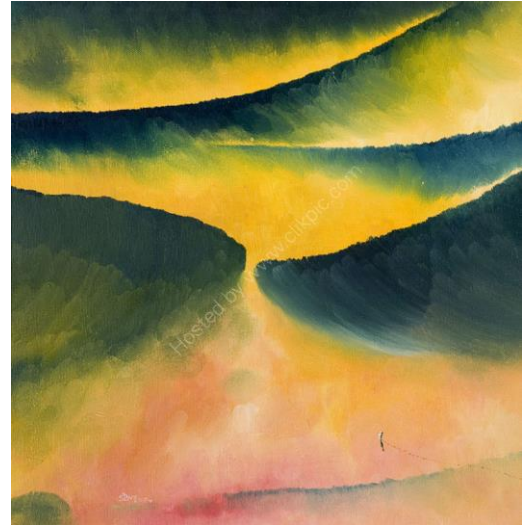


Lent Reflection on Art – Week 1

Jesus in the Wilderness, Neil Thorogood

Teacher Notes

This reflection is based on a painting by Neil Thorogood, a minister in the United Reformed Church. It is part of a series called [‘The Bible from the Air’](#) and captures something of the loneliness and isolation Jesus must have felt during 40 days in the Wilderness. The video [‘40’ by Si Smith](#) also conveys the sense of 40 days being a long time to spend on your own! This reflection explores the benefits of creating time and space to be still and to reflect.



Explain to the children:

Slide 1:

Do you remember the first lockdown last year when the streets were almost completely empty? People talked about how still and quiet everywhere was. Some people really liked it; others found it unsettling. Do you like silence? Could you cope with being on your own with no family or friends or pets to keep you company? How would you get on? What if you had no phone, no music, no games console – what would you miss most? What would you find most difficult? Would there be anything good about it? Would you enjoy having time to be still and reflect and listen to your thoughts? Why / Why not?

Slide 2:

How does this painting make you feel? Calm and peaceful? Or disturbed and anxious? Are the colours relaxing and soothing, or ominous and unsettling? Why do you think that?

It's called 'Jesus in the Wilderness,' who can spot the figure of Jesus? (It's in the bottom right-hand corner, you can see the trail of his footprints in the sand.)

What can you remember about Jesus in the wilderness? Remind them that after Jesus was baptised, he went out to the wilderness to think and pray about what God wanted him to do. He spent 40 days thinking about what he was going to teach people about God's plan and what sort of leader he was going to be.

Why do you think the artist has painted it this way? What was he trying to say about Jesus' time in the wilderness? Was it restful or troubling? Comfortable or challenging?

Slide 3:

Another artist, Si Smith, has put together a short animation called 40, to try and show what it must have been like for Jesus to spend 40 days on his own in the wilderness. Watch the film quietly and think about what Jesus would have experienced.

Slide 4:

Give the children a minute (time them!) to think about the video they've just seen and to come up with a question starting with the words 'I wonder...' (I wonder what it was like to..., I wonder whether Jesus felt..., I wonder why the artist decided to....)

Slide 5:

Jesus needed time on his own to listen to God and to work out what he was going to do next. The gospel writers tell us that he would often get up early, before anyone else, and go somewhere quiet where he could be still and pray.

Many people today try to do make space in the day when they can be alone and listen and reflect. Some people call it prayer, others call it meditation or mindfulness or just 'peace and quiet.'

What do you think about this idea? Do you have a special place where you can be by yourself? Maybe in your bedroom, or the bottom of the garden, or a den or hiding place? People say that just a few minutes of quiet can help us be calmer, think more clearly and be more creative. What do you think?

Closing prayer

Slide 6:

For our final prayer, you might like to close your eyes or look at the picture of Jesus in the wilderness. If you'd like to make it your prayer, you can say amen at the end.

Dear God,
Thank you for all the people and fun and excitement in our lives.
Sometimes life can feel too busy and too full.
Show us how to take time to be quiet and still.
Help us feel calm and peaceful.
Amen.