



KS2 / LESSON 2

- CHILDREN and the CHURCH -

INTRODUCTION

Christian faith was an important aspect of people's lives during the period of the industrial revolution. As populations grew, so did the demand for churches. Society underwent rapid and permanent change which children experienced as much as adults.

In this lesson pupils will think about the religious beliefs and experiences of children, starting with a book of Christian prayers and songs written especially for children in 1715. Pupils will discuss whether they think children have a different idea of religion to adults.

After looking at **samplers** created by children, pupils will read accounts of children themselves as they talk about their beliefs and hopes. Pupils will create a sampler of their own to summarise their learning. The language can be hard for modern readers but it is worth pursuing. Read with pupils, more than once if necessary. The letters and diary entries are the voices of real children and teenagers from another age.





LEARNING OUTCOMES

Emerging

- Show understanding that children have religious beliefs of their own.
- Explain one Christian belief held by a child evident in the artefacts.

Expected

- Explain Isaac Watts' aim in creating religious songs for children.
- Offer a view as to whether being religious is different for children and adults.

Exceeding

• Explain one Christian belief that can be found in the artefacts.

RESOURCES YOU WILL NEED

- For the samplers: paper and coloured pens/ pencils.
- British Library webpage: https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/divine-songsattempted-in-easy-language-for-the-use-of-children





NOTES FOR TEACHERS

STARTER:

Children's religious beliefs

- a) Print Isaac Watts' 'Against Idleness and Mischief' on paper (Resources for Pupils p.01). Ask children when they think this was written. [Answer: 1715. How many years ago? Over 300!].
- b) This short poem was one of many in a book called 'Divine Songs: Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children', written by Isaac Watts. Show some images from this book on the British Library webpage: https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/ divine-songs-attempted-in-easy-languagefor-the-use-of-children. Read some of the information on this page to children. Look at it together.
- c) Ask the class why they think Isaac Watts might have created these songs? Share ideas.
- **d)** Ask the class if they think children are more likely or less likely than adults to be religious.
- e) Conduct a '4 Corners' exercise: write the 4 ideas below on 4 sheets of paper, stick to 4 corners of the room. Pupils move to the corner of the room with the view they most agree with. Share some reasons.
 - 1: Children are more likely than adults to be religious because they have better imaginations.
 - 2: Adults are more likely to be religious because they know how hard life can be.
 - 3: Children are more likely to be religious because the world is magical for them.
 - 4: Adults are more likely to be religious because they can read and research holy books and philosophy.

1: Religion for Children

- a) Using the British Library pages, look at some Isaac Watts songs with the class. As the text on the website notes, this book was one the most popular children's books for the next 150 years.
- b) Compare to the Book of Common prayer which other churches would use. This is a version on the Church of England website, which reproduces the original 1662 version: https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/ default/files/2019-10/The%20Book%20of%20 Common%20Prayer%201662.pdf

Open this document and scroll through with the class. Pause a few times for them to absorb the language, even if it is hard to understand.

c) Ask pupils if, comparatively, the Watts seems more accessible to children? Listen to answers.





NOTES FOR TEACHERS

2: Children's Samplers

For your information, read **Text for Teachers 2: Samplers on p.05** of this document.

- a) Print off small copies of the samplers on pp.02–05 of the Resources for Pupils. Display large versions on the screen as well.
- b) Hand out a 'sampler card' ('Resources for Pupils pp.06–09) for each pupil or between two. Ask individuals or pairs to choose and copy out one phrase from a sampler that clearly communicates religious belief.
- c) Listen to answers from groups. Walk around and look at different tables' sampler cards. What phrases did lots of children choose? Ask the class to identify religious beliefs for these phrases: any mention of God, Jesus, teachings from the bible, etc? Put these cards aside for now but keep them.

3: Children's religious beliefs

- a) Read the children's religious beliefs on pp.10–11
 of the Resources for Pupils. You might want to read these with pupils one at a time, depending on their reading ability and some of the old-fashioned phrases. Either in groups or as a class:
 - Choose two that seem to be similar.
 - Choose one that shows children's fears.
 - Choose one that shows children's hopes.
- b) Ask groups or pairs to choose ONE to copy out onto their sampler card. Produce more sampler cards if necessary. Pupils should copy out one phrase which communicates clearly religious beliefs held by children, and note the name and age of the child, and the year they are writing in.

4: Plenary

Return to the '4 Corners' discussion. Repeat the exercise briefly, asking pupils to reflect if they have changed their minds since learning about Isaac Watts' songs and children's samplers.





NOTES FOR TEACHERS

Text for Teachers 2: Samplers

The word 'sampler' comes from the Latin exemplum, meaning 'example'. A sampler is an example of someone's needlework skill. Needlework and sewing were part of a girl's education. Samplers combined literacy and numeracy with these necessary practical skills.

The preferred female attributes (religious, hardworking, quiet, meek) were on show when girls made samplers. They also meant the girls were occupied in a useful way. The song 'Against Idleness and Mischief' shows us that society liked children to be well-occupied for moral as well as practical reasons.

Samplers could have offered a chance for creativity and expression. Girls engaged in sewing would have been able to enjoy their own thoughts as well as the pleasure of creating something beautiful. Samplers were often framed and displayed as decoration, as well as communicating religious messages.

Samplers were made by women and girls, of all social groups and Christian denominations. Samplers show us that Christian belief was not just in church but was a part of the home environment as well.

