Sacred Stories – Sacred Peoples

In Sacred Stories – Sacred Peoples students learn about how the people of Israel were formed, how they related to God, and how the early Christians understood Jesus Christ. Students explore family stories, examining the values and beliefs held by their families, revealed through these stories. They examine how the Israelites were formed as the Chosen People in Exodus and how they experienced God through an investigation of the Ten Commandments in Exodus. They consider the roles of prominent Old Testament figures such as Moses and Miriam. Students investigate how the first Christians understood Jesus Christ through an exploration of the commandment to love God and to love one's neighbour in the gospels. Students reflect on how God has been and is a part of their own life stories.

DOCTRINAL FOCUS

In planning to teach this unit the following references from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church are recommended:

#136 God is the author of Sacred Scripture because he inspired its human authors; he acts in them and by means of them. He thus gives assurance that their writings teach without error his saving truth (cf. DV 11).
(See Compendium #18 Why does Sacred Scripture teach the truth?)

#61 The patriarchs, prophets and certain other Old Testament figures have been and always will be honoured as saints in all the Church's liturgical traditions.
(See Compendium #21 What is the importance of the Old Testament for Christians?)

#64 Through the prophets, God forms his people in the hope of salvation. The prophets proclaim … a salvation which will include all the nations. Above all, the poor and humble of the Lord will bear this hope. Such holy women as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Judith and Esther kept alive the hope of Israel's salvation. The purest figure among them is Mary.
(See Compendium #8 What are the first stages of God's Revelation? and #8 What are the next stages of God’s Revelation?)

#125 The gospels are the heart of all the Scriptures ‘because they are our principal source for the life and teaching of the Incarnate Word, our Saviour’.
(See Compendium #22 What importance does the New Testament have for Christians?)

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

Through stories people share the significant people, places and times in their lives. In retelling stories people emphasise what is important to them. What stories have been part of your family history and identity? What do they tell you about what is important to your family?

What biblical texts have been significant for you at different times in your life? Who are the biblical characters you resonate with?
LINKS TO STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCE

Many students live in a multicultural world where beliefs and values shape culture and identity. What factors impact on the shaping of your students’ identity? How do these influence how they approach Scripture?

Students are able to approach text with an increasing ability to critique, analyse and evaluate. How can we lead students to an appreciation of the Bible as the revelation of God’s love?

EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

Ex 20: 1–5

The Ten Commandments or ‘Decalogue’ is a list of religious imperatives which, according to tradition, were written by God and given to Moses on Mount Sinai in the form of two stone tablets. They feature prominently in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The ‘Decalogue’ is derived from the Greek name found in the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew name, the words of God.

It begins with the most important statement. God is asserting God’s own authority and proposes Godself as the sole object of religious worship. This is repeated in the first four of the commandments. At this point only the Jewish people had a monotheistic faith – a belief in one God. The Jews were bound by a threefold cord: (1) the Lord is their God; (2) the Lord is a God who is in covenant with them; and (3) the Lord has brought them out of the land of Egypt. They are bound in gratitude to obey God and to give the respect that is God’s due.

POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- Decorate a lectern or book stand with a colourful drape to highlight the place of the word.

- Celebrate together a Liturgy of the Word. You may wish to include a procession of the book with candles and a bowl of incense. Sing a gospel acclamation and proclaim Mt 7: 24–29, or a particular gospel passage chosen by the class. Invite the students to reflect aloud on the meaning for them of that particular gospel passage. Conclude by re-reading the gospel, and say the response:

  Leader: This is the gospel of the Lord.
  All: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ!

- The emphasis here is to use a variety of scripture passages in prayer – psalms, prophets, gospels – demonstrating reverence for the Bible as our Sacred Scripture using gesture, ritual and symbol. It is important that students learn to pray with Scripture, and also spend time listening to what Scripture says to them.

- Choose verses from Psalm 119 that relate specifically to God’s word, e.g. verses 11, 16, 49, 105, and create sung responses from them.

- In pairs, students prepare and lead prayer using Daily Prayer Under the Southern Cross (Elizabeth McMahon Jeep and Sr Margaret Smith SGS).
• Respond in prayer to scripture passages. Read a selected passage. Students respond using prayer journals, mandalas, prayers of intercession, creating a chant based on the text, contemplation, meditation, or singing songs adapted from Scripture.

• Pray together the ‘Our Prayer’ litany in KW$L, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 13, p. 124.

• Prepare a Liturgy of the Word using the following readings:
  
  Reader 1: Ex 20: 1–5
  
  Respond with part of Psalm 136 using the response: *For his steadfast love endures forever!*
  
  Reader 2: Mk 12: 28–31

• Create a PowerPoint reflection with images from the world of nature. Read a psalm or sing a song of praise for God’s creation, e.g. ‘The Wonders I See’ (Bernadette Farrell, *Share the Light*, OCP Publications).

**Related Chapters** – KW$L, 2nd edn, Year 6: Chapter 10, The Word of God; Chapter 13, The God We Worship.
Faith concepts: revelation, story, beliefs, values, culture, identity.

Seeking understanding:
What is the Bible?
What do we learn about God and God’s people in the Bible?
How do I see God in my own story?

Understandings:
Through story people share the significant people, events, places and times, beliefs and values that shape their history and identity.
The Bible consists of many books about the people, events, places and beliefs of the people of God.
The Old Testament tells the story of the People of Israel and their relationship to God.
The stories of the Old and New Testaments continue in our lives today.

Unit specific learning:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students will learn about Knowledge and Understanding</th>
<th>Students will learn to Reasoning &amp; Responding</th>
<th>Students will undertake to Personal &amp; Communal Engagement</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● The place of story in people’s expression of what they believe and value.</td>
<td>● Evaluate modern-day living in the light of new learning about the Ten Commandments and the commandments in the New Testament.</td>
<td>● Plan, lead, participate in and evaluate a class ritual that has a scripture text significant to them as its focus.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● The books, characters, events and significant places in the Old and New Testaments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● The role of significant figures in the story of God’s people.</td>
<td>● Express their thinking about the relevance of the commandments in contemporary life.</td>
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<td>● The Ten Commandments in the historical context and how they apply to modern-day living.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● The relationship between the Old and New Testaments.</td>
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### PHASES OF STUDENT INQUIRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Reading for Teachers</th>
<th>Orientation to Inquiry</th>
<th>Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Story</strong></td>
<td>The teacher tunes in the class to the importance of family history to one’s own identity by sharing a significant story from his/her own background.</td>
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<td>A sense of religious culture and identity comes out of the links with one’s past and heritage via the sacred stories treasured by those who have gone before.</td>
<td><strong>Swapping Stories</strong></td>
<td>Students investigate significant and influential stories of people and events in their own family history to share with the class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jesus Christ himself had his religious and cultural identity as a human being formed by the Scriptures, stories and prayers he learned from boyhood. These Scriptures are what we know as the <em>Old Testament</em>; the great narratives of God’s deeds with the People of Israel, and how they came to understand that God was One, Holy and Just – the creator and redeemer of all.</td>
<td>Students discuss:</td>
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<tr>
<td>We, in turn, are formed as Christians by reading and hearing the stories of the Old Testament, but more especially by the stories of Jesus Christ himself in the gospels, and by the stories and letters of the first Christians. These stories and letters are contained in the</td>
<td>– people or events</td>
<td>The above activities set the stage for posing the big question: Who are the sacred people, and what are the stories in our Christian tradition that impact on our faith today?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>– qualities displayed/values expressed in significant people and events</td>
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The **Old Testament** is composed of books of many styles and genres. The most important divisions are these:

- **Pentateuch** – the first five books which are called by the Jewish people the *Torah*, meaning Law. These books are:
  - **Genesis** which contains the stories of the creation of the world and of human beings, and of their fall. It also tells the stories of the patriarchs of Israel and the beginnings of God’s revelation to humankind.
  - **Exodus** which tells the story of the descent into slavery of the Israelites, of their liberation by God under Moses, their reception of their Law and their journey to the promised land.
  - **Leviticus** which is a book containing a great many laws and ritual requirements.
  - **Numbers** which is a kind of census of Israel, and also contains some history.
  - **Deuteronomy** in which Moses makes three great speeches recounting the history of the people and directing them to their future.

Other major sections of the Old Testament are:

- the **Historical Books** – from the Book of Joshua to the Books of the Maccabees
- the **Wisdom Literature** – from Job to

### What Do You Know About The Bible? Bible Brainstorm

In small groups students record on butcher paper as many people, events, places, images of God and books in the Bible as they possibly can in a ten-minute time span.

Once the time is up, each group categorises their responses on a classroom data chart (see next activity).

### Classroom Data Chart

Once the above activity is completed each group will take turns at justifying their choices before the class. The teacher clarifies/Confirms the students’ understandings of the characters and their respective stories, and then

### Assessment for Learning

This activity will highlight the insights and gaps in students’ knowledge of the Old and New Testaments, e.g. significant female Old Testament characters.
Ecclesiasticus

- the **Prophets** – from Isaiah to Malachi.

Each section contains a variety of writings, from dramas like Job to the songs of the book of Psalms; from sagas like Samson to the historical details of Ezra and Nehemiah; from the great prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah to the pleading of Hosea and the urgent call to justice of Micah and Amos.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Testament</th>
<th>New Testament</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PEOPLE</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLACES</td>
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<tr>
<td>EVENTS</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>IMAGES OF GOD</td>
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<td>BOOKS</td>
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The New Testament was written over a much shorter time than the Old Testament. St Paul's letter to the Thessalonians is probably the first piece of New Testament writing (c. AD50), and the last part to be written was probably the Book of Revelation – the final book of the Bible – in the AD90s: a mere 40 years.

The main divisions of the New Testament are the four **gospels**: **Matthew, Mark, Luke and John**. Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the **synoptic** (from the Greek words for together and seeing) gospels because they share a somewhat similar view of the person and teaching of Jesus Christ. The **Gospel of John** has a different approach and style. The portrait of Jesus Christ that emerges from these different accounts is, despite minor differences, strong, consistent and cohesive.

Students:
- state anything else they know about the Bible, and
- put forth Wonderings and Questions.

Teacher records what students would like to find out. Wonderings and Questions could be displayed around the room.

**Inquiry Questions: True/False**
Teacher asks pairs of students to consider the key questions:
- What is the Bible?
- What do we learn about God and God’s people in the Bible?

These responses are recorded on Sentence Strips for repeated revisiting and analysis as the development of the **Assessment as Learning**

Over the course of the unit students will revisit these Sentence Strips, deciding whether the content is true or false, as a means of ongoing self-assessment.
The **Acts of the Apostles** is an account of the very early days of the Church and its spreading beyond Jerusalem. It follows on from the four gospels and was written by St Luke. Next come the **Apostolic letters**, written by Paul and some of the other apostles or their followers, to various communities, and finally the book of **Revelation**, written to encourage **Christian** communities facing persecution.

<table>
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<th>Additional Reading for Teachers</th>
<th>Development</th>
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<tr>
<td>A covenant is a solemn promise or treaty between two parties. It is an important concept in both Jewish and Christian thought. In the Old Testament the Covenant was the agreement between God and Israel that specified that Israel undertook to obey God’s law in return for God’s protection and care. This law is set out clearly in the Ten Commandments.</td>
<td>What experiences and religious texts will provide new learning for students? What skills will students need in order to work with these resources? What strategies and tools will enable students to think and reflect on these experiences and texts? How will students process their thinking and learning?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Prayer Space Preparation**

Decorate the prayer table with coloured ribbons to highlight the significance and place of the Word. Display and pray together the ‘Our Prayer’ litany in **KWL**, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 13, p. 124.

**Who Is In The Bible?**

**KWL**, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 10, pp. 91–93.

This text provides an introduction to the content of the Old and New Testaments and their books. Teacher provides strips of card naming specific characters from the Old and New Testament.
During the Exodus experience in the desert the Hebrew people formed their identity as the people of God. This is evident in the development of a way of living represented in

| **Recalling the Exodus Drama** |
| Use *KWL*, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 8, pp. 86–93. While the teacher reads from this chapter, ‘God of Freedom’, a |

New Testaments, i.e. Moses, Sarah, Elizabeth, Paul, Peter, James, Martha, King David, Noah, Rachael, Joseph, Jacob, Abraham, Isaac, Rebecca. Students sort strips into Old and New Testaments. Invite students to sort further into the books of each Testament.

Students research one of these characters to find out:
- What significant event was this character involved in?
- What other characters were involved?
- What kind of choices did this character have to make?
- What were the consequences of these choices?
- How did this situation affect his/her relationship with God?
- What were the strengths and weaknesses of this character?
- Would this character be admired in today’s world?

Present in a variety of forms – PowerPoint, oral presentation, series of illustrations, etc.

**Assessment of Learning**
Through the presentation students will demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of Old Testament and New Testament characters and events.
the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments gave the People of Israel a way of remaining cohesive as the Chosen People, and a way of relating to God.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOSES’ TIME</th>
<th>OUR TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>False Gods, e.g. golden calf</td>
<td>False Gods, e.g. money, mobile phones, dieting</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A group of students dramatises it. As the teacher reads aloud he/she stops at key places in the story and asks characters about what they are thinking, wondering and feeling. For example, when the Pharaoh made the Israelites his slaves, ask, ‘Hey Pharaoh, why are you keeping slaves? How do you think the Hebrews are feeling about what you are doing?’ ‘Hey Hebrews, what are you feeling? What are you thinking?’

- **Ex 20: 1–18: Responding to the Text**
  Read the Ten Commandments with the students. Allocate one commandment to each of ten groups.

- **Assessment of Learning**
  This task will demonstrate how students understand and apply the Ten Commandments to their own lives.

Students illustrate what their allocated commandment would look like in both of the above time frames. Each group presents their responses to the class.

Teacher poses the questions:
- I wonder why God gave the Israelite people these commandments?
- I wonder how these ten rules are
Laws For Living Role Plays
Students select a different commandment and create role plays around modern-day scenarios for this commandment. Note: students use a different scenario to that used in the previous activity.

Assessment of Learning
The role play will demonstrate how students understand and relate the messages and ideas of Scripture to their own lives.

The story of God’s faithful people continues with Jesus Christ. Jesus’ teaching about how we should live both in relationship with God and with one another expands on and develops the Ten Commandments. The Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes set the new agenda for Christians.

Holy Mother Church has firmly and with absolute constancy held, and continues to hold, that the four gospels, whose historical character the Church unhesitatingly asserts, faithfully hand on what Jesus Christ, while living among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation until the day he was taken up into heaven (see Acts 1: 1). The sacred authors wrote the four gospels, selecting some things from the many which had been handed on by word of mouth or in writing. Some of these were reduced to a synthesis, some things explained in view of the situation of their churches and the form of proclamation preserved, but always in such fashion that they told us the honest truth about Jesus Christ. For their intention in writing was that either from their own memory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEW TESTAMENT</th>
<th>OLD TESTAMENT PARALLEL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mk 12: 28–31</strong> (KWL, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 13, p. 123); <strong>Jn 13: 34–35</strong>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In pairs students read these texts, then refer back to Old Testament commandments to search out the commandment with a matching message, i.e. Mark: Ex 20: 1–11; John: Ex 20: 12–18.</td>
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</table>

Commandments in the New Testament:
**Mk 12: 28–31**

Think – Pair – Share
What is Jesus Christ’s message in the two texts? Is it the same or different from the message in the Ten Commandments?
and recollections, or from the witness of those who ‘themselves from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word’ we might know ‘the truth’ concerning those matters about which we have been instructed (see Lk 1: 2–4).

(Dei Verbum #19)

**Additional Reading for Teachers**

**SYNTHESIS**

*How will students demonstrate their understandings, beliefs, values, skills and feelings in relation to the topic?*

*How will students take action based on their learning? What strategies and tools will enable students to discern their action, to plan and implement action and to evaluate their action?*

**Assessment:**

*for learning, as learning, of learning*

- **Reflective Questions**
  - Students reflect on and respond to the following questions:
    - Which commandment do you strongly agree with and why?
    - Which commandment do world leaders need to take seriously?
    - Which commandment still puzzles you and why?
    - Which commandment is a challenge to you as a Christian?
    - Which commandment is the least important to you?
    - At which commandment do you most need to work?
    - Has your idea about God or Jesus Christ changed? If so, how or why?

**Assessment as/of Learning**

These questions give students an opportunity to monitor their own learning, as well as inform the teacher about how students relate the commandments to their own lives.
| | Has your idea about being Christian changed?
|---|---|
| **Laws for Living Booklets** | **Assessment of Learning**
Students create (write and illustrate) booklets of their own laws for living based on their learning about how Christians are asked to live in relationship with both God and each other. | This task will indicate how students allow Scripture to inform their attitudes, actions and values. |
| **Ritual** | Invite a group of students to plan, lead and evaluate a ritual that focuses on a scripture text significant to them. |

**RESOURCES**

*To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition*
Year 6: Chapter 10, The Word of God; Chapter 13, The God We Worship.

**Teacher Resources**

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS**
This unit may be used to assess some of the Level 4 standards.

Students analyse and reflect on scripture texts and stories in Church Tradition to inform actions, attitudes and values. Students express the significance of ritual in the Catholic Tradition by planning and evaluating prayer, liturgical and sacramental experiences.