*The Annunciation* by Fra Angelico shows the moment of the Incarnation. Students can explore what is meant by the word ‘Incarnation’, the way Christ came to be born and his titles.

**What is the Incarnation?**

By the word ‘Incarnation’ Must give literal meaning first and a quick etymology “In” “Carne” to become flesh or taking on flesh - carne- literally meaning meat, need to explain- God became flesh in the person Jesus Christ- teacher needs to get this right as this theology is at the heart of the prayer. Human nature is that we are made of flesh. The word ‘Incarnation’ expresses the fact that Jesus Christ is not just a man, but God himself become a human being just like us so that we can have salvation.

**How did Jesus Christ come to be born?**

The Annunciation is the historical event when God the Father, through the angel Gabriel, asked the Virgin Mary to become the mother of his Son Jesus.

Mary, who was and remained a virgin, questioned how she could conceive a child. The angel answered that this child would be conceived through a miracle:

*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow*

 *you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God (Luke 1:35)*

Mary gave her free consent to become the Mother of God, opening the way to our salvation:

*And Mary said, “Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord;*

*let it be to me according to your word. (Luke 1:38)*

The angel of the Lord also appeared to Joseph, Mary’s betrothed, assuring him that this child was born of God and to take Mary home as his wife.

At the time of a census called by the Roman Emperor Augustus, Jesus was born in Joseph’s home town of Bethlehem, the City of David. Here the king of Kings was born in the poverty of a stable. His birth was heralded by a miraculous appearance of angels to nearby shepherds, and a star in the heavens which guided wise men to him.

*She gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths,*

*and laid him in a manger.(Luke 2:4-7)*

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| **Possible Questions for Students** | **Information for Teachers** |
| Ask the students to look at the painting. What do they notice? What are some possible reasons Fra Angelico did this? | Begin by looking at the painting in general. Students simply share what they notice. Then you might begin discussing why these elements are present. For example “why do you think the artist paints a book on Mary’s lap?” |
| Notice the posture of the angel and of Mary. They make eye contact and their hands are matching.What might this mean? | Eye contact indicates communication. Both angel and Mary are open to communication. Hands and posture show a mutual reverence. Both are in the presence of the ‘holy’. |
| Notice the stars and the architecture.What might these mean? | Architecture is classical. Mary is on a throne. The stars might symbolise the universe. This contrasts with Mary as an ordinary Jewish girl sitting not on a throne but on a simple stool. As Mary indicates in the Magnificat – God has raised up a lowly servant. |
| Notice the book on Mary’s knee.What might the book be?What does it symbolise? | The book is the Jewish Scripture, the Word of God. Mary is the bearer of the Word of God. Her ‘yes’ means that the Word is made flesh in her. Note that Mary would not have had a Bible to read. This is symbolism – Mary carries the Word. |
| Notice the sun beaming towards Mary.What do you notice in the sun or light? | The sun/light connects the depiction of Adam and Eve with the Annunciation. God shines on all. In the sunlight is a hand and dove – the Father through the Holy Spirit. The sun/light is used to represent the dawn of salvation in Christ who “visits us like a dawn from on high. He will give light to those in darkness and those who dwell in the valley of death.” |
| Notice the left hand side of the painting.What is happening?Who are the figures?Why would the artist include this in a depiction of the Annunciation? | Adam and Eve are being led out of Paradise – The Fall. There is the chaos in nature. This contrasts with the order of the right hand side, the Annunciation. Mary, the ‘new Eve’ will give birth to the son of God, Jesus. Jesus, the ‘new Adam’ will redeem and renew all of creation. |