



Preparation

Get hold of a class set of percussion instruments and drums—and a place where using them will not disturb the work of other classes. For musical purposes, you could sort the instruments into distinct groups such as drums, shakers, wooden hitters, metal hitters. This means you could build up overlapping sets of beats (ostinatos) when music-making in groups. It will help if the principal actors (King Saul, Goliath and David) are dressed and armed with suitable props such as swords, etc. As teacher, it will help you to play some kind of loud percussion instrument, to keep the general beat. The suggested prompts for phrases and beats are simply prompts—your pupils may come up with something better!

Lesson introduction

What does it mean to be brave? We're going to be exploring a classic story about someone small taking on someone big—and afterwards, talk about why things happened the way they did. For members of the Jewish and Christian faith, it's an important story about God using somebody who doesn't seem to be important, to do something amazing.

Sort out the class into two large groups facing each other, appointing three pupils who enjoy drama as principal actors. It will help if 'Goliath' is significantly taller than 'David'—but pupil gender should not be an issue. (You could split each of the groups into two, enabling the playing of different ostinato.)

Before giving our musical instruments, establish a silence signal such as 'hand in the air'. Give out the instruments, allowing a short 'have a go making different sounds' moments before starting properly.

Development

This is a Bible story from 3000 years ago, about a time when tribes would often go to war. In ancient cultures, a pitched battle would often start with a challenge, where one champion would fight another. This might even decide who won the battle! There were also war-dances to try and scare away the enemy—like the Maori Haka from the New Zealand All Blacks. Drumming would be part of that. So we're going to tell the story of one great confrontation before a battle—the classic tale of David and Goliath.

We represent the two armies: the Philistines and the Hebrews. We'll start with the two armies doing their best to try and scare the enemy away by being more disciplined and louder than the others. It means working out some war chants that can be played on drums together in your team... and



playing them together really well. So you'll need to think of a short sharp message that will scare the enemy away.

Philistines? You're the people of the sea, your ships sail across the Mediterranean, your gods are the most powerful ones because you're a powerful warrior people. What are you going to shout at this pathetic little army in front of you?

Hebrews? You serve the one living God who brought his people out of Egypt with blood and smoke and fire and plagues. These Philistines have been bullying your people for far too long. Today, you make a stand- and King Saul says it's the time to stand and fight for your freedom!

(Practice time in groups, discussing and preparing their war chants and ostanatos. If in doubt, suggest *'We're gonna win!' / 'Down with the Philistines' / 'Hebrews rule' / 'Hebrews, forever!'*)

Perform both chants, with yourself setting the beat on your own instrument.

The story continues. Out from the Philistine army stepped a giant of a man, armed to the teeth.

(Whisper these prompts to each character, telling them to repeat them, loud and over-the-top if possible...)

'I'm Goliath! I'm the Philistine champion! If anyone can fight and beat me, then we'll say you've won! So... who's going to take me on?'

(Philistine Army beat out four times *'Champ-i-on! Champ-i-on!'*)

The Hebrew King Saul was old, so he said to the warriors in his own army.

'Well, my brave soldiers? Who will be my champion?'

Hebrews response: beating out four times, *'Not on your nelly! Not on your nelly!'*

Philistines are scornful, beating out four times, *'Scaredy-cats! Scaredy cats!'*

(Have both sides playing out their ostanatos, overlapping each other.)

Next day, Goliath came out again.

'I said, Who's going to take me on? Is anyone out there? Come on if you're hard enough!'

King Saul: *'Well, my brave soldiers? Who will be my champion?'*

Hebrews response, beating out four times, *'Not on your nelly! Not on your nelly!'*

Philistines are scornful, beating out four times, *'Scaredy-cats! Scaredy cats!'*



(Have both sides playing out their *ostinatos*, overlapping each other.)

Then a young boy turned up in the Hebrew army, bringing packed lunches for his older brothers. He heard Goliath's challenge and asked,

'So, who's going to take him on?'

Hebrews say and beat out four times: *'Go home Shepherd Boy!'*

David: *'Fine! Then I'll do it if no one else will!'*

King Saul heard about this and sent for David. *'Are you serious?'*

David: *'I'm a shepherd. I've killed a lion and I've killed a bear. With the help of the Lord God, I'll defeat this giant as well!'*

So King Saul kitted him out with his own armour and weapons. But David was a bit small for that—he took three steps towards Goliath, and fell over. (Everyone make the sound of clattering armour.)

Philistines beat out four times: *'What a load of rubbish!'*

So David went back, took off the armour, and instead went to a stream to pick out five smooth stones, and took out his shepherd's sling. Then he went back to face the giant.

Goliath: *'I'm not running a playgroup here! Go home!'*

David: *'You come against me with a sword and spear. I'm coming against in the strength of my Lord God.'*

Goliath: *'I don't see him! My gods are tougher than your gods!'*

David: *'You're about to...'*

Philistines beat out four times *'Death—to David!'*

Hebrews beat out four times, *'Bite him on the ankles!'*

Then as Goliath was coming closer, David took out his slingshot, placed a stone in it, whirled it round his head, let fly—and the stone flew straight towards Goliath, whacked him on the head and knocked him out. (Goliath hits the floor.) David ran forward, grabbed Goliath's sword and... (if Goliath had a helmet, have David hold it aloft, or just hold the sword high...) that was the end.

Philistines beat out four times, *'What's gone wrong? NNNNNOOOOOOOOOOOOO!'*

Hebrews beat out four times, *'David! Champion!'*



(Have both sides playing out their ostanatos, overlapping each other.)

Finish by organising a round of applause for the principal actors, and collecting in the instruments.

Questions for discussion

This is a classic story about the small guy defeating the bigger guy. But I wonder... what was it that actually gave David the power to win? (If it doesn't come up in discussion, mention David's powerful faith in his Lord God, which is a key point for Jewish believers and Christians. How might that have made a difference?)

What's this story saying to you about courage, or hope, or perseverance, or taking on responsibility for something?

This is a violent story. David later became King of his people, but wars kept happening. Do you have any questions about that? Could this story have ended differently?

One of David's descendants was Jesus of Nazareth. How might these two people be similar—and different?

Background information for teachers

The image of David taking on Goliath is frequently used as a symbol to describe situations where individuals or groups face insuperable odds—but then win (a familiar theme in World War I propaganda). Of course, everyone naturally sees themselves and their own just cause as the 'David' in the struggle, and never 'Goliath'. David went on to become King of his nation—but his kingdom continued to be plagued by wars and civil wars. However, one of his descendants, Jesus of Nazareth, famously said 'Blessed are the Peacemakers' (Matthew 5.9). That's quite a contrast!

The original 3000-year old Bible story (1 Samuel 17:1-51) is well worth studying in Literacy lessons as a classic narrative, but be warned—some details are unpleasant! An age-appropriate children's version might be more suitable.

This lesson could be turned into a performance for use in assembly or collective worship. If so, the principals will need to be rehearsed, and each musical group trained to shout the words as well as playing their beats. (Download this script so that everyone, at least in rehearsal, can see a copy.) Some of your pupils could share their own reflections about what the story is saying to them.