



Topic Material – Monasteries and Monasticism

The word “monastery” comes from the Greek word “monas”, meaning “alone”. The monks in Rochester followed the Rule of Benedict and were an enclosed community.

The monastery in Rochester was founded by Bishop Gundulf around 1080. There were between 20 and 60 monks here at any one time during its lifetime.

The Rule, written by St. Benedict in the first half of the 6th Century, was intended for his monastery in Monte Cassino. The Order was founded about 529 A.D. and during following years many houses or communities were set up under the direction of Abbots. Originally fairly simple communities, by the Middle Ages monasteries had become complex organisations, with each monk being assigned his particular role in the community.

Everything the monks did was “to the glory of God”. St. Benedict thought it was important to keep all aspects of the person in balance, and so the monks prayed (to keep the spirit healthy), studied (to keep the mind healthy) and did manual labour (to keep the body healthy).

The monk, after a period as a novice, would take his final vows of stability, conversatio morum and obedience. St. Benedict discouraged unnecessary conversation, so the novice would follow a life of virtual silence apart from the use of his voice to praise God.

In the psalms we are told “At midnight I rose to give praise to thee.” and “Seven times a day have I given praise to thee.” and the monks’ round of daily prayer, the “opus Dei”, or “Work of God”, was based on this.

The monastery of St. Andrew, in Rochester, existed from Norman times until its dissolution by Henry VIII in 1540. Remains of the monastic buildings may still be seen today in the Garth, now the cathedral garden and a place of peace and tranquillity.

Preparing for your visit

Your visit will incorporate a number of curriculum areas

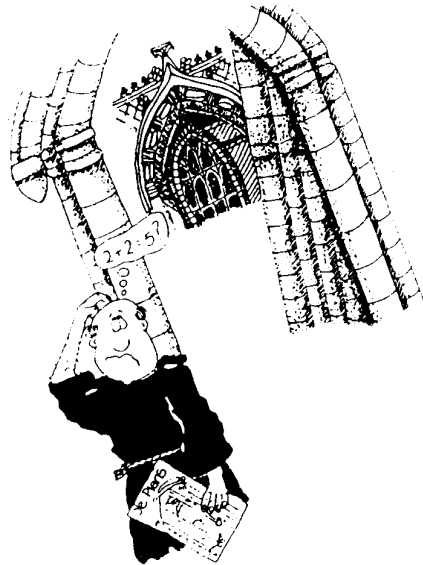
Religious Education

History

Citizenship

Literacy

Art and Design Technology



Careful preparation before you come to the cathedral greatly enhances the educational benefits obtained from your visit.

Preparing for the Religious Education element

- ❖ Research orders of monks, other than Benedictine orders
- ❖ Find out about early bibles and religious writings
- ❖ Look at some religious paintings and discuss symbolism in the pictures
- ❖ Study a typical day in the life of a monk
- ❖ What does it mean to belong to an enclosed community?

Preparing for the History element

- ❖ Look at life in a medieval town
- ❖ Find out how the English Church was organised in the Middle Ages
- ❖ Study aspects of monastic life
- ❖ Research conflict between the Monarchy and the Church

Preparing for the Citizenship element

- ❖ Discuss the need for rules in life
- ❖ Think about the need for mutual respect and understanding
- ❖ What does “responsibility” mean to you
- ❖ Learn about hierarchy, in the Middle Ages, in civil life today and in Church life

Preparing for the Art and DT element

- ❖ Research writing materials through the ages
- ❖ Study different scripts and fonts and their applications
- ❖ Look at religious art in different media (glass, tiles, tapestries, sculpture, murals, frescos, vestments)

Preparing for the Literacy element

- ❖ Look at a medieval text (try British Library online)
- ❖ Compare medieval language with modern language
- ❖ Find out the meaning of unknown words using contextual clues
- ❖ Look at the way in which meanings of words have sometimes changed over time, e.g. awful (was “full of a feeling of wonder”, now “terrible”), wicked (was “very bad”, now slang for “great”)
- ❖ Find more words that have changed their meaning over time



Background Research

Useful internet sites:-

Daily life of Monks www.buckfast.org.uk/
www.osb.org

Textus Roffensis www.bl.uk/ttp2/hiddentreasures.html

Lindisfarne Gospels www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/ttp/ttpbooks.html

(Please note – to view the British library digitised texts you will need to download their Turning the Page software).

Medieval writing www.medievalwriting.50megs.com/writing.htm

Booklist:-

The Rule of St Benedict	St Benedict The Liturgical Press ISBN 978-0814612729
Benedict Rules – Ok!	Vena Eastwood Gracewing ISBN 978-0852446805
Medieval Cathedral	Fiona Macdonald & John James Peter Bendrick Books ISBN 978-0872262669
A Medieval Monastery	Fiona Macdonald Hodder Wayland ISBN 978-0750020459
Life in a Medieval Abbey	Tony McAleavy English Heritage ISBN 978-1850745921
Cathedral, Forge and Waterwheel	Francis and Joseph Gies Harper Perennial ISBN 978-0060925819
Life in a Medieval City	Francis and Joseph Gies Harper Perennial ISBN 978-006660908805
Life in a Medieval Village	Francis and Joseph Gies Harper Perennial ISBN 978-0060920463
Cathedral	David Macaulay Houghton Mifflin ISBN 978-0395175132
The Christian Faith and its Symbols	Jan Thompson Hodder Arnold ISBN 978-0340663970

Vocabulary List

MONASTERY	BENEDICT	SCRIPTORIUM	HABIT
PILGRIMAGE	TUNIC	LAVATORIUM	TONSURE
CHRISTENDOM	VOW	PARCHMENT	QUILL
RELIC	OBEDIENCE	STABILITY	PRIOR
CATHEDRAL	PURGATORY	GUNDULF	PRIEST
CHASTITY	CHAPEL	ORDER	ABBOT
CHAPTER HOUSE	MATTINS	NOVICE	LAITY
HOSPITALLER	DORMITORY	VESPERS	MASS
ROMAN CATHOLIC	PROTESTANT	COMPLINE	FRIAR
HERETIC	PRIME	CONVERSATIO MORUM	

RE Writing Frames

Religious Beliefs

In the religion of they believe that
One important belief is
They also believe that
These beliefs lead them to
To me the most interesting belief is
because

The Rule of Benedict

Benedictine Monks follow the Rule of
He said that monks should
He also said that they should
I think that his most important rule was
I agree that
I disagree with

Regular Worship

.... worship in
Regular worship involves
During the worship they
At the end they
This ritual is important to believers because
.....

Visit to a place of worship

We visited a
First we looked at
Then we looked at
Next we looked at
The most interesting thing to me was
Because
I learnt that
If I visited again I would like to find out

General

I was puzzled about
I also wondered why
A question I would like answered is
I really enjoyed

Your Visit

The Monks Experience

The Monks Experience takes place in the garden and the crypt. A brief overview of the origins of Rochester Cathedral is given to help put the session into historical context. Pupils will learn about all aspects of life as a medieval Benedictine monk, from vows and rules, to daily activity and worship.

Pupils will then be asked to use their imaginations to travel back to medieval England and become a brother of the Benedictine Monastery of St Andrew. Once all pupils are dressed in monks robes we will process to the chapel where we will learn a little more about rules, punishment and the dissolution of the monasteries in Tudor times.

The session will give pupils the opportunity to contrast aspects of medieval life with the modern world, making links with life in a Benedictine community and life in school. It will also help them to begin to understand the importance of the church in the Middle Ages.

Work Booklets

Your visit can be enhanced by the use of one of the following workbooks:

- ❖ The Rochester Cathedral Trail (*RE / History, KS2*)
- ❖ Time Travellers (*History, KS3*)
- ❖ Art & Architecture at Rochester Cathedral (*Art / DT, KS2/3*)
- ❖ Signs & Symbols (*RE KS3*)
- ❖ A wide variety of shorter paper trail sheets are also available (see our website for details)

Please supply your own pencils for use with the above

Additional Activities

The Monks Experience may also be enhanced by booking the **Pilgrim Trail** which will guide your class around the cathedral whilst exploring medieval pilgrimage, visiting the site of the monastery as part of the journey. **Stories in Glass** is a session which explores Easter as told through the stained glass windows of the Lady Chapel. A separate book of teachers' notes is available for these sessions.

The Poor Man's Bible explores the messages hidden in the various forms of artwork found in the cathedral.

Classroom Extension Work

RE

- ❖ Discuss further the beliefs and lifestyle of Benedictine monks
- ❖ Look at a non-Christian religious community e.g. Buddhist monks
- ❖ Compare your own beliefs and attitudes to:
 - a. medieval monks
 - b. a modern religious community
- ❖ Imagine you are part of a new community. What are your key beliefs?

History

- ❖ Compare Benedictine Communities with other religious communities in medieval Britain
- ❖ Look at how obedience to the rule evolved and dissolved
- ❖ Research the impact of the dissolution of the monasteries

Citizenship

- ❖ Devise a set of rules for an imaginary community
- ❖ What are the sanctions for breaking these rules?

Art and DT

- ❖ Collate the information gathered in sketches taken of your visit
- ❖ Use this to design a poster to reflect aspects of your imaginary community
- ❖ Design a stained glass window to communicate messages on how we should live as a community

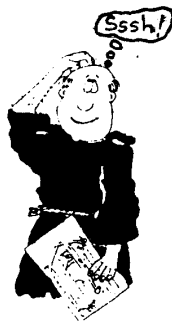
Literacy

- ❖ Make a prayer card for your imaginary community
- ❖ Write a diary entry for the day in the life of Brother Edmund of St. Andrews Priory, Rochester
- ❖ Write a letter from Abbot Walter of Rochester to Abbot Hugh of Canterbury, discussing your monks and their discipline (or lack of it!)

Daily life of a Benedictine Monk at the Priory of St. Andrew Rochester

02.00	Matins and Lauds in church Back to bed
06.00	Prime in church Breakfast Reading
09.00	Tierce in church followed by Mass
10.00	Chapter Meeting Work
11.00	Sext and High Mass in church Dinner Siesta
14.00	Nones in church Work
16.00	Vespers in church Work
Dusk	Supper Compline in church Bed

Times would change according to the season



Special Responsibilities

The Abbot	Elected by his fellow monks to rule the monastery
The Prior	The Abbot's deputy
The Novice Master	In charge of training the Novice monks
The Precentor	In charge of the music and liturgy
The Sacristan	Cared for the church and vestments etc.
The Cellarer	Looked after the stores and made sure there was enough food and drink for the monks
The Refectorian	Responsible for serving meals in the refectory
The Kitchener	Ran the kitchens, responsible for overseeing the preparation of food
The Hospitaller	Provided lodgings for pilgrims and guests
The Infirmarian	Cared for sick and old monks

Curriculum Areas Covered

RE

- Visit to a place of worship
- Understand the variety of symbolic meaning in paintings
- Beliefs and values of Benedictine monks
- Discover the role monks played in promoting the bible

History

- Use of a primary source
- The impact of the dissolution of the monasteries on Britain
- The Importance of church life in the Middle Ages
- Aspects of medieval monastic life
- The conflict between the church and the monarchy in Tudor England

Literacy

- Drawing on knowledge to decipher new words
- Listening
- Group discussion
- Understanding of rules
- Contrasting medieval and modern English

Art and DT

- Understanding Characteristics of materials
- How these are used
- First-hand observations of artwork
- Collect visual information about buildings in the form of sketches
- Looking at a variety of religious art in the cathedral

ICT

- Use of ICT to research background information

Citizenship

- Compare the rules of Benedictine society to modern society
- What impact did the dissolution of the monasteries have on society
- Exploring responsibility