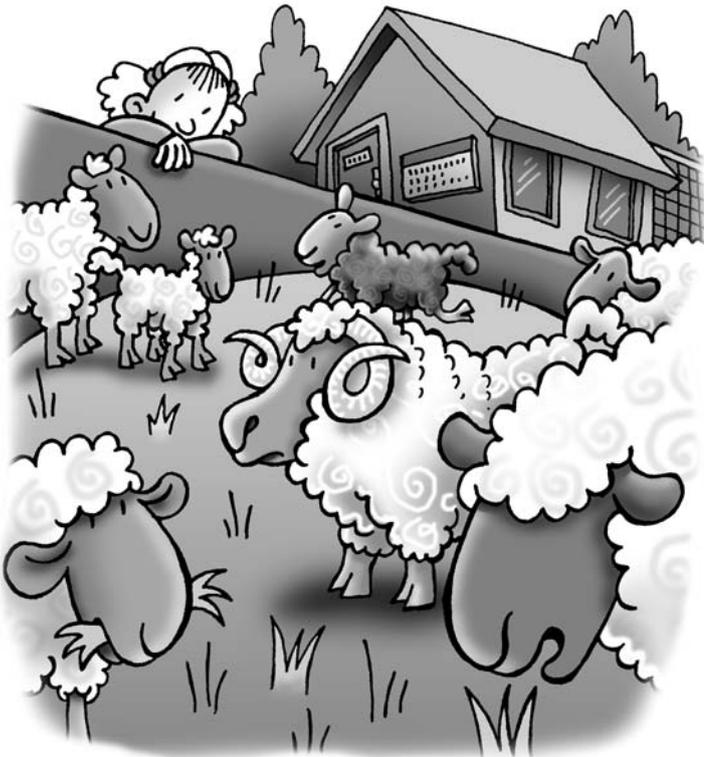


A lost Sophie

THEME: SHEEP



Sophie has a favourite backpack. It's one of those that looks a bit like a sheep from behind. The backpack goes everywhere that Sophie goes.

Sophie had put her sandwiches and drink in her backpack for the trip to the zoo.

'Look!' shouted Thomas. 'Look over there.'

The coach taking 2H to the zoo was passing a large field full of sheep and lambs.

'That field's full of Sophies!' shouted Thomas.

Everyone laughed—even Sophie.

Sophie was sitting just behind Mrs Murray on the coach.

'Mrs Murray, can I do sheep for my topic?' she asked. 'I've always loved sheep.'

'Yes,' said Mrs Murray, 'you certainly can. Sheep are very important animals. I think you may see

some rare breeds of sheep when we get to the zoo.'

Sophie got off the coach with the others. She joined them as they saw the lions and camels. When it came to lunchtime, Mrs Murray counted the class. Then she counted them again. They were one short.

'Oh dear,' said Mrs Murray, 'I think we've lost Sophie. Has anybody seen her lately?'

'I think she went off to find the sheep,' said Jade.

'I think she's a lost sheep!' said Eleanor.

Jack's mother had come with 2H to the zoo. She went off to look for Sophie.

A few minutes later Jack's mother came back. By her side was Sophie.

'I found the sheep,' said Sophie. 'I found all the rare breeds.'

'I'm very pleased you found the sheep,' said Mrs Murray, 'and even more pleased *we* found you! Please stay with us for the rest of the day.'



It was Sophie's turn to tell the class about her topic.

'We know what you chose,' said Eleanor with a grin. 'It has to be sheep.'

'Thank you, Eleanor,' said Mrs Murray. 'Now we'll let Sophie tell us.'

'Sheep can be found in almost every country in the world,' said Sophie. 'Humans first started to look after sheep about eleven thousand years ago. A male sheep is called a ram and a female is a ewe. Sheep can live for twenty years.'

Sophie opened her backpack and took out a woolly jumper.

‘Sheep give us wool for our clothes and carpets. They give us milk for drinking and for making cheese.’

Sophie opened a small box.

‘This is feta cheese. It is made from ewe’s milk,’ she said. ‘Sheep give us mutton to eat and sheepskin coats to wear. Australia is the country that has most sheep—a lot more sheep than people. And last of all, there’s lots of stories about sheep in the Bible!’

‘Well done, Sophie,’ said Mrs Murray, smiling. ‘Perhaps I’ll forgive you for getting lost at the zoo! As Sophie has told us, there are lots of stories about sheep in the Bible. Sophie has reminded me about the story Jesus told about a sheep getting lost. First, though, I want you to remember the sheep we saw on the way to the zoo. Where were they?’

‘They were in a field,’ said Thomas.

‘Was there a fence round the field?’ asked Mrs Murray.

The children looked puzzled. Of course there had been a fence round the field.

‘Yes,’ said Eleanor, ‘you need to have a fence to stop sheep running away.’

‘In the story Jesus told, things were very different,’ said Mrs Murray. ‘There were no fences. The sheep just wandered about on the hills. This meant that they sometimes got lost. In those days there were usually two or three shepherds looking after big flocks of sheep. You see, the sheep belonged to the whole village. The shepherds were very clever. They could follow a sheep by its tracks.’

Mrs Murray held up a picture of sheep and shepherds in Palestine.

‘I’ve asked Jade if she will read us the story from the Bible.’

Jade stood up with the class Bible.

“‘What do you think a man does who has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost?’” asked Jesus. “‘He will leave the other ninety-nine grazing on the hillside and go and look for the lost sheep. When he finds it, I tell you, he feels far happier over this one sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not get lost. In just the same way your Father in heaven does not want any of these little ones to be lost.’”

Jade sat down.

‘Thank you,’ said Mrs Murray. ‘As well as being



very clever, the shepherds had to be very brave. A sheep could get stuck on a ledge halfway up a mountain. Wild animals could chase it. A shepherd had to do his very best to find a lost sheep, however long it took.’

‘It’s a bit easier when the sheep are in a field,’ said Eleanor.

‘It certainly is,’ said Mrs Murray. ‘But when a shepherd found a lost sheep, everyone was very happy. Jesus told us that story to show that God loves each one of us. He loves us whatever we do and wherever we are.’

EXTENSION WORK

Talk about how it feels if you get lost. What kind of emotions do you feel? Relate this to the story of the lost sheep, and the feelings of relief when you are found.

Find out how many different breeds of sheep live in Great Britain. How do they differ from each other?

Discuss why Jesus used his parables. Why did he choose a shepherd for the story? What other jobs are cited in the parables?

Try some sheep’s milk cheese like feta. How does it differ from cows’ milk cheese?

Some of the sheep have gone missing!
Can you find them? (We think there should be ten.)

