



Introduction

The theme is the role of the angels in the Christmas story – both their significance and their symbolism. The intended learning outcomes include the opportunity:

- to express thoughts and ideas about angels
- to identify and discuss the meaning of angels in the Christmas story
- to explore ways in which Christians use images of angels.

Christmas narrative. A CD of the artwork is also available.

Development

1. What do we think about angels?

Ask the children to close their eyes and imagine an angel. Help them to create a 'mind' picture by asking 'how big is it?'... 'how do you know it is an angel?'... 'can you see its face?'... 'what colour is it?'... 'what words would you use to describe its face?'... 'how is it dressed?'... 'how does it move?'... 'where has it come from?'... 'what does it do?'... 'is it happy or sad?'... 'how do you know?'... 'does it speak?'... 'what does it sound like?'... 'what does it say?'.

The children should open their eyes but not discuss ideas yet. Ask them to paint/draw/ create a collage of an angel and annotate it with a simple description.

In a class discussion the children can later share their pictures and descriptions and comment on one another's ideas.

2. What do other artists think about angels?

Show a variety of Christmas cards or pictures from paintings or the web showing angels. Have an open discussion about whether the children like or dislike these images.

What are the artists and card designers trying to show?

Where have the artists got their ideas?

Where do we get our ideas?

Do these pictures help show us what Christians believe about angels?

3. What do angels do in the stories of the birth of Jesus?

Tell the story of the angel visiting Mary (the annunciation). See the books above for ideas. On a simple photocopied picture of the annunciation, ask children to complete speech bubbles for Mary and Gabriel or hot seat children in the roles of Mary or Gabriel.

Tell the story of the angels visiting the shepherds (again the Barnabas books listed above have ideas for this). The children could act out the story, create a storyboard or complete a diary entry for one



of the shepherds.

4. Why do the children think there are angels in these stories? What do they mean?

Have a class discussion about the significance of angels in the stories.

Where do you think the angels came from?

What do the angels say about the baby Jesus?

What was their job/task in the stories?

Can you think of other things, which could be in the story and which would show that baby Jesus was special?

Would the stories be the same without them?

What do you think Christians think about angels?

5. How and why do Christians use pictures of angels?

Create a display showing a variety of images of angels (e.g. from famous paintings, stained glass windows, Christmas tree decorations, statues in churches, wrapping paper etc...)

Discuss these pictures.

What common features can the children identify?

What do they think Christians believe about angels?

Invite someone who is a Christian to say what angels mean for them.

Ask the children to write extended labels for the images chosen.