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| **Good King Wenceslas**  **John Mason Neale**  Publisher: **Widely available online (originally 1853)** | **2 guided sessions** |
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| This guided reading plan is based on a traditional carol. There are also sessions for Year 1, Year 2 and Years 3/4.  The focus of this plan is archaic language. It has been devised for a range of readers, particularly the texts that are used about the carol (see the post-session 1 task), so the plan could be used with a mixed attainment group or with a range of groups, each reading the text about the carol that matches best with their reading needs. | |

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| **Books by the same author** | **Linked texts** |
| Further hymns written or translated by J. M. Neale available online at [J. M. Neale | Hymnary.org](https://hymnary.org/person/Neale_JM) | Other carols known by the children  *Wenceslas: A Christmas Poem* by Carol Ann Duffy (2012)  Information about the history of the carol (provided in the post-session task) |

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| **National Curriculum Programme of Study** | |
| **Comprehension** | |
| **maintain positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what is read:** | |
|  | **increase familiarity with a wide range of books, including myths, legends and traditional stories, modern fiction, fiction from our literary heritage, and books from other cultures and traditions** |
|  | * Traditional carols |
|  | **identify and discuss themes and conventions in and across a wide range of writing** |
|  | * Discussing the message of the carol |
|  | **learn a wider range of poetry by heart** |
|  | * Learning the carol off by heart |
| **understand what they read:** | |
|  | **check that the book makes sense to them, discuss their understanding and explore the meaning of words in context** |
|  | * Identifying archaic vocabulary and discussing its meaning * Working with a partner on a text, discussing its meaning |
|  | **ask questions to improve their understanding** |
|  | * Using the matrix to create questions * Ensure that the answer to the questions is known * Answering questions generated by others |
| **retrieve, record and present information from non-fiction** | |
|  | * Making notes about the text they read to share with others in the group |
| **participate in discussions about books that are read to them and those they can read for themselves, building on their own and others’ ideas and challenging views courteously** | |

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| **Pre-reading task**  Pupils to read the carol prior to the session and to think about the story contained within it. Record notes about the story in reading journals. |

**Session 1**

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| **Book Introduction** | Share notes that children have made about the carol and what they think happens in it.  Ask pupils when they think this carol was written. A date is not important, but the idea that it is not recent is.   * What words or phrases give you the clue that it was written a long time ago?   In pairs, children read through the carol again and underline parts that suggest it was written a long time ago. |
| **Strategy Check** | Ask pupils what they will do if they don’t understand a word or part of a text.  Clarify through:   * reading forwards and backwards in the text to use the context; * thinking about parts of the word that might be known, e.g. prefixes and suffixes; * thinking about word families and whether the word is similar to other known ones. |
| **Independent Reading** | Read with a partner.  Teachers may choose to use echo-reading to support less confident readers, or read to the children with them tracking the text with a finger. |
| **Respond to Text** | Jot down on a large piece of paper all the clues the children find, discussing what the words and phrases mean.  In pairs, use the question matrix in Resources, or similar, to generate questions that you can ask the rest of the group which could be answered from the text of the carol. Make sure you know the answers. Children share their questions with the group and discuss where answers differ from what they were expecting.  What is the message of this carol? |

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| **Post-session task**  Provide pairs with a reading about the carol – they are all different. Children read the text, discussing parts they are not sure about.  **It is recommended that the text be taken off the websites for the pupils as there are adverts on each one that change whilst each site is being read.**   * <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/dec/21/wenceslas-carol-ann-duffy-christmas-poem> - a more challenging poem telling the story of Wenceslas and the feast. * <https://www.carols.org.uk/good_king_wenceslas.htm> - a short and simple snippet of information about the carol. * <https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/real-story-good-king-wenceslas-carol/> - a more detailed, and slightly gory, history of Wenceslas and the carol.   Make notes about the important parts of your text. For the Christmas poem this will mean explaining how the poem is the same as and different from the carol. |

**Session 2**

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| **Respond to Text** | Children discuss their text and what it is about.  Share the most important parts of the text with the group.   * What do we know now about the carol that we didn’t before? * When we sing this carol, what are we asking people to think about at Christmas time? |

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| **Post-session task**  Learn the carol off by heart. If possible, perform to an audience. |

**Other independent activities based on the book**

* Create a poster, sharing historical information about the carol for a display.
* Find out about the history of other carols that are favourites to sing.
* Use the Classic FM information about the carol to create ‘Found Poetry or an Altered Poem’. <https://www.poetry4kids.com/news/how-to-make-a-found-poem/>

**Resources**

**Lyrics**

Good King Wenceslas looked out

On the feast of Stephen,

When the snow lay round about

Deep and crisp and even;

Brightly shone the moon that night

Though the frost was cruel,

When a poor man came in sight,

Gath'ring winter fuel.

'Hither, page, and stand by me,

If thou know'st it, telling

Yonder peasant, who is he?

Where and what his dwelling?'

'Sire, he lives a good league hence,

Underneath the mountain,

Right against the forest fence,

By Saint Agnes' fountain.'

'Bring me flesh and bring me wine,

Bring me pine logs hither,

Thou and I will see him dine

When we bear them thither.'

Page and monarch forth they went,

Forth they went together,

Through the rude wind's wild lament

And the bitter weather.

'Sire, the night is darker now

And the wind blows stronger;

Fails my heart, I know not how,

I can go no longer.'

'Mark my footsteps, good my page,

Tread thou in them boldly:

Thou shalt find the winter's rage

Freeze thy blood less coldly.'

In his master's steps he trod,

Where the snow lay dinted;

Heat was in the very sod

Which the Saint had printed.

Therefore, Christian men, be sure

Wealth or rank possessing,

Ye who now will bless the poor

Shall yourselves find blessing.

**Question matrix**

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated