

GARY AND THE GRATED GOUDA

Mr Pilate, the deputy head, stood at the front of the assembly. "It has come to my attention that someone has scattered grated cheese all over the stairs in the art department."

A hubbub of chatter went up among the Year 9s sitting in rows in the hall. The phantom cheese scatterer had struck again. Four times in the last week, someone had thrown cheese around different parts of the school. Mr Monet's art rooms were the new target.

"Quiet!" shouted Mr Pilate. "Thanks to various pupils, we have identified the culprit as Chelsea Chester."

A whisper went up around the room: "Chelsea Chester?" "It was Chelsea!" "Chelsea the cheese chucker!"

Gary shifted uneasily in his chair. It wasn't Chelsea, she hadn't done anything wrong. She was allergic to dairy – in fact, she came out in hives if she even touched a bit of cheddar. Besides, they'd spent almost all their time together over the past day or so. He'd know if she'd been responsible. He looked around the room. Who were the 'various pupils' the deputy head had mentioned? Then he saw Jane McCain, leader of the Christian Union and winner of the smuggest smile in Manchesterford award, smirking to herself and whispering to her goody-two-shoes friends.

"Quiet! I won't tell you again," barked Mr Pilate. "If anyone has any more information about any others involved, I urge you to come forward. Thank you, you may all go to your first lesson."

There was a lot of chair scraping and shuffling as Year 9 got to their feet, picked up their bags and started to leave the hall.

"Hey Gary!" Gary turned to see Saskia right behind him. "You and Chelsea are mates, aren't you? And you love cheese! Did you help her?"

"N-no-no," he stammered. "We're not really friends."

"Yeah!" Kofi appeared next to him. "You told me last week how much you loved Double Gloucester."

"No, I didn't! I hate cheese!"

"I bet you were involved," added Temi. "You and Chelsea do everything together."

"No, we don't! I don't really know her all that well!"

"Whatever..." shrugged Saskia. She, Temi and Kofi wandered off to geography, leaving Gary stunned. What had he just done?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Chat about the story, what the family members liked and didn't like. You could use some of these questions in your discussion:

- Why did Gary act the way he did?
- Was he right to do what he did? Why? Why not?
- Have you ever been in a similar situation? What did you do?
- What might have been the right thing to do?

This story is based on Luke 22:54-62. If you'd like to add a more explicit faith element to your discussion, then read this passage together – you could read the whole Easter story if you have the time. Discuss why Peter did what he did and what might happen next.

GOOD FRIDAY

Good Friday can often be a tough part of the Easter story to explore. It involves sadness, pain and despair and can be source of deep conversation with children and young people. It would be easy to gloss over this part of the story, but it is important to allow children to explore the depths as well as the highs of Easter. Here are some crafts which will help children to explore the events and emotions of this day in a visual, hands on way. As usual, each craft allows time and space for discussion and freedom of creativity.



NAIL AND STRING ART

You will need: wooden blocks; nails; hammers; string or wool

This craft relates to the nailing of Jesus to the cross and the sounds and actions of that event. Let children experiment with hammering nails into the wood (under supervision!) and to think about the sounds and sensations of doing this. When everyone has had a turn, spend some time, individually or together, winding wool or string around and through the nails to make a piece of tangled art work. Use the time to discuss the feelings and thoughts this part of the story arouses, perhaps linking the tangle of the winding string to the confusion and sadness of Jesus' followers.



TEAR MARBLING

You will need: plastic containers; water-based paint (eg ready-mix paint); baby oil; spoons; water; strips of paper

Fill the containers with paint watered down to a milkshake consistency. Make the colour as strong as possible as it is likely to dry to a paler shade. Talk about the tears the women of Jerusalem cried for Jesus as he carried his cross through the streets and let the children discuss their own sad times in life. Drip baby oil into the paint and slowly stir with a spoon so that the oil droplets are broken down further and dispersed. Lay strips of paper on the top of the paint / water mix and watch as the paper takes on a marbled 'tear' effect. Lift the paper out and let it dry.



BROKEN PIECE PICTURES

You will need: coloured or patterned scrapbook paper; white paper; glue

One of the amazing things about what happens in the Easter story is that out of the brokenness of Jesus' body comes resurrected life. This craft explores that concept. Offer a selection of scrapbook paper and let children tear pieces, sticking them onto a backing paper, to make a new picture of their own choosing. There is something important about using hands to tear the pieces rather than using scissors as they are much more jagged and frayed this way. This craft might be used as a starting point to discuss areas of life where we feel broken or torn and where God might come to make a new picture for us.



EMBOSSSED CROSSES

You will need: a cardboard box or other sturdy cardboard; scissors; string; PVA glue; foil

Cut cross shapes from a cardboard box – A5 is good as a guideline. Wind string round the cross and glue down string swirls or knots to decorate the cardboard. Leave some cardboard spaces for the full embossed effect. Next cut three strips of foil – one for the body of the cross and one for each arm. The strips should be wide enough to fold over the edges of the cross so that the front is completely covered. Wrap the body and arms of the cross in the foil and gently press down so that the patterns made by the string can be clearly seen. Don't press too hard or you'll break the foil! This craft might be a starting point for a discussion of why people wear crosses and why we use it as a Christian symbol.

MINA MUNNS

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STORYTELLING GAMES

So, after what seems like years, we're still under some kind of lockdown. Things might be easing, but we still can't get together and play games (unless you're in the same household), so here are some suggestions that can be played in families or online during video calls.

PUNCHLINES

Before you play, prepare a list of the first half of jokes. Read them out and ask the players to come up with alternative punchlines. They should avoid the actual punchline and come up with their own – they can be as surreal as they like! You may need to give people some time to create their punchlines. Try these, or come up with your own:

- "Doctor, doctor, I feel like a pair of curtains."
- "What do you get if you cross a sheep with a kangaroo?"
- "Why did the chicken cross the road?"

ACTING OUT

Before the game, create a list of films or books that the players will know. In turns, give each player a book or film title and challenge them to act out the story. They shouldn't just act out the title, but the plot of the film or book. You might want to give the players some time to think about how they are going to perform the story. Invite the players to perform their story and challenge the others to guess what the film or book is.

You could develop this game further by challenging the players to film or draw their story, creating a new, lockdown version of the film or book.

MEMORY STORY

Adapt the traditional game 'Today I went to market' to create a storytelling game. The first player starts by saying a sentence that introduces a story. The next player repeats the first sentence and then adds one of their own. The next player repeats the first two sentences and adds another and so on. Play on until someone forgets the story so far or until the story stops making sense!

CHEDDAR GORGE

This simple game which, for some reason is called Cheddar Gorge on the long-running radio programme *I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue*, is easy to play and can take your story on very strange flights of fancy. Each player takes it in turn to add one word to a sentence, trying as hard as they can to keep the sentence making sense! However, this usually isn't possible, so enjoy the fun. Vary the game by challenging the children or young people to tell a particular story (such as a fairy tale), or give each player an unusual word that they have to try and fit in – words such as 'stethoscope', 'margarine' or 'mucus'.

FIVE-MINUTE FABLE

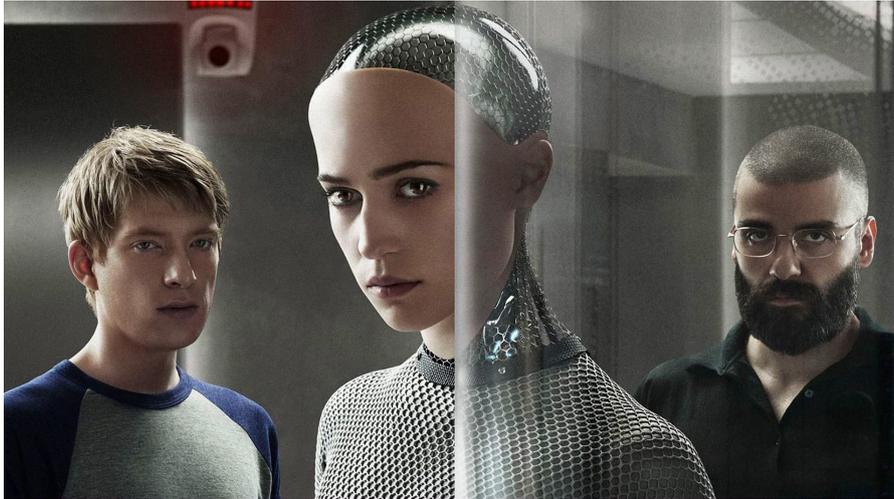
You will need: paper and pens; stop-watch or smartphone

At the start of the game, come up with six potential characters for a story (such as the Prime Minister, a doctor, a talking dog), six locations (eg the park, the bathroom or Westminster Abbey) and six props (perhaps a recipe book, a tomato plant or a rubber chicken). Write each one down on a slip of paper, fold all the papers up and put them in three piles.

Each player should choose a character, location and prop from the piles. Set a time limit of five minutes and challenge each player to write a story using their three choices in that time limit. At the end of the time, invite players to read out their stories. If you have reluctant writers, then they can dictate their story to someone else or use a phone to record their story.

ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children's Work* and is a huge board-game fan.



EX MACHINA (15)

Watch the whole film together or concentrate on the clip:
00:25:43 – 00:32:00

SYNOPSIS

Caleb, a 26-year-old programmer at the world's largest internet company, wins a competition to spend a week at a private retreat belonging to Nathan, the reclusive CEO of the company. But when Caleb arrives at the remote location, he finds that he will have to participate in a strange and fascinating experiment in which he must interact with the world's first true artificial intelligence: a robot girl.

Ex Machina is a 2014 release that tackles some excellent topics around artificial intelligence, the singularity and what it means to be human. The idea of AI becoming sentient has fascinated art, literature and film for decades, and the film tackles this topic from a quiet and nuanced perspective.

DISCUSS

Ask your young people about what they know about artificial intelligence, have they seen any films or TV shows that tackle this idea? Their experience will probably be about robots becoming killers of humanity so prepare for some of those conversation to occur. After this introduction, discuss all or some of the following questions to begin to get your group thinking:

- How has your life been impacted by technology? Consider today – how has your day already been changed by AI?
- What is the best piece of technology that you currently own and why?
- Where would you like to see technology advance in the future?
- Should humans be wary of AI developing too far?

This clip focuses on an interaction between Caleb (the human) and Ava (the AI). Caleb's role is to question Ava and examine her to determine whether she can be considered 'human' or not. Caleb has previously met Ava and has now recovered from the shock of meeting an AI who looks and

talks like a human. In his second scheduled session Caleb has been tasked with discovering how Ava feels about him. Intrigued by the concept of an AI 'feeling' Caleb allows Ava to take control of the questioning process. What follows is an in-depth exploration of Caleb and his background.

After showing the clip, chat about these questions:

- Do you agree with Ava's definition of friendship?
- Ava and Caleb's conversations often move to the topic of 'choice' – do you think that everyone has a choice in the decisions they make?
- Do you think that Caleb can trust Ava?
- If AI can experience emotions in the future, would this make them human? Should they be protected in the same way humans are?

If you'd like to extend this into a family Bible time, introduce the book of Genesis. Give some context to the book and then read Genesis 1:1-31. Discuss the following questions:

- If we are created by someone should we have to follow what they tell us to do?
- Does it matter if Genesis is a literal story or not?
- Are there limitations put on us by God during the creation story?
- If humans were to create an advanced AI would that essentially make us 'God'?

Ex Machina is a 15-rated film and does contain scenes that are justify that rating later on. Be aware of this if you are suggesting that you watch the whole film. It is now available on Netflix and DVD.

TOM WADE

is head of humanities at Haileybury and Imperial Service College.



ARTIST: Dierks Bentley
SUITABLE FOR: 10 to 13s

INTRODUCTION

This track is taken from the *Trolls* sequel, *The Trolls World Tour*. In the film, this song accompanies the characters' escape from the jail at Lonesome Flats, but it resonates with the deep longing that many of us, and our children and young people are feeling, to get out, to escape or run free from the restrictions of our current lives.

As you begin the session, invite the young people to share how they are feeling right now, and share some of their news or recent experiences. If you find it a helpful tool to encourage your young people to open up, you could ask the young people to share an emoji which best suits how they are feeling today, before asking them how to find an emoji to describe the week they have just had, and perhaps how they are feeling about the week ahead.

LISTEN AND DISCUSS

You could check who has seen the film as you introduce the song. Play the track, distributing copies of the lyrics if needed. Together with the young people, discuss some of the following:

- Which words stand out to you and why?
- Can you relate to any of the lyrics in this song?
- What do the lyrics "I got to get away!" mean to us?
- What do you long to get away from?
- What do you long to get away to?

Depending upon the circumstances and experiences of your young people and your community, there may be a particular passage which is meaningful or helpful for you to share together. Alternatively, you may like to read one of the following together and talk about what it means to your young people in the light of the song you explored together:

- **Exodus 9:1:** Let my people go
- **Joshua 1:9:** God is always with us, do not be afraid
- **Psalms 121:** Our help comes from the Lord
- **John 8:31-36:** Jesus setting us free from sin
- **Galatians 5:1:** Set free from sin

As you draw this session to a close, take some time to pray together. You could use some creative means to enable your young people to access this. One way of doing this could be to create a paper chain of prayers with the young people, drawing or writing their prayers, things they want to be free from, and free to do, which they can break apart as you pray together that they would experience the full freedom of Christ in every circumstance.

BECKY MAY

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