

# Nativity Explorer's Notebook



*A Multisensory Experience Inspired by  
Glencairn Museum's Nativities Collection*

Hello explorers and Merry Christmas!

Today we are going to learn about Christmas by exploring the Nativities collection at Glencairn Museum. Do you know what a Nativity is? A Nativity is an artistic representation of the story of Christ's birth as told in the Bible. A Nativity can be done in many different ways and made of many different materials.

How many Nativities do you think that Glencairn has? Can you believe that Glencairn has more than 200 Nativities from places all over the world! We are going to explore just six of the Nativities at Glencairn.

As you make your way through this notebook, write or draw about your thoughts, answers, observations and new ideas!

On the next page, there is a map that shows where in the world each Nativity is from.



Have you heard of any of these countries before?

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Do you have a Nativity in your house? If you do, where do you put it up? If you don't, do you display any other Christmas or holiday art?

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Have a good adventure!

# Exploration 1: Making an Ornament



This Nativity is from Zambia, a country in southern-central Africa. It is made of wire, yarn, and fabric. Can you see the texture of the yarn in the picture? It looks kind of soft and fuzzy!

We are going to make a Christmas tree ornament using materials similar to this Nativity.

You will need:

- Thin wire or pipe cleaners
- Different colors of yarn
- Any sort of scraps of fabric
- Scissors
- Glue (tacky glue or hot glue)
- You also might need a grownup to help you!

## Directions:

1. Bend the wire or pipe cleaner into the shape you'd like your ornament to be, perhaps a circle, star, or Christmas tree. Be sure to twist the ends of the wire or pipe cleaner together a couple of times so that they're nice and secure. If you are worried about them coming apart, you can use a drop or two of glue to hold them together.



2. Glue the wire shape to the fabric, covering both sides of the shape. You can use two different fabrics if you like! Once the glue is dry, trim the extra fabric off of the outside of the shape.



3. Draw a shape with glue on the fabric, maybe a gingerbread cookie, a Santa Claus shape, or maybe a star. You can do any shape you like! Before the glue dries, place the yarn on the glue. You can draw two different shapes on the two different sides, or you can do the same shape on both sides.



4. To hang the ornament, tie a loop of yarn onto the top of the wire. If the fabric gets in the way, you can cut a little hole to access the wire.



1. If you want to make the activity a little more complicated, you can take on some of these challenges:
  - a. How can you make a three-dimensional ornament instead of a two-dimensional one?
  - b. Can you find a way to incorporate beads into your design?
  - c. How many different fabrics can you incorporate? How many different kinds of yarn?

We would love to see your ornaments! You can post them on social media and tag them with [@glencairnmuseum](#) or [#glencairnmuseumkids](#) or email them to [info@glencairnmuseum.org](mailto:info@glencairnmuseum.org).

## Exploration 2: Christmas Vocabulary



This Nativity is from Peru, a country in South America. In Peru, many people speak Spanish. Lots of people also speak languages like Quechua, Aymara, and many others. Today, we are going to learn some words in Spanish that will help us describe this Nativity and the Christmas holiday. Look at the table below and see how many words you can use to describe the Nativity.

Word	Translation	Pronunciation
La Navidad	Christmas	la nah-vee-dahd
La Natividad	Nativity	la nah-tee-vee-dahd
María	Mary	mar-ee-ah
José	Joseph	hoe-say
Jesus	Jesus	hey-sue-s



Los Magos	Wise Men	los mag-ohs
Los Pastores	Shepherds	los past-ore-es
Los Ángeles	Angels	los an-hel-es
El Pesebre	Manger	el pess-ebb-ray
El Establo	Stable	el estah-blo
La Oveja	Sheep	la o-vay-ha
El Caballo	Horse	el cah-bye-o
La Vaca	Cow	la vah-kah

Did you already know some of these words? Were any new to you?

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Which word did you like learning or saying the best?

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Were any words a little trickier to pronounce?

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## Exploration 3: Making Cucidati



This Nativity is from Italy, a country in Europe. Italy is known for many things including its delicious food, things like seafood, pasta, sauces and pizza! There are also many delicious Italian desserts! Today, we are going to make cucidati, a fig cookie that many people in Italy make at Christmastime.

### Cucidati

Yields about 24 small cookies

You will need:

- An adult to help you

For the dough:

- 2 cups of all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup of sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of salt
- 1 stick of butter
- 2 eggs

For the filling:

- 6 ounces of dried figs
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of dates with pits removed
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of almonds
- $\frac{1}{6}$  cup of apricot jam
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of raisins
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of cinnamon

## Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F

## For the dough:

2. Combine the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt.
3. Add in the butter. Cutting it into small cubes might help it combine more easily.
4. Add in the eggs.
5. First mix and then knead the dough until smooth and then form it into a log shape. Wrap it in plastic wrap or in a clean kitchen towel and put it in the refrigerator.

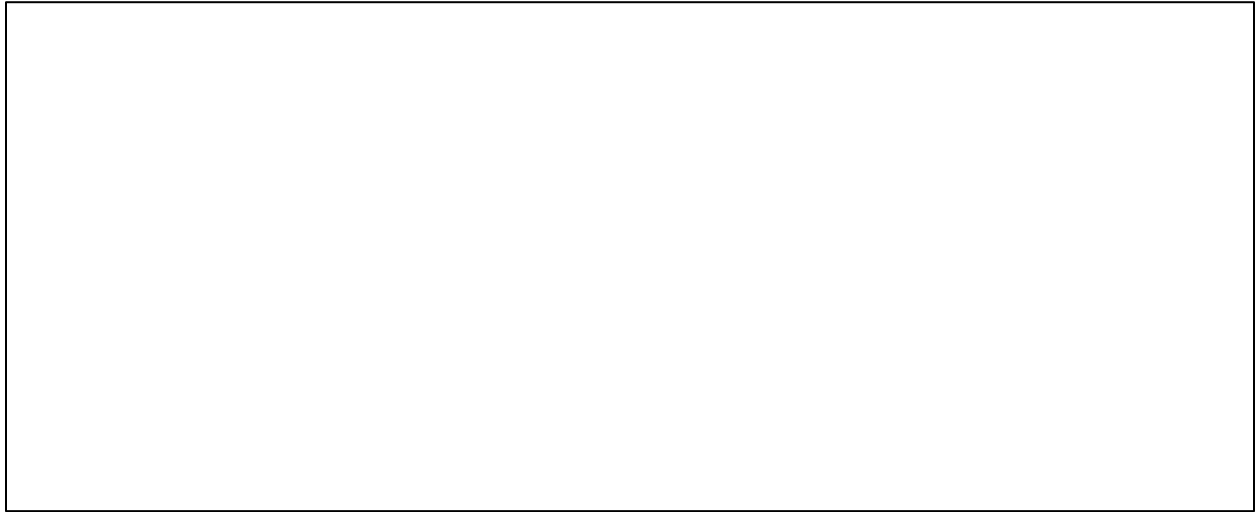
## For the filling:

6. Remove all the stems and pits from the figs and dates. Chop them into medium sized pieces.
7. Using a food processor, combine the figs, dates, almonds, jam, raisins, and cinnamon. If you don't have a food processor, you can have an adult help you cut everything into little pieces and then mix well in a bowl.

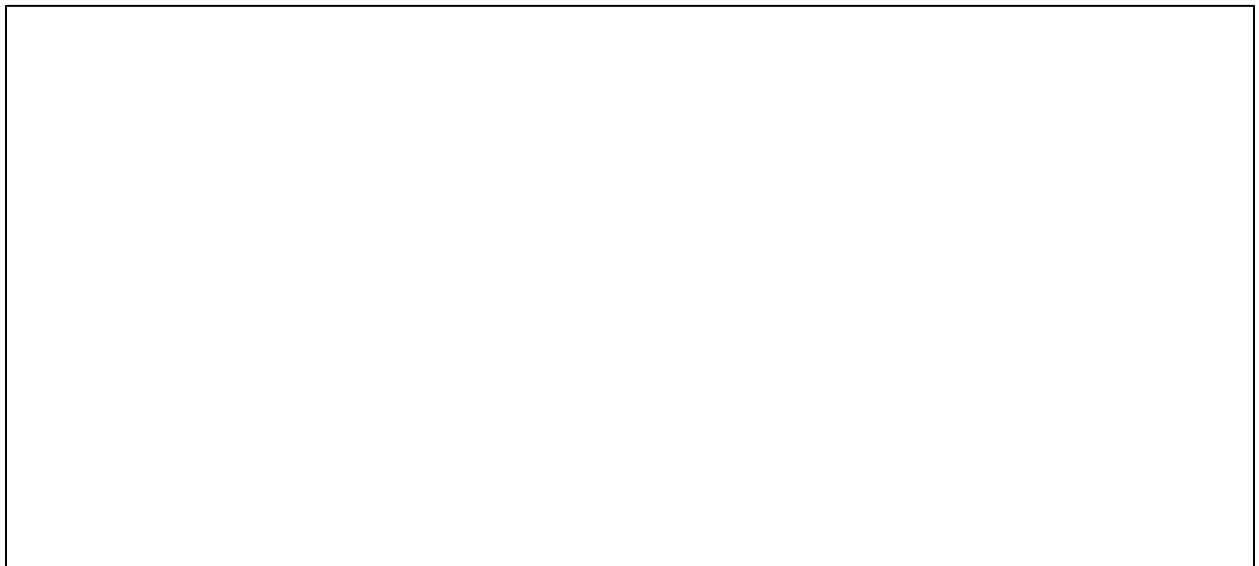
## To combine:

8. Cut the log of chilled dough into six pieces to make it easier to work with. Roll each piece out into a rectangle.
9. Make a line of filling down the center of each rectangle and roll the dough around the filling.
10. Cut the rolls into pieces that are about an inch and a half wide.
11. Place each piece onto a baking tray lined with parchment paper and bake for 15 minutes.

What did you smell as the cucidati was cooking? You can write about it or draw a picture.



What do the cucidati taste like? Have you ever tasted something like it before?



## Exploration 4: The Smells of Christmas

This Nativity is from Laos, a country in Asia. It is made of several different kinds of wood and grass. Even though it is winter right now, there are lots of different kinds of wood in your house right now. Did you know that many kinds of spices come from trees, just like wood? Today, we are going to go to our spice cabinets and discover all sorts of smells that come from trees that grow in Asia.



Cinnamon is made of the bark from cinnamon trees native to southern China. What are some words you could use to describe the way cinnamon smells?

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Nutmeg is made of the seeds from nutmeg trees growing in Indonesia. What are some words you could use to describe the way nutmeg smells?

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Cloves come from the flowers that grow on clove trees in Indonesia. What are some words you could use to describe the way cloves smell?

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Pepper comes from the berries of pepper vines in India, which grow on trees. What are words you could use to describe the way pepper smells?

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## Exploration 5: Making Your Own Nativity



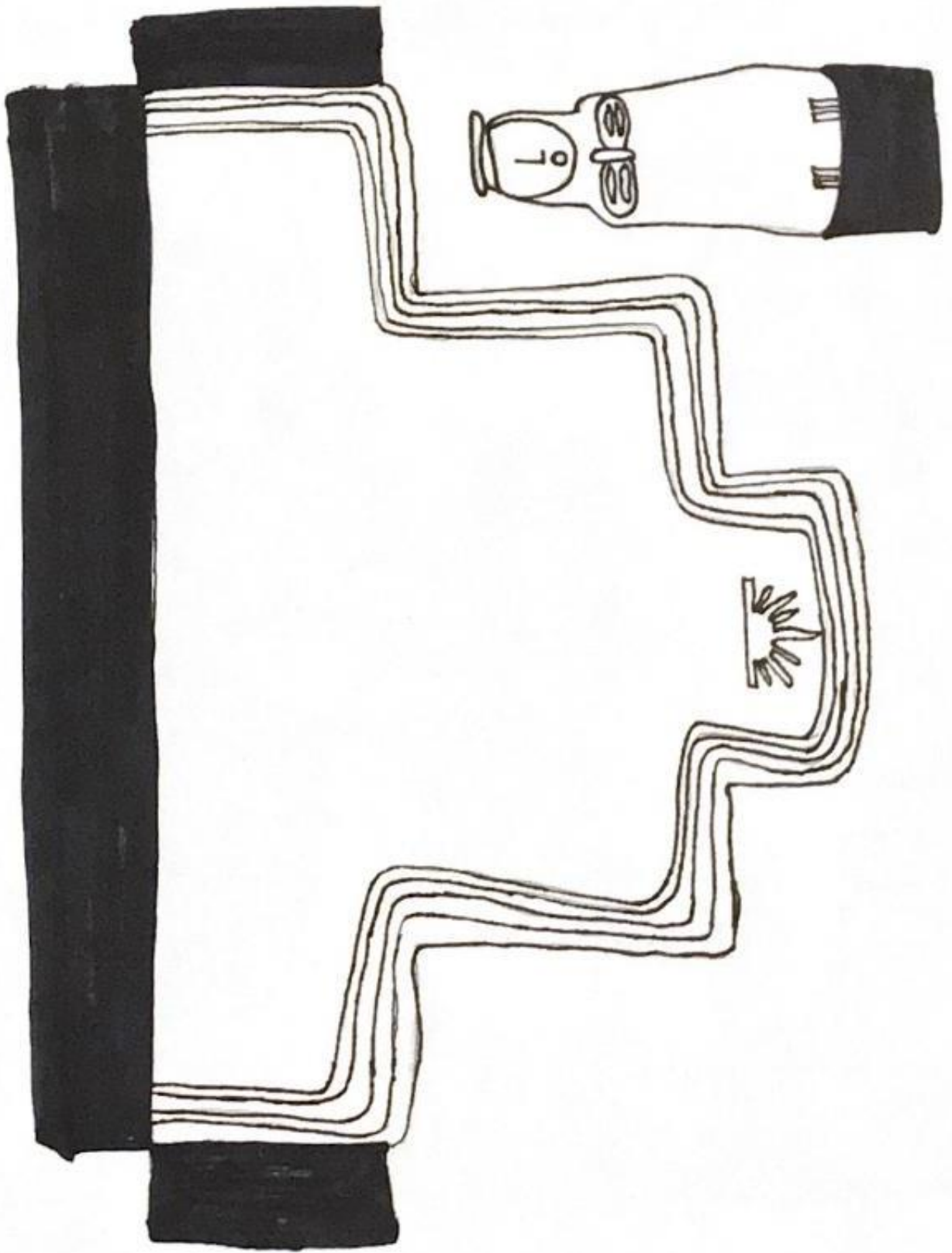
This Nativity is from the United States, specifically from the Taos Pueblo in New Mexico. It was made by an artist named Alma Loretto Maestas. Ms. Maestas made this Nativity out of clay that she painted.

Ms. Maestas says, “I hope people will see [my Nativity] and remember what Christmas is about. I hope, too, it will remind them that not all Christians are white, that they are of all nationalities.”

In this Nativity, the wise men are bringing chili peppers, corn, and bread to the baby Jesus. Chili peppers, corn, and bread are all foods of the Taos Pueblo. All the men in the Nativity have the braided hairstyle of the Taos Pueblo.

On the next few pages, there are drawings of each of the figures in the Nativity that you can cut out and color. You can bend the black tabs attached to each figure to make them stand up. It might be a good idea to print out the next few pages on thicker pieces of paper so that they stand up better. You could even make a paper floor for the Nativity and glue the figures to the paper so that they never fall!





## Exploration 6: Living Nativity

This Nativity is from Martinique, an island in the Caribbean. The Nativity is made of clay that has been painted with bright colors. The clay is molded into people in many different positions.



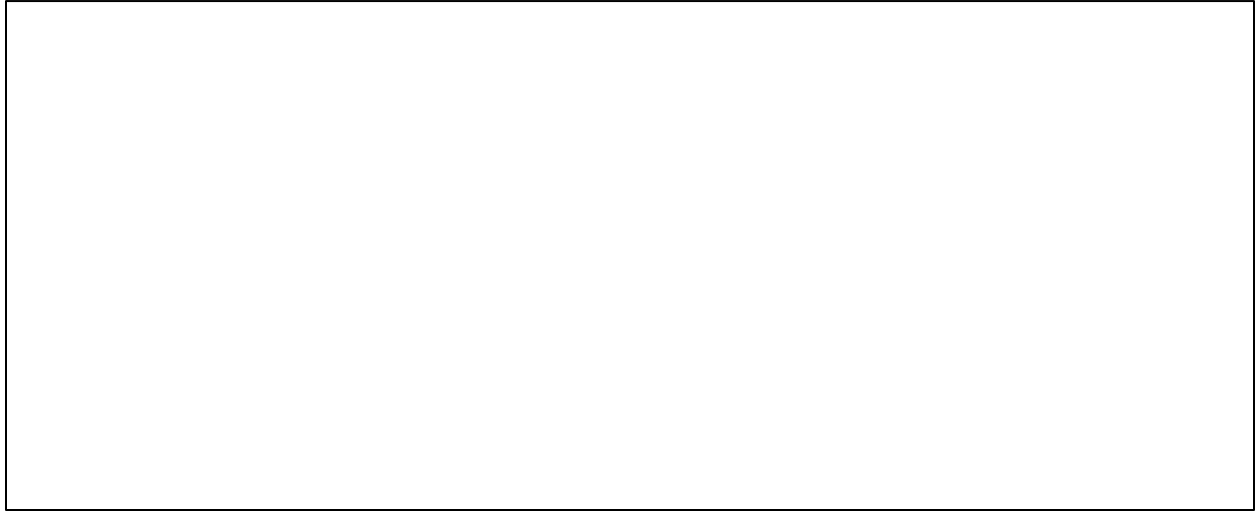
What are some of the different things that you can see people are doing in this Nativity?

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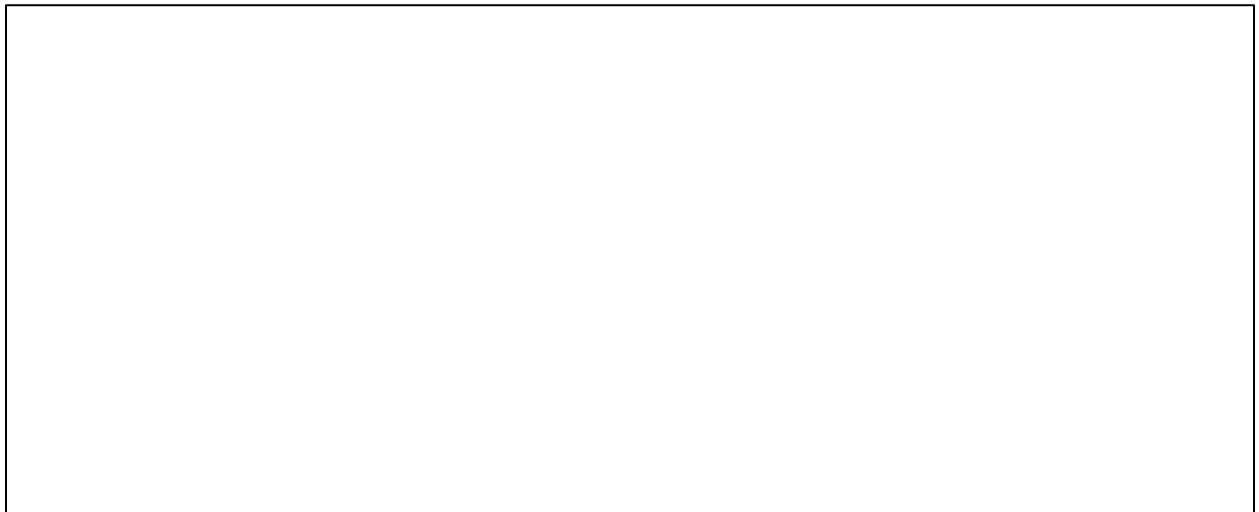
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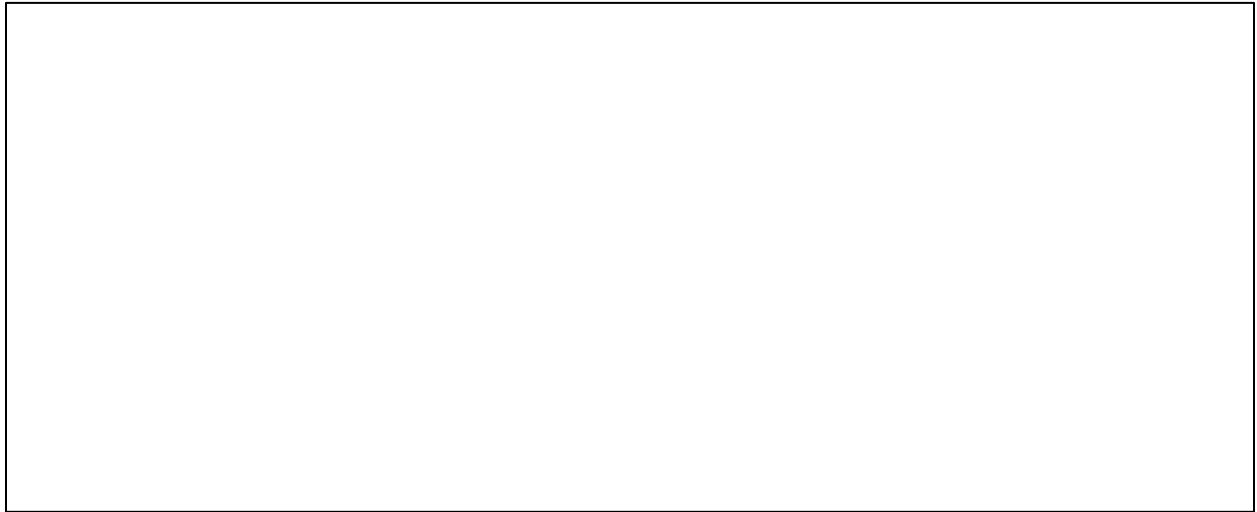
Look at Mary, dressed in pink with her hands pressed together in front of her. What is her body doing? Can you position your body to look just like hers? Draw a picture of yourself in Mary's position.



Do you see the shepherd dressed in green holding two sheep? What is his body doing? Can you position your body to look just like his? Draw a picture of yourself in the shepherd's position.



Choose one of the other figures in the Nativity – the other shepherd, Joseph, one of the wise men, or Jesus in the manger. What are their bodies doing? Can you position your body to look just like theirs? Draw a picture of yourself in the position.



Extra challenge: Ask some of the other people at home with you to see if you can recreate some or all of this Nativity by each choosing a person to copy the position of!

## Additional Activity: Making a Christmas Card

Many people love getting letters, especially at Christmastime! You can use any art supplies you have at your house to make Christmas cards of your own.

You will need:

- A piece of paper
- Markers, crayons, pencils, or any other sort of art supplies you'd like to use
- A pen or pencil
- An envelope and a stamp

Instructions:

1. Fold the piece of paper in half. If you'd like to make the card smaller, you might want to use a pair of scissors to trim it down. You can ask an adult to help you with this if you would like.
2. Draw a picture on the front of the card! It can be of anything you would like, but if you need inspiration, you can look at the Nativities included in this notebook. You can also look around your house. Do you have any decorations on display? What do they look like?
3. Write a message inside the card. Often, people write about what exciting things happened to them that year and what they're grateful for at Christmastime. Sometimes, everyone in the family will write a little note and sign the card.

4. Put the card in an envelope with a stamp and address it to who you'd like to send it to. You can ask an adult for help with writing an address. Then, you just put it in the mail!

Merry Christmas, explorers! We hope you have a very happy holiday season.



# Sources

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## Credits

*Developed by Fiona Dwyer for Glencairn Museum*  
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