

Open the Book Start Up

What is Open the Book?

- A way of doing primary school assemblies by telling Bible stories.
- It's a resource produced by the Bible Society
- The Open the Book Team are known as 'storytellers'.
- The stories are told from the Lion Storyteller Bible with an accompanying handbook.
- Its goes through the Bible in a 3 year cycle.
- Open the book isn't teaching, explaining, discussing or evangelising, it's simply telling the story.
- It uses props and costumes.
- It's fun!



Practicalities

- Open the Book can be done with just two people, the storyteller Bible and handbook but a bigger team and presentation allows for more visual impact which will help the children to remember the story.
- A good number of storyteller is 7 or 8 with around 4 doing each assembly. That way there is spare capacity for holidays or sickness. Children can be involved for non-speaking parts.
- Each assembly is approximately 15 minutes plus preparation time of 1 to 1 ½ hours per assembly.

Getting Started

- Understand as much as you can about [Open the Book on the Bible Society website](#). This has far more detail and information about how to get started so this is a summary guide based on one Church's experience.
- Pray and identify people who you think would be good storytellers. There aren't particular skills that are required, just being able to read and have a go. Potential storytellers can be reassured that there is training available.
- Whilst considering the team consider who might be a good person to co-ordinate sourcing props and costumes. This might be someone who doesn't want to be a storyteller. It's been surprising who in the local community not just churchgoers have been willing to contribute if they have a particular skill. Also, the school 'Friends' group might help or children's craft sessions in school.
- Also consider what level of commitment you can offer, one assembly per week, one per month?
- Approach your local school. If it's a CofE school and / or your church already does assemblies then the way would hopefully be smooth. There is a promotional video on the OtB website to help a school or to recruit storytellers. OtB ticks Ofsted boxes, more about this on the website. The school may ask when you intend to start. Give yourself plenty of lead in time to allow for training, meeting safeguarding requirements and sourcing early props. You can reassure a Head Teacher that they can have a copy of the handbook so they know exactly what the OtB team will be saying. If doubts remain have a 3 session or a term probationary period.
- Once a team has been assembled and the school is agreeable contact OtB to organise a training session. The training is good quality. It's delivered by Scripture Union. They may require a minimum number of candidates for training in which case you might need to team

up with another Church or Deanery. The Diocese of Leeds Diocesan Children and Young Families Team also offer training – see below.

Safeguarding

- Storytellers will need to be DBS checked, interviewed, complete a self-assessment form and provide a reference. This sounds daunting but there are resources that make this straightforward which are available on the [Diocesan Safeguarding webpages](#) or your Area Safeguarding Adviser will be able to guide you.
- Your Church Safeguarding Officer will be able to organise the DBS checks.
- Arrange a time to interview each storyteller. There is a pro forma of questions among the Diocesan resources.
- When you interview each storyteller ask them to fill in the self-assessment form available from the Diocesan website.
- Also at the interview give them the template reference form available from the Diocesan website and ask them to have this completed by someone and returned.
- The interview is to determine the person's suitability to work with children rather than a job interview to determine the person's ability.
- Once this has been done and no safeguarding concerns have arisen the PCC can be recommended to appoint the storytellers.

Training

- The Scripture Union training is free but the travel expenses of the trainer needs to be met. The training includes OtB Code of Practice, Safeguarding, explains the handbook and gets you doing a sample session.
- [Anne Carter](#), part of the [Diocesan Children and Young Families Team](#), and first point of contact for the Ripon Area can also advise and train people as well as equip local churches to take Open the Book into schools.
- A key thing to bear in mind is to stick to the script. This avoids people putting their own interpretation on the story. Also, if a child misunderstands something, tells their parents and the parents complain to the school the Head can refer to the handbook and say this is what was actually said and iron out the misunderstanding.
- The handbook includes an introduction to the assembly and enables a period of reflection at the end which means that anyone can do it. The assembly concludes with a prayer which is done sensitively, the script says 'I'm going to say a prayer and if you would like to make it your own then say 'Amen' at the end.'

Concluding the Preparation

- Once all this is done purchase the appropriate quantity of Storyteller Bible and year 1 handbooks.
- The Storytellers register as such on the OtB website.
- Have an act of commissioning in Church. OtB provide liturgy and certificates.
- Start gathering props.
- Plan your first rehearsal date.