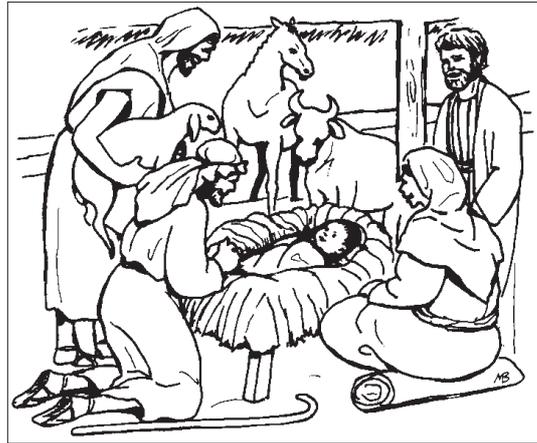
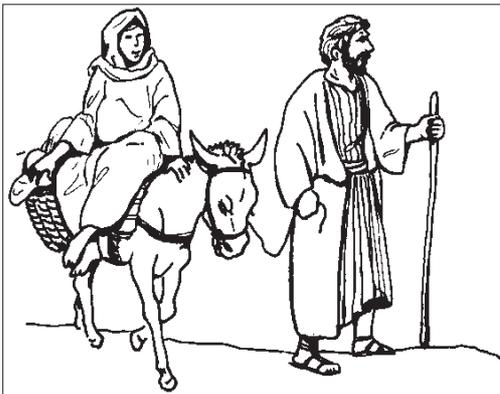


The First Christmas



An Intermediate ESL Reading about Christmas

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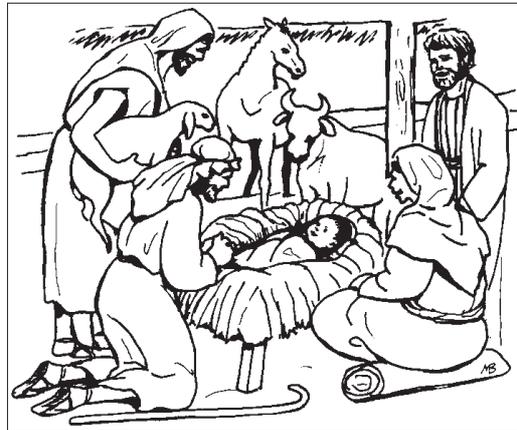
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The First Christmas

A. Discuss the following questions before reading the passage.

1. What is Christmas?
2. Do you celebrate Christmas where you are from?
3. What was the very first Christmas like?
4. What is happening in the pictures below?



B. Read the following passage.

This is how Jesus Christ was born. A young woman named Mary was engaged to Joseph from King David's family. But before they were married, she learned that she was going to have a baby by God's Holy Spirit. Joseph was a good man and did not want to embarrass Mary in front of everyone. So he decided to quietly call off the wedding. While Joseph was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord came to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, the baby that Mary will have is from the Holy Spirit. Go ahead and marry her. Then after her baby is born, name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." So the Lord's promise came true, just as the prophet had said, "A virgin will have a baby boy, and he will be called Immanuel," which means "God is with us." After Joseph woke up, he and Mary were soon married, just as the Lord's angel had told him to do.

Everyone had to go to their own hometown to be listed. So Joseph had to leave Nazareth in Galilee and go to Bethlehem in Judea. Long ago Bethlehem had been King David's hometown, and Joseph went there because he was from David's family. Mary was engaged to Joseph and traveled with him to Bethlehem. She was soon going to have a baby, and while they were there, she gave birth to her first-born son. She dressed him in baby clothes and laid him on a bed of hay, because there was no room for them in the inn.

That night in the fields near Bethlehem some shepherds were guarding their sheep. All at once an angel came down to them from the Lord, and the brightness of the Lord's glory flashed around them. The shepherds were frightened. But the angel said, "Don't be afraid. I have good news for you, which will make everyone happy. This very day in King David's hometown a Savior was born for you. He is Christ the Lord. You will know who he is, because you will find him dressed in baby clothes and lying on a bed of hay." Suddenly many other angels came down from heaven and joined in praising God. They said: "Praise God in heaven! Peace on earth to everyone who pleases God." After the angels had left and gone back to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see what the Lord has told us about." They hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and there was the baby lying on a bed of hay.

When Jesus was born in the village of Bethlehem in Judea, Herod was king. During this time some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem and said, "Where is the child born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." Herod brought together the chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses and asked them, "Where will the Messiah be born?" They told him, "He will be born in Bethlehem, just as the prophet wrote, 'Bethlehem in the land of Judea, you are very important among the towns of Judea. From your town will come a leader, who will be like a shepherd for my people Israel.' "

The wise men listened to what the king said and left. And the star they had seen in the east went on ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. They were thrilled and excited to see the star. When the men went into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they knelt down and worshiped him. They took out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and gave them to him.

Matthew 1:18-24; 2:1-2, 4-6, 9-11, Luke 2:3-17 (CEV)

C. Write T (true) or F (false) on the line next to each sentence. Answer according to the reading.

1. _____ Joseph wanted to marry Mary because she was pregnant.
2. _____ Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem to be listed.
3. _____ The shepherds heard about Jesus' birth from the wise men.
4. _____ The wise men went to Nazareth to find the child to be born king.

D. Circle the letter for the word or phrase that best defines the underlined word in the sentence.

1. A young woman named Mary was engaged to Joseph ...
 - a. planned to marry
 - b. had a fight with
2. ... name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”
 - a. thoughts or ideas
 - b. disobedience
3. A virgin will have a baby boy, and he will be called Immanuel.
 - a. a young woman
 - b. a person who has never had sex
4. This very day in King David's hometown a Savior was born for you.
 - a. a person who rules people
 - b. a person who rescues people
5. They took out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and ...
 - a. expensive spices used in incense and perfume
 - b. two kinds of metals that are very expensive like gold
6. The wise men ... knelt down and worshiped him.
 - a. to get down on one's knees
 - b. to sit down in front of someone

E. Match the following words with their meanings. Write the correct letter on the line.

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. _____ embarrass | a. to have your name written down |
| 2. _____ hometown | b. to show respect and honor |
| 3. _____ Messiah | c. to be required to, must |
| 4. _____ had to | d. to make feel bad, ashamed |
| 5. _____ angel | e. to rescue |
| 6. _____ prophet | f. where someone was born |
| 7. _____ worship | g. messenger from God |
| 8. _____ save | h. person who brings a message from God |
| 9. _____ be listed | i. name or title of person who God sent to set the people free from sin |

Use the words above to complete the following sentences.

1. Joseph did not want to _____ Mary.
2. The angel said that the baby will _____ people from their sins.
3. Joseph and Mary _____ go to Bethlehem to _____.
4. Bethlehem was the _____ of King David.
5. An _____ appeared to the shepherds.
6. They said that the _____ would be born in Bethlehem.
7. The _____ wrote that Bethlehem was an important town.
8. The wise men _____ the baby born to be king.

F. Answer the following questions by writing a complete sentence. Answer the questions according to the reading.

1. How did Mary get a baby before marrying Joseph?

2. Why did Joseph decide not to call off the wedding?

3. What was the good news that the angel told the shepherds?

4. Why did the wise men go to Jerusalem?

5. What did the wise men do when they saw Mary with her child?

G. Answer the following questions by writing several complete sentences.
Discuss your answers in class.

1. How was Jesus' birth different from the birth of other people?
2. How did God communicate to people that Jesus the Messiah was coming?
3. Why was Jesus' birth good news for the shepherds?
4. Who gave gifts at the first Christmas? What was the most important gift?

