



## Introduction

There are many different types of bravery. How far would you go to stand up for something you believe in?

## Preparation

This dramatized no-rehearsal story requires you to pick three articulate, confident pupils (boys or girls) who can spontaneously repeat and act out the lines and gestures you give them, in front of an audience. If you can provide them with suitable costumes, then all the better. These parts are the Emperor, the Head Teacher and Daniel. Have a decorated chair (drapes?) ready for the Emperor, and another less-decorated one for the Head Teacher. Give the Emperor some sort of sword or badge of office, and the Head Teacher a bell. The Head Teacher will need to see a list of the following activities: **Reading, Writing, Numeracy, Languages, Making hard decisions, Running, Throwing spears, Archery and Swimming.**

## Development

This is a story about all sorts of things - and most especially, food! Who likes food? What are your favourite foods? How does food help us to stay healthy? For some people, food can be extremely important. Around the world, some choose not to eat certain foods, not because they're bad for you, but because it's part of their beliefs. Can you think of any examples? (Muslims - pork, Hindus - beef, vegetarians - meat.) This is a Bible story about a time when some of God's people, the Jewish people, faced a problem about food.

We're all going to be taking part in the story, which contains some very powerful feelings. So as a warm-up, when I give the signal, could you show me a face that's all about... fear, surprise, hunger, having to make a hard choice, determined...

*(Sort out the three principal actors. Seat the Emperor and the Head Teacher on their chairs on two different sides of the 'stage', with Daniel sitting on the floor in the middle.)*

Long, long ago, there was a war... *(The whole audience look like they're fighting with swords)* and God's people, the Jewish people... lost. *(OH NO!)* God's people, the Jewish people, were taken away from their homes by armed guards and had to travel hundreds of miles to live *(all swing arms like walking, looking tired and exhausted)* until they reached the great city of Babylon where the Emperor lived. He said:

**Emperor:** Do as you're told, and you'll be all right. If not, then it'll be bad for you *(slitting action across the throat)*.

**Audience:** YES SIR!



And so they settled in this new land. Some of their smartest children even went to the Emperor's special talent school.

**Emperor:** The smartest people can work for me if they're good enough. I'll pay well. Got it?

**Audience:** YES SIR!

And so that's what happened. The smartest young people from across the Empire went to the Emperor's school to be trained up in...

Reading (*open a book*), Writing (*write in the book*), Numeracy (*count on your fingers, 4 x tables*), Languages (*'Bonjour!'*), Making hard decisions (*'How will I solve that?'*), and there were all sorts of sports too - running (*swing arms*), Throwing spears (*imaginary javelins*), Archery (*bow and arrow*), and Swimming (*breast stroke*).

The school's Head Teacher was in charge:

**Head Teacher:** Right you lot, let's see if you can follow instructions - ready? (*Head Teacher calls out commands for everybody to perform any of the previous activities when the bell is rung, then everybody has to obey.*)

But one day, the Emperor summoned the Head Teacher to say:

**Emperor:** I want to see who your smartest students are.

**Head Teacher:** Great! I'll sent you some!

**Emperor:** No, I'm going to set them some tests. I'm going to feed them the best food from the palace kitchens, and you teach them as best you can. In a few weeks, we'll see who are the best! And if no one's good enough, you know what'll happen don't you? (*Draws finger across throat.*)

**Head Teacher:** Y-Y-Y-Y-es sir! (*faints*)

So the Palace staff brought over the meals. But then one of the Jewish students called Daniel took one look and gathered his friends together.

**Daniel:** We can't eat this food!

**Audience:** What? Why?

**Daniel:** God gave our people food laws. Only eat 'kosher' food! That means no pork, no ham, bacon, rabbit or seafood, or anything with blood in it! We can't eat any meat from the Emperor's kitchen!

**Audience:** Why make a fuss?

**Daniel:** Because if we don't make a stand on something like this, it'll be harder when we get older!



We've got to face up to it now! We've got to go veggie!

I wonder what his friends said? Well, after a lot of discussion, they agreed. Then Daniel went to see the Head Teacher to tell him their decision.

**Head Teacher:** WHAT? If you don't eat the food, you'll go all weak! The Emperor will be furious! He'll have my head!

**Daniel:** Don't tell him. We'll keep fit, and take the tests when he wants.

**Head Teacher:** I'm DOOMED!!!!!!!!!!!!!! (*faints*)

So over the next few weeks, Daniel's Jewish friends had their lessons, only ate veggie food, and prayed at the regular appointed times according to their Jewish faith.

Then one day, the Emperor came to see the Head Teacher.

**Emperor:** Ready?

**Head Teacher:** Y-Y-Y-Y-es sir!

**Emperor:** Then let the Games begin....!

All the students were put through loads and loads of difficult tests.

**Head Teacher:** (*with bell, calls out a few at random from the following list of activities*) Reading.. Writing... Numeracy... Languages... Making hard decisions... Running, Throwing spears, Archery, Swimming

And at the end, the Emperor said the best students were...

**Emperor:** (*pointing at the whole audience*) This lot!

And the Emperor said to Daniel and his friends:

**Emperor:** You're hired!

And then the Head Teacher fainted for the last time!

I wonder what this story has to say about being part of a team, supporting each other, and staying true to what you believe?

(Discuss in pairs, then feed back a few.) Point out how their decision about not eating the Emperor's special meat was all about remembering their Jewish faith and making it their own. It can't have been easy for them. But this decision prepared them play a very important part in the story of their people, later on.



I wonder - what big decisions might you have to make in future, that will prepare you for the next steps in your life?

Shut your eyes. What do you want to be when you're older? How could what you do today in school, help you prepare for that, in some small way?

## **Prayer**

Father God, we can all have dreams about what we want to be. But some of that's going to come from the decisions we make today. Show us all how to be a bit more like Daniel, to think ahead, and choose wisely for a better future. Amen.

## **Information for teachers**

This classic Bible story (from Daniel 1) dates from a time when the Jewish people had been taken into exile by the victorious Babylonian Empire. They faced a traumatic question: why did God let this happen to us, his chosen people? Part of their response is shown here - by rededicating themselves to the traditional practices prescribed in scripture from the time of Moses and the Exodus. (Many are still maintained today by orthodox Jews.) However, some would later ask awkward questions about the way these traditions were being followed- especially Jesus of Nazareth.