



Handbook 1

**A first year of
Bible storytelling**



Enabling every child to hear the story of
the Bible at school in their primary years

Welcome to Open the Book

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at school in their primary years**

Welcome to **Open the Book**, and welcome to Bible storytelling in schools.

However tempting it may be, please don't skip these introductory pages even if you have been involved in **Open the Book** before.

By reading them you will learn a great deal about **Open the Book**, how to get started and how to make the most of this wonderful opportunity to tell Bible stories in your local school.



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What is Open the Book?

Open the Book is a project which offers primary school children an opportunity to hear the major stories of the Bible, presented chronologically, during one school year. It is a free service given to each school by a team of Christians from local churches, who present the stories during Collective Worship. Each presentation takes a maximum of 10 minutes and can be incorporated into a wider school assembly, or can stand alone.

All the Year 1 stories are taken from *The Lion Storyteller Bible* written by Bob Hartman, and give an overview of the Bible from Creation to the Ascension. There are a further two years of themed material for those schools (and teams) who wish to continue. It is a mark of **Open the Book**'s popularity that most schools continue with the programme!

Open the Book fulfils both OFSTED and Church School Inspection requirements for Collective Worship, and has been successfully used in a multi-faith context.

For further information, help, advice or feedback about the project, please contact:

Open the Book

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Email: enquiries@openthebook.net

Website: www.openthebook.net



How does Open the Book operate?

- Each school has a regular team of four to seven people drawn from their local church(es). Individual teams are responsible for liaising with their local school regarding day, time, usual customs and security.
- The team present the stories weekly using a variety of storytelling methods. 'Open the Book' begins with a brief introduction to ensure that each story is placed in context. This Handbook gives guidance on how to present the individual stories with eye-catching visual aids and involving the children.
- After the story there is an opportunity for guided quiet reflection. This gives the children time to reflect on some aspect of the story or on something which relates directly to them and their friends. This is followed by a short closing prayer which the children are invited to make their own by joining in with the "Amen" at the end. It is very important that the children are not coerced into participating in prayer by the use of phrases such as "Let us pray" or "Close your eyes while we pray".
- All the text for the Open the Book assembly is contained in this Handbook, and in *The Lion Storyteller Bible* (2008 expanded edition)*. Please uphold the integrity of Open the Book by sticking to the script. We take great care to ensure that the material can be used in a Christian or multi-faith context. Please resist the temptation to change it.
- We require all individual volunteers and teams to register with Open the Book. The material is only available to registered members who have agreed to our aims and Code of Practice. (Please see our website www.openthebook.net for details.)
- For copyright reasons we expect each volunteer to have their own copies of *The Lion Storyteller Bible* and the relevant Open the Book books.
- We require all volunteer storytellers to undergo the necessary safeguarding checks through their own church or denominational procedures. **The responsibility for this lies entirely with the individual team and the churches who send them into their local school; it is neither the role nor responsibility of Open the Book.**

* We are encouraging everyone to use the 2008 (expanded edition) of *The Lion Storyteller Bible*, and not the earlier (1995) edition.

Our Aims

- To present the Bible in primary schools in an accessible and enjoyable way.
- To tell the stories in ways which enable the children to engage imaginatively with the text.
- To equip, encourage and enable volunteers from churches to deliver good quality assemblies.
- To assist primary schools in meeting their statutory collective worship obligations.
- To contribute to the children's religious, spiritual and moral education.
- To contribute to the biblical literacy of each new generation.
- To enhance children's understanding of the nation's Christian heritage.
- To encourage links between school and church in a local context.



Our Code of Practice

All storytellers sign up to our code of practice, which means they agree to:

- stick to the script and present the story simply, without addition or improvisation, following the guidelines in the Open the Book Handbooks.
- allow each story to speak for itself, as a Bible story, not as a sermon.
- liaise closely and sensitively with schools, and be mindful of the educational environment.
- make minimal demands on schools and be aware of being invited visitors.
- show respect and sensitivity to those of other faiths, and to those with none.
- fulfil the relevant safeguarding requirements.

We ask that volunteer storytellers are accompanied by members of staff during all storytelling sessions.



Hints and tips for storytellers

- Remember to open your *Lion Storyteller Bible* when you say the words “Open the Book”. It is an action which enables children across the country to relate to the project.
- Elastic bands help to keep the pages open at the relevant story and also secure the Handbook (open at the correct page!) to the front or back cover of the book.
- Please remember to read the original story in the Bible when you are preparing. It will give you vital context and important insight.
- Please ensure that at least one of your team has access to the internet. Although the Handbook will provide the key information, the website contains a wealth of additional material and help, including further advice and ideas on how to make the story come alive through costumes, props, sound effects and participation. You will also find suggestions for gathering a core kit of basic costumes and props to see you through most stories.
- Be inspired by other teams and share your experience too. Aim for variety in your presentation.
- It's well worth the effort of making some good quality, high impact props. Forward planning is the key to this! Many churches have capable people who may not like storytelling but who are willing to help in practical ways.
- Make sure you have a full run-through before you face the children; it's amazing how props, chairs, and even the books themselves can conspire against you!
- When introducing a sound or action for pupil participation, include a clear stop signal in your instructions.



- Ask for volunteers, give instructions and practise any sounds or actions with the children **before** the Introduction, otherwise the flow is lost and you'll probably have to repeat it.
- No sexual stereotyping please – the roles of Jesus, God and Moses can all be taken by women. Also, try to use different members of the team in different roles so that no-one ends up being the 'baddie' or God, etc., each time. Of course, where a character such as Moses or Joseph appears in consecutive weeks, it makes sense to use the same person in that role.
- Speak loudly and confidently, look up and smile – even if you're terrified and your knees are shaking!
- When characters say their own lines, the narrator can sometimes leave out the "he said" or "she said". Leave them in if they describe how the words are said: "he whispered" or "she shouted angrily". Also, if God is 'off stage', leave them in too.
- Don't worry if the Reception class isn't very attentive at first – they're still getting used to school and are probably finding it all a bit overwhelming.
- Don't worry if the older children aren't very attentive towards the end of the year – in their minds they've already left for senior school. Combat this by giving some of them speaking roles; you'll be amazed how attentive their friends become!
- Remember that the reputation of Open the Book depends on volunteers adhering to our Code of Practice. Please respect the fact that the wording in the booklets has been prepared very carefully with today's sensitive educational environment in mind. However tempting it may be, avoid drawing points from the story or adding your own interpretation beyond those given in the booklets.
- Remember the 3 P's – Pray, Prepare, Present.
- Above all – HAVE FUN! If you enjoy communicating, the children will love to listen!



How to use this Handbook

This Handbook is your essential companion to **Open the Book** storytelling, along with *The Lion Storyteller Bible*.

Please make sure you've read the preceding pages, so you're familiar with the Open the Book approach, you're happy to abide by our Code of Practice, and also that you've read through our Hints and Tips for Storytellers, for general guidance and advice on preparation and performance.

The rest of this Handbook is about the individual guidance notes – and the complete list of all 33 stories in Year 1 is shown opposite. Please remember that except where otherwise indicated, all these stories should be presented in the order shown – therefore what we know as the “Easter” stories will be told at the end of the summer term, completing the sequential series of stories about Jesus’ life on earth.

In the pages that follow, the guidance notes to each story occupy a complete spread, with each element marked out with clear headings. They have been designed to make referencing the information you need as easy and clear as possible – especially given that sometimes you may be under a little pressure!

The left-hand page (with the grey background) contains your ‘script’ for introducing and concluding the story, guidance for the closing prayer, and the prayer itself. All the text to be read aloud is in **BOLD**.

The right-hand page tells you what storytellers are needed, how best to prepare for the presentation, things you can do to increase the impact of the story, and directions as to what other resources are available.

The second page also contains some space for your own notes. This is quite important, because although the Open the Book system gives clear directions as to how to present the story and what to say, individual practice and performance will often reveal details of your own that you might want to record. This may be as simple as reminders of who is playing who, or it could be more particular notes about timing, vocal emphasis, gestures, responses ... even spatial requirements at the school you visit. This could be useful not just for your actual presentations, but for future reference.

Open the Book is committed to presenting Bible storytelling at its very best, and this Handbook has been designed to help all volunteers to get the most from the stories themselves, and from the presentation opportunities they have.

Year 1 Stories

all taken from *The Lion Storyteller Bible*
(2008 expanded edition)

story	title	page	based on
1	The First Christmas ^A	12	based on Luke 1–2
2	In the Beginning	14	based on Genesis 1–2
3	A Sad Day	16	based on Genesis 3
4	A Special Promise	18	based on Genesis 6–9
5	God's Friend	20	based on Genesis 12,17,18, 21
6	Joseph the Dreamer ^B	22	based on Genesis 37–41
7	Joseph the Ruler ^C	24	based on Genesis 37–41
8	The Secret Baby	26	based on Exodus 1–2
9	The Great Escape	28	based on Exodus 7–14
10	A Long Journey	30	based on Exodus 16–40
11	The Walls Fall Down	32	based on Joshua 6
12	Samuel Hears a Voice	34	based on 1 Samuel 3
13	David the Giant Killer	36	based on 1 Samuel 17
14	The Wise King ^D	38	based on 1 Kings 3
15	Jonah the Groaner	40	based on Jonah
16	Daniel and the Lions	42	based on Daniel 6
17	A Time to Build	44	based on Nehemiah 1–4
18	The Wise Men's Visit	46	based on Matthew 2
19	The Boy in the Temple	48	based on Luke 2
20	Jesus is Baptised	50	based on Matthew 3
21	Jesus' Special Friends	52	based on Luke 5
22	Down through the Roof	54	based on Luke 5
23	The Storm on the Lake	56	based on Mark 4
24	The Marvellous Picnic	58	based on Matthew 14
25	The Lost Coin ^D	60	based on Luke 15
26	The Big Spender	62	based on Luke 15
27	Jesus and the Children	64	based on Mark 10
28	Jesus and the Taxman ^D	66	based on Luke 19
29	The Great Parade	68	based on Matthew 21
30	An Important Meal	70	based on Mark 14
31	A Dreadful Day	72	based on John 19
32	A Happy Day	74	based on Luke 24
33	Goodbye At Last!	76	based on Luke 24

A to be used in the last week of autumn term

B followed by first page of Joseph the Prisoner

C preceded by second page of Joseph the Prisoner

D can be left out if insufficient weeks in school

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The First Christmas

Starting & Finishing

(Present immediately before the Christmas holidays)

INTRODUCTION

We have come to a special time of the year. What are we all looking forward to? (Allow time for an answer) For this special time of the year we have a special story from the Bible.

The Bible is divided into two parts. The first part tells what happened before Jesus was born and the second part tells what happened after he was born.

So today we are going to jump forward in our Bible story book to the story of Jesus' birth.

Let's OPEN THE BOOK and read 'The First Christmas'.

Read *The First Christmas*

in The Lion Storyteller Bible (2008 expanded edition)

CONCLUSION

There are so many things to enjoy at Christmas. Christmas trees, presents, special food and parties. Why do we do all these things? Well, it's to celebrate the birth of a special person – and that person is Jesus.

QUIET MOMENT FOR REFLECTION

Close your eyes and think of a time when you heard some good news. See if you can remember how happy you felt when you heard that good news.

Allow time for reflection – silently count to 10 s-l-o-w-l-y.

PRAYER INTRODUCTION

Now I'm going to say a prayer and if you want to make it your prayer say "Amen" at the end after me.

PRAYER

Dear God,

Thank you that Jesus came to tell the Good News of your love for us. We pray that everyone in this school will have a really happy Christmas. Amen.

STORYTELLERS NEEDED

Essential Narrator, Mary, Joseph.

Additional The innkeeper and the angel.

(If pre-arranged with the school, children could take some of the parts but they will need a rehearsal!)

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRESENTING THE STORY

- There are seven mini-scenes in this story so make sure each one is well-defined.
- Live births are always difficult on stage but, if you hide your 'baby' out of sight, Joseph can simply hand the doll over at the appropriate moment!
- Have a dowel rod with a two-sided face on the top (smiley face/sad face). A child or adult shows the appropriate face for 'good news' and 'bad news'. Pupils call out accordingly.
- An introduction showing a time-line can overcome any confusion as this story interrupts the chronology of the Old Testament. (See below.)
- Make use of background music such as 'Little Donkey' and 'The Hallelujah Chorus'.

SUGGESTIONS FOR VISUAL IMPACT

- Simple props like a stripy innkeeper's apron, carpenter's tools, toy sheep.
- A newborn baby doll or a bundle of swaddling clothes.
(Also useful for later stories.)

EXTRA RESOURCES – downloadable from www.openthebook.net

- A list of core costumes and props.
- Suggestions for an angel costume, timeline and props.
- Suggestions of relevant songs for singing or playing at appropriate times.

MY NOTES

INTRODUCTION

Hold up a Bible. Can anyone tell me what kind of book this is?

Allow time for the children to answer. Yes, it's a Bible.

You can extend this with a series of different-looking Bibles : "This one is very old, this one is in a different language" or whatever you have managed to find.

Hold up The Lion Storyteller Bible.

And here is another kind of Bible. I like this one because it has pictures in it. The Open the Book storytellers use this one a lot. You may know that the Bible contains many stories, but did you know that these stories link together to form one, long story about God and the people here on earth? Today we're going to hear the very first story in the Bible.

Let's OPEN THE BOOK at the story called 'In The Beginning'.

Open The Lion Storyteller Bible (2008 expanded edition) and read

In the Beginning

CONCLUSION

That was a pretty amazing first story – from nothing to all these wonderful things! Which part of the story did you like best? (Invite responses) Next week, we'll be coming back to tell the next part of the story. We'll be finding out what happened to the beautiful world that God made.

QUIET MOMENT FOR REFLECTION

Close your eyes for a moment and think of something beautiful you have seen. It might be the sea, a river, a tree or a flower. It might be a colourful butterfly, a shiny conker or a bright tropical fish.

Allow time for reflection – silently count to 10 s-l-o-w-l-y.

PRAYER INTRODUCTION

Now I'm going to say a prayer and if you want to make it your prayer say "Amen" at the end after me.

PRAYER

Dear God, thank you for all the beautiful things you have made. Please help us to enjoy them and look after them. Amen.

STORYTELLERS NEEDED

Essential Narrator, voice of God.

Additional Adam, Eve (*not needed if using banner*).

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRESENTING THE STORY

- This is a fairly short, simple story so don't rush it. Allow the descriptive text to come alive for the children.
- This story can be done in two ways :
 - 1 Use a Creation banner (see below).
 - 2 Involve the children. (If you want to involve the children and this is your first visit to the school, then discuss your plan with the head teacher in advance.)

Divide the children up into four groups to be the 'green growing things', 'the flying things', the 'splashing things' and 'the walking, hopping things' (don't forget the 'stop' sign). Hide two adults to appear at the end as Adam and Eve.

SUGGESTIONS FOR VISUAL IMPACT

- Collect a selection of Bibles for the introduction.
- Go for visual impact in this all-important first story. Wave large sheets of coloured fabric for light, sky, water and earth, or paint a sun, a moon and some stars on large cards attached to dowel rods. These can be lifted high as they are mentioned in the story.

It's worth putting your best effort into creating quality visual impact for this story – first impressions count, and will last!

EXTRA RESOURCES - downloadable from www.openthebook.net

- Ideas for developing a basic kit of core costumes and props.
- Inspiration from other teams for making a creation banner.

MY NOTES



SAMPLE

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