



Liber Regalis, about 1382

11-18 activity – Christianity in 10 objects

What can you see in this image? Who might these figures be?

What activity is taking place? What clues can you find?

Look at the decoration around the text. Do you think this is a special book? Why?



The coronation of kings and queens has taken place at Westminster Abbey since 1066. This book called the Liber Regalis, Latin for Royal Book, was written in around 1382 as a manual on how to run a coronation service. It included a step by step guide to the actual event, the words that must be spoken by the new king or queen and the music that should be included. It has provided the template for coronations ever since.

A coronation is a religious ceremony. The idea of anointing, being blessed with holy oil, and crowning monarchs links back to the biblical stories of King David and King Solomon. Since the 18th century, the anthem Zadok the Priest has been sung by the choir at the coronation. The words of Zadok the Priest came from this Bible passage:



‘So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, the Kerethites and the Pelethites went down and had Solomon mount King David’s mule, and they escorted him to Gihon. Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the sacred tent and anointed Solomon. Then they sounded the trumpet and all the people shouted, “Long live King Solomon!” And all the people went up after him, playing pipes and rejoicing greatly, so that the ground shook with the sound.’ 1 Kings 1:38-40

Talk with others

What impression of a coronation ceremony does this Bible text give you? Does it sound solemn and dignified? Noisy and joyous? Or perhaps a mixture of both?

Activity: Listen to coronation music



The image shows the memorial to George Frideric Handel (1685-1789) a famous composer who is buried at Westminster Abbey. Handel composed many famous pieces of music but some of his most famous were the Coronation anthems.

Listen to [Handel's Zadok the Priest](#) in this short clip about the Coronation Chair.

- How many different musical instruments can you identify in this piece?
- How does the music make you feel?
- Can you create music that is solemn and also joyful?

This image shows John Blanke, one of the trumpeters at King Henry VIII's coronation in 1509. Blanke was a musician of African descent, who probably came to England as part of Katherine of Aragon's staff. He is known as a great trumpet player. Following Henry VIII's coronation, he asked the king for a pay rise and was given it.



Trumpets are mentioned in the Bible text you read earlier. Trumpets are always played at coronations.

Can you think of a time when music has made an event feel more special? It could be one you've seen in real life or on television.

Extension

You can read the modern version of what happens at a coronation service [here](#).

Try designing a simplified, illustrated guide to the coronation using this information.

Share your experience on Facebook or Twitter using #WAbbeyFun

