



Why do Christians go on pilgrimage?

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Learning objective:

To understand and explain why Christians go on pilgrimage

Success criteria:

- I can explain why Christians go on pilgrimage
- I can discuss the difference between a pilgrimage and a holiday
- I can talk about what a spiritual journey is
- I can discuss why pilgrims might travel to Westminster Abbey



Think and discuss

Have you been on any journeys today?



What other journeys do we go on?



Think and discuss

Think about when you last went on a school trip.

How did you get there?

Where did you go?



Why did you go on the trip?



A pilgrimage is a special journey.

Which of these might be a place people would go on pilgrimage? Think about why they would go there.





A pilgrimage is a journey to a holy place.

Special Places



Holy Places



A holy place is one dedicated to God.



A person who goes on a pilgrimage is called a 'pilgrim'.
How is a pilgrim different from a person going on holiday to a special place?

Pilgrim



Holiday maker





Spiritual journeys

Part of what makes a pilgrim's journey different to someone going on holiday is that it is not just a physical journey to a place. It is also a **spiritual** journey. But what does that mean?

To find out, we are going to go on a short walk. While we walk, think about how you have changed since you started this school.





The physical journey was the one we made with our bodies



The spiritual journey was the one we made in our minds, thinking about how we have changed.

Discuss: Did anyone notice anything on the physical journey that helped them remember how they had changed?

Your spiritual journey helped you to remember, reflect on how you have changed, and maybe you thought about how you might change in the future too!



Spiritual journeys

When a pilgrim goes on their journey, they might spend a lot of time thinking, looking at nature and the world around them as they travel, and praying.

What might pilgrims say to God and think about on their pilgrimage?





Pilgrims might be saying

Sorry

or

Thank
you

They might ask for God's guidance and help or blessing. They might be looking for an answer or thinking about what to do next in their life.

They use their journey as a time to think, and travel to a holy place to reflect on these things.



Why here?

One of the places a Christian pilgrim might travel to is a Cathedral or an Abbey.

Why might they go here?





Westminster Abbey

St Edward the Confessor who became king in 1042 said that if he became the King, he would make a pilgrimage to Rome to thank God for making him King.

But when he became King, he realised that if he left England, someone else might try and become King in his place. So he wrote to the Pope to ask permission **not** to go on the pilgrimage.





Westminster Abbey



The Pope said that was okay, as long as Edward built a special church in honour of St Peter as he wasn't coming to see his tomb. It took about 20 years to build, but that church was Westminster Abbey (it's also called St Peter's!).



So why do Christians go to Westminster Abbey on pilgrimage?

One of the main reasons people go on pilgrimage to Westminster Abbey is to visit the shrine of St Edward the Confessor. But why is he so important to pilgrims?

Read the stories and answer these two questions:
What made Edward the Confessor special?
Why might Christian pilgrims want to visit his shrine?



The Canterbury Tales



In Westminster Abbey there is the grave of a writer called Geoffrey Chaucer. He wrote a very famous story about pilgrims between 1387 and 1400. It is called 'The Canterbury Tales'. Canterbury is a cathedral people go on pilgrimage to.



Who went on pilgrimage?

Which of these pilgrims he wrote about might have travelled on pilgrimage together?



The Knight

A brave and experienced soldier



The Wife of Bath

Likes expensive clothes, talking and arguing



The Shipman

Well-travelled, steals wine



The Head Nun

Kind and charitable, speaks French



The Parson

Poor but gives to the needy, preaches in Church



The Doctor

Healthy, good at his job, loves money



They all travelled together!

When Christians go on pilgrimage, it doesn't matter who they are. When people go on pilgrimage everyone is doing the same thing for the same reason. Sometimes the journey would be very difficult (they didn't have cars and planes then) but everyone was also on their own spiritual journey too.



The Knight
A brave and experienced soldier



The Wife of Bath
Likes expensive clothes, talking and arguing



The Shipman
Well-travelled, steals wine



The Head Nun
Kind and charitable, speaks French



The Parson
Poor but gives to the needy, preaches in Church



The Doctor
Healthy, good at his job, loves money

This is still true today, any Christian can go on a pilgrimage, but they don't have to.



How would you recognise another pilgrim?

What do you wear on your school trip?

Pilgrims used to wear a shell on their clothes to show that they were pilgrims, and on a special journey for God. Other people knew that they might need food or somewhere to stay.

It's a bit like you wearing your school jumper on your trip!





Why do Christians go to Westminster Abbey today?



They go to visit the shrine (grave) of Edward the Confessor as he is said to have performed miracles.



Christians might come to the Abbey to pray, sometimes they do this at the Shrine too.



Christians could also praise and worship God in the Abbey. They might thank him for things or be asking him to help them.



Pilgrimage

Unlike some religions, Christians do not **have** to go on a pilgrimage. Lots of Christians choose to because they want to have their own spiritual journey.

Cathedrals in England are places that pilgrims might go.

What would you say thank you or sorry for?





Quick Quiz

How is a pilgrimage different from a holiday?

What is the difference between a physical and spiritual journey?

What might Christians do while on pilgrimage?

Why do Christians travel to Westminster Abbey on pilgrimage?

Why was St Edward the Confessor special?





Information for teachers

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