

Handwritten text in Pitman's shorthand on a grid background. The text is written in blue ink and appears to be a transcription of the Christmas story. It includes a large number '6)' on the left side of the page. The handwriting is dense and fills most of the page area.

The Christmas Story

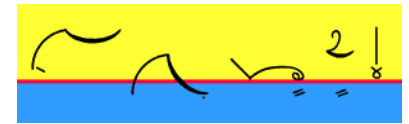
This is adapted from the Smile International Christmas Pictures & Cards activity book PDF (free download from www.smileinternational.org), hence the simple language used. Used with permission. These events can be found in the Gospel of Luke chapters 1 & 2.

Part 1 of 3

The Christmas Story. Mary was a young lady living in Nazareth. The angel Gabriel brought a message to Mary that she was chosen to have baby Jesus. This is sometimes called the "Annunciation" which means announcement.

In paintings, Mary is often shown wearing blue. Ordinary people could use a plant dye called indigo to make blue clothes. Dyes for really bright blue and purple were extremely expensive and only kings had them. This is why it is called Royal Blue. In some paintings Mary is shown wearing Royal Blue to honour her place in history as the mother of Jesus.

Mary married Joseph who was a carpenter. Joseph and Mary had to walk from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be registered for taxes. This was about the time that Mary's baby was due to be born. Nazareth is in the north of the country and Bethlehem is in the middle near Jerusalem. The distance between them is 112 kilometres or 70 miles.



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The journey through the hills and countryside would have taken about a week. The roads were mostly rough rocky tracks and not at all like our smooth roads. They may have taken a donkey, which was very sure-footed and able to carry people and bags over the rough ground.

There were lots of extra people in Bethlehem, who also came to be registered. All the guest rooms were full of these visitors, and Joseph and Mary could not find a room. They had to find somewhere else.

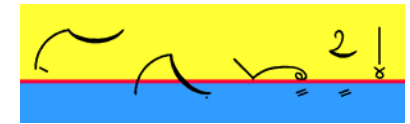
They may have stayed in a stable or a villager's house. In those days, people kept their animals in the lower part of the house at night, to keep them safe. The animals also provided warmth for the house!

This is where Mary gave birth to Jesus. The only place to put the baby was a manger, which is a wooden or carved stone box to hold the animals' food and hay. Manger comes from the French word for "eat".
(328 words) (Continued)

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Part 2 of 3

Hay is very good at staying warm and dry, so the baby was comfortable. In those times people wrapped newborn babies in strips of cloth called "swaddling clothes" which kept the baby warm, and made him or her feel safe and calm.

There were shepherds in the fields at night looking after their sheep. They had to keep watch all the time against wild animals such as lions, jackals and eagles, as well as robbers who might steal the sheep, or to help any sheep that got hurt.

Suddenly an angel appeared and told them that a special baby had been born in Bethlehem, who would bring peace and joy to the world. More angels appeared, praising and singing, and after a while they disappeared. The shepherds were amazed, and they believed what the angels said.

The shepherds decided to go into Bethlehem to find the baby. It was probably their home town and not far away. It is unlikely that they left the sheep unguarded. Some shepherds

may have stayed to look after them, or they may have taken them to a sheep pen in the town.

The hilly land around Bethlehem was used for food crops, olive trees, vineyards to make wine, and for grazing sheep. Nowadays there are still pasture fields around Bethlehem where shepherds look after their sheep.

The shepherds found Joseph and Mary, just as the angel had told them. It was polite to bring a gift when visiting and it is possible that they brought a lamb from their flock. When they left, they told everyone they met all about what happened that night.

The lamp commonly used in those times was a small bowl of olive oil, fish oil or animal fat (sometimes called "tallow"), with a lighted wick in a groove at one end. It gave the same light as a candle. This was the normal form of lighting for most people. Olive oil was best – animal fat was very smoky and smelly.

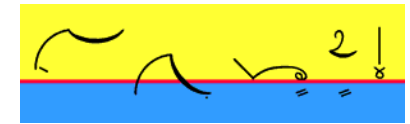
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Part 3 of 3

The wise men were priests from a country to the east, who studied the stars. They gave special meanings to the movements of stars. In their own country, kings and governors would come to them for answers to problems, because they were well-educated men.

When they saw the new star, they believed that a new king had been born. This would be a very important event and so they decided to make the long journey to find the new king, following the Christmas star. They probably arrived about two years after Jesus was born, as it was a very long journey.

They would have crossed the deserts and mountains on camels which can survive very well in the heat of the desert, they can eat tough plants and do not need to drink very often.

When they arrived they went to King Herod. King Herod did not want someone else to be king, so he told the wise men to tell him when they found the baby. He secretly wanted to kill the baby.

They followed the star and found Joseph, Mary and Jesus. We assume that, by this time, Joseph and his family were living in a house in Bethlehem.

The wise men brought gifts of gold, which could be used as money, and frankincense and myrrh, which are very expensive perfumes. These perfumes were made from the sap of certain trees. The sap drips out and dries hard into lumps, which can then be burned to make scent, just like we have scented candles. They can also be made into perfumed oils for people to wear.

These were special gifts that one would normally give to a king to show great respect. An angel warned the wise men not to tell King Herod anything, and so they went home another way. This made King Herod extremely angry.

Another angel told Joseph to take Mary and baby Jesus to Egypt until King Herod had died. After Herod's death, it was safe for them to return home to Nazareth. (339 words)