



THE REFORMATION

Teachers' notes

The planning of a church building, and what happened to it in the period of the Reformation, provides an excellent focus for the children to learn about what the Reformation meant to Tudor men and women.

The class had visited their local church earlier in the term, so knew something of churches and their purpose. Several of the children attended church on Sundays.

The approach we adopted in this lesson was a simulation: we gave the children the task of creating a Catholic church, then faced them, as parishioners, with a royal command to transform it into a Protestant one after the accession to the throne of the reforming Edward VI. This teaching approach transfers beautifully to the see-saw changes from Catholicism to Protestantism and back again during the Tudor period.

Henry VIII, although he broke away from Rome, was never a reformer at heart. Indeed, the Catholic form of worship and ceremonies continued virtually unchanged throughout his reign. It was his son Edward VI who introduced the real Reformation. The pendulum swung twice more, with Queen Mary bringing back Catholicism in 1553, and Elizabeth changing it back to Protestantism after 1558.

Year group/class and teaching time

Years 3 and 4; a mixed ability class. A single session of about one hour.

Learning objectives

- To lead the children to think about why a church is planned out in a particular way
- To introduce children to the nature and sequence of a pre-Reformation service
- To consider the kinds of change that would happen to churches during a period of religious conflict, in this case the Reformation.

Key questions

Why are Christian churches arranged in the way that they are?

What happened to churches during the Reformation in England?

Resources

Pictures of various features within a church (or models of these) – one set per pair of children.

Outline plan of a church - one per pair of children, blown up to A3 size.

Letter from the bishop, conveying King Edward VI's demands for changes to the churches (invented, but true to the events of the time).

The teaching

Episode 1

Focus: Brainstorm – building a church.

We asked the class: 'If we were building a church, how would we plan it out – and what would be inside?'

To answer the question, we split the children into pairs and asked them to come up with three things that they would like in their church.

After a few minutes, we grouped the children round the whiteboard. We went round each pair, asking for their church items, moving on quickly when there were repetitions. We produced the following list, based on the class's visit to the local church earlier in the term:

cross	hymn books	candles	stairs
bible	vicar	statues	organ
altar	walls	meeting place	light
font	chairs/pews	pictures	keys
graves	steeple/tower	toilets	
bells	windows	choir stalls	
arches	doors	clock	

Episode 2

Focus: Planning the church, 1530.

We now gave each pair the A3 outline of a church, and also the sheet of pictures of church features. We told the class that now they were going to plan out their church. They could cut out the pictures of church features and arrange them on the outline plan as they thought best. They could use whichever features they wished, and could also draw any they wanted that weren't on the sheet of pictures.

Before the children began, we went through the features, explaining things the children might not know.

We stressed that England was a Roman Catholic country, so their church would hold Catholic services. This meant that there was a rood screen, the altar was prominent, there would be stained glass, statues and pictures – and that the service would be held in Latin.

The children set to planning, cutting out, glueing and drawing pictures onto their outline plans of the church.

Episode 3

Focus: The church service.

When they had finished, we told the children: ‘The bishop is coming to conduct the first service in your church.’

We now explored what a church service is with the class. We asked each pair to come up to the front of the class and say what they would have in their service. We encouraged them to think about the whole service and its order; for example, processions, incense, crosses, prayers, hymns, chanting, the sermon and so on.

The church-goers were well-informed, but others had very little idea about what happened during a service. With input from us and the church-goers – and some role play – the children soon had a reasonable picture of a pre-Reformation service.

Episode 4

Focus: Edward VI comes to the throne, 1547.

We moved on seventeen years, to 1547. We told the class that a letter had come from the new bishop, conveying orders from the young King Edward VI.

We read the letter out to the class, and told them that they had to decide what to do next. Would they comply, and destroy all their Catholic features? Or would they fight? If they decided to hide their treasures, where would they hide them?

There was a buzz of excited talking, then in came Edward’s soldiers.

Episode 5

Focus: King Edward’s men reach the church.

The class teacher and I swung into role as Edward’s troops. We demanded that the churches be completely cleansed of Catholic features. We swept through the class, sweeping aside the children’s church plans, acting out the breaking of statues and stained glass, and the wrecking of rood screens and altars.

As we had hoped, the class developed a dynamic of dismay and different reactions.

We stopped the simulation, then pooled and discussed the children's different reactions to the overturning of their traditions of worship. They divided roughly into: comply, hide treasures, or fight back – all scenarios that occurred in reality during the Reformation.

Episode 6

Focus: Communication of learning – writing an account.

We ended the session by asking the children to write individual accounts of the happenings in their church in 1547. The accounts were to take the form of a letter to a relative living in a different part of the country. We reminded the class of the features of an account, and they each made a good start before the bell went. The letters were completed in the literacy lesson the next day.

Learning outcomes/reflection

The learning objectives were fully met. The children learnt much about both Roman Catholic and Reformation churches through planning their own churches, going through the process of a service and responding to a demand for reform. At every stage of this open-ended lesson they were asked to think, to plan and to respond to events, ensuring enactive and kinaesthetic learning that engaged the children completely from start to finish.

Nuffield Primary History project

General editor: Jacqui Dean

Author of this unit: Jon Nichol

© in this format Nuffield Primary History 2007

downloaded from www.primaryhistory.org