

Think about it

Theme: Lent

Focus country: Ghana

Aims: to understand the importance of having a time of reflection (linking with the theme of Lent) and how that reflection can lead to action.

Materials/preparation:

- access to YouTube: the link to Poverty Over video youtu.be/kLBZI4FzOww
- music as a background to the final reflection (optional)
- the *Think about it* PowerPoint presentation, available at christianaid.org.uk/learn

Assembly presentation

Show slide 1. Welcome people to the assembly. You could ask them how they feel as they walk in. Are they looking forward to this time? Explain: *One of the good things about assembly time is that it gives us all a chance to be still and quiet for a while. Life in school can be busy and regulated by bells and timetables, but here, it's possible just to sit and think. That's not always easy to do! It's often easy for our minds to wander during an assembly: our thoughts are our own. Are you still with me?!*

*Today though, I'd like you to concentrate! Please sit comfortably – it's easier if you place your feet on the floor. You can close your eyes or lower them – this is just to help you concentrate and avoid being distracted. Now listen to this poem called *Relentless* by Rhys Powys.*

Relentless

**The teacher said it was Lent.
Didn't really understand what he meant.**

**Said it would be time well spent
If we were all to sit for a bit,
Give up the X-Box and the Wii Fit,
For some 'personal reflection
On our life's direction.'**

**Some peace and quiet instead
Of the riot going on in my head.**

**iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch.
I sometimes feel it's all too much
Information at my beck and call.
Don't know what the heck to do with it all.**

**Facebook, Face Time, Twitter, Skype,
My Space, YouTube – love the hype.
But no one sees me, face to face.
A gloomy room is a lonely place.**

**No one knows how I'm really feeling
And the status I'm revealing
Is a sham. A lie.
A con. A cry.**

Reflection? OK. I'll try...

**Won't make me ill to have a chill.
Just need a chair, and breathe the air
And count to ten, and if it's good
Then do it again –**

**Just give it a rest.
Might be for the best.**

Explain you will get a chance to listen to these words again later.

In the Christian calendar, this time of year is called Lent. Lent recalls a time when Jesus spent 40 days and nights in a desert area near the river Jordan, in Israel. He fasted and spent time reflecting on his life and the challenges that lay ahead for him. You can read about this in Luke 4:1-13.

You could say it was his 'personal reflection on his life's direction'. Today, some Christians observe Lent by fasting or giving something up for Lent. It's a time for Christians to prepare for the Easter festival that follows. But it is also a time to reflect on life or pray; to get rid of the

inessentials of life and focus on the things that really count. A time to give up the less important things and focus on what really matters. That's why during Lent, Christian Aid asks its supporters to reflect for a while, and be thankful.

Show slide 2. During Lent we can reflect on the fact that in 2012, 884 million people in the developing world use unsafe drinking water sources; that 1.5 million children globally will die this year as a result of diarrhoea – that's three children every minute.

Show slide 3. We can reflect that children around the world miss a total of 443 million days of school every year due to water-related illnesses and that only 10 per cent of all children in Sudan will finish primary school.

Christian Aid is a development and aid charity. The focus of its work is to bring an end to global poverty: to make Poverty Over. This may not be an easy target to set, but it is achievable – and to achieve this aim, Christian Aid works with partner organisations in nearly 50 countries across the world.

Show slide 4. One of these partners is an organisation called SEND in Ghana, west Africa.

Since 2004 the Ghanaian government has been able to provide more schools in Ghana. The government in Ghana set up a feeding programme that enabled school-children to go to school and have a meal that was made from locally grown food. The school feeding programme was introduced to help encourage students to attend school, to reduce hunger and also to reduce poverty. Previously, many families in some poorer regions of Ghana couldn't afford to pay for their children to attend school and feed them at the same time. So

children often accompanied their parents and worked on farms, where they were given food. So the government set up the school feeding programme to make sure pupils were able to get a meal and an education.

That all sounded good, but SEND could see that this programme was not always working well, especially in remote areas. Its research showed that the poorest schools often missed out on the food for various reasons. For example, sometimes food was late reaching the school because of the bad state of the roads. SEND took some time to reflect on the issue and came up with some ideas. Now it often help farmers to grow more food locally, so the farmers can sell it to the schools and increase their income. This means the schools have more food available locally and they don't need to bring it in from bigger market towns further away.

Show slide 5. As a result of changes suggested by SEND, over 17,000 children in Ghana's poorest northern regions are now getting vital nutritionally balanced meals at lunchtime in schools. That's three times the number of children that were receiving meals before SEND intervened. For some, this will be their only meal of the day.

Show slide 6. There has been increased attendance at school because of the lunchtime meals, and this has also resulted in other benefits for the community. When the numbers attending the school shot up from 320 to almost 400, SEND helped the local community ask for a new primary school to be built. It will make a huge difference for children like Betty, who you can see in the middle of this photo.

So this Lent, why not make some time to be still and reflect? Reflect on your lives, or on the bigger picture. Think about it!

Reflection

- For the reflection you could read **Relentless** again and leave some quiet time before ending the assembly.
- For an inspirational end to the assembly you could show the Poverty Over video, available on YouTube: youtu.be/kLBZI4FzOww

Action

If your pupils have been inspired by this assembly, here are some ideas to take it further:

- Take a look at the *Count Your Blessings 2012* materials produced by Christian Aid, which include daily reflections for Lent. Visit christianaid.org.uk/lent
- Prepare an area of the classroom for reflections – you could try a reflections wall or tree. Include inspirational quotes and thoughts. Try to include a short reflection time as part of the session.