

Seeing is believing -  
or is it?  
What do you  
think?

# Close Enough to Touch

In this unit, you will be asked to think about:

- The Christian belief that Jesus was raised from the dead and that he appeared to his friends and followers
- The idea that we don't always see things about people we know very well
- What angels might be like



Before you read the narrative on the next page, here are some things you need to know.

- This is part of a long and very important narrative for Christians. It explains that Jesus was sentenced to death by being crucified (hung on a wooden cross) and was buried in a cave-tomb with a rock across the front.
- When his two of his disciples (friends and followers) went with a woman called Mary Magdalene to Jesus' tomb two days later, they discovered that the tomb was open and Jesus' body was no longer there. The two men ran back to tell the others what had happened and this is where Mary Magdalene's story begins.
- Jesus died on a Friday and was buried the same day. The Sabbath, the Jewish holy day (from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday) started a few hours after Jesus' death, so Sunday morning was the first opportunity anyone had to visit the tomb. One of the Jewish Ten Commandments forbids work on the Sabbath. This probably meant that Jesus' friends did not have time to prepare his body for burial as well as they would have liked to, as this would have counted as work.



## Friday



Jesus dies and is hurriedly buried.


## Saturday

SABBATH  
All work forbidden

## Sunday

Early in morning, two disciples and Mary Magdalene visit the tomb.

# An Encounter with an Old Friend



**M**ary Magdalene stood crying outside the tomb. She was still weeping when she stooped down and saw two angels inside. They were dressed in white and were sitting where Jesus' body had been. One was at the head and the other was at the foot. The angels asked Mary, "Why are you crying?"

She answered, "They have taken away Jesus' body! I don't know where they have put him."

As soon as Mary said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there. But she did not recognise him. Jesus asked her, "Why are you crying? Who are you looking for?"

She thought he was the gardener and said, "Sir, if you have taken his body away, please tell me, so I can go and get him."

Then Jesus said to her, "Mary!"

She turned and said to him, "Teacher."

Jesus said to her, "Don't hold on to me! I have not yet gone to the Father. But tell my disciples that I am going to the one who is my Father and my God, as well as your Father and your God." Mary Magdalene then went and told the disciples that she had seen Jesus. She also told them what he had said to her.

ADAPTED FROM THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 20:11-18 (CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION)

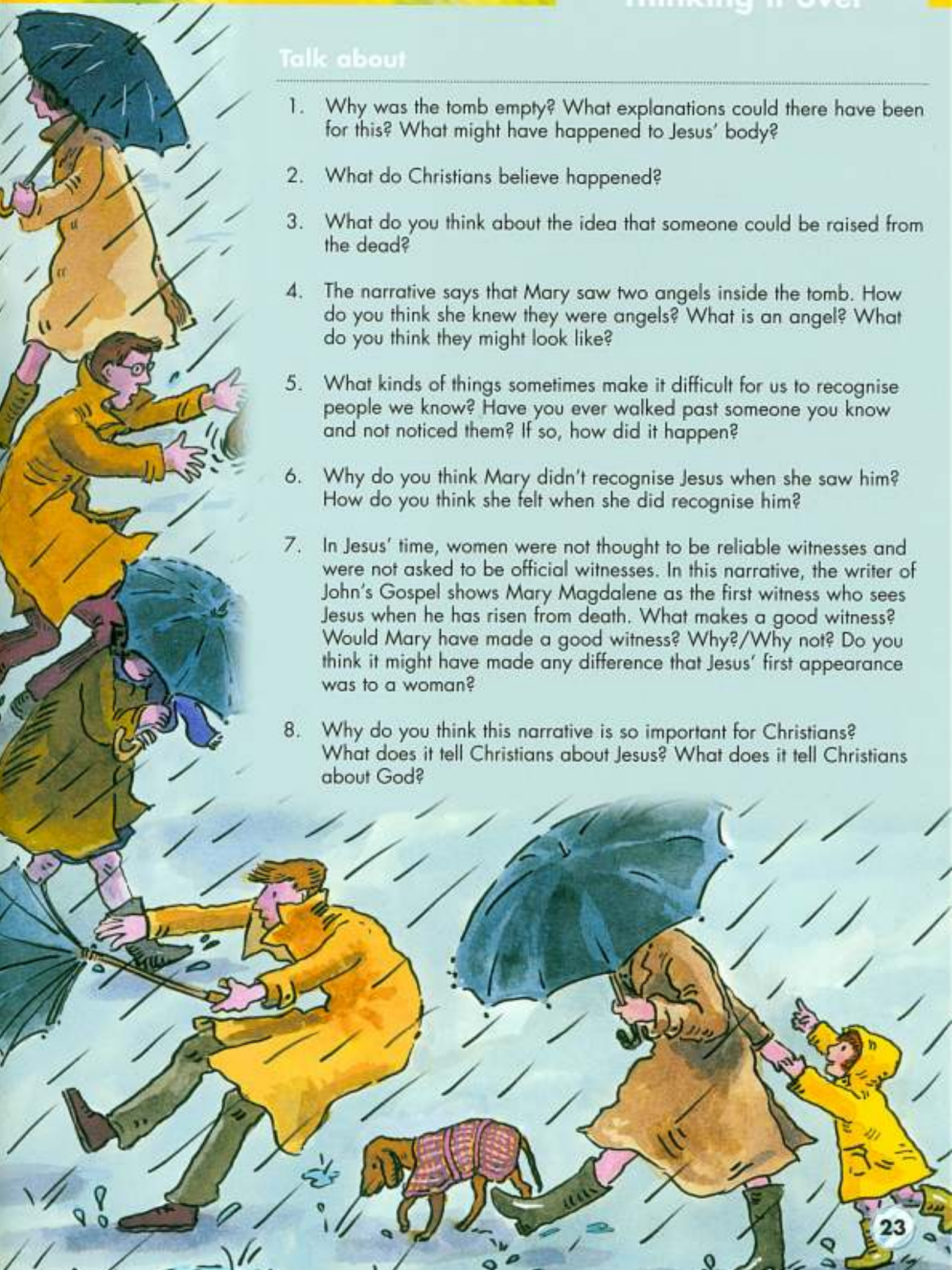
## Clues

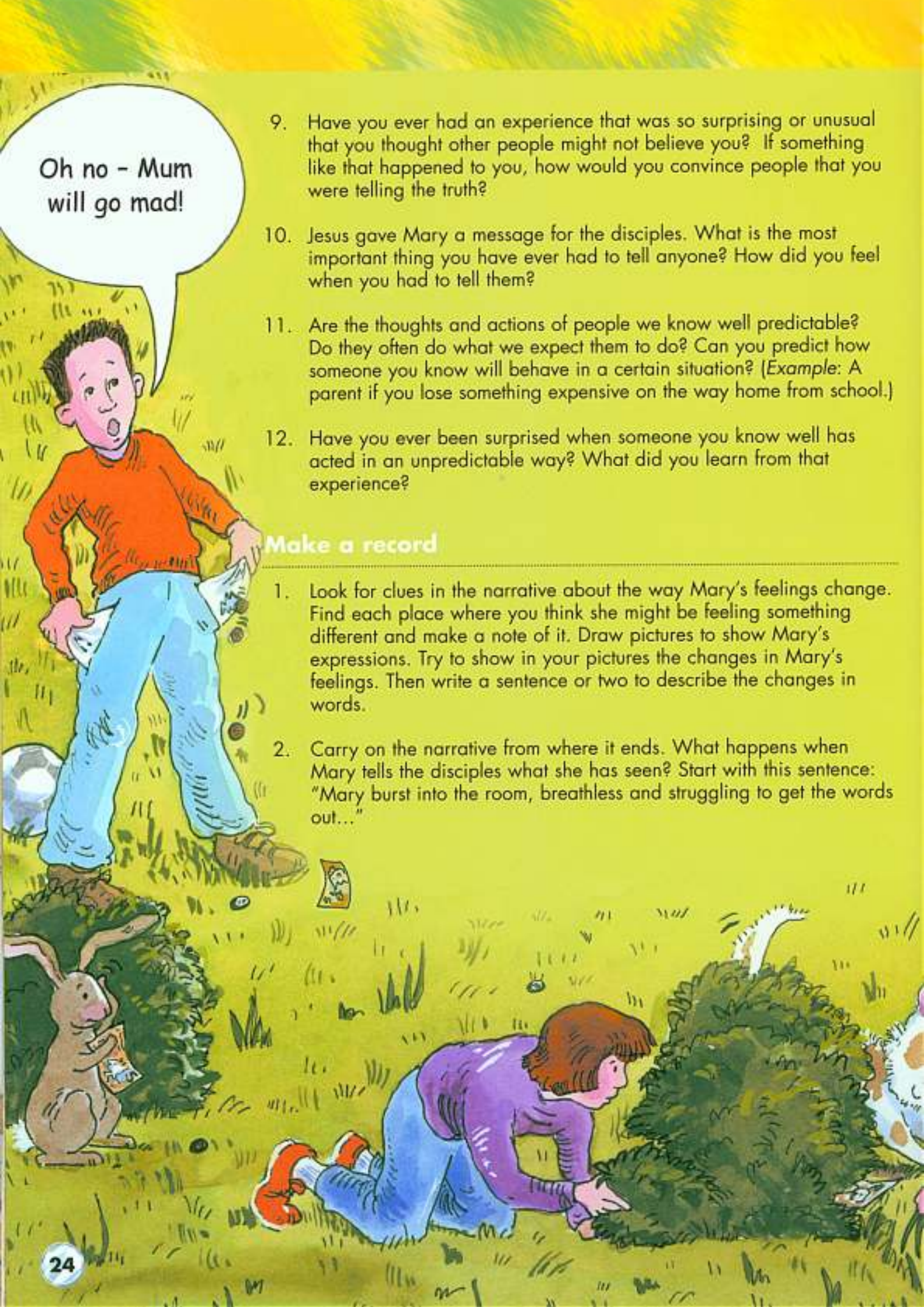
Use these clues to help you answer the questions.

- Mary was probably visiting the tomb to finish putting ointments and herbs and spices on Jesus' body, because this 'work' had been interrupted by the start of the Sabbath.
- The Hebrew word Mary uses when she recognises Jesus is 'Rabboni', which means teacher. Jewish religious teachers are now called 'Rabbi'.
- The word 'angel' means messenger. In the Bible, angels are sometimes human beings who are bringing God's message, but sometimes heavenly creatures. Angels often appear when something dramatic is going to happen. In Luke's Gospel, an angel comes to tell a different Mary that she will be the mother of Jesus (see Luke 1:26-38).

### Talk about

1. Why was the tomb empty? What explanations could there have been for this? What might have happened to Jesus' body?
2. What do Christians believe happened?
3. What do you think about the idea that someone could be raised from the dead?
4. The narrative says that Mary saw two angels inside the tomb. How do you think she knew they were angels? What is an angel? What do you think they might look like?
5. What kinds of things sometimes make it difficult for us to recognise people we know? Have you ever walked past someone you know and not noticed them? If so, how did it happen?
6. Why do you think Mary didn't recognise Jesus when she saw him? How do you think she felt when she did recognise him?
7. In Jesus' time, women were not thought to be reliable witnesses and were not asked to be official witnesses. In this narrative, the writer of John's Gospel shows Mary Magdalene as the first witness who sees Jesus when he has risen from death. What makes a good witness? Would Mary have made a good witness? Why?/Why not? Do you think it might have made any difference that Jesus' first appearance was to a woman?
8. Why do you think this narrative is so important for Christians? What does it tell Christians about Jesus? What does it tell Christians about God?





Oh no - Mum  
will go mad!

9. Have you ever had an experience that was so surprising or unusual that you thought other people might not believe you? If something like that happened to you, how would you convince people that you were telling the truth?
10. Jesus gave Mary a message for the disciples. What is the most important thing you have ever had to tell anyone? How did you feel when you had to tell them?
11. Are the thoughts and actions of people we know well predictable? Do they often do what we expect them to do? Can you predict how someone you know will behave in a certain situation? (Example: A parent if you lose something expensive on the way home from school.)
12. Have you ever been surprised when someone you know well has acted in an unpredictable way? What did you learn from that experience?

### Make a record

1. Look for clues in the narrative about the way Mary's feelings change. Find each place where you think she might be feeling something different and make a note of it. Draw pictures to show Mary's expressions. Try to show in your pictures the changes in Mary's feelings. Then write a sentence or two to describe the changes in words.
2. Carry on the narrative from where it ends. What happens when Mary tells the disciples what she has seen? Start with this sentence: "Mary burst into the room, breathless and struggling to get the words out..."

## Find out

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1. Read what the gospels say about Jesus appearing to other people. Jesus' disciple Thomas (often nicknamed 'doubting Thomas') said that he would not believe Jesus had risen unless he could touch the wounds in Jesus' hands and sides. You can read about him in John 20:24–29. Was Thomas right to be doubtful? Do you believe something only if you can see and touch some evidence? Would it be easier to believe in God if you could see and touch God?
2. In John 21:1–14, Jesus goes on a fishing trip and then eats breakfast with his disciples. Why do you think Christians believe this narrative is important? Why is it important for Christians to show that Jesus was real and solid, and not a ghost, after he was raised from death?
3. There is another narrative where Jesus is not recognised straight away, in Luke's Gospel (24:13–35). It tells of two disciples who meet Jesus, after his resurrection, on the way to a place called Emmaus. At what point do they discover his identity?
4. Jews and Muslims believe in angels, as do some Christians. Find out about the angel Gabriel in the Jewish religion and in Islam, where he is called Jibril.

## Imagine

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1. Imagine the narrative ended with the tomb empty but no other evidence of Jesus. What difference might this have made to what Christians believe today? Would there be any Christians if it had happened like that?
2. Imagine you have the opportunity to interview Mary Magdalene on television. What questions would you ask her? What do you think her answers would be? Explore how she felt when she discovered that she had been the first person to see Jesus. Was she surprised that Jesus chose her? Act out your interview.
3. Imagine you were the real gardener there in the garden. What would you have seen? Draw a picture or make a model to show the scene in the garden. Concentrate especially on the faces and expressions of the people in the scene.

