

HOW GREAT OUR JOY Worksheet

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While by the sheep we watched at night,
Glad tidings brought an angel bright.

Refrain

How great our joy! Great our joy!
Joy, joy, joy! Joy, joy, joy!
Praise we the Lord in heaven on high!
Praise we the Lord in heaven on high!

There shall be born, so he did say,
In Bethlehem a Child today.

Refrain

There shall the Child lie in a stall,
This Child who shall redeem us all.

Refrain

This gift of God we'll cherish well,
That ever joy our hearts shall fill.

Refrain

Vocabulary In one or two words define the following terms from the poem.

Verse 1: tidings, angel

Verse 2: joy

Verse 3: stall, redeem

Verse 4: cherish

Word Pictures Word pictures is another way of saying *imagery*. *Imagery* or *figurative language* helps us form a picture of what the author is trying to present. Discuss what these word pictures mean and, perhaps, draw your idea of the *imagery* or *figurative language* the author uses!

Verse 1: by the sheep we watched at night; angel bright

Verse 2: How great our joy

Verse 3: redeem us all

Verse 4: cherish well

Mechanics are the nuts and bolts of a poem. Verbally discuss.

Who is the speaker? (Does the speaker have a specific personality or has the author remained in the background so the message of the poem will be more clear?)

What does the poem reveal about the speaker's character? (Sometimes, poems reveal nothing about the speaker's personal thoughts, feelings, or attitudes. Yet, the poem may demonstrate those character traits that are important to the author like courage, loyalty, perseverance, etc.)

Is the speaker addressing someone in particular or is it to anyone? (Sometimes poems are not directed to anyone in particular, but to anyone that may read it.)

Does the poem have a setting? (Does the author tell where the poem occurs? Is the poem about a specific event?)

Is the poem about a particular event? (Is the event past or present? If it is about a past event, does the remembrance of the event have a particular meaning to the speaker?)

Is the theme of the poem stated directly or indirectly? (Some poems are straightforward and are meant to be taken literally. In songs, the theme may be presented in the refrain or in the last few lines. Sometimes the theme is a little bit more difficult to discern as it is made with figurative language or symbols.)

What point of view or perspective is the speaker? (What meaning do you think the poem has for the author?)

How did you respond to the poem when you read it the first time? (Did your thoughts and feelings change after you took time to study it?)

Comprehension Questions Verbally discuss

Verse 1: Who, do you suppose, were watching the sheep at night? What happened?

Refrain: Explain and discuss: “How great our joy!” Why would there be joy? Explain and discuss: “Praise we the Lord in heaven on high!” Why should this be done?

Verse 2: What happened in Bethlehem? Why is that significant? Why is Child capitalized?

Verse 3: Where is this Child? Explain and discuss: “This Child who shall redeem us all.”

Verse 4: According to the author, what is to be cherished? Why? Do you agree with the author? Why? What shall fill hearts?

Did this historical event or message become more real to you after reading this poem? Why?

After reading this poem, what character traits did you think of? What does the Bible have to say about these character traits?

What Does the Bible Say?

Find Scripture proofs for each of the assertions or statements made for each of the five verses and the refrain.

Re-read the Gospel accounts of the Nativity along with Isaiah 53. What does the Bible say about duty and cheerful obedience? Give examples of Biblical personages that demonstrated duty and cheerful obedience. Give examples of historical characters that demonstrated duty and cheerful obedience. Do you know of any present day examples of duty and cheerful obedience?

The Author/Poet

Based on what you have studied about this poem so far, would you guess that the author was a Christian or a humanist? How did you arrive at your decision?

This traditional German carol was translated to English (stanzas 1 and 2) by Theodore Baker (1851-1934). He was born 3 June 1851, New York, New York, and died 13 October 1934, Dresden, Germany. He PhD from the University of Leipzig. (NOTE: Baker’s doctoral thesis was on Seneca Indian music).

Geography

Locate New York and Germany on a globe, map and atlas.

Challenge Locate Dresden and Leipzig (Germany) on a map or in an atlas.

Compare/contrast the weather from New York and/or Germany with your own for one week.

Make an American or German meal for your family.

Activities

1) Make your own book! Without making an image of Christ, draw pictures representing each verse. (Note: that will be five different illustrations). With construction paper and other items readily available at home, make a title page with the name of the song and the author's name which will be your book's cover. You may want to illustrate your cover and include this poem in your book.

2) Make your own play! Re-enact with your siblings or friends the event or message discussed in this poem. Keep it lively, simple, and short. You may want to end your play with singing a rousing chorus of this poem or reading Scripture verses. Videotape your creation.

3) Radio Drama! With a handheld tape recorder, create your own radio show dramatizing the historical event or message of this poem.

4) Be a Reporter! Either with your family camcorder or with a handheld tape recorder, "interview" various individuals connected with this poem (e.g., Joseph, Mary, shepherds, repentant sinners, King David, Caleb, Joshua, Patrick Henry, Oliver Cromwell, George Mason, etc.). In order to have the fast paced style of a reporter, watch and/or listen to the news with your parents' permission. Keep the interviews lively, quick, and to the point.

Remain objective! Being objective means just reporting the facts and not giving your opinion of the situation.

5) What is one of the things you most enjoy? Is it literature? math? science? sports? cooking? Take that area of interest and relate that to this poem. If you enjoy dance, for example, develop a dance routine that physically expresses the sentiments of this poem. If you enjoy shop, create something out of wood that helps to clarify this poem. Do you enjoy creating stories? Write a story based on any time period you desire that expresses the sentiments of this poem. Do you enjoy creating things in the kitchen? Make an ancient meal from this time or develop your own meal that symbolizes the many different points this poem makes.

6) Poster. Create a poster illustrating the the author's view of the impact of *How Great Our Joy*.

7) Scavenger Hunt. Go to the library to learn what you can about German carols and Theodore Baker (1851-1934) and share it with your family. If possible, discover the story behind this poem.