

Comprehension Workbook 10

# Life in a Monastery



Find out about the meaning of stories and articles

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# Christian faith

Matches the requirements of the Literacy Strategy and designed to integrate with the study of world religions. (This material is independent of any specific text book and can be used alongside any publisher's books including our Christian Faith, Church, Christian art and writing and Christian holy days books.)

## Contents

### Unit 10: Life in a Monastery

	<b>Life in a Monastery</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>Understanding words</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>Finding key words</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Summarising</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>Sequencing</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>Get to the facts (AF 2-3)</b>	<b>8</b>
	<b>Whys and wherefores (AF 4-5)</b>	<b>9</b>
	<b>Opinions matter (AFs 6-7)</b>	<b>10</b>
	<b>Talking it through</b>	<b>11</b>
	<b>Make a story...</b>	<b>12</b>
	<b>Print the story (from PDF)</b>	<b>13</b>



# Life in a Monastery

There are many different types of monastery. Each type has different practices, such as hours of silence and set prayer times. This is a typical day in the life of a traditional Benedictine monastery.

6:00 am. The rising bell rings, waking us up for the day. I dress, wash and shave and go downstairs to the monastery church.

6:30 am. VIGILS The first worship service of the day. It begins with the words, "Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall announce your praise."

7:00 am. Breakfast. This is a silent meal. I drink tea and eat toast and marmite. Others have oatmeal or cereal.

7:30 am. LAUDS The second service of the day takes place at first light. This is a reminder that God sent Jesus to be the Light of the world.

8:00 am. This is the time for "lectio divina". We spend time in our rooms reading scripture and in personal prayer.

9:00 am. TERCE and MASS. The third worship service of the day. We sing three psalms and celebrate mass together.

10:00 am. The first work period of the day. Today I am working in the monastery tea room, cooking and serving tea and cakes. Other jobs include working in the garden, cleaning, teaching novices and showing visitors around.

1:00 pm. SEXT. The fourth service of the day is very short, just a hymn, three short psalms, a reading and a prayer.

1:15 pm. We all eat dinner together in the refectory. We sing grace together but do not talk during the meal. While we eat, one monk acts as reader. The reading is always a book on a religious theme.

1:45 pm. We relax over a cup of tea or coffee.

2:15 pm. NONE. The fifth service of the day is made up of just three psalms.

2:30 pm. Afternoon work. I am working in the laundry. Novices, who are monks in training, may use this time to study Latin or take lessons in the prayers we use.

5:30 pm. The community meets for tea. This is a time to talk with monastery guests and discuss our day.

6:00 pm. VESPERS. The sixth worship service of the day. It begins with the words, "O God, come to my assistance. O Lord, make haste to help me...", spoken in Latin. Then we sing several hymns. After this there is a reading from the Bible and we sing a prayer song called the Magnificat. Then a ceremony called the Benediction, which includes singing ancient hymns written by St Thomas Aquinas, prayers and blessings.

7:00 pm. We eat supper while listening to the reader. Tonight the reader starts with a chapter from Saint Benedict's Rule. These are the rules and guidelines for our order.

8:00 pm. COMPLINE. This is the last worship service of the day. It begins with the words, "Now Lord, let your servant depart in peace." Then we sing the song of Simeon, the old man whose life was prolonged by the Lord until his eyes had seen the salvation prepared for all peoples. We give thanks for the mercy we have received today, and pray for a quiet night and a perfect end to the day. Then it is off to our rooms for quiet contemplation and personal prayer.

10:00 pm. Lights out. The day is at an end.



# Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

**a** Write a sentence in which you found the word 'commandment'.

**b** From that sentence, write what you think 'commandment' means.

**c** Write a new sentence using the word 'commandment'.

**d** Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'commandment'.

**e** What is an example of a 'commandment'.



# Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

Key word	Synonym (similar word)
Example: special	exceptional



3

# Summarising

(the gist of the story)

To summarise means to rewrite the story in a shorter version using as many of our key words from Task 2 as needed.

**1** Write a heading for your summary.

**2** Now write the main idea in one sentence.  
e.g. "This story tells us..."

**3** Now add some detail to the main idea by writing more sentences after it.

**Finally,  
can you rewrite your  
summary to make it better?**

- 1. Look out for errors such as using the same word too often – use alternatives.**
- 2. Make sure you have summarised the author's purpose in your OWN words.**
- 3. Make sure your summary is in a logical order.**
- 4. Is your summary informative AND interesting to others?**

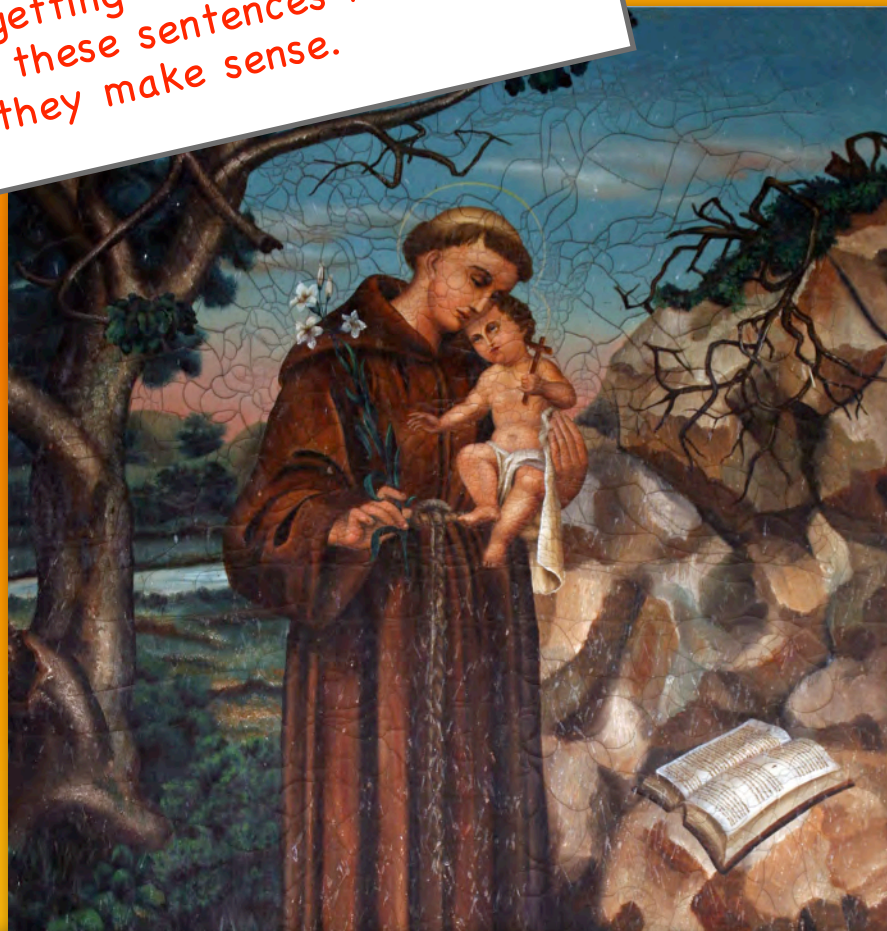
**There is  
nothing wrong  
with rewriting; even  
the best authors  
rewrite their  
work.**



123  
4

# Sequencing

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.



The community meets for tea.

It begins with the words, "Now Lord, let your servant depart in peace."

The second service of the day takes place at first light.

Then we sing the song of Simeon, the old man whose life was prolonged by the Lord until his eyes had seen the salvation prepared for all peoples.

We spend an hour in our rooms reading scripture and in personal prayer.

The fifth service of the day is made up of just three psalms.



# Get to the facts

Answer these questions to see how much you know about the facts of the story.



Write a sentence to answer each of these questions:

- (a) When does the third worship service take place?
- (b) What is the name of the final worship service of the day?
- (c) What are some different jobs in the monastery?
- (d) What happens during the fourth worship service of the day?
- (e) What happens while the monks eat?





# Whys and wherefores

Answer these questions to see how much you know about the meanings in the story and how it was written.

1 Why does the second service of the day take place at first light?

2 How much free time do the monks have?

3 What do the monks spend most of their time doing?

4 Are the monks free to talk during meals?



# Opinions matter

Answer these questions to give your views and to develop the story.



1 Why do you think the monks do not speak during meals?

2 Do you think the monastery day is too strict?

3 Why is it important for the monks to spend time in work as well as prayer?

4 What is the purpose of what monks do at 8.00am?

5 Some daily worship services are very short – what do you think the purpose of these short services is?





# Talking it through

It often helps if a group of people get together and discuss a problem.

## Discussion topic: Monastery Life

Life in a monastery is very regimented – most of the day is planned out and there is not much free time. Do you think you would like this type of life? Why or why not? Do some parts of monastery appeal to you more than others? What do you think would be the hardest parts of monastery life for you?



# Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.

(Source: Wikipedia)



## Monastic Life

You are spending some time in a monastery. Describe how you spend your day and how you feel about life in the monastery.



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6:30 am. VIGILS The first worship service of the day. It begins with the words, "Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall announce your praise." This is followed by a singing of psalms.

7:00 am. Breakfast. This is a silent meal. I drink tea and eat toast and marmite. Others have oatmeal or cereal.

7:30 am. LAUDS The second service of the day takes place at first light. This is a reminder that God sent Jesus to be the Light of the world. It begins with the reading of a short Bible verse, then a hymn, psalms of praise and a prayer song called the Benedicte are sung.

8:00 am. This is the time for spending in our rooms reading scripture and in personal prayer.

9:00 am. TERCE and MASS. The third worship service of the day. We sing three psalms and celebrate mass together.

10:00 am. The first work period of the day. Today I am working in the monastery tea room, cooking and serving tea and cakes. Other jobs include working in the garden, cleaning, teaching novices, cooking and showing visitors around.

1:00 pm. SEXT. The fourth service of the day is very short, just a hymn, three short psalms, a reading and a prayer.

1:15 pm. The monks all eat dinner together in the refectory. We sing grace together but do not talk during the meal. While we eat, one monk acts as reader. The reading is always a book on a religious theme.

1:45 pm. The monks relax over a cup of tea or coffee.

2:15 pm. NONE. The fifth service of the day is made up of just three psalms. It is a way for us to refocus on God in the middle of our working day.

2:30 pm. Afternoon work. I am working in the laundry. Novices, who are monks in training, may use this time to study Latin or take lessons in the prayers we use.

5:30 pm. The community meets for tea. This is a time to talk with monastery guests and discuss our day.

6:00 pm. VESPER. The sixth worship service of the day. It begins with the words, "O God, come to my assistance. O Lord, make haste to help me...", spoken in Latin. Then we sing several hymns. After this there is a reading from the Bible and we sing a prayer song called the Magnificat. Then a ceremony called the Benediction, which includes singing ancient hymns written by St Thomas Aquinas, prayers and blessings.

7:00 pm. We eat supper while listening to the reader. Tonight the reader starts with a chapter from Saint Benedict's Rule. These are the rules and guidelines for our order.

8:00 pm. COMPLINE. This is the last worship service of the day. It begins with the words, "Now Lord, let your servant depart in peace." Then we sing the song of Simeon, the old man whose life was prolonged by the Lord until his eyes had seen the salvation prepared for all peoples. We give thanks for the mercy we have received today, and pray for a quiet night and a perfect end to the day. We sing a final devotional song to Mary and pray for her protection. Then it is off to our rooms for quiet contemplation and personal prayer.

10:00 pm. Lights out. The day is at an end.