

Scene 5: The garden of Gethsemane

Bible

Matthew 26:36-56; Mark 14:32-50; Luke 22:39-53; John 18:1-12

Aim

To help pupils to understand what happened in the garden of Gethsemane. To help the children experience how Jesus was arrested and how he and the disciples felt at this time. What sort of king is Jesus? A captured king and a lonely king.

Setting the scene

After the Passover meal, Jesus asked his disciples to go with him to the Garden of Gethsemane. When they got there, he left them for a while so that he could be alone to pray. The disciples did not fully understand the danger that Jesus was now in and they fell asleep. Earlier, Jesus had warned them that one of them would betray him, but they had all vehemently denied this. Late into the night, Judas led a mob, assembled by the chief priests and leaders, to arrest Jesus. He was taken away to be tried by Caiaphas the high priest and subsequently by Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor.

Character(s)

None (the whole scene is based on a listening experience so that the children use their imaginations to understand what is happening)

Costume

None

Scenery

The children are led into a darkened area where they are asked to crouch behind bushes made from plywood and listen to the noises of the night. If possible, a painted scene of the distant city at night is the focal point. Many Christmas cards show scenes of a middle-eastern town and a scene can be copied from a card on to corrugated cardboard stapled to a wooden frame. Alternatively, the scene can be traced on to a piece of acetate and projected on to a large piece of card. The outline can then be drawn and painted with poster or emulsion paint. Dark buildings and lighted windows give the impression of a night scene.

Props

Stylised bushes can be made using plywood cut into simple bush-like shapes then slotted together (see www.easterjourney.org.uk for reference). The bushes should be 80 to 100cm high and approximately 150cm wide. You will need six bushes spaced evenly around the area, allowing up to five children to hide around each bush. You will also need a CD of sound effects, which can be recorded 'live' or downloaded from the Internet. For further details see the website, www.easterjourney.org.uk. The CD needs to include night sounds (cicadas and so on) to provide a continuous background beneath the following sequence of sounds:

- Walking in the undergrowth
- A person walking alone
- Sighing
- A voice whispering the words: 'Do what you want, and not what I want'
- People sleeping
- Marching feet coming closer
- A scuffle and raised voices
- A sword fight
- Footsteps running away
- Soldiers marching away
- Quiet night sounds
- A cock crowing

The whole sequence should last no longer than five minutes. If you have difficulty in putting the CD together, you could consider approaching a local high school or FE college where the project could be undertaken by a media student. As well as the sound effects CD, suitable dramatic music playing softly in the background can give a sense of continuity to the experience. The soundtrack to the film '*Narnia*' has some excellent tracks. Track 11, the Stone Table is very suitable as background music in this scene.

Lighting

It is important to provide atmospheric lighting to create a sense of mystery and anticipation. Although the scene takes place at night, there does need to be some ambient light in order for the children to see where they are. Also group leaders may find lanterns or torches useful. If professional lighting is used, a moon projected on to the scenery can give enough light for safe movement of the children. Also, coloured acetate sheets can be used in front of spotlights to create a sense of foreboding.

There is no script as such for the scene because it is based on listening to sound effects.

Jesus asks the children to follow him to the garden as he leaves the previous scene (the last supper). Group leaders allow Jesus and Peter time to get out of the way before they usher the children into the next space. It could be useful for the person playing the part of Jesus to go behind the scenery to switch the CD on once the children are settled behind the bushes. The leaders help the children to hide in the space and encourage them to listen carefully to the sounds so they can work out what is happening. The scene does not require too much explanation from leaders as it is revisited later in the journey. The sound effects CD lasts for about five minutes and experience shows that the children readily take part in the adventure, entering into it with imagination and enthusiasm. Leaders can encourage the children to quietly question what they have heard but hold on to those thoughts until the end of the journey. Once the sound effects of the garden have ended, leaders ask the children to move out of the bushes towards the other side of the room for the next part of the story.