

Who Murdered Naboth?

A play outline with a message. Useful in class or assembly

Characters:

King Ahab	Lord Mayor and Town Council
Queen Jezebel	Two thugs
Steward	Crowd
Naboth	Elijah

The teacher explains the situation; the cast make up the words.

Scene One

In the vineyards

King Ahab and a steward go on a tour of the King's vineyards.

King Ahab climbs on a chair (i.e. a tower used for watching the fire) and boasts about his vines, particularly one area.

The steward explains that these don't belong to the King, they belong to Naboth.

The King tells the steward to go and ask Naboth to sell. The steward goes to Naboth who refuses.

The steward returns to the king who sends him back to Naboth asking Naboth to name his price. Naboth still refuses.

The steward returns to the king who sends him back to Naboth.

The third time, Naboth explains that he will never sell because the vineyard is of sentimental value; it's been in his family for ages.

The king storms off.

Scene Two

At the palace

King Ahab is sulking.

The teacher explains the character of Jezebel, the Queen, who is a forceful lady. Her father was King of Phoenicia and she feels she has married beneath her. She has tried her best to civilize these people of Israel, even bringing her own religion, the worship of Melqart, the Phoenician Baal. She wants to know why Ahab is sulking. He is off his food and, as the Bible says, he has turned his face to the wall.

The steward tells Jezebel what has happened. She storms at Ahab. Her father wouldn't have been bettered by a peasant; he would have chopped his head off. Things aren't done that way in Israel.

Jezebel writes a letter, takes the king's ring and stamps the letter with his seal. She tells the steward to take the letter to the Town Council.

Scene Three

The Town Council Rooms

The steward brings the letter in to the council. The mayor reads it and is upset. He passes it person to person. They are shocked. The mayor says they will have to get rid of Naboth. The Council protests that he is a good man, but they are afraid of Jezebel who they guess is behind it. She has suggested in the letter how it might be done. One of the Council says he knows two men; they are glad to pass on the responsibility. The two thugs are summoned. The council don't want to know the details, just to be informed when it is done. There is some haggling over the price. The council insist that the deed must not be traced back to them. The thugs say they will set it up for the feast day.

Scene Four

A street festival

All the class joins in.

Naboth is there.

The king, queen, steward, mayor and council arrive with due pomp.

One thug at one end of the ordinary crowd says that he has heard Naboth cursing God.

'Pass it on', he says. The message is passed through the crowd, person to person, till it reaches the other end where the second thug is waiting. 'It shouldn't be allowed', he says.

'Pass it on.' The message is passed back through the crowd person to person. When it reaches the first thug, he says 'He ought to be stoned. Pass it on.' The message returns. When it reaches the

second thug he says 'Stone him!' The two thugs, the king, the queen, the steward, the mayor, the council exit whilst the crowd start to chant 'Stone him! Stone him!'

They stone Naboth (with imaginary stones or balls of old paper).

Scene Five

Outside the palace

The thugs report to the council who report to the steward who reports to Jezebel who tells Ahab that the vineyard is his because Naboth is dead. Ahab asks no questions, he just skips off rubbing his hands to see the vineyard.

Elijah appears. He tells Ahab that as the dogs licked the blood of Naboth so they will lick his blood and that of Jezebel.

Written work

Who murdered Naboth?

Make a list of the characters and state whether each one is innocent or guilty and why. In subsequent class discussion (or even a trial!) it is to be hoped that the children will realise that everybody was guilty to some extent.

Biblical reference: I Kings 21.

For the bloodthirsty, if you want to know how Elijah's prophecy came true, read: I Kings 22 (death of Ahab) and II Kings 9 (death of Jezebel).

The death of Naboth is useful when doing the stories of Elijah. It can be linked with I Kings 19 when Elijah after the triumph at Mount Carmel has a fit of depression and runs to Mount Horeb (Sinai) to find God. I Kings 19.10-12 makes good dramatic reading (a narrator, Elijah; and sound effects from the class—wind, earthquake and fire.) Having discovered God as the still small voice of conscience it is logical that Elijah would see the importance of the individual hence his anger at the treatment of the peasant, Naboth.

This move in the stories towards awareness of social responsibility leads nicely into the eighth century prophets—Amos, Hosea, Micah and Isaiah of Jerusalem.

If using this playlet as an assembly, it is good to end on the question: WHO murdered Naboth? You'll be surprised at the feed-back you get during the week.

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