

Easter Tales

An Easter Passion Play for Primary Schools



Covering all the events of Holy Week for Key Stages 1&2



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How to use/perform our Easter Passion Play

There are a variety ways of putting this play on for different age-groups. You can make it as simple or complex as you want!

Key Stage 1

The simplest way of performing would be to have just frozen pictures for every scene and the script being read by a teacher (or even the Bible verses read - see Directors notes for Bible references). It's also very easy to only use certain scenes. Feel free to pick and choose what would work best.

Key Stage 2

Again, if you're putting this on quickly and simply, frozen pictures for each scene work well with pupils reading the lines from the scripts. This play doesn't need to be performed- although the pupils may want to perform in front of either parents or as an assembly for other year groups. There is value in pupils simply reading through the play or even simply doing frozen pictures for each part of the Easter story. Frozen pictures are often very effective. You can always add an extra layer by asking each pupil to come up with a word as to how their character may be feeling at the time of that frozen picture, and go round each person saying their word from the freeze one by one.

Larger Scale Performance

This works really well as an actual performance with music and SFX and with the characters learning their lines. As there are quite a few narration lines, the narrators could always read from the script. Characters such as Jesus and Pilate sometimes have a lot to learn. (Although Pilate's scene is only optional.) You could also adapt the script to say "Jesus said" and then have someone with a script read the part of Jesus if it's too much to learn.

Church Schools

Church Schools could even use certain scenes or frozen pictures as part of an Easter Church Service with Hymns or songs sung, Bible passages read all interspersed with scenes from the play.

After the script you'll find a host of suggestions for putting on each scene, as well as music & costume ideas.

Key Characters

Often everyone wants to take a turn at playing the main characters!

During the many times of running workshops of this play we have used a very simple costume (see simple costume suggestions) to represent the character.

We've then swapped the actor for each character so that a different person plays Jesus/ any of the other characters for each scene.

It's a very effective - and easy-to-follow - way of giving as many people as possible an opportunity, as well as making sure that no individual is burdened with too many lines to learn.

Dividing Up the Play

The script has been broken down into short chunks, that have been designed to slot easily together. The idea is that different classes can take responsibility for different scenes

With the assumption that years 5&6 would probably tackle the speaking roles, with the younger years joining in with the crowd scenes and even creating the tableaux in the first scene.

For example, for Palm Sunday, one class could take responsibility for the speaking lines, but everyone could learn and join in with all the chants & celebration actions.

Beginnings & Ends

At the start and end of each scene, the performers involved come on & off the stage. As part of the rehearsal process, make sure they know the signal for them to move into place. And also for when they leave so that they can make a quick, clean exit.

A bit of music can help make this clear for the performers (and will also help muffle out the sound of lots of feet moving!)

Also, if you are swapping the key characters, the costumes should be left in a convenient place for the next person during the transition.

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Part 1 - Introduction

PEOPLE SITTING AROUND THE STAGE IN 3 SEPARATE GROUPS (A,B &C).

THEY ARE LOOKING SAD, BORED AND FED UP.

NARRATOR 1: A long time ago, in a place called Israel
Some events took place, which are quite the tale to tell

NARRATOR 2: It was a time of trouble, and life was tough
And a lot of people felt, like they'd almost had enough

NARRATOR 3: When, into the midst of these tricky old days
Came a remarkable man with some remarkable ways

JESUS ARRIVES CENTRE STAGE.
EVERYONE LOOKS CURIOUS

NARRATOR 4: Jesus was the name of this marvellous bloke
And huge crowds would gather every time that he spoke

NARRATOR 1: One time..

JESUS GOES TO JOIN GROUP A
THEY CREATE THE FEEDING 5,000 TABLEAU

Jesus was teaching in place far away
Where thousands had come, to find out what he'd say

NARRATOR 2: But at the day's end, as night began to fall
There wasn't any food to make dinner for them all...

NARRATOR 3: Then one young lad offered his packed lunch to share.
Jesus said:...

A BOY OFFERS JESUS HIS LUNCH BOX WHICH
JESUS TAKES WITH A SMILE

JESUS: ...Thank you

NARRATOR 3: ...and offered up a quick prayer

NARRATOR 4: Then they passed around the fish and the bread
And five thousand people were miraculously fed!!!

CELEBRATIONS AND EATING

NARRATOR 1: Another time...

JESUS GOES TO JOIN GROUP B.
THEY CREATE THE CALMING THE STORM TABLEAU

Jesus went with some friends, in a boat, on a lake
But a storm started up and his friends began to quake

NARRATOR 2: The storm got worse and they began to think
If the waves get bigger then our boat might sink!

NARRATOR 3: But Jesus wasn't fussed - he was sleeping on board
'Til his friends woke him up shouting:

DISCIPLES: 'SAVE US LORD!'

NARRATOR 4: Jesus told the storm: ...

JESUS: ..STOP!

NARRATOR 1: ...And at once it ceased
The waves calmed down, and again there was peace.

CELEBRATIONS (Wow and awe)

NARRATOR 2: Jesus did many amazing things...

JESUS GOES TO JOIN GROUP C.
THEY DO THE HEALING THE SICK TABLEAU

He could make the blind see, He could heal those who bled

NARRATOR 3: And there were even some times when he went and raised
the dead!

CELEBRATIONS (AWE, SURPRISE & EXCITEMENT)

NARRATOR 4: Yes, people loved the things he could do...
But they also loved the words he spoke too

JESUS STANDS IN THE MIDDLE
EVERYONE CROWDS AROUND TO LISTEN TO HIM

JESUS:

I'm building a kingdom that's all about love
A kingdom inspired by heaven above
Where everyone's special... and all have a place...
No matter your age, your gender or race...

God loves us...

He knows our hurts and He knows our fears
And one day He'll dry every one of our tears
He'll take all our wrongs and banish them, and then
Give us all the chance to start over again!

Now if that's the kind of thing you'd like to see
Then come along ... yes come, follow me!

JESUS LEADS EVERYONE OFF-STAGE

Part 2 - Palm Sunday

NARRATOR 5: Now, a little while later...

NARRATOR 7: Jesus entered Jerusalem-

NARRATOR 6: The Capital city!

JESUS STANDS IN THE MIDDLE THE STAGE

THE CROWD STAND IN 2 GROUPS, ON EITHER SIDE OF THE STAGE, AS IF THEY ARE STANDING AT THE SIDE OF THE STREET

NARRATOR 7: Now stories of Jesus had spread far and wide
And he had loads of fans by the time he arrived

NARRATOR 5: They were all excited
They'd heard of his fame
And they stood lining the streets all calling his name...

CROWD CHANT & FREEZE

NARRATOR 6: Flags were flying
Palm leaves waved in the air
And every step that he took, the crowd gave a great cheer...

CROWD CHANT & FREEZE

NARRATOR 7: And all of them wondered what Jesus would do...
Would they get to see a miracle or two?

NARRATOR 5: Or had he come... and here is a thing...
Had he come to their city to declare himself king?

CROWD CHANT & FREEZE or
CHEERLEADING ROUTINE (see notes)

NARRATOR 6: It was such a celebration; the most fantastic day
And everyone was sure that change was on its way...

EVERYONE EXITS CHEERING/SAYING THE CHANT

Part 3 - The Pharisees Plot

NARRATOR 8: But...
Not everyone in Jerusalem was pleased to see Jesus...

THE PHARISEES ARE PLOTTING

NARRATOR 9: The Pharisees - the religious leaders of Jerusalem - were not at all happy...

PHARISEE 1: So.... this Jesus is doing the rounds
And getting much praise, from the way that it sounds
All of a sudden, he's got all this fame
Everyone cheering and calling his name

PHARISEE 2: Plus he's the nerve to teach them about God
Which is really annoying - 'cos it should be our job!

PHARISEE 3: If they listen to him, they won't listen to us
And that really is going to cause a fuss!

PHARISEE 2: We'll be out of a job! ...

PHARISEE 3: ...They'll stop giving us money!

PHARISEE 2: I don't like that thought; it makes me feel funny

PHARISEE 1: We like being in charge; having people do as we say
And we're really rather keen for things stay this way
We must put a stop to Jesus! Bring an end to his plans!
Do everything we can to get rid of this man...

NARRATOR 8: So the Pharisees plotted and waited...

MUTTER IN AGREEMENT & PERHAPS SOME NASTY
LAUGHING AS THEY EXIT MAKING PLANS TOGETHER

Part 4 - Judas' Plot

JUDAS ARRIVES LOOKING AROUND SHIFTILY

NARRATOR 10: Now one of Jesus' friends, a disciple called Jude
(who rarely smiled and was often rude)
Had had enough of Jesus' talk of love
He wanted action, not talk from above

So he decided to go and visit the pharisees...

JUDAS: I hear getting rid of Jesus is what you want to do.
Well, you'll never guess what - it's what I want too!
I reckon we can work together: you and me
I'll tell you everything I know - for a modest fee

PHARISEE 2: Hang on, you're one of his friends, or so we thought
What are you doing here, wanting him caught?

JUDAS: Let's just say:
It turns out he's not the man I thought him to be
Now... how much money will you give to me?

PHARISEES WHISPER TOGETHER AND DECIDE

PHARISEE 1: You give us Jesus; tell us how and where and when
And we'll pay you your money... Shall we say... ten?

JUDAS SHAKES HIS HEAD

20?

JUDAS SHAKES HIS HEAD AGAIN

30 pieces of silver?

JUDAS NODS

Oh very well...

THE PHARISEES HAND OVER A POUCH OF MONEY

NARRATOR 10: So a deal was made, and they all shook hands
And together they began to make their dastardly plans...

THEY SHAKE HANDS AND EXIT STAGE PLOTTING

Part 5 - The Last Supper

UPBEAT JEWISH MUSIC PLAYS AS EVERYONE ENTERS CHATTING EXCITEDLY ABOUT THE UPCOMING PASSOVER FEAST AND THE TABLE IS SET WITH A WHITE CLOTH, THE BREAD & WINE, A BOWL & CLOTH & EVERYONE GATHERS AROUND IT

NARRATOR 11: It was Passover time - a most special day
When all God's people would remember the way
That, long ago, back in Egypt's land
God had rescued the Hebrews by his mighty hand

NARRATOR 13: By sending plagues and parting the sea
So that the Hebrews slaves could be set free

NARRATOR 12: And so every year...
Friends and family would gather to celebrate this feast
A jolly old affair – well, that was the plan at least...

NARRATOR 13: In an upstairs room, at around the day's end
Jesus had gathered with his closest friends

NARRATOR 12: But there were no celebrations - the air it was muddled
And Jesus himself seemed rather troubled.

JESUS STANDS UP

JESUS: My friends...

Some of you may find this rather hard to believe
But soon, I'm afraid, I'm going to have to leave

REACTIONS (No! Why? Confusion)

Now don't be alarmed, it's all part of a plan
And I will return - just as soon as I can.
Something's going to happen that will seem rather bad
But I'm telling you now so you won't feel too sad.

When I'm gone, I'd like you to remember me...
By sharing this bread and this wine that you see...
This bread is my body, broken for you...
This wine, my blood – that will be poured out too...

COMMUNION MOMENT. THE BREAD AND WINE IS PASSED AROUND WITH EVERYONE TAKING SOME BUT SEEMING CONFUSED, UNSURE AND SAD

So when you gather together, these things you can share...

and I promise I will always be with you there

I know it's hard but I'm trying to explain

Something bad is going to happen...

...But good will come again.

Now my friends....

One of you here, I have to reveal

One of you here, sharing this meal...

...Will betray me.

EVERYONE REACTS (GASPS/SHOCK/CONFUSION)

Judas... it's time for you...

To go and do what you have to do.

JUDAS STANDS & WALK TOWARDS THE DOOR
HE TURNS & SPEAKS

JUDAS: Do you know what? I don't care - I've had enough...
I've had it up to here with all this lovey-dovey stuff!
I wanted a kingdom of power and might!

JUDAS GOES

NARRATOR 11: Then Judas stormed out of the door, and into the night

NARRATOR 12: Everyone caught their breath, but there was more to come
For the evening's surprises were far from done

JESUS GOES TO GET BOWL

NARRATOR 13: Jesus got up from the table and left his seat
Took a bowl of water... and began washing feet!

REACTIONS (GASPS/SHAKING HEADS/ NOT WANTING
SOMEONE SO GREAT TO DO SUCH A DIRTY JOB)

NARRATOR 11: As you'd expect, his friends kicked up quite a fuss

Saying:...

DISCIPLE 1: ...Why are you doing such a thing for us?

DISCIPLE 2: You're our leader; you're supposed to be a king

DISCIPLE 3: You can't be doing this sort of thing!

NARRATOR 12: Jesus smiled and said:

JESUS: My kingdom is different:
It isn't about self - it's about living for others
about giving our all for our sisters and brothers
Helping them: doing the things that need to be done
Even when they're yucky and not much fun
I might be your leader, but I can also serve too
And if I can do it... then so can you...

NARRATOR 13: Everyone was confused...
It was a surprising night - not what you'd expect
But nothing could prepare them for what would happen
next...

NARRATOR 11: For when the meal was finished
They all went a short way
To a Garden called Gethsemane...

ALL EXIT WITH JESUS, CONFUSED AND WONDERING
WHAT'S HAPPENING

Part 6 - The Garden of Gethsemane

SFX OF CRICKETS/ OWL HOOTING TO SET THE SCENE

NARRATOR 14: By then it was dark...
The sun was setting at the end of the day
As Jesus knelt on the ground to pray...

JESUS KNEELS AT THE CENTRE
DISCIPLES GO TO SLEEP AT THE BACK

NARRATOR 15: He'd asked his friends to stay and to keep
a watch with him - but...

NARRATOR 14: ...They'd fallen asleep...

NARRATOR 15: By himself, Jesus began to pray...

JESUS: Father, I know what lies ahead
And, to be honest, it fills my heart with dread
I wonder, perhaps, if there's another way instead...

But I know this is right.-
I know a price must be paid to set people free
And I know in my heart that that price is me...

Father, I know that you love me; I know I'm your Son
So this is my prayer: Your will be done

NARRATOR 14: Then, out of the garden, out of the night...
Suddenly came a terrible sight...

SOLDIERS & JUDAS ARRIVE

NARRATOR 15: Soldiers marching, a fearsome band...
With angry faces and sticks in hand...

NARRATOR 14: And, at their head was a familiar face...
Judas! He was the one who'd brought them to this place...

DISCIPLES AWAKE

NARRATOR 15: His other friends awoke at the startling sight
Some of them scared, some ready to fight

NARRATOR 14: One of them... Peter...
Grabbed a sword, and quick as a flash
Gave one of the soldiers a nasty gash

PETER CUTS OFF ONE OF THE SOLDIERS EARS WHO
CRIES OUT IN PAIN

JESUS: STOP!...

ALL FREEZE

NARRATOR 14: ...Cried Jesus

JESUS: This is not the way from above...
My kingdom is different, it's all about love
And not just for the likes of me and you
But for everyone- even our enemies too...

NARRATOR 15: Then he went to the guard who'd been hurt by Peter's
sword
And healed him completely - just by saying a word
He said:...

JESUS:It is right for these people to take me today...

NARRATOR 14: And so Jesus was arrested, and taken away...

SOLDIERS TAKE JESUS & LEAD HIM OFF

Part 7 - The Pharisees Trial

JESUS STANDS ON TRIAL IN THE CENTRE OF A COURTROOM

NARRATOR 16: Jesus was taken and put on trial in front of the Pharisees - the religious leaders of Jerusalem...

PHARISEE 1: Let the trial begin!

NARRATOR 17: The first Pharisee stood with a sneer on his face
And slowly began to present his case

PHARISEE 1 COMES TO THE MIDDLE & ADDRESSES THE JURY

PHARISEE 1: Ladies and gentlemen...
This man is charged (against all advice)
Of going around and being far too nice!

THE JURY CHEER BRIEFLY, BUT THEN STOP.
CONFUSED COUGHING/ SOME HUHS?

Oh dear, that's no good...

PHARISEE 1 STEPS BACK CONFUSED & PHARISEE 2
TAKES HIS PLACE

PHARISEE 2: Oh, but there's more! There are more things still...
He's been visiting sick people and making them well!

THE JURY CHEER BRIEFLY, BUT THEN STOP AGAIN
MORE CONFUSED COUGHING/ SOME HUHS?

Okay, that doesn't seem too bad either...

THE PHARISEES HUDDLE & WHISPER TOGETHER
THROUGH THE NEXT FEW LINES

NARRATOR 17: The pharisees were stumped; what could they say?
How could they get Jesus taken away?
After all, Jesus hadn't done anything bad
(It was only his teachings that had got them so mad!)

THEY COME UP WITH SOMETHING

PHARISEE 3: Aha!
But let me tell you the worst thing he's done
This man actually said that he's God's Son!
(TO JESUS) Isn't that so?

NARRATOR 17: Everyone held their breath...
Then Jesus said:...

JESUS: ...It is as you say.

PHARISEE 3: That proves it! He's guilty! Take him away!

THE JURY ALL CHEER

Part 8 - Pilate's Trial

NARRATOR 18: Jesus was put on trial in-front of the Roman leader- Pontius Pilate..

JESUS IS ONE SIDE OF THE STAGE, HANDS TIED TOGETHER.

PILATE RUNS ON STAGE. HE IS A BIG PERSONALITY - LIKE A GAME-SHOW HOST.

PILATE: So, Jesus...

What's this about? What's this 'to-do'?
Why does everyone seem upset with you?
You seem a nice guy - that's pretty clear...
But somehow you've made a lot of enemies here...

HE PACES UP & DOWN, THINKING

What to do? What to do?

NARRATOR 18: Then he had an idea...

PILATE: I know - it's the Passover!

Round here we have this tradition, you see
That once a year a prisoner goes free
It's my way to show to everyone
What a wonderful Roman empire I run!

And so, I will give the people a choice...
To show that I can listen to their voice...
Gather round, everyone!

THE CROWD GATHER ROUND
JESUS STANDS ON ONE SIDE OF THE STAGE
PILATE ADDRESSES THE CROWD

Here are your choices...
Over here...

HE GOES TO THE OPPOSITE SIDE TO JESUS

BARABBAS IS BROUGHT ON STAGE BY TWO GUARDS
THE OPPOSITE SIDE TO JESUS, MENACING &
AGGRESSIVE.

Is Barabbas...

A criminal who's actions are beyond the pale
And throughly deserves to be locked up in jail

HE GOES TO JESUS

And over here- Jesus: as nice a chap as ever could be

HE GOES BACK TO THE MIDDLE

Now, which of these two would you like to set free?

NARRATOR 19: Now, Pilate was sure Jesus would be the one
that the crowd would pick -since he'd done no wrong

NARRATOR 18: But - unknown to Pilate -
The Pharisees in the crowd were moving about
Telling the people what they must shout
So when Pilate said:

PILATE: People of Jerusalem! Tell me: whom shall it be?
Which one of these prisoners shall I set free?

NARRATOR 19: The crowd yelled:

CROWD: Barabbas! Barabbas!
That's whom we choose!
Barabbas! Barabbas!
Let him be turned loose!

NARRATOR 18: Pilate was puzzled...

PILATE: Are you sure? Are you certain? Let me give you some
advice.

HE GOES TO BARABBAS

You see, one of these is bad...

HE GOES TO JESUS

...And the other one's nice!

PILATE GOES BACK TO THE MIDDLE

Now, who do you want? Whom shall it be?
Which one of these prisoners shall I set free?

NARRATOR 19: But again the crowd called:

CROWD: Barabbas! Barabbas!
That's whom we choose!
Barabbas! Barabbas!
Let him be turned loose!

NARRATOR 19: Pilate was stunned.

PILATE: Are you sure? Can't I let Jesus go instead?

CROWD: No!..

NARRATOR 18: ...Yelled the crowd.

CROWD: ...We want Barabbas!...

NARRATOR 18: ...They said

NARRATOR 19: Pilate saw the crowd turn into a menacing throng
And, even though he knew Jesus had done no wrong,
He said:

PILATE: Okay, I'll let Barabbas go - have it your way
this wasn't what I expected you to say
But what of Jesus? Isn't he supposed to be a king?

NARRATOR 18: The crowd shouted back:...

CROWD: ...No he's not! Crucify him!

NARRATOR 19: Then Pilate said, ...

PILATE: As you wish... I will do as you say

NARRATOR 18: So Barabbas was released and Jesus taken away...

THE CROWD CHEER

Part 9 - The Crucifixion

JESUS IS IN THE MIDDLE
THE SOLDIERS STAND AROUND, MOCKING HIM,
JEERING AND LAUGHING

NARRATOR 20: The Roman soldiers were mean, they laughed in his face,
And said...

SOLDIER 1: ...You're not a king - you're just a disgrace

NARRATOR 21: They pinched him; they poked him, and then for a joke
They decided to dress him up in a cloak

THEY PLACE A PURPLE ROBE ROUND HIS
SHOULDERS & A CROWN OF THORNS ON HIS HEAD

NARRATOR 22: Round his shoulders they put a raggedy old cloth
And then finally, to finish things off,
They placed a crown upon his head...

NARRATOR 20: Made not of gold, but of thorns instead

JESUS IS LED THROUGH THE STREETS

NARRATOR 21: They led him through the streets,
and outside the city walls

JESUS IS PUT ON THE CROSS*

NARRATOR 22: And fastened him to a wooden cross
nearly five metres tall

PEOPLE GATHER TO WATCH

NARRATOR 20: As everyone gathered, the sky grew dark
And the cold wind howled around

NARRATOR 21: The clouds thundered and everyone gasped
and there were tremors in the ground

NARRATOR 22: Then from the cross, Jesus gasped,

JESUS It is finished...

NARRATOR 22: ...Jesus cried

NARRATOR 20: He bowed his head, and breathed his last,
and quietly.... he died.

SILENCE AS THE CROWD BOWS THEIR HEADS

NARRATOR 21: Was it really all over; was there no more to say?
Would the adventures really end in this way?

NARRATOR 22: Was it really all over, when it had barely begun?
Or
...had something rather extraordinary been done?

JESUS' BODY IS TAKEN DOWN AND HE SLOWLY
WALKS OFFSTAGE

Part 10 - The Resurrection

NARRATOR 23: Three days later, in the Sunday morning gloom
Mary and Jesus' friends went to visit his tomb

MARY & FRIENDS ARRIVE AT THE TOMB

NARRATOR 24: But when they got there...
The door was open and an angel did appear
Saying:

ANGEL APPEARS

ANGEL: You're looking for Jesus' body – but you won't find it here
A tomb is a place to find the dead
But Jesus, you'll find, is alive instead!

NARRATOR 23: And then, to Mary's great surprise
Jesus himself appeared - before her very eyes...

JESUS APPEARS

MARY: Jesus! Can it really be true?
Are you really here? Is it really you?

JESUS: It's me. I'm here - it's not a dream
Now go and tell the others all that you've seen

JESUS: For I've conquered death and everything bad
And I'll soon bring an end to all that's sad
I've made a way, I've opened a door
For everyone to be friends with God once more...

Go into the world and tell them all the good news
There can now be an end to their troubles and blues
From all of their struggles, I'll set people free
All they must do... is come follow me!

NARRATOR 23: So the disciples celebrated the most wonderful surprise
That Jesus was back - he was really alive...

THEY ALL HUG JESUS AND PAT HIM ON THE BACK
LAUGHING & AMAZED

Character List



Part 1 - Introduction

Narrator 1
Narrator 2
Narrator 3
Narrator 4
Jesus (large part)
Disciples (Group B)

Part 2 - Palm Sunday

Narrator 5
Narrator 6
Narrator 7
Jesus (non-speaking)
Crowd (everyone else or a few pharisees scattered in there too)
Possible Gymnasts to do a chant with letters that the crowd repeats

Part 3 - The Pharisees Plot

Narrator 8
Narrator 9
Pharisee 1 (larger)
Pharisee 2
Pharisee 3

Part 4 - Judas' Plot

Narrator 10
Judas (larger)
Pharisee 1
Pharisee 2

Part 5 - The Last supper

Narrator 11
Narrator 12
Narrator 13
Jesus (very large- if too long to memorize then there could be a reader saying 'Jesus said' whilst Jesus is doing the actions with the script being read. Perhaps Jesus actually says a few of the more important lines)
Disciple 1
Disciple 2
Disciple 3

Part 6 - The Garden of Gethsemane

Narrator 14

Narrator 15

Jesus (large)

Peter (non-speaking)

Soldiers (non-speaking)

Judas (non-speaking)

Soldier whose ear gets cut off and healed (non-speaking)

Part 7- The Pharisees Trial

Narrator 16

Narrator 17

Jesus (1 line)

Pharisee 1

Pharisee 2

Pharisee 3

Jury: Other Pharisees jeering

Part 8 - Pilates Trial

Narrator 18

Narrator 19

Pilate (very large)

Jesus (non-speaking)

Barrabus (non-speaking)

Crowd

Part 9 - The Crucifixion

Narrator 20

Narrator 21

Narrator 22

Jesus (one line)

Soldier 1

Other soldiers (2-4 others non-speaking)

Crowd (have some disciples watching and mourning at the cross)

Part 10 - Resurrection

Narrator 23

Narrator 24

Jesus (large)

Mary (2 lines)

Angel

Mary's 2 friends (non-speaking)

Disciples (non-speaking)

Music/SFX Ideas

As long as you're not charging for a performance, copyright wise it shouldn't be an issue to use music excerpts from YouTube or other platforms. I searched Yiddish folk music either upbeat or mournful/sad.

Introduction

- yiddish folk music upbeat like www.youtube.com/watch?v=kmGDTSTd_4
- Stormy sea SFX www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsD5u6k6dKI

The Pharisees Plot

- Search for Russian Liturgical Chants Dark www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWGr_89_xdU

Judas' Plot

- Again the Russian chant from above

The Last Supper

- To start perhaps re-cap the beginning music to establish a fun party then fade out after a few seconds
- A sad/mournful jewish tune would work well during communion
www.youtube.comwww.youtube.com/watch?v=azAwCV-RzWI&list=PLRreNQIHxp1XPwtoZXBnhxtfvAnhW67S6&index=4
- or www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBGRIbD4TrE&list=PLRreNQIHxp1XPwtoZXBnhxtfvAnhW67S6

The Garden of Gethsemane

- SFX of night crickets or an owl hooting to set the scene www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1w3IT5WnYw&t=11960s
- Boots marching for the soldiers arrival www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsFIHdObXyk&t=6s

The Crucifixion

- I searched sad Jewish cry song- especially at 1minute 27 works well.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=locW-9S00VU

The Resurrection

- Finish with the same fun Jewish music same as the start www.youtube.com/watch?v=kmGDTSTd_4

Costume Ideas

Sometimes less is more. This enables the children to really focus on the acting rather than costume changes but it may be useful to have a costume for Jesus if he is being played by multiple people from scene to scene. (Simply to distinguish him from everyone else). If you do want to make this more of a production and have costumes for everyone, then I would suggest for the other characters you could also keep this very simple. I've only mentioned a few that may warrant costume here.... However, the props for The Last Supper and the Crucifixion scenes do add to the piece if you can access them- but again these aren't necessary.

Jesus

A Brown Cloth draped around the actors shoulders would suffice

Pharisees

Perhaps some posh looking fabric draped around their shoulder

The disciples

This isn't necessary at all but if you're making a large production and want to use the disciples in other scenes (like Pilate's Trial) then they could all have beanie hats or caps.

Judas

A hat-like a beanie or a cap but specific to him so it's recognisable.

Pilate

Perhaps an official hat of some sort

Barabbas

A dark woolly hat

Angel

Possible White Cloth

Props Ideas

Introduction

- A lunchbox for the boy in Feeding of the 5,000

Palm Sunday

- If you wanted to add large leaves or flags to wave for a few then do!

Judas' Plot

- A pouch of money

The Last Supper

- A plate with bread and a glass of wine-looking squash
- A large white cloth for the tablecloth
- A washing bowl (bowl of water) and cloth

The Crucifixion

- A purple cloth
- Crown of thorns
- Plank of wood as the cross (cross-beam)* & maybe a stool to stand on.

*the cross can be a plank of wood (a horizontal cross beam). If there's a stool for Jesus to get up onto and to hold the plank up or have someone help steady it as it could be a long time to hold the cross beam up for- but that could add to the struggle on the cross.

Directing Ideas

Part 1 - Introduction

This scene isn't set in Holy Week but we've put it in as an introduction as to who the person of Jesus was, the things he talked about and the things he did.

At the start, perhaps there could be an upbeat Israeli / Yiddish Folk Music playing for a few bars to set the scene until they all sigh. But it's not necessary if you're keeping things simple!

Stage positioning

The children begin on stage in their three groups.

With frozen pictures it's often good to have people on different levels: some sitting, some kneeling and some standing.

There are 3 separate groups for the miracles in this scene.

Group (A) will become the **Feeding The 5,000** group

Group (B) will become the **Calming The Storm** group

Group (C) will become the **Healing The Sick** group

Tableaux

This can either be one simple frozen picture for each miracle. Or, you can make it more complex by having different start & finishing pictures (with a cue line to tell them when to swap poses). It's a good idea to get the children to really imagine what it would have felt like to be there.

It's also a good idea to rehearse which line of script breaks their freeze, so they don't change too soon but altogether.

Feeding 5,000

Start: Hungry people listening to Jesus (looking sad / holding stomachs)

Changing line: *And five thousand people were miraculously fed!!!*

End: Amazement, finally eating something, enjoying the food, awe, wonder, confusion, passing the bread and fish around whilst celebrating

Calming The Storm

Start: Scared & terrified disciples in a small boat in a storm / Jesus asleep

Changing line: *The waves calmed down, and again there was peace.*

End: Wonder, calm, awe, amazement, wonder at how a person can tell the weather what to do!

Healing The Sick

This can be done all together, or broken down into 3 sub-groups to go with the lines:

1. *He could make the blind see*
2. *He could heal those who bled*
3. *And even some times when he went and raised the dead!*

Each group can do a before & after picture. The frozen image of the third one could be quite moving with a few people mourning the body in front of them- some kneeling, some standing (use levels on this one), heads in hands or comforting one another.

Celebration response: Wonder, amazement, shock, confusion, surprise and pure joy!

Jesus Speaks

After the miracles, when Jesus stands in the middle and everyone crowds round him for his longer speech about his kingdom, they are all amazed at what he's done and can all get excited about this new kingdom and what it sounds like.

Remember they have been oppressed by the Romans and feeling sad, bored and fed up so this is all very new. No-ones ever said things such hopeful and wonderful things like this to them before!

General Acting Note

It's a good idea for the negative emotions of being bored, sad and fed-up to be exaggerated. These emotions are quite hard to act because they can be underplayed. If everyone is sighing it's a good idea to get them to really raise their shoulders and exhale loudly and freeze with head in hands or arms folded or grumpy. The more exaggerated/dramatic the position of the freeze is the better it reads to the audience.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

FEEDING 5,000 Matthew 14:13-21,

CALMING THE STORM Mark 4:35-41

HEALING THE SICK John 11:1-44

Directing Ideas

Part 2 - Palm Sunday

We chose not to include the donkey in the stage directions (although Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on one), simply because it's quite hard to act and could detract from the celebrations.

The Crowd

It helps in this scene to really conjure up the excitement of how the crowd may have felt having Jesus entering their city. They would have heard stories all about this man and what he did and said. It's a good idea to get them to imagine a celebrity like royalty, or a well-known football player coming to their school - but even better! They'd be so excited to see them and get close to them. Maybe they're hoping to see a miracle. Perhaps some of them have an illness they need Jesus to heal them from...

The Chant

Having a chant can really help the excitement. Here's an idea below, or I'm sure the children can have fun making up their own.

"JESUS" clap clap clap!

is almost like a football chant.

Perhaps someone could lead the chant (a bit of a team leader) and then everyone else joins in - saying it again twice & getting louder each time.

After the last time, everyone could cheer briefly and then freeze. It's important to practice so that everyone knows when to stop!

Cheerleading Routine

This could be performed by everyone, or just a specific small group.

You could even send a group of 5 people who like to gymnastics away to come up with this cheerleading routine themselves! Each gymnastic person takes a different letter to lead the chant... Ideally they make a position with their body (that they stay in) when they shout out their letter.

1. "Give me a J" Crowd "J!"

2. "Give me an E" Crowd "E!"
3. "Give me an S" Crowd "S!"
4. "Give me a U" Crowd "U!"
5. "Give me an S" Crowd "S!"
1. What have we got? Crowd "Jesus!" Big Cheer then freeze

BIBLE REFERENCES:

PALM SUNDAY John 12:12-19

Directing Ideas

Part 3 - The Pharisees Plot

For this scene it might be atmospheric to find some Russian Orthodox music to play underneath - but again not necessary if you're keeping things simple.

The three pharisees could enter in a formal line with their hands pressed together as though they're in prayer. They could keep this formal pose for the whole scene. Acting wise and voice wise it would be great if these Pharisees could be quite mean, jealous and villainous.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

PHARISEES PLOTTING Matthew 26:1-5

Directing Ideas

Part 4- Judas' Plot

This is a very straightforward scene. Acting wise Judas could be a bit of a lad. For this scene you can use a prop bag of money or just ask pupils to mime. It'd be good after the deal is struck that Judas shakes hands with Pharisee 1.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

JUDAS BETRAYAL Matthew 26:14-16

Directing Ideas

Part 5- The Last Supper

This is a very poignant scene and one that pupils really engage with emotionally. However it should conjure up lots of different atmospheres.

The beginning should be filled with excitement and celebration. The disciples were expecting to celebrate the feast of the Passover.

All the actors should enter enthusiastically and set the table to the upbeat music chatting excitedly about what they're going to eat about how much they loved this celebration and freeze around the table chatting and celebrating frozen positions.

During the first narration lines the music should fade out.

The reactions to Jesus leaving are important as the disciples had never heard this before. They'd been with him for 2-3 years travelling around and seeing all his miracles and now suddenly he talks about going or leaving. I wonder where they think he's going to - they certainly wouldn't have been expecting what was about to happen.

During communion I don't think the disciples would have understood what Jesus meant by the bread and wine being his body and blood. It would be a very unusual moment as Jesus had never talked like this before. I think they'd be wondering what this all meant but can sense that it's difficult for Jesus and that something bad is about to happen.

Judas has wanted Jesus to overturn the Romans and think they should fight the oppression but Jesus talks more about everyone's insides - their hearts - and maybe Judas is fed up of no action. Jesus isn't who Judas wanted him to be. (After Jesus is crucified Judas hugely regrets what he did).

The washing the feet is also a precious moment. Ask the actors to really imagine what it might be like for the most famous person in the world to serve them.

Washing feet was the smelliest, dirtiest job and the lowest servants were expected

to do this. Jesus' example here is quite mind-blowing. The disciples wouldn't ever have expected their leader to do such a menial task.

As the disciples exit following Jesus, they could be whispering in a few groups what they think might happen and why Jesus is behaving so strangely.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

THE LAST SUPPER Matthew 26:17-30 & John 13:1-38

THE PASSOVER Exodus 12

Directing Ideas

Part 6 - The Garden Of Gethsemane

This is a very atmospheric scene. It would be great to get some sound effects here - perhaps crickets at night or owls hooting (YouTube has some).

Jesus is wrestling with what's about to happen here. When he kneels to pray it would be good if he comes to front of stage. It's a deep conversation to his heavenly father. The Bible tells us that Jesus knows here what is about to happen - that he must go through torture and even physical death. In one way he must not want to - he knows it'll be extremely painful but in another way he knows that this sacrifice is going to be so powerful for the whole of history. It's hard stuff.

On the line - Your will be done- he's realised how brave he's going to be and he's made his decision. This line could be said quite momentarily - as though he's preparing to go through with it.

As soon as Jesus says this line, it would be great to have some SFX of Marching Boots (starting quietly and getting louder- again YouTube has marching boots SFX) during the narration line and gives drama to the soldiers arriving. The SFX can stop when the disciples awake shocked and confused. Some of the disciples can run away terrified here.

When Peter cuts the soldiers ear it'd be dramatic if he could have a vocal effect like a 'raar' as he does it and for the soldier to cry out in pain. The soldier should be holding his ear in pain. When Jesus heals the ear he simply needs to touch the soldier on the side of his head and the soldier should show pure amazement (maybe he touches his own ear that's now miraculously there as he can't believe it). Everyone should be amazed that Jesus is doing a miracle and especially on someone who'd come here to arrest him.

When Jesus is arrested and led away the few disciples left should look terrified but be torn - should they follow Jesus and the soldiers or should they escape. They decide to escape from trouble and run off the other side of stage.

BIBLE REFERENCES: THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE Matthew 26:36-56

Directing Ideas

Part 7- The Pharisees Trial

Jesus should have his hands together as though he's been arrested. It might be a good idea to have the audience as the audience in the courtroom and the Pharisees present their case both to the audience and to the Jury.

The Jury could be positioned in some diagonal lines one behind the other one side of the stage with Jesus in the middle and the pharisees presenting and the head pharisee like a Judge on the other side of the stage.

This is quite a fun scene in some ways as the pharisees keep thinking they can trap Jesus but then realise that he's innocent or the things they're accusing him of aren't bad at all. The jury will be great at adding to this atmosphere by beginning to cheer after the first two accusations, then realising and looking awkward and confused.

On the important words '*Gods' Son*' all the jury should gasp completely gobsmacked in an angry kind of way!

After the last line of the scene the jury should burst into angry cheers and accusations as everyone exits. Cries of "Outrageous claims!" "He's getting what he deserves" "he's guilty of blasphemy" etc etc

BIBLE REFERENCES:

THE PHARISEES TRIAL Matthew 26:57-68

Directing Ideas

Part 8- Pilates Trial

If you include this scene then do have a big fun personality playing Pilate! The feel needs to be almost like a game show with Pilate just wanting everyone to like him and to appease the crowd.

With this scene be careful with audience sight lines with the crowd gathering. Make sure that Pilate, Jesus and Barabbas (when he enters) can be easily seen. It may be best to position most of the crowd gathering behind Pilate with a few either sitting on the front of the stage but turned towards Pilate and a few gathered front side on each side. Again different body levels (sitting, standing etc) and groupings are more interesting to look at.

Practice the crowd chants here. There are 2 that are the same, then a third that is spread out with narration lines that need more practice.

When Barabbas appears he needs to look really mean and tough..

In the Bible passage the Pharisees are the ones whispering to the crowd about Jesus and stirring up trouble. Remember this crowd is probably made up of the very same people, who only days before, were cheering as he entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. You could have your Pharisees whispering subtly in certain places (maybe in the crowd chanting places so that it's not distracting to the main action) and moving through the crowd.

If you wanted to layer the scene even more you could have a couple of the disciples looking shocked and terrified in the crowd too.

BIBLE REFERENCES: JESUS BEFORE PILATE Matthew

27:11-26

Mark 15:1-15



Directing Ideas

Part 9- The Crucifixion

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

This could be a small group of soldiers. They could come up with their own routine and work on it for you. It would be good if we could hear them laughing and mocking.

When Soldier 1 says “you’re not a king, you’re just a disgrace’ the other soldiers could come in jeering and agreeing. Ask the narrator to give time to the pinched him, poked him so the group can do a physical action inbetween each part like someone pretending to punch (they need to be aware of stage-combat and not hurting each other or making any physical contact) and Jesus’ reaction vocally and physically to each punch or hit or kick.

When one soldier comes in with the purple cloth and the crown of thorns the group of soldiers can laugh at his good idea and get on board with it pretending to kneel and worship but laughing and mocking.

Led Through The Streets

During this part the soldiers can give him a plank of wood to carry on his back for a few steps horizontally as a side beam (creatively the vertical beam doesn’t need to be there -even for the crucifixion- as Jesus’ body works as the vertical part of the cross).

The Crucifixion

It’s a good idea for there to be a small stool for Jesus to stand on. When Jesus gets to the stool 2 soldiers can help him up as he climbs onto the stool.

The soldiers can then put the crossbeam up behind Jesus. The person playing Jesus could either try to hold this cross beam themselves as this is the most effective image of the cross. Or a couple of people behind could help support it.

When everyone gathers to watch the crucifixion you could have a variety of people there - the disciples, Mary, the crowd, soldiers & pharisees.

The sky turns black (there was a lunar eclipse recorded at the time Jesus was on the cross) and there's a small earthquake so there could be some SFX of wind and a storm as everyone stands there.

As Jesus says 'It is finished' it's good if the actor breathes out all their breath and drops their head gently to demonstrate that he's died and to stay there for a good few moments. Time should be taken over this whole passage.

Ending

It's tricky getting someone offstage when they've died! So I would advise not trying to and instead to ask them to simply slowly walk off as the cross is dismantled and as the crowd walk away in the same atmosphere that has been created.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

THE CRUCIFIXION Matthew 27:27-66, Mark 15:16-20 & 33-41

Directing Ideas

Part 10 - The Resurrection

Start

Mary and her friends were going to anoint Jesus' body (as was the custom for the dead at that time). So when your actors enter they are mourning for Jesus and expecting to anoint the body with spices. When they see the door of the tomb is open (or the rock rolled away) they were probably startled - maybe thinking someone (like the Romans) had broken in.

The Angel

When the angel appears they're probably terrified. It's not often one sees an angel! (Often in the Bible, the first words that angels are recorded saying are 'don't be afraid' insinuating that those who've seen them are very afraid.)

When the disciples see Jesus there are probably a huge array of emotions. After all, just 3 days ago they'd watched him die. There's probably complete confusion, disbelief and a huge amount of joy and amazement. Some might actually touch him (just like Thomas does as recorded in the Bible) to check he's real.

Ending

There are a variety of ways to end this passion play. The simplest would be simply for everyone to cheer and with some delightedly patting Jesus on the Back and freeze celebrating.

Or as the play ends you could have some upbeat Jewish music (maybe the same as the start or the last supper start) as Jesus goes up to each one of them and they hug or shake hands or pat each other on the back. And then they all walk off celebrating together.

Or if you have a hymn or a song you think works, well you could sing this here to finish.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

THE RESURRECTION Mark 16:1-8 Matthew 28:1-8 &16-20 John 20:11-31