

The Story of St Frideswide

A legend from Oxford, England

Recommended Key Stage: 1 and 2

Synopsis: St Frideswide was a princess who was raised by nuns. One day, she saw the cook beating a peasant who was stealing wine for his sick daughter. Frideswide took the wine herself and cured the child. From then on, she vowed to devote her life to helping others. One day, an evil king named Algar wanted to marry her. Frideswide refused. Angered by this, Algar called for his soldiers to steal her away, but Frideswide was able to escape to an orphanage, where she healed the children with healing water she had prayed for. Eventually, Frideswide heard news that her father was dying, so she hurried back home to heal him. Algar vowed to take over the city unless Frideswide married him, but Frideswide prayed, and a burst of lightning erupted and blinded Algar. Frideswide healed him, and he cried and begged for forgiveness. From then on, Frideswide and her father made the palace a place of welcome for the poor and sick.

Part 1: Share the Story

Watch the video **Stories from the Woodshed: St Frideswide**

Part 2: Discuss the story

Use the questions below to begin a discussion about the story

Key Stage 1 Questions	Key Stage 2 Questions
- What are your favourite parts of this story? Why? - What words can you use to describe Frideswide? - What words can you use to describe Algar? - The word 'Frideswide' means 'peace' and 'strength.' What does Frideswide do in this story to help create peace? Where in the story is she strong and brave? - In the story, Frideswide forgives King Algar and helps him. Would you have forgiven King Algar? Why or why not? Why do you think she forgives him? - If it was Frideswide's birthday, what birthday present would you like to give her and why? What do you think she would like, or need?	- What words could you use to describe Faith, Frideswide and Algar? - If it was Frideswide's birthday, what birthday present would you like to give her and why? What do you think she would like, or need? - Why do you think Algar wanted to marry Frideswide? Why did he continue trying to marry her, after she refused? - Write this quote on the board: <i>Frideswide was always remembered for bravery, mercy, peace and strength.</i> - What words do you associate with each of these assets? - Where in the story does Frideswide demonstrate each of these? - Discuss the theme of forgiveness using these questions: - What is forgiveness? - What does it take to forgive someone when they have hurt you? Do you find forgiveness easy?

Learning Resources

	- How do you feel to forgive and be forgiven? - When might forgiveness be hard or impossible to do? Would you have forgiven and helped Algar? - How hard do you think it was for Frideswide to forgive Algar? Why do you think she did so? - What does her forgiveness of Algar reveal about her character? • Frideswide's mother says to Frideswide at the beginning of the story, 'Always stay true to yourself.' Discuss: - What does it mean to 'stay true to yourself'? - How does Frideswide stay true to herself? - If she had not 'stayed true to herself,' what might she have done in some of the situations? How might this have impacted the characters, and changed the events in the story? - Give an example of how you could stay true to yourself in an every day situation.
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Part 3: Play the Story

KS1 Activities	KS2 Activities
Freeze Frame • Students work in groups of 3 or 4 and find a space in the room. • Read out the scenes described in Resource A. The groups make a freeze frame, a frozen picture, depicting each scene.	Freeze Frame • Students work in groups of 3 or 4 and find a space in the room. • Read out the scenes described in Resource A. • The groups make a freeze frame, a frozen picture, depicting the scene. • For each freeze frame, select one group. One by one, each student in the group can say a sentence about what their characters might be thinking or feeling.
Interviews • Work in pairs: an interviewer and an eyewitness who saw the moment Algar was cured. • The news report is entitled, 'Miracle Cure.' • The interviewer asks questions of the eyewitness, for example - What is your name? - What is your job? - How old are you? - What were you doing at the time Algar entered the city? - How did you feel? - What happened to Algar during the thunderstorm? - Lots of people in the city were cheering for Frideswide to punish Algar when he was blinded. Whose side were you on? Why? - How did you feel when Frideswide gave Algar his sight back? - How did you feel when Algar said he had changed his ways and become a good person?	Conscience Alley • Divide the class into 2 groups. One group represents Frideswide saying 'yes' to Algar's marriage proposal; the other group represents Frideswide saying 'no' to Algar's marriage proposal. • Groups discuss and prepare reasons to support their side of the argument. • The two groups form two lines, facing each other, forming an 'alley.' • One student plays the part of Frideswide. They walk slowly down the alley. As they pass, each student speaks, trying to convince Frideswide. For example: - Say 'yes' team: 'You will become rich.' - Say 'no' team: 'You will not be staying true to yourself.' • When Frideswide reaches the end of the alley, they can say which argument was more persuasive. Conscience Alley can also be used for the final section of the story, in which the crowd are calling for Frideswide to punish Algar. Frideswide must choose between giving Algar his sight back, or leaving him blind.

Learning Resources

	Courtcase • Extending the Conscience Alley activity above, hold a courtcase with the proposition: 'Algar must be punished.' • Students play the following characters: - A Judge - Frideswide - Frideswide's father - Members of the Jury - Algar - Algar's soldiers, supporting Algar - Citizens, eyewitnesses to the thunderstorm, supporting the proposition • One by one, the Judge calls for characters to come forward with their arguments, which could follow some of these ideas: - Algar defends himself and begs for mercy; - Algar's soldiers say they were only acting under orders; - Frideswide's father wants a severe punishment for Algar; - Frideswide says we must forgive Algar; - Citizens say Frideswide is too nice to Algar after everything he has done to her. After the courtcase, the Juror can announce whether Algar is 'innocent' or 'guilty' and, if guilty, what his sentence is.
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Part 4: Story Stimulus

KS1 Activities	KS2 Activities
Stories of Kindness • In pairs, students make up a new character who decides to devote their life to being helpful. The character does not have to be human; they could be anthropomorphic animals to make this more accessible and fun. • Groups create the story of the character's life. - Background setting: where and how they grew up - One event that made them decide to be kind for the rest of their life. - What kind thing they did. - How that changed the lives of other people. - How we can learn from their life. • For example: - A cat grows up on a farm. - One day, the cat sees a rabbit with a nail in his paw. A builder had been working on the roof of a house nearby and had left it on the ground by accident. - The cat does a deal with the farmer to make all the rabbits live in an enclosed field with soft grass. - The rabbits live comfortably in their rabbit orphanage. - The rabbit orphanage becomes famous and the cat sets up many others across the land.	Wonderful Lives • Write this quote on the board: Frideswide was always remembered for bravery, mercy, peace and strength. • Can you think of examples of real people who have demonstrated one or more of these qualities? They may be people you know, celebrities or historical figures. For example: an NHS keyworker, a family member, Greta Thunberg, Marcus Rashford, Captain Tom Moore, Malala Yousafzai, Mary Seacole, Florence Nightingale, Mother Teresa, Harriet Tubman, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King. • Research the person and tell their story as a story, using the following structure: - Where did they grow up and what was their childhood like? - Who or what inspired them? - What did they do? - What was the impact of their life? How did they change other people's lives? - What can we do to be more like them? - Present stories to rest of the class.

Part 5: Taking it Further

Similar Stories

Stories with strong female protagonists:

Tatterhood (Norway)

Molly Whuppie (England)

Stories about kindness and helping others:

Abla and Antarah (Middle East)

The Lion and the Mouse (Greece)

Wider Curriculum Links

PSHE – kindness, bravery, forgiveness, helping others

“The characteristics of friendships, including mutual respect, truthfulness, trustworthiness, loyalty, kindness, generosity, trust, sharing interests and experiences and support with problems and difficulties”

Learning Resources

Freeze frames

Resource A

- The cook beating the peasant; Frideswide caring for the peasant's sick daughter.
- King Algar proposing to Frideswide, who rejects him; Frideswide's father in despair.
- King Algar calling for his war horse and soldiers.
- Frideswide escaping by boat, with Algar and his soldiers following on angrily behind.
- Frideswide clawing her way through the thorn wood, with Algar's ferocious dogs rushing into the trees behind her.
- Frideswide hiding in the pigsty with the pigs.
- Frideswide wandering from place to place looking for shelter. People looking away in disgust.
- Faith taking her in, with Catherine and Cicely looking sick in the background.
- Frideswide curing Faith's bunions and Cicely's cough with the healing water.
- Frideswide curing her father; the city celebrating Frideswide's return.
- The city surrounded by Algar's soldiers.
- Thunder and lightning striking Algar from his horse.
- Algar pleading for forgiveness; the people of the city demanding Algar's punishment; the soldiers unsure.
- Frideswide healing Algar.
- Frideswide and father opening the palace as a place of welcome and healing for new people.