

EYFS Being special: 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.

Samuel's story (Jewish focus): being special

In Samuel's backpack

2 white candles
bread roll or small loaf
days of week cards

Special words

names of days of the week,
Jewish, Shabbat, candles, God,
prayer, holy, challah

Sit Samuel in a circle and welcome him on behalf of the group. Talk with the children to find out what they remember about Samuel from previous learning.

Place the backpack in the centre of the circle. Explain that Samuel, like many of the children in the group, has a very busy week. Take out the days of the week cards and display the names. (Very young children often do not have a concept of distinctive days of the week, but perhaps the practitioner could talk about certain activities such as PE or celebration assembly, which happen in school on different days.) Samuel does different activities on different days of each week.

He likes **Monday** because that is when he goes swimming after school.

On **Tuesday** he goes to **Jewish** School at the synagogue to learn to read a special language called Hebrew. (Show some Jewish words on a card.)

On **Wednesday** Samuel's Grandad picks him up from school and takes him home for tea with him and Grandma.

On **Thursday** Samuel goes to football practice at the leisure centre.

But on **Friday**, Samuel goes straight home because he helps his mum get ready to celebrate **Shabbat**. **Shabbat** lasts from Friday evening until Saturday evening.

If possible draw the curtains or blinds in the room and switch off the lights. Explain that Samuel and his family are **Jewish**. Samuel has brought something in his backpack today that he wants to show us. Take out the **candles** and the bread roll. As the sun goes down and it begins to get dark, Samuel's Mum lights the **Shabbat candles** to show that the busy week is over and it is time to pause, rest and thank **God** for creating the world for us to enjoy. A special **prayer** is said before the family begins their **Shabbat meal**:

"Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has made us holy and commanded us to light the Shabbat candles."

Samuel's family says this **prayer** of thanksgiving to **God** because they believe he made the universe, the whole world including the sun and moon, the stars and planets, the earth with its seas and mountains, its rivers, trees, plants and animals. They also believe he made human beings, people like you and me, and he called us **holy**, which means very special. People are special because **God** made them in his image, which means a little bit like **God** himself.

After lighting the **candles** Samuel's family share the **challah bread**. They think about the wonderful world that **God** has created for them to enjoy it. They do not work during this special time.



Light the **candles** in the centre of the circle and share the bread together.

As they eat their piece of bread ask the children to think of something about our world that they enjoy. Offer some suggestions that Samuel has thought of, eg daffodils in spring or the ocean waves at the seaside.

Samuel's Little Book

Name:	Samuel
Age:	5
Gender:	male
Hair:	brown and curly
Eyes:	brown
Nationality:	British
Favourite food:	potato latkes and Lekach (honey cake)
Favourite activities:	football, painting and drawing, shabbat
Family structure:	lives with Mum, Dad and his brother, Joseph (8 yrs)
Father's occupation:	teacher
Mother's occupation:	manager of Kosher food shop
First language:	English
Family history:	great-grandparents came to Britain from Germany in 1939
Religion:	Jewish
Festivals:	Passover, Hanukkah and Rosh Hashanah

Suggested artefacts for Samuel's backpack

Unit: Being Special

2 white candles and stands

A bread roll or small loaf

Days of the week cards

