



## You will need...

- Reindeer costume
- Wise man costume
- Doctor's coat + stethoscope
- Mary Costume
- Baby Jesus in manger
- King Herod costume
- Advisor costume
- Manuscript + talc
- Star on a stick
- Bible to read from

## The story

| Character/Actions | Lines  |
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| Leader            | Good morning, it is great to be here for this Assembly. My name is X, I'm here from X Church   |
|                   | Christmas is on the way, and that means everything has just an added tinge of excitement. Christmas is jam packed with so many reasons to be happy- special food, huge presents, time with families but there's more.<br>There are surprises at Christmas. In fact, you could say that it is the season of surprises. Every year there are so many surprises. The presents are surprising, Father Christmas is surprising and people are surprising. |



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| <p>Rudolf the reindeer comes on looking a little embarrassed<br/>Rudolf shrugs and walks off.</p> | <p>It's the time of year when people you've known for so long, do really surprising things. At any other time of the year, no one would ever dress up like this.</p> <p>But at Christmas everyone goes a little odd, and dresses funny, acts funny and is just a little, well... surprising!</p>  |
|   | <p>In fact the one thing at Christmas that isn't surprising is the old nativity story. We've heard it so many times before that there is absolutely nothing surprising about it.</p> <p>But there are just a few surprises. We're going to tell you the story of the visit of the wise men to the baby Jesus. We all know that story. But we're going to tell you what really happened, what is written in Matthew's Gospel, the eye witness account of that night in the Middle East, about 2000 years ago. We've found three huge surprises. Let's be surprised together!</p> |
| <p>Wise man walks on<br/><br/>Wise man walks off</p>  | <p>Here's the first surprise.</p> <p>When the wise men went looking for the new born Baby Jesus, they asked the obvious question "Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews?"</p> <p>Where had the King of the Jews been born?</p>  |
|   | <p>Where would you expect a King to be born? From the very beginning a King would be surrounded by wealth, in a royal bedroom. What would that look like? Imagine what that room would be like- warm, covered in gold, surrounded by servants?</p>  |
| <p>Doctor comes on with stethoscope, and looks professional<br/><br/>Doctor leaves</p>            | <p>Or perhaps a King would be born in the finest hospital available. In a completely clean room, and the very best hospital would be in the very largest city in the most important nation on earth. So perhaps he was born in Rome, the centre of the mighty Roman empire, or in Athens, the centre of the cultured Greek empire.</p>  |



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| <p>Mary comes on with manger and a baby.</p> <p>Put the manger on the edge of the stage and Mary leaves.</p>                                    | <p>This King wasn't born in a palace or a hospital or even in a city</p> <p>Reading from Matthew 2:1 "Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea". Jesus was born in a tiny village, miles from anywhere. In Luke's eyewitness account we find out that his mother, Mary wrapped her new born in cloths and laid him in an animal's eating trough. Surprising! But then Jesus would never be a normal King. He never lived in a palace. It's as if he wanted to be as normal as possible, so that normal people like you and me, would know that he came for us.</p> |
|   | <p>That's the first surprise. Where had the King been born- in an eating trough in a tiny village.</p> <p>Here's the second surprise.</p> <p>How do you think the wise men were going to find where the King had been born?</p>  |
| <p>Wise man comes on reading a map</p> <p><i>King Herod</i> comes on</p> <p>Wise man:<br/>Wise man leaves and quickly changes into advisor.</p> | <p>They did a very sensible thing, they went to the most important person, the King of that country, King Herod. He must know if another King has been born and so they asked him.</p> <p>"Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews?"</p>   |
|   | <p>King Herod went berserk! How could there be another King? And one people had travelled so far to see. He needed to find this King, and get rid of him! He didn't want any competition. So he needed some help.</p>  |



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| <p>Herod:</p> <p>Advisor comes on with a manuscript and hands it to Herod.</p> <p>Herod Blows dust off manuscript and reads:</p> <p>King Herod leaves the manuscript on the floor and walks off. Wise man comes back on . Wise man picks up his star on a stick and follows it, taking it to the manger.</p> | <p>“Bring me the chief priests. Bring me the teachers of law. Bring me my advisors. Bring me anyone! Where is this King meant to be born?”</p> <p>They found an old prophecy that had been written 700 years before by the prophet Micah. Micah was a messenger for God. God gave him a message to give to God’s people but this particular message wouldn’t make sense until that very day.</p> <p>“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel”.</p> <p><b>BETHLEHEM!</b> He’s been born in Bethlehem.</p> |
| <p>Reading from the Bible</p> <p>Holding up manuscript and star.</p>   | <p>Let’s read what happened next: “After they had heard the King, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the East went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was”</p> <p>There’s the second surprise. How did the wise men find where the king had been born? A 700-year-old message from God and a star! That’s not a normal navigation technique!</p>  |
|  | <p>This baby must have been someone very special. This manuscript and star were straight from God. Only God can predict the future and move stars around the sky. These were God’s way of saying that this baby had been sent straight from Him, with a very special job to do. He had to be. How else do you explain it?</p> <p>That was the second surprise.</p>  |



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| <p>Mary walks on and sits next to the baby.</p>   | <p>Here's the third, and final surprise. What did the wise men do when they first saw the baby, called Jesus? What do you normally do when you meet a baby? Maybe you've got a baby brother or sister. Perhaps you remember what you did when you first met them? Did you hold them? Or maybe you stroked their head? Or held their hand? Or gave them a present, something special, to remember that moment. Let's read what the wise men did.</p>   |
| <p>Wise man drops to his knees and bows down.</p> | <p>"On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and bowed down and worshipped him."</p>  |
|   | <p>Have you ever seen anyone do that when they first saw a baby? What does that tell us about this baby? He's like God himself. Only God gets worshipped. No one would want to worship a person, let alone a baby. God had become a baby. It's hard to believe. But I guess with God, anything is possible. Shall we put our surprises together?</p>  |
|   | <p>A King who was born in a tiny village in the middle of nowhere, and laid in an eating trough. This was a King who was ordinary, who was like you and me. He came for us. A King who had a 700-year-old message and a star to direct visitors to him. God wanted everyone to find him, to know that a special King had been born.</p> <p>A King who wise men worshipped. God himself had become a man. This baby was surprising. The surprise of Christmas. The reason for Christmas.</p> |



But why?

Well his name is the clue. "Jesus" it means "God saves". This surprising King was born to save, but that's the Easter story.

I hope you have a wonderful, and ever so slightly surprising Christmas.

Let's pray. I'm going to say a short prayer, I'm going to put my hands together and close my eyes to help me to concentrate. You might not want to pray - that's fine, why not just sit quietly.