

Collective Worship

Primary resources

Black History Month 2024

A decorative graphic consisting of a large, light blue, semi-circular shape on the left side of the page. On the right side, there is a white, rounded rectangular shape with a dark blue outline. Inside this white shape, there is a smaller, solid blue semi-circular shape at the bottom left corner.



Worship 1 - Key Concept / Message

Black History Month (BHM) is celebrated in October in the UK and February in the United States. BHM began in the US in 1926 and was initiated by historian Carter G. Woodson to honour the contributions of Black individuals who were often overlooked in mainstream history. The UK first celebrated BHM in 1987, inspired by the American tradition but tailored to recognise Black communities' specific histories and achievements in Britain, including the Windrush Generation and other significant contributions. BHM serves as a time to honour the rich cultural heritage, resilience, and accomplishments of Black people and to educate wider society about the diverse histories that shape our world today.

This year's theme, "Reclaiming Narratives," encourages us to take control of our stories, celebrating heritage and amplifying voices that have often been misrepresented or ignored. As Christians, participating in BHM is deeply connected to our faith's call for justice, truth, and love. Proverbs 31:8-9 urges us to "speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves," aligning with the mission of BHM to highlight and honour marginalised voices. Celebrating BHM reflects God's creation of diverse humanity (Genesis 1:27) and Jesus' command to love our neighbour (Mark 12:31). It's an opportunity to learn, reflect, and commit to building a more inclusive and just society that honours all of God's people.

This act of worship for primary pupils focuses on the importance of telling the stories of the past in order to inspire us for the future, particularly the stories of those who have overcome injustice. Using the Bible verse about telling our own stories (Psalm 107:2), we reflect on the importance of sharing our experiences and listening to the stories of diverse voices.

The story of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "[The Danger of a Single Story](#)" teaches us that when we hear only one side, we miss out on the richness and depth of other perspectives. (This is recommended watching for staff leading this series)

We are also reminded of how this applies to Black History Month, where we focus on reclaiming narratives. It's not just about the challenges faced by Black communities but also about celebrating their achievements, creativity, and everyday acts of courage and kindness.

Schools are encouraged to adapt this material to reflect their own communities, highlighting their own local stories and contributions that are often overlooked. The act of worship aims to teach pupils the value of listening to many different stories and perspectives, encouraging empathy, understanding, and respect for all.

Slide 1: Theme

The theme of this act of worship is 'Retelling Our Stories'

Slide 2: Gathering

Begin with your usual greeting to gather everyone together. You may like to start with an opening prayer, such as this one:

Dear God

We thank you that each of us has been fearfully and wonderfully made.



We are all your children.

We thank you for the many contributions made by black people, past and present, to the UK.

Help us to hear, celebrate and retell their stories.

Bless our eyes, to see the journey of others,

Bless our ears to hear the story of our neighbour,

And bless our hearts to be united in love

Amen

Slide 3

Introduce Black History Month and the theme "Reclaiming Narratives." Explain that this month is about celebrating the stories and achievements of Black communities and understanding the power of telling our own stories.

Today, we're going to talk about stories. Stories are powerful. They help us understand the world and the people around us. It's important to listen to many different stories to help us understand others. When we hear only one story from a particular community or culture, we might miss out on the many other beautiful, amazing, and true stories that also deserve to be told. During Black History Month, we celebrate the opportunity to hear many different stories from Black communities - both the difficult ones, as well as the stories of joy, success, and strength.

'Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story.' Psalm 107:2 (NIV)

This verse reminds us that our stories are important, and God wants us to share them with others. Everyone's story matters, and it's important to listen and learn from each other. It is particularly important to hear stories about how people have overcome injustice, and how people have been set free from difficult circumstances. This helps others in similar situations to feel hopeful about the future.

Slide 4

Introduce and share the bible story for the children

Let the stones tell the story (Joshua 4: 1-7)

When the people of Israel had finished crossing the Jordan River, God spoke to Joshua. He told him to pick twelve men, one from each tribe, and have them collect stones from the middle of the river, where the priests stood with the Ark of the Covenant. These stones were to be set up as a reminder. Joshua said, "In the future, when your children ask what these stones mean, you will tell them how God helped us cross the river by stopping the water. These stones will always remind us of what God did for us."

Explain: Just as the Israelites set up stones to remember their journey and history, today we remember important stories from Black history to help inspire and guide us.

Slide 5: Stories Are Powerful

Discussion Questions:

1. "What is the best story you have ever heard?"
2. "What is one reason you loved that story?"



Encourage the pupils to share stories from their own community, stories they have heard from around the world or stories they have encountered in books. How have those stories encouraged them in their lives?

Slide 6: Stories Are Powerful

"Stories have the power to inspire people. They help us understand the past, and they can encourage us to achieve great things."

Explain to the pupils that Black history is full of stories that can inspire us to be better and kinder people. They also provide hope for a fairer future for all people.

Slides 7&8: Paul Stephenson's Story

Introduce Paul Stephenson:

This is Paul Stephenson. He was born in England and went to a school where he was the only Black child. Explain: Paul faced racism, which inspired him to spend his life working to stop racism and bring communities together.

Share his achievements: He became Bristol's first Black social worker and helped improve relationships between Black and white people in the city.

Discussion Question:

What kind of actions does Paul Stephenson's story inspire us to do take?

Slide 9&10: Learning from Stories

I wonder... why the Israelite grown-ups wanted to share their story with the children. Why do you think that was important?

In our bible story, Joshua told the parents that they needed to retell the story of their journey out of slavery and how they were able to cross the Jordan into the 'promised land'. Stories of those who have gone before us are very important to remember because they help guide and inspire us. Their actions of bravery and courage can inspire us today to do the same. They can also give hope to those who are experiencing difficult circumstances.

I wonder... how listening to stories can help us when we're feeling discouraged. What do you think?

Connect to the earlier Bible story: Just like the Israelites shared their stories with their children to remind them of God's help, sharing positive stories from Black history helps inspire us when we feel discouraged. We might be feeling discouraged if our own circumstances are difficult, or if we are not seeing things change. These stories remind us that with God, all things are possible, and that real, lasting change takes a long time.

Slide 11

Read African proverb:

"Until the lion learns how to write, every story will glorify the hunter."



Chinua Achebe wrote this in his seminal novel, titled *Things Fall Apart*, in 1958.

Explain to the children that this proverb reinforces the idea that our stories are powerful and if we do not tell our own stories somebody else may do, but not in the way we would have wanted.

Black history month is about ensuring that the stories of Black people are retold accurately, and are shared widely.

These stories of love, life, light and courage have the power to inspire many more today.

Slide 12: Closing Prayer

Lead the pupils in the closing prayer:

"Heavenly Father,

We thank you for the opportunity to retell the stories of the past in order to be inspired for the present and future.

Help us to be courageous like Joshua, Paul Stephenson, and many more who spoke up for what is right.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Action: Encourage the children to go out and share one positive story about themselves or someone else this week. Remind them to make sure they are telling the story faithfully.



Spiritual Development: Practical Ways to Explore Faith at Home and School

Exploring Faith Through Stories:

Encourage children to read or listen to Bible stories that connect with the theme of reclaiming narratives, like the story of Moses leading his people out of Egypt. Discuss how God guided Moses to help his people reclaim their freedom. At home, parents can share family stories that highlight resilience and faith, drawing parallels to biblical narratives.

Create a ‘Gratitude Jar’:

Both at home and in school, children can decorate a jar where they place notes of gratitude daily. They can write about things they are thankful for, moments of kindness they've witnessed, or stories they've heard that inspired them. This activity helps children reflect on the good around them and see God's hand in everyday life.

Prayer and Reflection Spaces:

Set up a quiet corner at home or in the classroom where children can go to pray, think, or reflect. Encourage them to use this space to talk to God about their day, ask questions, or simply be still. You can include small activities like drawing, writing a short prayer, or reading a comforting Bible verse.

Acts of Kindness Chart:

Create an Acts of Kindness chart where children can record kind deeds they have done or received. Highlight how these small actions can change someone's story and make a positive impact in the world, just like Jesus did through his teachings and actions.

Sharing and Listening Sessions:

Have regular times when children can share stories from their lives or stories that have touched them. Encourage them to listen actively and respectfully to each other, recognizing the importance of every voice. This practice helps them value storytelling and understand the power of sharing their own narratives.

Use Visual Reminders of Faith:

Create posters or visual displays in classrooms or at home that feature Bible verses, positive affirmations, or symbols of hope. These can serve as daily reminders of God's presence and the importance of telling our own stories.



Conversations which connect communities

“Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.” Desmond Tutu

Personal Reflection:

- How can small acts of kindness make a difference in your school or community?
- Why is it important to act even when the problems seem too big to solve alone?
- How can you use your voice to support others within your community?
 3. What values do you hold that align with Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s call to do good in the world?

Community and Society:

- How can we encourage others to join us in doing “little bits of good” to create a more inclusive society?
- In what ways can communities come together and show support for each other?
- How can we ensure that our good actions inspire others to do the same and create a ripple effect in society?

Global Perspective:

- How do you think the cumulative effect of many people doing “little bits of good” could help address global issues like racism?
- How can learning about different cultures and histories help people be kind to each other?
- How do you think young people can lead the way in creating a world that is kinder and free from racism and discrimination?
- What kind of world do you envision for the future, and what small actions can you take today to help make that world a reality?



Collective Worship – Our approach

Invitational

Everyone is welcome to take part in collective worship, as much or as little as they or their parents and carers are comfortable with. This means we use invitational language and consider carefully our choice of words and songs. Children are invited to pray but are not compelled or expected to do so; they always have a choice. We invite them to pray or reflect in whatever way they would usually as a family, if that is part of their home experience.

Inclusive

Acts of worship need to be inclusive of all. Therefore, we choose topics and ideas that are shared by different faiths and worldviews. When we present Christian teaching, we make it clear that this is 'what Christians believe', saying things like: 'I wonder why this story might be important to Christians?' 'The story today comes from the Bible (the holy book of Christians), which teaches that ... Our worship should be accessible for children and young people with a range of different backgrounds, and so we take care that activities do not require expensive resources. We also offer a variety of activities, so that children and young people with differing needs can all find something they can engage with.

Inspiring

We aim for our acts of worship to inspire those engaging with them. How might it engage their emotions, enabling a sense of peace, comfort, hope or motivation? How might it inspire them into action, into thinking differently and considering their behaviour or actions? How might it inspire them to reflect on their faith or beliefs, and on the faith or beliefs of others?