



On your marks

Here is one of a series of three sessions to pick up the three events we associate with the season of Epiphany: three 'manifestations', 'signs' or 'clues' as to who Jesus is.

Get set

The mini series is based around creating a wall display of a piratical treasure map with the three clues on. You'll need card or paper for the background, cut to the size of your display board, two colours of card, scissors, story of wise men, pictures of wise men, Christmas cards or drawing materials, incense or candle and matches, cut outs of speech bubbles, pencils.

Go!

1 As the children come in, their first job is to paint the backdrop of your display with very strong tea (4 teabags to a mug of boiling water) to make it look aged. This will be wet and messy and may take up longer than you expect as it's really good fun. Cool the tea before you let the children loose on it, of course.

2 Draw the letters onto coloured card for the title of your display. In one colour: 'Epiphany' and in another colour 'A time of clues'. If you cut them out into blocks of three or four letters beforehand, so that the children have the fine cutting to do, it makes an interesting anagram puzzle too as they try to work out what order the letters come in.

3 As they work out the puzzle, explain that Epiphany means a time when something is 'shown' to us: it's a time of clues as to who Jesus really is. There are three clues and today we're looking at the first one: the clue of the wise men.

4 Tell the story of the magi: there are plenty of storybooks to choose from, or it is so familiar you will probably be able to tell it by question and answer, or purposely getting the facts wrong and being corrected by the children.

5 Look at some pictures of the wise men as painted by great artists. You can download pictures from the National Gallery website or you may have copies at home or from Christmas cards. The beautiful book 'The Image of Christ' published by The National Gallery Company has a great selection of Magi pictures by Gossaert, Bonfigli and Bruegel, all of which have wonderful detail to talk about. Ask the children simple questions like:

- What can you see in the picture?
- What do you like about this picture?
- Who is the most important person in this picture, do you think?
- What colour are the faces of the wise men? What are they wearing? What can you tell about the wise men from the way they look (what they're wearing, their skin colour, what they're



doing)?

- What are the characters doing?
- What's like the Bible story you've just heard? What's different?
- What do you think the artist is trying to say about Jesus?

6 Prayer time: if possible, light some incense or an incense-scented candle. Silently choose one of the magi from the picture. Imagine what he might be thinking about Jesus at that moment. Is it something you'd like to say to Jesus too? If so, say it to him in the quiet of your own heart now. Write the words of the wise man on a speech bubble.

7 Finish with making or cutting out from Christmas cards pictures of the wise men and their gifts to go on the display. Glue them on with the speech bubbles glued around them. Beneath this part of the display glue on the prophecy from Isaiah: 'Nations will come to your light; kings will come to the brightness of your dawn' Isaiah 60:3 and ask the children to think about what the clue of the wise men tells us about Jesus.

8 Before the next session, add the artwork to the dried-out tea stained background and add a red cross in the centre like the X on a treasure map.