

December 18th

Memory verse

And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. Genesis 1:5

Art and archaeology¹

More caves today. Do you remember the lessons in September about art and textiles found in caves?² Today's lesson continues the story. I have highlighted some words you might like to look up in your dictionary.

The paintings inside the Chauvet Cave in the Ardeche region of France, discovered on 18th December 1994 are remarkable. Carefully crafted multiple images are placed on the walls in such a way that in flickering firelight they seem to move. Animals are shown with “extra” tails and limbs which create the movement as the changing light and shadows cast by the fire hide and reveal them to the watching eye. Can you imagine how the horses on the right might raise and lower their heads in the fire light?



Cut off for thousands of years by a rock fall, the entrance was found by some speleologists and on penetrating deep into the caves they discovered the magnificent art that lines the walls. Visitors are not allowed into the caves these days. Previous experiences with cave paintings in France have shown that changes in humidity caused by high levels of visitors mean the paintings begin to deteriorate because of mould growth. A huge replica of the caves has therefore been made for visitors instead, in which the art work of the caves has been painstakingly copied onto imitation rock surfaces.

If you are ever able to visit the replica caves you will find that your guide tells you that the paintings were made 32,000 to 30,000 years ago. This is not correct according to the Bible's chronology. If you add up the genealogies in Genesis they show that the earth itself is only around 6000 years old. Who is right?

Previously to the discovery of these caves archaeologists had been convinced that this type of art work could not have been made 30,000 years ago. People only evolved to that level of skill about 15,000 years ago they thought. Other scientists say no: people had creative skills from the beginning. Both these ideas are partly correct! God made Adam and Eve in the beginning and they were creative because they were made in the image of God who is the Creator. However, the cave paintings cannot be older than the global Flood of Noah's day, which occurred only around 4,500 years ago. They are probably much younger than that.³

Something to make

You can make an image that appears to move rather like the flickering cave paintings. Sometimes called a “flick book,” these toys have always been popular. You need a stack of paper; large sized “post it notes” are idea. Start with a stick figure. Draw a standing stick figure on one sheet quite near the right hand edge. Use a bold black marker pen. Now place a second piece of paper on top.

¹ Information from <https://creation.com/chauvet-cave> and other sources.

² 11th and 12th September.

³ Older children might like to read <https://creation.com/how-carbon-dating-works> that explains why the dating methods used to give very old dates are not reliable.

If you can't see the underneath drawing clearly enough, place it against a window as you work so that the light shines through. Now trace over the outline again but change something slightly, for instance, you could raise one arm a little. Now use the second picture as a guide and trace over it with another piece of paper raising the arm just a little more. Now use this next picture as a guide in the same way and raise the arm still more. Carry on with whatever movements you wish until you have a stack of papers. Make sure you line the papers up correctly as you trace. Now stack up your papers carefully. You may find it helps to hold them together with a small bulldog clip. Hold the book with your left hand and flick the pages quickly with your right hand. What do you see?

An extract to read for older children from a great historian ⁴

It was on December 18th 1381 that Ann of Bohemia landed at Dover on her way to marry the sixteen year old Richard II. In the picture I think you can see the crown being placed on her head as she sits beside Richard who holds the orb and sceptre. Here is G M Trevelyan's commentary on the importance of this event:



Of the many purposes for which this match had been designed not one was fulfilled. No heir was born to settle the succession to the English crown; the active participation of Bohemia in the war [against France] never took place; still less was Wenceslaus [Ann's Father] either able or willing to direct against France the whole power of the German Empire. The English diplomatists got little in return for their £15,000,⁵ except discontent of the taxpayer at so bad a bargain, while Pope Urban never succeeded in stirring up his German crusade against the French schismatics.⁶ By the irony of chance, this marriage was the means of bringing about another schism even more formidable to the Papacy than that of Avignon. The Bohemians who passed to and fro between Prague and London after the alliance of the two courts, carried to their home manuscripts of Wycliffe's theological works, and diffused there the spirit of the reformer. In the University of Prague and the villages of Bohemia this seed soon ripened into harvest. The Hussite⁷ movement was Wycliffism pure and simple. A generation later, persecution and racial animosity converted it into Wycliffism armed and triumphant, a strange spectacle for the fifteenth century. At the hands of Ziska⁸ the Catholic church had a foretaste of the great revolt. It is these events, so little foreseen by the statesmen who planned the match, which make Anne's coming to England worthy of notice.

Can you take this passage sentence by sentence and simplify it so that a younger child could read it? You could start off: *This wedding had been planned to bring about many things but they never happened.*

What do you think of Trevelyan's phrase: "By the irony of chance..."? Does it accord with a Christian view of history?

Something to listen to

Antonio Stradivari (c.1644 – 1737) died on 18th December 1737 but some of the remarkable string instruments that he made are still in use today. Stradivari was an Italian luthier - a maker of string instruments such as violins, cellos, guitars, violas and harps. Today we call his instruments

⁴ George Macaulay Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wycliffe* (London, 1925) p.261-2.

⁵ Money promised to Wenceslaus if he broke off his dealings with France and supported England instead.

⁶ There were two popes at the time one in Rome and the other in Avignon in France. See the lesson for February 1st.

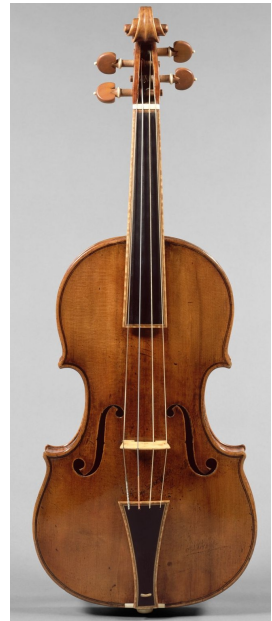
⁷ Hussites were followers of Jan Huss. We learned about him in the lessons for May 2nd, May 23rd June 21st June 26th and July 16th.

⁸ Czech national hero and contemporary of Jan Hus who led the Hussite forces and never lost a battle.

Stradivarius or just “Strad.” Stradivari made instruments that make a beautiful sound and to own a strad is the ambition of violin players all over the world. However, there are not many of them left – only about 650 – so they fetch a very high price, between six and half million and fifteen million pounds!

There are arguments about whether one can really hear the difference between a strad and a less exalted instrument but there is no doubt that players definitely think they are special. Some say that as Stradivari lived a much longer life than was usual in his day he had longer to learn his craft. But that would presumably mean that only his later instruments were remarkable and this does not seem to be the case. Also it is important to note that almost all strads in use today have been adapted to modern use. They have had their neck angle altered, for instance. Maybe other makers of Stradivari's day made instruments that sounded even better but did not sound so good once they had been altered!

Find a recording of a Stradivarius and listen. What do you think?⁹



9 There is one here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKi1ofVPj5s&t=113s> for instance.