

## Aims and objectives

During this lesson, pupils will:

- Hear and discuss the meaning of a Bible story.
- Compare and contrast a series of artworks based on this story.
- Consider the intentions and possible beliefs of the artist and patron (the person who commissioned the artwork).
- Reflect on the story's possible meanings.

## Background

The story of Jesus and the money changers has inspired a great many paintings because of its unusual subject matter: Jesus of Nazareth was not known for his physical violence! This vivid story sees him challenge the wisdom and authority of the people in charge of the Jerusalem temple, shortly after he entered the city to the acclaim of many followers. Instead of attacking the Roman rulers (as some might have hoped), Jesus went straight to the centre of Jewish worship – and proceeded to clear out the market set up in the Court of the Gentiles, an open space where non-Jews were allowed to pray. This demonstration of his own authority probably sealed his death warrant: Jesus' 'cleansing of the temple' on what became known as Palm Sunday was followed a few days later by his arrest, trial and execution.

Bible stories like this have inspired a wide variety of artists, so the study of religious art can provide excellent discussion about faith and beliefs for RE. When we approach a work of religious art in RE, it is always useful to consider:

- the faith or intention of the artist
- the faith of the person who commissioned the artist
- the subject matter
- the use to which the piece of art is put
- the faith of the viewer.

## Preparation

You will need to be able to display this painting on your computer whiteboard, because it provides the foundation for the main lesson: *Expulsion of the Money - Changers from the Temple* by Valentin de Boulogne (1591-1632).

You will also need to display a few other paintings, such as:

- *Expulsion of the Money Changers from the Temple* by Giotto di Bondone(1267-1337)
- *The Merchants Chased from the Temple* by James Tissot(1836-1902)
- *Cleansing the Temple* by Carl Heinrich Bloch(1834-90)

- *Christ Driving Merchants from the Temple* by Jacob Jordaens(1593-1678)

These paintings (and others) can be found at [jesus-story.net](http://jesus-story.net), which is also a helpful source of background detail to the story.

You also need to have a copy of the Bible story itself, which is retold in all four Gospels of the Christian Bible: Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-48; and John 2:13-16. Of these four, Matthew provides the most detail. You should ideally use a child - friendly Bible translation, or retelling that is appropriate for the age and ability of your pupils. ([www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) offers a downloadable variety, including the Easy-to-Read Version (ERV), the International Children's Bible (ICB) and the Good News Translation (GNT) - but beware American spellings.)

A digital camera will be useful.

(Please note that in the pupil task, the suggested connection with Cardinal Richelieu is completely fictional. Richelieu certainly commissioned artwork like this, but there is no evidence for it happening with this painting.)

## Lesson introduction

Ask the pupils if they have ever seen something unfair happen to someone else that really made them angry. Quickly discuss and share a few examples. Explain that there is a Bible story about Jesus seeing something happen that was completely wrong and unfair, and deciding to make an impact. He was rough, he was tough - and it made him a lot of enemies!

## Development

Show *Expulsion of the Money - Changers from the Temple*, painted by Valentin de Boulogne in about 1625. For a few moments, ask your pupils to 'take their eyes for a walk' around the painting, encouraging them to notice different details such as the faces and reactions of different people, and the painter's use of light and darkness to highlight key features.

Read aloud the Bible story. Then ask the children, in pairs, to spend a moment creating a tableau of two figures from the picture - Jesus and the man lying down. Repeat with the pupils exchanging roles.

Then discuss and encourage feedback of immediate reactions. Do you think the artist has conveyed the moment well? How would you describe Jesus' face in this picture?

Now explain the background - that the people in this scene have been running a market that stops foreigners from being able to come and pray to God. Jesus is saying that's completely unfair, and he's driving out the market traders. This made the people running the temple very angry, because the market was making them rich as well. They said that only the special Jewish temple money was acceptable to God - so if anyone wanted to make an offering, it first had to be exchanged for the

expensive temple money. Jesus said that was wrong, and he was going to put a stop to it! Then discuss and encourage feedback. What do you think of Jesus in that picture now?

Together, create a class tableau of the whole scene, with one child playing Jesus and the rest choosing other roles. (If you can, take a picture using a digital camera. The result could be used as a further activity in which children add speech bubbles to show what people in the picture might be saying and thinking.)

Then show two or three other paintings of the story. What do you notice that's similar, and different, about the way the scenes have been rendered? Discuss in pairs, then give feedback.

## Pupil task

**Creative writing:** imagine you are the French artist Valentin de Boulogne, planning to paint this picture in 1625. What do you think are the most important bits in the story? Does it have an underlying message? How will you show that in your painting? What will the different characters be doing? Write a letter to the person you hope will be paying for it (Cardinal Richelieu, an important statesman and bishop), explaining your thinking. How will you impress the Cardinal with your understanding of the story, and what you plan to do with it? (What sort of place would be best for displaying the painting?)

## Differentiation

**SEN/Less Able** - use the '[Speech bubbles](#)' and '[Missing words](#)' worksheets provided for reinforcement of the story's key ideas. Pupils could write directly on the worksheets, or they could be copied and used for handwriting practice as well.

**More Able** - Cardinal Richelieu is an extremely clever man who runs the government for the king of France and has great plans for making France the most powerful nation in Europe. He especially wants to run a strong army and navy, and to have his own palace. He also thinks that his Church should help to run the country, with him in charge. Do you think he will like this painting, or would he prefer something else? (Will he like the idea of a rough, tough Jesus?) Write his letter in reply to Valentin de Boulogne, giving his reasons for supporting, or not supporting, the painting.

## Extension

[A creative music lesson based on this Bible story can be found on our website.](#)

## Plenary: discussion points



- Share some of the letters.
- Did this picture of Jesus surprise you?
- Is this story saying it is all right to fight and hurt people? Why? (Note that later in the week, some soldiers came to arrest Jesus. His disciples fought back, but Jesus told them to stop, saying, 'I'm the one you're looking for - let the others go') (John 18:8, paraphrased).
- How could the wrecking of this market fit with the others things Jesus did in the temple - such as teaching, and healing the sick?
- Why do you think the children were so pleased to see Jesus?