

Norwich Passion Play

Resource Sheet for Schools



On Easter Saturday 2022, the Norwich Passion Play was staged by a group of Norwich churches, ecumenical charity Celebrate Norfolk and the professional Christian Saltmine Theatre Company.

The play tells the story of the final week in the life of Jesus Christ in a contemporary way through a drama which moved across the city streets, watched by thousands of people.

A 13-minute free video was also produced to enable the story to be shared even further, including in schools and youth group settings. The best time to use it, is in the couple of weeks leading up to Easter.

This short resource sheet has been produced to use alongside the video in a school and youth setting.

The video

The video is 13 minutes long and includes helpful sub-titles to set out the context.

You can find it on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/9MFZyrsc388> and it is free to use.

Alternatively we can supply a 2GB mp4 file via We Transfer or similar for free by emailing keith.morris@networknorwich.co.uk

We suggest you start off your session by setting the scene using some of the background details below about the history of Passion Plays and about the Norwich Passion Play itself.

Then play the video and use the following questions to stimulate thought and discussion.

Questions to discuss

- Why do you think they are called Passion Plays?
- Do you think a Passion Play in a modern setting helps to better convey the relevance of the story of Jesus today or not?
- What struck you about the play – what were the most memorable bits?
- What does the play say about the importance of women in the life of Jesus?
- Do you think the immersive nature of the performance in which the boundaries between actors and spectators are blurred helps people to be able to engage with the performance and make it seem more realistic?
- What do you think are the lessons we can draw from the Norwich Passion Play?

Additional Background Material

Norwich Passion Play

The 2022 Norwich Passion Play tells the Gospel story in a contemporary way through a drama played out on the city streets by Saltmine Theatre Company and local actors and musicians.

The Norwich Passion Play was watched by thousands of people who were captivated by the dramatic scenes acted out in bright sunshine on Hay Hill and Millennium Plain and inside St Peter Mancroft church over the Easter weekend. Large crowds were mesmerised by the rabble-rousing of Mary Magdalene standing on a plinth on Hay Hill. Local drummers and chanting created a carnival atmosphere as the crowds joined the Palm Sunday procession following Jesus on a bike, rather than a donkey, up to Millennium Plain.

The modern-day drama continued to unfold in front of the Forum, with the Last Supper – featuring fish and chips from Norwich Market – and the poignant betrayal of Jesus by Judas in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The arrest of Jesus by riot shield-carrying militants and his trial, and sentence to death by crucifixion by Pontius Pilate, took place in front of jeering crowds.

Some were shocked and many others left in tears by the portrayal of Jesus carrying his cross and then being tied to it, along with two convicted criminals either side of him.

As a dead Jesus was carried away, the crowds were directed inside St Peter Mancroft to see the last scene. The group of dispirited disciples were transformed when Mary Magdalene said she had seen Jesus come back from the dead. Disciples Thomas, Peter and John were amazed when the resurrected Jesus appeared at the back of the church to loud cheers from a packed audience.

Jesus' triumph over death was acclaimed by all and then celebrated in style by a Norfolk Gospel choir and band, before earning a standing ovation.

History of Passion Plays

Since Medieval times Passion Plays have dramatised the last week of Jesus' life, depicting the events that led up to his crucifixion and resurrection.

Passion Plays use theatre to bring the words of the Gospel to life in new, often vivid and startling, ways. They show how the message of second chances, forgiveness and new opportunities has the potential to speak life and hope into communities struggling with poverty, crime, addiction, hopelessness and boredom.

A Passion Play is a dramatic portrayal of what has been called **the greatest story ever told**. It is the real story of Easter and it has all the elements of stories that are compelling and confronting: treachery, betrayal, injustice, sacrifice, redemption and a startling ending. As Passion Plays dramatize the story of Easter, they allow it to speak again to new audiences in new contexts.

Why are they called Passion Plays?

The word 'Passion' refers to the fervent love Jesus had for the people he came to save. The Bible tells us that 'God so loved the world that he sent his only son so that no one would perish but all would come to eternal life'.

The word 'Passion' also refers to the intense suffering in Jesus' life from the time of his betrayal and agony in the Garden of Gethsemane to his trial, torture and death.

Finally, the word 'Passion' can also encompass our response to God's love and Jesus' willingness to die for us. Telling the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection reminds us of how God entered our world of suffering and paved the way to new hope and a second chance by dying on the cross.

For further information: Contact: Keith Morris, Celebrate Norfolk at keith.morris@networknorwich.co.uk or ring 07712 787762 or visit: www.celebratenorfolk.co.uk

The Norwich
Passion
play

Celebrate
Norwich & Norfolk

