

# EYFS Special places: lessons using persona dolls

## Notes about using persona dolls

Persona dolls are an extremely valuable tool in supporting learning about and from different religions. By encouraging children to enter imaginatively into the life of the doll, they can be introduced to situations, ideas and issues that are significant and relevant to them and also experiences that are sometimes very different from their own.

Persona dolls should be recognised as special and generally only used in planned teaching and learning sessions. Practitioners are encouraged to use open-ended questions that will stimulate discussion, invite participation, help the children relate to the doll and encourage them to ask their own questions. As the material is contextualised in the life of the doll children find it easier to engage with the mystery and wonder of the religion in focus.

## Elizabeth's story (Christian focus): special places

### In Elizabeth's backpack

1. Children's gardening set
2. Palm cross

### Special words:

Church, worship, Christian, pray, symbol, cross, porch, Saint, font, baptised, christened, pew, font, kneeler, pulpit, hymn, paschal candle, stained glass window, halo, altar.

### Part 1: A Special Place in the Natural World

Sit Elizabeth in a circle with children in your group.

Place the backpack in the centre of the circle and take out the children's gardening set.

Explain to the children that today they are going to be thinking about special places. Elizabeth has a place at home, which is very special to her. She has brought a clue to help us guess where it might be.

? Can you guess where Elizabeth's special place is? (It is where she uses her trowel and fork.)

Elizabeth's mum has given her a little patch of garden to plant some of her very own seeds. She also has two plant pots for some flowers. When Elizabeth is in her garden she feels peaceful and happy. Sometimes Elizabeth and her Mum go out into the garden at night to see the stars and the moon. The garden feels very different in the dark. In Elizabeth's special book, the Bible, it says (in Psalm 148):

Let the sun, moon and stars praise God!  
Let everything on earth praise Him  
Because He created the whole universe.

When Elizabeth is in her garden she feels very thankful to God for making such a wonderful world.

- ✎ Either take the children into the school garden or to visit a well-cared for garden nearby. Ask the gardener to explain why his garden is special to him, which are his favourite parts and how being there makes him feel? Does he have any favourite plants? Which time of year does he most enjoy in the garden?

Talk with the children about places that are special to them.

- ✎ If possible give the children in the group a place in the school grounds to plant bulbs and seeds. If not, bring pots inside to make an indoor garden space. When watching the different kinds of plants growing, practitioners should be alive to the wonder children experience at the 'miracle' of new life and growth.

## Part 2: Elizabeth's Special Place of Worship

Sit Elizabeth in a circle with children in your group.

Place the backpack in the centre of the circle and take out the palm **cross**. Ask the children what they think it is and where they have seen this symbol before.

? Can anyone guess what it is made from?

Explain that Elizabeth was given this in church just before Easter. The **cross** is an important **symbol** for Christians and the place where Elizabeth goes to **worship** God has many **crosses**. The building is called a **church**. Elizabeth would like to show you some pictures of her **church**.

The accompanying PowerPoint, "Special Places", shows Elizabeth visiting her **church**. The slides are as follows:

1. **Elizabeth's Church.** Here is Elizabeth standing by the porch of her **church**.
2. **The bell tower.** Elizabeth's **church** has a very tall tower. Inside the top of the tower there are bells, which ring out to call people to **worship**. One day Elizabeth went to the top of the tower with her Mum. She could see her whole village.
3. **The font.** Elizabeth is sitting in front of the **font**. When a baby is **baptised** or **christened**, water is put into the **font** and the vicar pours some of it over the baby's head. Can you see that the **font** is near the door of the **church**?
4. **The cross.** Elizabeth is sitting by a beautiful **cross** that is carried to the front of the **church** at the start of **worship**. Look out for other **crosses** as Elizabeth shows us around her **church**.
5. **The pews.** Elizabeth is sitting in her favourite **pew** with her friend William.  
During the service there are lots of people in **church**, so everyone must squeeze in.
6. **The kneelers.** When Elizabeth **prays**, she kneels down on a **kneeler**. These are like floor cushions and have special **symbols** and patterns embroidered on them.
7. **A pulpit.** Elizabeth Mum has lifted her on to the **pulpit**. It is very tall. The vicar stands in the pulpit to talk to people about Jesus. The numbers on the wall behind tell everyone which **hymns** to sing.
8. **Stained glass windows.** In Elizabeth's church there are beautiful windows. The people in the top of these windows have **halos** (circles of light around their heads). Can you guess who they are?
9. **The Easter candle.** This is the Easter candle (**Paschal candle**). When Elizabeth was in church on Easter Day this candle was lit for the very first time. Can you recognise any of the **symbols** on the candle?
10. **The altar.** Elizabeth is kneeling in front of the **altar**, a special table which is covered with a beautiful cloth.

## Elizabeth's Little Book

Name:	Elizabeth
Age:	5
Gender:	female
Hair:	black and curly
Eyes:	brown
Nationality:	British
Family origin:	Jamaica
Favourite food:	pizza, pineapples, ice-cream
Favourite activities:	swimming, playing on local adventure playground, visiting cousins on their city farm
Family structure:	lives with Mum
Mother's occupation:	Computer Programmer
First language:	English
Family history:	Elizabeth's great grandparents came to Britain from Jamaica in 1952
Religion:	Christian (Anglican)
Special times:	Christmas, Easter, Harvest, Pentecost

### Suggested artefacts for Elizabeth's backpack

#### Unit: Special Places

Children's gardening set  
palm cross

