

# Moses Little Brother

## Key and Teachers' Notes

NOTE 1: This small kit is intended for selective use in a single 90 session. Adapt the material as you wish to suit the time you have available BUT DO NOT EXCLUDE ANYTHING FROM PRE-READING. The material is not sequential so by missing out one section you will not impede another. Use project work as home work. If you choose to use every activity suggested this is likely to take around three hours of class time.

NOTE 2: Check the website

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/download/britlit/butlin/butlin.shtml> for further information on the author, Ron Butlin, and extracts from other stories and poetry.

### SUGGESTED LESSON MAP

1. Ask who Moses was. Refer to PRE-READING text 1 (Moses). Students to speculate on who Moses little brother might be, and why an author might choose to introduce him (*add variety, change of pace, introduce a new element etc*).
2. Introduce section from Old Testament (Exodus). This is from the English Revised version which dates from the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
3. Creating a story from questions about a story that hasn't been read might appear counter-intuitive, but it isn't. Everyone knows the elements of story-telling, and there are sufficient clues in the questions that, if the students read all the questions before they attempt to answer them, then this will help (e.g. that Little Brother didn't stay with the tribes). The students should then work in groups to try to create a narrative from their answers – just giving answers is not enough; they need to be able to create a story using narrative voice and appropriate connectors.
4. The vocabulary activity is useful before you give the students the text to read.
5. **READING THE STORY.** Give the students the text, and give them enough time to read without rushing. This is their time and you must respect it. Find an alternative activity for very quick readers.
6. When everyone has had a chance to read the story, do not elicit responses (though allow any spontaneous comments). Tell them they are now going to listen to the author himself reading the story. Explain that the author is Scots and thus speaks with a Scottish accent. They may like to hear it twice; the first time they should follow the story from the text. On the second hearing they should listen with the text put away.
7. **CONTEXT.** The first activity requires students to read through a section outlining a possible interpretation of the story. There are two contexts drawn out in this section: the conflict between faith and reason, and the problem of political turmoil in the middle east. Both of these are contentious issues and should be tackled very carefully. The purpose of these activities is to develop some aspects of critical thinking and for students to assess that there are two points of view in each case. For this reason you are advised not to try and reach resolution in debate, but to allow an opportunity for different points of view to be expressed (whether from the texts or from the class) and equally respected.
8. The websearch at the end of this section would be ideal for homework or for a follow up session.
9. **WORD WORK.** The grammar activities in this section could either be completed as homework or carried out in class. If they are carried out in class then they should be followed by a further listening to the story, so that the students are not left with the dryness that grammar activities tend to generate.

## Pre-reading

2.1 in a burning bush

2.2 a land of milk and honey

3. Any version that keeps the narrative order must be accepted.

4. Vocabulary

Wilderness	desert like, hostile land
Plague	infestation
Locust	insect that eats crops
Frog	amphibian
Boils ( <i>noun</i> )	skin diseases
Pillar	column
Suits me	That's fine
Work permit	official licence to work
For the likes of him	for people in a similar situation
Building –site	place where construction is taking place
Still at it	continuing (to argue?)

## Context

This potential tricky area of discussion may benefit from the following observations:

Concepts we use to explain the world very much influence not only how we act, but also what we see. There is a point of reference or perspective which attempts to balance faith and reason, but would have to take the associated values into consideration..

Reason, and how it is defined, can be seen as "rational" or "empirical", or a combination of the two. (cf Kant). The purely rational states that we as humans have the power of understanding objective reality by way of structured thought. The purely empirical says that we know nothing except through experience, essentially what we cannot experience does not exist. The former can allow for God, almost requires it, whereas the latter cannot.

For Nietzsche, faith in science is the same as the old faith. The little brother has a map, but what if the map is wrong? Isn't "faith" involved here as well?

Science explains, but it doesn't offer any meaningful answers whereas religion does. The life of a believer is serving God, and thus full of meaning for those of the religious community. The life of a scientist builds a bit on what has come before (it he's lucky) but is soon superseded by the next scientist who comes along, his life becoming a footnote for the scientific community.

When things don't work out we fault the method in science, and fault ourselves for having angered God in religion. Both rest on the assumption that our choice was correct in the first place, that is both are self-contained value spheres where questioning the basic assumption questions the validity of the entire world view.

JG

A. 2.

The lesson that both thinkers took from the Greeks was that you could subtract the gods and their stories from Greek religion without taking away the most important thing. **This thing**

had its primary reality not in myths or theology or doctrine, but in rituals, in moments that stand outside time, in which the loneliness and anxiety of the human individual is confronted and overcome, through immersion in the group. By calling these moments "sacred," we recognise both their complex social meaning and also the respite that they offer from alienation

*Roger Scruton (British academic and essayist)*

The maxim, "credo quia absurdum," which has been pronounced by prominent defenders of religious faith and which means "I believe *because* it is absurd," implies the antinomy between "knowledge" and "faith." It seems to imply furthermore, that we "know," for example, from scientific evidence that the earth is billions of years old. However, according to the above maxim, a believer may adhere to the notion that the earth is only about 6,000 years old, not because he "knows" that but because he "believes" in that, however absurd the latter notion may be in view of the contrary evidence; moreover, the very absurdity of the notion in question is claimed by the quoted maxim as the reason to believe in it.

Precisely because it is absurd from the rational viewpoint, its acceptance requires *belief*.

*Mark Perakh (American academic and essayist)*

We respect your learning; but there is one thing you do not seem to have learned: that God is a spirit and cannot be found through the telescope or microscope, no more than human thought or emotion can be found by analyzing the brain. As everyone knows, religion is based on Faith, not knowledge. Every thinking person, perhaps, is assailed at times with religious doubt. My own faith has wavered many a time. But I never told anyone of my spiritual aberrations for two reasons: (1) I feared that I might, by mere suggestion, disturb and damage the life and hopes of some fellow being; (2) because I agree with the writer who said, 'There is a mean streak in anyone who will destroy another's faith.' ..

*Letter from President of the New Jersey Historical Society to Albert Einstein*

How is it that hardly any religion has looked at science and concluded, 'This is better than we thought! The Universe is much bigger than our prophets said, grander, more subtle, more elegant'? Instead they say, 'No, no, no! My god is a little god, and I want him to stay that way.' A religion, old or new, that stressed the magnificence of the Universe as revealed by modern science might be able to draw forth reserves of reverence and awe hardly tapped by the conventional faiths.

*Carl Sagan (Scientist, broadcaster and writer)*

Some people have views of God that are so broad and flexible that it is inevitable that they will find God wherever they look for him. One hears it said that 'God is the ultimate' or 'God is our better nature' or 'God is the universe.' Of course, like any other word, the word 'God' can be given any meaning we like. If you want to say that 'God is energy,' then you can find God in a lump of coal.

*Steven Weinberg (Philosopher)*

Faith is a principle of action and of power, and by it is believed one can command the elements and/or heal the sick, or influence any number of circumstances when occasion warrants. Also, it is by faith that one obtains remission of sins and eventually can stand in the presence of God. All true faith must be based upon correct knowledge or it cannot produce the desired results. True faith always moves its possessor to some kind of physical and mental action; it carries an assurance of the fulfillment of the things hoped for. A lack of faith leads one to despair, which comes because of iniquity.

*Church of the Latter Day Saints (Mormon Church)*

Shake off all fear of servile prejudices, under which weak minds are servilely crouched. Fix reason firmly in her seat, and call on her tribunal for every fact, every opinion.

Question with boldness even the existence of God; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason than that of blindfolded fear.

*Thomas Jefferson (Co-writer of American Constitution and 3<sup>rd</sup> President of the USA)*

## B Questions

Allow personal statements to emerge, especially if these feelings are strongly held. Do not attempt to resolve any issues but, in the words of the West-Eastern Orchestra, allow the students to “express themselves freely and openly whilst at the same time hearing the narrative of the other. It is not necessarily a question of accepting the narrative of the other, let alone agreeing with it, but rather the indispensable need to accept its legitimacy”.

Note: the photographs are of an Israeli and a Palestinian girl, of the border area and of the wall which divides the two communities.

### SPECIAL NOTE:

We are very grateful to the publishers, Serpent’s Tail, for their kind permission in allowing us to use this story, which they published in the collection of Ron Butlin stories ‘No More Angels’, 2007  
[www.serpentstail.com](http://www.serpentstail.com)

To read the other 20 stories in this collection go to

[http://www.amazon.co.uk/No-More-Angels-Ron-Butlin/dp/1852429542/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1198412771&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.co.uk/No-More-Angels-Ron-Butlin/dp/1852429542/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1198412771&sr=1-1)

For further classroom activities based on stories by Ron Butlin, go to  
[www.britlitworld.com](http://www.britlitworld.com)

## Word Work

### Activity 1

1. *Next thing, God was shaking him.*
2. That night.....
3. The day after .....
4. A few days later .....
5. A partition was followed .....
6. ....showed up forty years later.
7. Three thousand years after that .....

### Activity 2

(Suggestions)

The Twelve Tribes showed up forty years later. **Then** there was a dispute. **Next**, several other gods, both local and freelance, got involved and, three thousand years after that, everyone was still at it. A partition was followed by refugee camps, suicide-bombers, missiles. **After that**, someone produced a new map. **Then** someone started building a wall.

**A few days later**, God turned Himself into a burning bush. No one noticed.

### Activity 3

Look for evidence of both sequential and retrospective use. As an alternative, you may ask students to make their own diary entries for Little Brother and work from this.