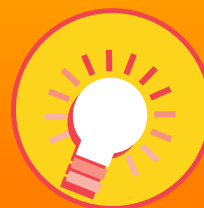


Comprehension Workbook 7

Symbols

(the story of the Chi Rho)



Find out about the meaning of stories and articles

CurriculumVisions

VisionMasters

Comprehension Workbook 7

Symbols

(the story of the Chi Rho)



Find out about the meaning of stories and articles

understand • key words • summarise • sequencing • AF2-3 • AF4-5 • AF6-7 • discuss • create

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.)

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Symbols - the story of Chi Rho

Chi and Rho (XP) are the names for first two letters of the word "Christ" in the Greek language - ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ. Sometimes the Chi-Rho is called the Monogram of Christ or the Chrismon.

Chi-Rho use comes from a time when Constantine was emperor of Rome. He was the first Christian emperor and he had a vision that told him to use the symbol at the front of his armies. Later, he allowed Christians to worship openly for the first time. The symbol that helped Constantine became an official symbol of Rome and of Christianity.

The story goes that in 312 AD, Constantine (who lived from 272 to 337) was about to lead his army in a battle with his rival Maxentius. The winner would become leader of the whole Roman empire. Constantine believed in the Roman gods, but he was worried about the coming battle. He was worried that the Roman gods might prefer Maxentius. Constantine's mother was a Christian and Constantine knew about the way that Christians prayed to one God. So Constantine started to pray to God for help. As he prayed, Constantine saw the Chi-Rho in the sky above the sun with the words "in this sign you will be the victor".



That night in a dream Constantine saw Jesus Christ telling him to use the Chi-Rho to protect his army in battle. Constantine ordered the chi-rho symbol to be placed on the front of his soldiers' shields – and he won the battle. The following year, Constantine issued the Edict of Milan which was a law allowing Christians to openly practice their faith and returned property that had been confiscated from Christians. During his reign, Constantine also had the Chi-Rho placed on coins.

The ancient Roman historian Eusebius described the Chi-Rho symbol designed by Constantine before the battle and used as a standard:

"Now it was made in the following manner. A long spear, overlaid with gold, together with another bar, made the shape of the cross. On the top of this was fixed a wreath of gold and precious stones; and within this, the symbol of the Saviour's name, two letters indicating the name of Christ by means of its initial characters, the letter P and an X in its centre."

Eventually, Constantine converted to Christianity, making Christianity the official religion of Rome. The Chi-Rho became part of the official imperial insignia and was used on helmets and shields of Roman soldiers.



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 'symbol'.

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

c Write a new sentence using the word 'symbol'.

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

e Draw a picture illustrating the idea of a 'symbol'.



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: whole	entire

3

Summarising

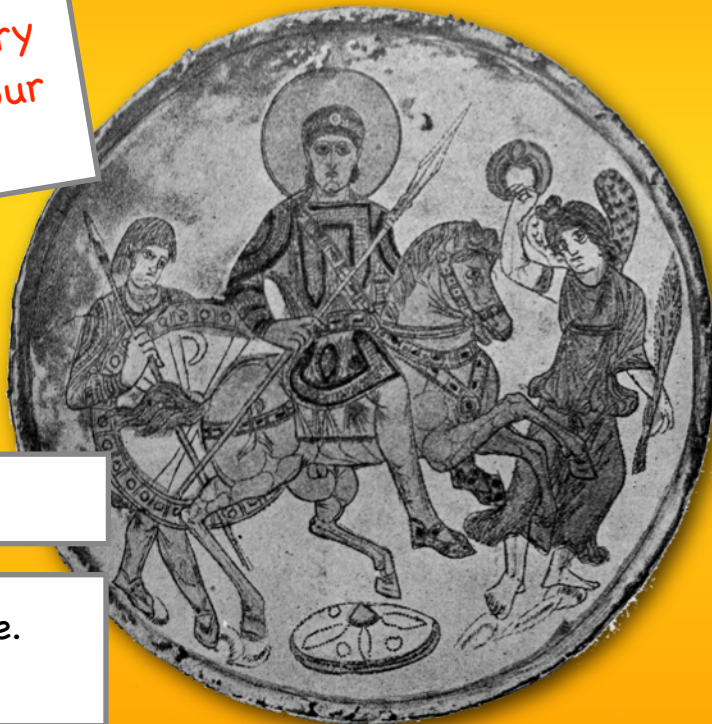
(the gist of the story)

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.



Constantine's shield with XP in it Look to the left

**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.

As he prayed, Constantine saw the Chi-Rho in the sky above the sun with the words "conquer by this".

Constantine issued the Edict of Milan which was a law allowing Christians to openly practise their faith.

The Chi-Rho became part of the official imperial insignia and was used on helmets and shields of Roman soldiers.

In 312 AD, Constantine (lived from 272 to 337) was about to lead his army in a battle.

During his reign, Constantine also had the Chi-Rho placed on coins.

Constantine ordered the Chi-Rho symbol to be placed on the front of his soldiers' shields.



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) What are Chi and Rho?
- (b) What does the Chi-Rho stand for?
- (c) What did Constantine see in the sky?
- (d) Who described the Chi-Rho symbol designed by Constantine?
- (e) What did Jesus tell Constantine in a dream?



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 did Constantine place the Chi-Rho on his soldiers' shields?

2 Was Constantine already familiar with Christianity before the battle?

3 Draw a picture of the Chi-Rho that Constantine designed and label the parts.

4 Why did Constantine pray to God?



Opinions matter

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

1 Do you think Constantine believed his dream?

2 Do you think winning the battle helped Constantine to believe in Jesus Christ?

3 Did Constantine's success in beating Maxentius make him feel differently about Christianity?

4 Constantine had two visions about the Chi-Rho, why do you think one vision was not enough to convince him to use the symbol?

5 Was winning the battle an important moment in the history of Christianity?





Talking it through

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



Discussion topic: Visions

His visions of Jesus played an important role in Constantine's decision to use the Chi-Rho and later to convert to Christianity. There is no way to know if these visions were real or are just a story. Constantine may even have made them up in order to show that Jesus preferred him over Maxentius. Do you think it is important to know if these visions were real?



Make a story...

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



Chi-Rho

If you look at the vestments that priests wear, you may notice that they have the Chi-Rho symbol embroidered on them. Imagine you are the priest shown here and someone comes up and asks what the symbol on their vestments means...

(Now you describe what your reply might be.)

Symbols - the story of the Chi Rho

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