



A Christmas Donkey's Diary

Information for Teachers/Parents:

This is a new and interactive way to tell the Christmas story written by Tony Bower, York Schools and Youth Trust.

Travel with our donkey detective from Nazareth to Bethlehem as he seeks to unravel the Christmas story. Pick up clues along the way and store them on his saddle.

The following script is in three parts, each taking ~12 minutes.

Children should first assemble their very own 3D donkey and cut out the 6 clues ready to be glued onto his saddle bags.

Download the donkey cut-out sheet here:
godwhospeaks.uk/the-christmas-donkey



Introduction

We're going to listen to the story of the very first Christmas, as told by . . . Mary and Joseph's donkey!

Listen carefully to the donkey's Christmas diary. Can you spot the six clues he picks up along the way? You have a picture of each of the six clues. Stick them to his saddle bags to help him to remember them.

He may invite you to join in with some of his songs too!

Part One

There are three things you need to know about me.

I can understand what humans say.
 I have a very curious mind, like a detective.
 I love eating beetroot.

My story begins in the middle. I know that might sound a bit confusing, but I also know that children are very clever and like to work things out.
 It was in the middle of the day, and it was hotter than burning sand. It was so red hot that I was hiding from the sun in the shady part of the stable. My mouth was giving out the biggest yawn ever.
 Have you ever seen a donkey yawn?
 Donkeys have the most amazing teeth.
 I can bite through a piece of wood.
 Well... I think I can bite through a piece of wood.
 I can definitely bite through a bag of beetroot without opening the bag.



I did it once and my master was not very happy.
It was in the middle of the day and in the middle of my yawn that I sensed something I had never sensed before.
I knew this was something special and something extraordinary because my fur was tingling as if a family of mice were tickling my ears.
There were no mice in sight, so I knew that it wasn't the mice.

Something beyond special was happening.

Something beyond what humans can sense was happening.

I saw a glimpse and a glimmer.
I saw a light begin to shimmer.
I felt my fur start to shiver.
I felt my ears begin to quiver.

Dazzling!
Blinding!
Dazzling!
Blinding!

Light golden and silver
Shimmering and shining

The sky seemed to be smiling.
The world seemed to be singing.

My hooves wanted to dance, and I don't know how to dance!

A feather lighter than any feather floated into my stable.
A feather brighter than a star landed in my lowly stable.

The feather was like nothing I had ever seen on earth,
The feather was nothing that lived on this earth.

My donkey hooves were beginning to stomp the ground.
My donkey hooves were beginning to make a loud sound.
To try and help you understand what it looked like and what it felt like I have made up this little poem for you to join in with.

It goes like this...

There was a blinding... FLASH!
Like a huge lightning... FLASH!
There was an amazing... FLASH!
World changing in a...FLASH!

I made it easy and simple for you to remember by using the same word. I think you will learn it in a...FLASH! (I think I got my humour from my really great grandma, but more of her story later)



Right, everyone here we go:

There was a blinding... FLASH!
Like a huge lightning... FLASH!
There was an amazing... FLASH!
In a world changing... FLASH!

I was seeing stars spinning in my eyes.
I was spinning round in the stable.

Have you ever seen a donkey spin?

All I can say is, it's a good job I hadn't eaten a big bag of beetroot!

The spinning soon stopped, and my eyes began to adjust. I remember looking down at the ground and staring at the feather as bright as a star. I nudged it with my nose and sniffed it a good number of times.

It smelled heavenly.

As I said before, something beyond special was happening and this was an important **clue**.

I decided to keep it with me always, so I scooped it up in my mouth and dropped it **in one of my saddle bags**.

[Children to attach clue to their cut-out donkey]

I was still dazzled and dazed by all of the sights and smells when I heard singing.

It was Mary.

She was singing in the house.
She has a wonderful voice and is the kindest human I know.
She seemed to float out of the house. Her face was shining. I could see that from my stable. I have seen humans smile, which is something I would love to do, but when I try to open my mouth wide...it doesn't look like I am smiling. Anyway, as I was telling you, I have seen humans smile, but never like this. I have seen humans be happy, but never like this.

Mary was shining from the inside out.

She was almost dancing on air as she entered my little stable. Her face was brighter than a full harvest moon.

'I am the maidservant of God most high' she told me.

I just listened carefully, not sure what she was telling me.

'May it be to me as you say. That's what I told the angel.'



Mary looked at me and hugged me. I could feel something different about her, but I didn't know what.

An angel!

That's what the light was all about. That's what the feather is. That's what Mary's talking about. That's what I had glimpsed and seen.
An angel.

But what did the angel say to Mary? Why is she beaming like the sun? What is going on?

That night I slept with an angel's feather under my big head. It felt wonderful. I had slept in heavenly peace. I was still tingling with excitement from seeing the angel. The only other donkey that I know who has seen an angel is my great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, grannie.

My lovely grannie had a message to give to a messenger. Imagine that! A message, as in talking, as in she spoke, as in she used words, as in 'please pass the beetroot', only that wasn't the message. My grannie SPOKE! Sorry for shouting, but it is still amazingly exciting to tell her story.

It was a long time ago. A very long time ago. Think of what a long time ago is, well it was even longer than that. My grannie did three strange things. I will tell you what she did, and then I am going to ask you to guess why.

Strange thing number one: She ran into a field. You might think a donkey going into a field is not very strange, but my grannie bolted faster than a lightning bolt. Well, maybe not that fast, but she moved quickly. That is strange because you might have noticed, and you might well know that we donkeys tend to plod along not dash along. My grannie dashed.

Strange thing number two: My grannie trapped her master, the messenger, against a wall. He didn't ask to be trapped against a wall. He didn't like being trapped against a wall. This was not what anyone wanted, including the wall.

Strange thing number three: My grannie laid down. My grannie laid down flat on the floor. She refused to budge and no matter how much she was given a very strong nudge by her master, she still refused.
That is strange.

The big question is, why? Why do you think grannie did all of those three strange things. Before you quickly say the word angel, I know you know I said my grannie saw an angel, but the big, big question is, what was the angel doing that made grannie run into a field, trap her master against a wall and squat on the ground.

I think it would be a good idea if you shared your ideas with me and I will see if you get the right answer.

[Discussion time]



Interesting. Very, very interesting.
Now let me tell you what she saw.

A sword.

Yes, I know, a sword!

An angel standing in the road, blocking the way, with a sword saying, No Way.

The angel had a strong message to send to my grannie's master. God was not pleased that grannie's master was going to say words that were not good and kind, and not the kind of words that God wanted him to say at all.

No
Way.

So, the angel was saying STOP!
STOP!

Don't walk another step.
Don't take a misstep.
Don't make a mess.
Don't cause distress.
STOP!
LOOK!
LISTEN!

My grannie's master couldn't see the angel at first like grannie did so he rudely pushed and shoved grannie to get her to move. He only stopped, looked and listened when grannie said to him:

'Why are you attacking me?'
'Why are you whacking me?'

My grannie SPOKE! I know, I know. It is an amazing story. It's all been carefully written down so anyone and everyone can read it.

My grannie helped her master when she had a big chat with him.

My grannie's master made sure he said the right words after that encounter.

Now back to my story. In my story I not only saw an angel but heard a story about an angel as well. This part of my story goes like this...

Mary loved a man called Joseph.
Joseph loved a woman called Mary.
I could see it. I could smell it. I could sense it every time I saw the two of them together. They were such a happy couple. They were so happy together they planned on getting married. It was a beautiful plan.



I was planning to throw some hay over the happy couple on their wedding day. I have very strong jaws and can scoop up lots and lots of hay when I want to. I was really looking forward to the wedding, and so I was very confused when I saw Joseph walking out of Mary's house.

The door slammed shut.
It didn't just close quietly.
It slammed.
As in...
SLAM!

Joseph never slammed doors. Ever.
Not
Ever.

Joseph is a carpenter. He makes wonderful things out of wood, and he always takes good care of the things he makes, and he always takes good care of Mary, and he always closes her door respectfully.

SLAM!

That was how he shut the door today.

It almost made me choke on my piece of beetroot.
I watched as Joseph stormed up the path. It was like there was a horrible storm cloud over his head. His mouth was muttering, and he kept brushing his eyes a lot.

I called out to him.

'Joseph'
'Joseph'
'Joseph'

He stopped and stared at me.

'Are you upset too?' he asked me.
'Is that why you are braying so much?'

Braying?
Braying!
I never bray.
I always have something to say, not bray!

Joseph came over to me and gave me a little stroke on my head. I could feel his sadness in his touch.

'I thought...' he said and then stopped to brush his eyes.
'I thought she loved me.'

She does. She does. She does.



Joseph smiled, but his sadness was just growing deeper and deeper.
'Goodbye old friend' he said and walked away.

It was the next morning that I saw him running. It was only just light and everyone in Nazareth was fast asleep. Everyone but Joseph.

He was running and he was laughing, and he was brushing his eyes a lot.

I called out to him.

'Joseph'
'Joseph'
'Joseph'

He stopped running and he came over to me.

'You don't need to bray so loud my old friend, all is well.'

I
Never
Bray.

Joseph burst into laughter and threw his big arms around me giving me what humans call 'a hug'. I kindly licked his hands in return.
Joseph just laughed as he wiped them on my fur.

'I don't think Mary will want your donkey drool over my hands' he told me.

I
Never
Drool.

'Last night I had a dream' said Joseph 'an incredible amazing dream. It was so real, so amazingly, incredible real. It was all about Mary and about the baby...'

He stopped talking, smiling in a way I had never seen him smile before and feeling more peaceful than I had ever known him before.

'It was an angel who spoke to me and told me. An angel.'

I tried to get the angel's feather out of my saddle bag, to show him, but by the time I had scooped it up (teeth are not as good as hands!), he had gone. I saw him enter Mary's house, and I heard, like a gentle whisper, the door slowly closing.

Written by Tony Bower, York Schools and Youth Trust



A Christmas Donkey's Diary

Part Two

After the angel visits, I saw a lot of Joseph. He always stopped to say hello to me and he was always smiling from the inside out. I could feel his happiness and it shone through him. He was still smiling but also serious when he came to see me early one morning.

'I want you to take good care of Mary for me on the journey.' He told me.

I always take good care of Mary I told him.

Joseph laughed.

'It's good to hear your excitement old friend. You could bray for ever today.'

I
Never
Bray.

Joseph held out his hand and I could see a fistful of the most delicious looking beetroot ever.

'This is for your journey.' He said.

I would like to say I took the beetroot gently and took my time in munching it carefully, but I think it went in a flash and it sounded like this:

CHOMP!
CHOMP!
GONE!

Joseph simply smiled.

The journey was to see a family friend of Mary's. A lovely lady called Elizabeth. When we approached the house, her husband, a man called Zechariah, opened the door to greet us.

He smiled but didn't say a word.

Mary said: 'Hello Zechariah'

Zechariah put his thumbs up.

Mary said: 'It's good to see you again Zechariah'

Zechariah put his thumbs up, pointed at Mary, and put his thumbs up again.

I could sense that Mary was confused.



Zechariah sighed and tried to talk but no words came out. He was as silent as a beetroot and his face was getting redder and redder as he tried to talk.

Mary stood there watching him as his arms flapped like a bird and his eyes grew wider and wider. Thankfully, Elizabeth appeared by his side and began to talk.

‘Zechariah was on duty as priest at the temple’ she explained.

‘He was met by an angel’

Elizabeth carried on speaking and explaining what happened at the temple. She talked about how the angel promised that they would soon have a child and he would be a special messenger who would help prepare people for the coming of God’s son.

I saw Zechariah bury his head in his hands and shake his head at this moment.

Elizabeth smiled as she touched his hand and said.

‘Poor Zechariah didn’t believe the angel at all. He tried to explain that we were both far too old to have children.’

Zechariah’s head was still held in his hands.

‘The angel told Zechariah that he wouldn’t be able to say a word until our son was born.’

Zechariah, still with his head in his hands, nodded.

‘He hasn’t said a word since that day’ explained Elizabeth as she stepped around her Zechariah and showed Mary that she was carrying a baby in her tummy.

Mary put her hand to her mouth and gasped.

Mary looked at Elizabeth.

Elizabeth looked at Mary.

And they both burst out into laughter.

My ears began to twitch, and my nose began to wriggle.

Do your ears ever do that?

Or your nose?

Mine do when something amazing is happening and when something wonderful in the world is taking place. So, let’s see what’s going on here:

An angel appears to Zechariah and tells him that his wife Elizabeth is going to have a baby even though they are both very old. The angel tells Zechariah that this baby is going to prepare the way for God’s son.



Mary is singing a song as my ears are twitching and my nose is wriggling, and my fur is tingling.

Mary's words were like stars that shine in the darkest night. Mary's words were like the rising sun. Mary's song was better than beetroot! That is amazing!

This song was wonderful.
This song was beautiful.

I can still remember the words I heard. Now please remember, that although my hearing can hear beetroot being slipped into a bag, I cannot hear everything.

These are the words I heard.

'My soul glorifies the Lord
And my spirit rejoices in God my saviour'

It sounded beautiful and filled with awe and wonder, but I was wondering what it meant. I wonder if you know what Mary was singing about?

It might help you to know some other things she said in her song.

She sung about God remembering her and seeing how humble she was.
She sung about God being full of mercy.
She sung about God filling the hungry with good things.

I wonder if you could think about Mary's song.
What do you think she was singing about?
What do you think those words I mentioned mean?
Why don't you take some time to think about it and talk to someone about it now, I'll wait.

[Discussion time]

Wow! Those are some great thoughts.

Oh, and by the way, Elizabeth slipped some swaddling clothes **into one of my saddle bags** just before we left for home. Gifts for a baby.

As I said before, something beyond special was happening and this was another important **clue**.

[Children to attach clue to their cut-out donkey]

I was back home in my stable, chewing the hay, when I heard Joseph say to Mary: 'We have to go to Bethlehem.'

Mary looked a little confused and she asked Joseph: 'Why?'

Joseph took a deep breath and tried to smile: 'The Roman government' he said.

Mary was still looking a little confused, so Joseph carried on talking.



Joseph said: 'They want everyone to be counted and recorded so they know how many people there are.'

'But why Bethlehem?' Mary asked.

Joseph smiled and this time I sensed it was a happy smile.

'That's where my family come from' he said.

'David's town' Mary replied.

'David, the shepherd King' Joseph said, with a joy dancing in his voice.

Mary smiled too, but I also could sense they were concerned. I don't know how long a journey it is to Bethlehem, but I do know that it isn't just around the corner from Nazareth. If Mary and Joseph were going to go to Bethlehem, then I knew I would be going too. I also knew that I would need lots and lots of energy, which also meant that I would need lots and lots and lots and lots of beetroot.

I don't always understand about days and nights, and so I am not sure how long it was before we were ready to leave Nazareth. The truth is, I'm not very good at counting. I tried to count to ten once, but the only numbers I knew are three and eleven. I know that day follows night and night follows day. I know that there had been a few of those that had passed before I heard Joseph say to me:

'You will be carrying the most precious person in the world to me; he said, 'and you will be carrying someone who made the world.'

I was so confused I wanted to ask Joseph what he meant, but once again realised it is highly unlikely I will be granted the power of human speech like my wonderful very, very great grannie.

Before I had time to think what Joseph had meant Joseph was waving a staff in front of my face.

Very close to my face.

Very

Close

I do trust Joseph. I really do, but the staff was very big and very thick and very, very close to my face.

'What do you think to my staff old friend?' Joseph asked me.

I was speechless.

'It's a shepherd's staff that I have made, especially for the journey to Bethlehem. A shepherd's staff in honour of my great relative King David.'



I was keeping my very close eyes on Joseph's staff. It was going very close to my eyes.

'Did you know that before King David became King, he was a shepherd boy. He was a shepherd boy who defended his sheep against the attacks of wild beasts.'

I was wondering why Joseph looked at me when he said the words:

'Wild beasts.'

The staff was now being pointed straight at my nose.

I have a very sensitive nose. I need it for smelling and telling if it's going to be rainy or not. Just kidding, but it is very sensitive.

Joseph was still talking about how David fought back all kinds of wild creatures and was very brave.

Joseph was still waving his staff very, very close to my nose!

'Joseph!'

The voice of Mary.

A voice that made Joseph drop his new wooden staff.

'Joseph, what are you doing?'

Joseph looked at me as if to say. 'Please don't tell her.'

'I was talking to my old friend here' said Joseph, 'and I was explaining about how David was a brave shepherd boy.'

Mary smiled and strode over to him, wrapping her arms tight around him.

'Do you think our faithful donkey was enjoying your stories?'

Joseph looked at me, then looked away.

'I think', he said, 'it's time to get ready for the journey.' And with that Joseph tied the shepherd's staff **onto one of my saddle bags**.

As I said before, something beyond special was happening and this was another important **clue**.

[Children to attach clue to their cut-out donkey]

Once everything was packed and ready we were off and the journey looked very much like this:

Walking.



Walking whilst you are waking and walking whilst you are eating, or at least a little chewing. Walking and not talking. Walking and listening. You need to follow the directions of where you are walking.

We walked by the hills.
We walked by the valleys.
We walked in the heat of day.
We walked in the cold of night.

I began to wonder what Mary and Joseph were wondering whilst we were wandering. What was on their mind? What thoughts were they thinking? What was on their hearts?

I wonder if you could all take a few moments to think and to wonder about Mary and Joseph, and me!

What might my humans have been thinking?

[Discussion time]

Wow! That is a lot of wondering.

The truth is, although I can understand what humans say, they don't always talk in front of me, or near enough me to hear them. Sometimes I pick up a few words whispered, or the end of a conversation, or just a few odd words here and there, a bit like holding pieces of a puzzle but not every piece. That is why, thankfully, I have a very curious mind to try and work it all out, like a good detective.

Here is what I had heard mentioned on a number of occasions.

'How far to Bethlehem?'
'How long will this journey take?'
'How far to Bethlehem?'
'I hope and pray everything will be alright'
'How far to Bethlehem?'

I think, and you might all agree with me, that the big thing on their minds was how long the journey was going to take. To help pass the day along I made up a little song. I will say a line and all you have to repeat it back. It's a marching song, and it goes like this...

On our way to Bethlehem
(On our way to Bethlehem)

Say a prayer and sing a hymn
(Say a prayer and sing a hymn)
On our way to Bethlehem
(On our way to Bethlehem)

Stars shine like a sparkling gem
(Stars shine like a sparkling gem)



Three, eleven here we go
Our journey is so slow

(Three, eleven here we go
Our journey is so slow)

Thank you for joining in. I like that. In fact, I like it so much I would like us to sing it again now that you've got the idea of the marching song. Only this time when we get to the chorus bit at the end with my numbers, we will repeat it quieter and quieter until it fades out in a whisper.

Okay, here we go...

[Repeat the song and do a nice gentle fade out at the end]

Can you remember that at the start of my story I said we were starting in the middle?

Can you remember that I talked about my great grannie who also saw an angel and was given the power of human speech to talk to a prophet called Balaam? (Sorry, I forgot to tell you his name earlier).

Can you remember that I told you we were going to Bethlehem, known as the city of David, the shepherd king?

Can you remember that Mary's friend Elizabeth gave her some swaddling cloths for a baby?

If you can remember all of that then those are great BIG clues. Detectives like clues. I am a donkey detective because I LOVE clues!

Have you worked out what it all means yet? Have you worked out why I said that I started my story in the middle?

If not, please...Do. Not. Panic. There is more of the story to come, a lot more still to come.

Written by Tony Bower, York Schools and Youth Trust





A Christmas Donkey's Diary

Part Three

We had arrived in Bethlehem...

I want you to imagine a small town.
Smaller than that.
Still smaller.
Not that small.

Yes! That kind of small.

Now I want you to help me with the telling of this part of the story.

Thank you.

I need you to stomp your feet on the floor, First with your right foot and then with your left foot. Good. When I say 'Stomp, stomp' you stomp with your right foot and then your left foot. Okay, here, we, go.

Stomp
Stomp.

Good!

Now you need to use your right hand and then your left hand to knock on the desk. So, when you do the both together it goes like this:

Knock
Knock.

Now, we will put the two parts together using the sounds and the words.

Okay, here, we, go.

Stomp
Stomp

Knock
Knock

Now you need to say the words, 'Is there room for anymore?'

Let's practice that on the count of eleven...
Three, eleven...

'Is there room for anymore?'

Very good, you're very good at this. Now there is still some more to do.



'SLAM!'
Went the big wooden door.

Can you all do that please.
On the count of eleven.

Three, eleven

SLAM!
Went the big wooden door.

Brilliant.
Now, let's put it all together as I tell the story.

Bethlehem was packed and crowded, everyone was there for the night, and there wasn't any rooms in sight. We walked around the sleepy old town and it sounded like this...

Stomp
Stomp

Knock
Knock

'Is there room for anymore?'

SLAM!
Went the big wooden door.

Oh dear, oh my, now what were we going to do?

I looked at Mary who was looking at Joseph, who was looking at Mary.

Things were not looking good.
I don't know what human senses are like, but I can smell emotions and I can smell feelings. Maybe you can smell freshly baked bread. YUM! Or maybe you can smell the salty sea air. YES! But I can smell fear. I can smell panic and I can sense trouble a mile away.

I could sense all of that right then. Nowhere for Mary and for Joseph to spend the night!

I watched the way Mary placed her hands so gently on her tummy and heard words that flowed over me with such a love. I saw the way that Joseph put his arm around her shoulders as she sat on me, and the way in which his shepherd's staff was always protectively with him.

I also saw that there was no room for us anywhere. Nowhere to stay, nowhere to lay and no hay. Hey!



I had an idea. Maybe there wasn't a room but maybe there was somewhere that was warm, and somewhere we could all lay out of the cold and the winds of the night. Hay? I am a good donkey detective, and I was confident I could find some fresh hay.

I began to sniff, I began to smell, I began to think all might be well.
I began to tug, I began to pull, I began to shuffle and snuffle as well.

'What is it my old friend?' Joseph calmly asked me.

I was too busy pulling to do any talking. I kept on pushing on in the direction of the hay I was smelling. I had to keep going. I had to find the hay.

I could smell the hay as if it was right under my nose. I could hear animal noises as if the cattle were right next to my ears. I could feel hope in my heart beating like a big round drum.

The street led me to an inn. There was a wooden door facing me, so I knew what I had to do. A donkey sometimes has to do what a donkey has to do.

I turned round and I...

KICKED!
I KICKED
And I KICKED.

The door almost flew off its hinges as I heard a man's voice behind me shouting loudly in my flapping flopping ears.

'OI! Donkey!'

I didn't have to be an amazing detective to work out that the man was angry.

I felt Joseph grabbing hold of my reins and trying to rein me in.
I heard Mary apologising to the man and saying she had no idea why I had acted the way I did.

I knew why.
'Hay!' I said
'HAY!' I shouted

Joseph grabbed hold of me tightly as he said:
'Please don't bray'

I
Never
Bray!

I stuck my neck out and grabbed a mouthful of hay and tried to give it to Mary. I threw it into the air and some fell down and landed **in one of my saddle bags**.



As I said before, something beyond special was happening and this was another important **clue**.

[Children to attach clue to their cut-out donkey]

The man whose inn it was suddenly looked at Mary's belly. It was looking different from before, more round, and I hadn't quite worked out why that was yet. Detectives need more than a few clues sometimes. That's when I found out the exciting truth, when the man said:

'Looks like you're going to have a baby, and soon... I am sorry but my inn is full and I can't offer you a room.'

Joseph's head dropped.
Joseph let my reins drop.

And my mouth dropped open! I began to bray, really loudly.

I know, I know, I know I said I didn't bray, BUT this was an exception. I was calling out loud and clear to all of my animal friends in the stable. I needed them all to hear me loud and clear, and I needed them to lend me a helping hand. Or to be more precise, a helping sound.

Thankfully, my fellow creatures duly obliged. There were moos and baas and a whole host of sounds. In fact, and just for a bit of pure fun, pick a farmyard animal, anyone you like and anyone you want, and then on the count of eleven and just for three seconds you can make that sound.

Okay, here, we go.
Three, eleven.

[Encourage children to make farmyard animal noises]

Okay, okay, time to stop the rattle and cattle noises.

The innkeeper, who had been looking at Mary with sad eyes now looked like he had just woken up on his birthday.

'I have an idea' he said, starting to sound like an excited child.

'You could all spend the night in the stable. It's very warm, with lots of hay.'

Joseph looked at Mary.
Mary looked at Joseph.
I looked at them both.

'Thank you' they both said.

'Thank you so much'

No one thanked me, but that was okay. I had done my job and now I knew there was a warm place, with lots and lots of hay for when the baby was born.



Before we all went inside, I noticed a bright light shining down right into the centre of the stable. I turned my head and gazed up at the dark night sky.

There was a star shining brighter than any earthly jewel. It was brighter than any star I had ever seen, and it was so, so big.

As I said before, something beyond special was happening and this was another important **clue**.

I just wish I could have kept that star with me always, I would have kept it **in one of my saddle bags**.

[Children to attach clue to their cut-out donkey]

I could have stared at the star and watched it for ages, but I knew that Mary and Joseph needed me to be there for them, and so with one last look I walked slowly into the stable.

It was time to rest for the night. Or so I thought!

Rest?

Rest!

There was little time for rest.
Let me explain what happened.

First, the baby was born.

Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!

All of the animals were cheering. The stars were brightly shining. The whole world seemed to be laughing and smiling. Joseph was beaming brighter than a full moon and Mary...Mary was holding her tiny precious baby.

Jesus.
That is his name.

Jesus.
I heard them both say his name, like a whisper, like a promise, like a prayer.

Jesus.
I heard them say it with their mouth, with their lips and with the whole of their hearts.

Jesus.
I heard them both say his name, like a whisper, like a promise, like a prayer.

‘Just as the angel told me.’ Said Mary, gazing into the eyes of her precious child.

‘Jesus, the Son of God.’

I almost fell over, and donkeys never fall over.



God's son?
God's son!

I was still in shock and almost choked on a nice piece of beetroot I was eating when the stable door was flung wide open.

Shepherds. At least eleven of them. (Well, there were more than three). Big, smelly shepherds. All of them grinning from ear to ear. I could sense something about them that was so unlike anything I had sensed before. It felt...it felt heavenly. They were so excited to see Jesus, I could tell they all wanted to talk at the same time. I could also tell they all wanted to worship him.

I heard them talk in quiet words that were filled with exploding joy.
I heard them talk about angels in the Bethlehem sky.
I heard them talk about peace on earth.
I heard them talking with their mouths, with their lips and with their hearts.

I saw it all.
I heard it all.
I felt it all.

The night that Jesus was born.
The night that God's son was born on earth.
The night that changed the world forever.

Do you understand why I said my story started in the middle?

God spoke through my great grannie to a prophet. God sent prophets to tell people about His love and His ways. God made David the shepherd boy a King to help show God's love and God's ways, but through all of the years and all of human's struggles and fears God was waiting for the right time to send His son. God had been speaking through prophets and kings and many different people, but the time was right to send to earth what humans really needed the most.

A Saviour.

The shepherds left the stable brushing their eyes and laughing with bursting joy. I could hear them singing in the streets of Bethlehem, and I could hear people waking up and being disturbed by their singing, but they never quieted down. They never stopped singing about Jesus, and I don't think they ever will.

I watched Joseph watching Mary as Mary watched over Jesus.
I watched them both until the night finally lulled them into a deep lullaby sleep.
I watched Jesus resting quietly as I walked over to him.

I watched Jesus gentle breathing and saw his eyes shining with a twinkling light. I saw his eyes looking up as I looked down at him, and I knew with all my heart that I would always love him and would carry him anywhere and everywhere he wanted to go. I would carry the gift of heaven, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, wherever he wanted to go, and I would carry his love in my heart, forever.



My heart was so full with love I think it could have spilled over and **into my saddle bags!** Another important **clue** that something beyond special was happening.

[Children to attach clue to their cut-out donkey]

This is my story. This is the ongoing story of the love of God for humans everywhere. The love of God's son, Jesus. And I would have given him all the beetroot I had, but I don't think you give beetroot to babies.

I remember gently breathing my warm breath to keep the stable warm and cosy as I watched the twinkling light in the eyes of Jesus. I remember the sense of peace and dancing joy that made this donkey smile for the first time in my whole life. And outside the stable the star shone as bright as an angel.

Written by Tony Bower, York Schools and Youth Trust

