

EYFS Special times: 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)

Christmas

Inside Elizabeth's backpack

5th Birthday Card

birthday cake candles, invitations, balloons or party blower,
Wrapped gift box containing crib figures

Christmas cards showing scenes from the Christmas story

Special words

birthday, Christmas,
Christian, Advent, nativity,
crib, gift, Mary, Joseph,
Jesus, shepherds,
kings, angel

Part 1:

Sit Elizabeth in the circle with children in your group.

Place the backpack in the centre of the circle. Tell the children that Elizabeth is very excited because next week she is celebrating a special occasion. Elizabeth's Mum has been buying some things for the big day. Take out of the backpack a party blower or balloon, birthday cake candles, a birthday card and a party invitation.

- ? What do you think Elizabeth and her Mum are preparing for?
- ? Has anyone here celebrated a **birthday** recently? What do you like about **birthdays**?
- ? How will the things in Elizabeth's bag help to make her **birthday** special?

Talk to the children about **birthday** parties and how these celebrations made them feel special.

Elizabeth has asked if our group will help to celebrate her **birthday** next week. She would like to have a party here with a special cake.

-  Talk with the children about what they will need to do to plan a good party. What will they eat? Which games will they play?
-  Make a list of things that will be needed.

As you get ready for the big day, focus on the importance of careful preparation and the sense of anticipation. (This will lay the foundation for future learning about Advent and Lent.)

Part 2:

Sit Elizabeth in a circle with children in your group.

Place the backpack in the centre of the circle. Ask the children to guess Elizabeth's favourite time of year. Explain that **Christmas** is an important time for **Christians**. In the same way that we prepared for Elizabeth's **birthday** last time, **Christians** spend a long time preparing for **Christmas**. Either make a simple **Advent** wreath to show how a different candle is lit each of the four weeks before **Christmas**, or show Elizabeth's Nativity Advent calendar. Explain that **advent** means 'coming' and the **Advent** calendar and wreath are ways to help Elizabeth and her family remember that **Christmas** is drawing closer.

Elizabeth has brought something to school today to show everyone. Take the gift box from the backpack and as you open it ask the children what they remember about the **Christmas** story.

Explain that **Christians** believe that **Jesus** is God's son and was a **gift** to the world to show people how much God loves them. That is why Elizabeth and her family give gifts at **Christmas**.

Use the **crib** figures to tell the **Christmas** story using an appropriate children's Bible.

✎ Make the **crib** figures available for the children to re-enact the story in their own way.

Take from the backpack some **Christmas** cards that Elizabeth has already received from her friends, which have scenes from the Christmas story.

? Can the children recognise which part of the story is illustrated on the card?

✎ Children could design their own **Christmas** card showing a scene of their choice from the Christmas story.



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

Special Times

Christmas:

5th birthday card, candles, invitations, balloons,
wrapped gift box containing crib figures,
Christmas cards