



# Esther Saves Her People

**Goal: To discover ways to turn our faith into action.**

## RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

### . . . In Esther 4-7

Esther, Queen of Persia, is an important figure in Jewish history. She was a Jewish girl, chosen to be the wife of the Persian King Ahasuerus (Xerxes I, 486–465 BCE). As queen, Esther foiled a plot to kill the Jewish people. She was able to turn it around against the enemies of the Jews.

Haman, a major official, was offended by Mordecai, Esther's Jewish cousin and her guardian. Haman's resentment against Mordecai and the Jews led him to persuade the king to issue a decree to exterminate all Jews on the thirteenth day of the month. But Esther intervened. Mordecai told her, "Maybe it was for a moment like this that you came to be part of the royal family" (4:14, CEB). Esther was willing to die with her people (v. 16).

But the tables were turned. Haman was given the death sentence, and the Jews were permitted to defend themselves against their enemies and win victories. This began the Feast of Purim, celebrated by Jewish people to this day.

God's grace was with Esther; even as it was "for a moment like this" that she was able to save her people. Her people remembered her brave actions, with gratitude.

### . . . In Your Children's Experiences

The story of Esther and her willingness to speak up for her people is still remembered and celebrated in the holiday of Purim. This story, with its many characters and evolving plot, is a great one for children to connect with as they hear it and follow the actions. Just as Jewish children choose one of the characters at Purim, so the children you are teaching can imagine the thoughts of Haman, Mordecai, Esther, and King Ahasuerus to better understand the choices they made. Power, bravery, meanness, wisdom, cruelty—emotions that lead to good and bad choices are all here for children to witness and understand in this story and in their lives.

### . . . In Your Relationships with the Children

As you prepare to tell the story of Esther, be aware of the uniqueness of this small book in the Bible. Children may be interested to know how remarkable it is to have a story about a woman, and a book of the Bible where God is not mentioned! They might enjoy seeing how God is present in this story through the actions of the characters. Where do they see God's love at work? Where is God's concern for justice, mercy, and kindness evident in the actions of the characters? Where is it missing?

*O God, guide me into new ways to deepen my faith  
and to serve you. In Jesus' name. Amen.*



## Supplies

Music & Melodies  
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More  
(SCM) i–iv, 12, 20, 21

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

candle

green cloth

jingle bells

## Responding

### Celebrating

card-stock copies of  
**Grace Notes (GN) 1–2**,  
prepared cardboard  
box, white tissue paper,  
brass fastener, flashlight

### Extra

copies of **GN 3**

## GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” requires more prep.

### Welcoming and Preparing

**LG A B SD**

Play “Alabad al Señor (Let Us Give Praise to God)”—**MM 21**—as the children arrive.

Welcome each child by saying, “Grace and peace be with you, (*Name*).” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.”

Invite children to place a green cloth, a candle, and a Bible on the worship table.

Ask some children to prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two lead today’s singing. The Scripture passage covers several chapters of Esther. Invite several volunteers to practice reading **SCM 12**.

Help the children make noisemakers for today’s story using jingle bells and jumbo craft sticks. Use the following directions to make the noisemakers. Give each child eight bells, about 2 feet of yarn, and a jumbo craft stick.

- ▼ Have the children string their bells on the yarn.
- ▼ Tie one end of the yarn around the end of the craft stick. Dab with glue to secure.
- ▼ Wrap the yarn with the bells tightly around the stick so that the bells are alternating sides of the stick.
- ▼ Wrap remaining yarn around the stick at the end of the bells. Tie off the yarn and dab with some glue to secure.
- ▼ Decorate the stick.

### Singing

**B MS**

Give God an offering of music. Play and sing “Alabad al Señor (Let Us Give Praise to God)”—**MM 21**; **SCM 20**. Invite the children to raise their arms in the air and shake their noisemakers while singing.

### Praying

**T**

Turn on the candle as a reminder of God’s light in the world through Jesus. Pray:

Holy God, we praise you for all that you have done and continue to do in the world. We know you are always with us, but sometimes it is hard to remember. Help us to place our trust in you. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.



### Preparing to Hear the Story

Say that today’s Bible story took place a long time ago. It is about a woman named Esther. God placed Esther in the right place at the right time. She saved God’s people. Every year Jewish people remember Esther’s story and her bravery at a celebration called Purim (POOR-im), a celebration to mark this event.

Explain that everyone will participate during the second reading of the story. They will say a phrase or do an action when they hear a person’s name. Ask the children to practice saying and doing the following:

- ▼ Esther—Say, “Oh, beautiful queen.” (*raise arms in the air*)
- ▼ The king—Say, “Hail to the king!” (*make an exaggerated bow*)
- ▼ Mordecai—Say, “Faithful and wise uncle.” (*place hands, palms together and nod head*)
- ▼ Haman—Shake the noisemakers.



Today’s story can be found in *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), [www.pcusastore.com](http://www.pcusastore.com).

### Hearing the Story

**B** **L** **MS** **SD**

Have a child to turn to Esther 4 in the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship table. Invite volunteers to read **SCM 12**. Conclude by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Read the story again using **SCM 12**, asking the children to participate during the story as they practiced earlier.

After you finish telling the story, set aside the noisemakers.

### Reflecting on God’s Grace

**C**

Use the following questions to reflect on the story together:

- ▼ Why do you think Esther asked for the Jewish people to pray before she began her task?
- ▼ Why did Esther risk her life to speak to the king?
- ▼ Are there times you felt you needed to be brave? What was that like?
- ▼ What does this story tell us about God?
- ▼ Where do we see God’s grace in this story?

**B** *Children can be distracted by objects—ordinary items and items that are not usually present. Giving children the choice of putting items away first helps gain buy-in to better behavior. Removal of distracting items becomes necessary if children fail to willingly put them away.*

### Singing

Celebrate that God encourages our faith to grow into action by singing “We Are Growing”—**MM 28; SCM 21**.

Turn off the candle.



## RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and the time available.

### Claiming God's Grace

LG C

Tell the children that Esther was a hero because she put herself in danger to save her people. Ask them to think of everyday heroes. Encourage them to think of people they know who work hard or put themselves at risk so others may be treated fairly. Record on newsprint the names of the people and what actions make them heroes. Have a few examples in mind, including biblical people who were strong in their faith (see Hebrews 11).

Invite the children to make a poster about one of the heroes they named. They can draw a picture of that person and include a few sentences about why they consider this person a hero. Encourage the children to think about how they would try to be like their heroes. Ask them what we can learn from each person represented on the posters.

Point out that in most cases, heroes are ordinary people, like Esther, who step up to act when they find themselves in difficult situations.



### Celebrating God's Grace

SD F

*Before the session, cut a 9" x 12" rectangle from the upper half of the front of a large box. Cut the top, back, and bottom off the box so the three sides can sit on a table.*

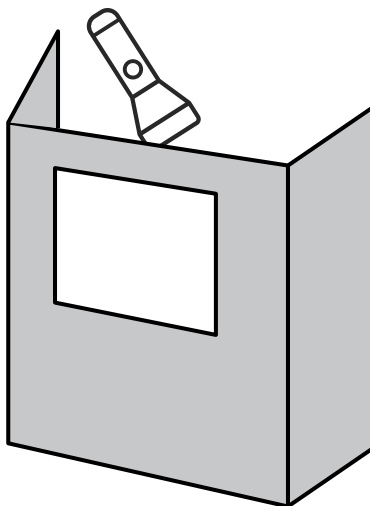
Invite the children to make a shadow puppet theater. Show them the puppet theater you prepared. Encourage the children to decorate the front of the box. Help a couple of children tape the tissue paper on the back side of the cutout rectangle to make the screen.

Cut card-stock copies of **GN 1** and **GN 2** apart and have volunteers cut out the puppets. Queen Esther's arm is detached so the children can move it to point to Haman. Use a brass fastener to attach Queen Esther's arm so the children can move it. Ask the children to tape pencils to the backs of the figures to turn them into puppets.

Ask a volunteer to stand behind the children operating the puppets and shine the flashlight toward the screen.

Ask the children to take turns reenacting the story with the figures. Perform the story for another class or group.

**SD** *Some children may be uncomfortable in darkness. Help these children by altering activities to avoid the situation or providing them a pocket-sized flashlight when lights are dimmed.*





### Praying God's Grace



Remind the children that being faithful to God is about telling the truth even when you think you might get in trouble. Read the following story:

Pablo was ten years old. He was a busy boy, always thinking of fun things to do. He was playing with his little sister Tina and his friend Felicia. Pablo said, "Let's pretend that the floor is lava, and we have to climb on the furniture to get around the room." That sounded fun, but Felicia said that she was concerned that someone could get hurt or the furniture could be damaged. Pablo didn't care. He just wanted to have fun.

Felicia said to Tina, "Your mom is upstairs. You should go tell her what's going on. She may have something else for us to do." Tina didn't want to. Pablo may get mad at her. Felicia encouraged her, saying, "Tina, we don't want Pablo to get hurt or in trouble. You need to say something."

Tina thought about it and then she got brave. She turned to Pablo and said, "Mom is not going to like this game. Someone could get hurt or we could break something."

Pablo laughed and said, "You are such a baby. This will be fun!"

Tina marched up the stairs and said, "Mom, I want to have fun, but I think Pablo is doing something wrong. He wants to climb on the furniture and not touch the floor. Will you help us come up with another game to play?"

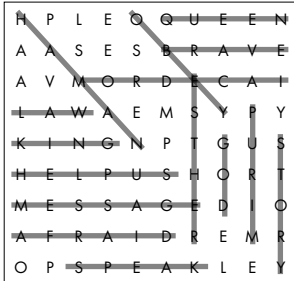
Wonder together about times when we know it is important to speak out. Ask the children if they know anyone who spoke out and stopped something bad from happening. Be prepared to share a brief story of your own, showing how you know God will always be with you.

Offer a prayer for the children. Turn to the child on your left and take his or her right hand in your left hand. Say, "(Name), for times when you are brave. . . ." Put your right hand over your left hand and your neighbor's hand and say, "I am with you in prayer." Have the children follow your example with their neighbors.



**GN 3 Solution:**

Please save my people.



**Extra Activity**



Queen Esther was called to be brave and courageous to save the Jewish people. Wonder together about times when we have had to be brave. Hand out copies of **GN 3** and pencils. Allow the children time to find and cross out the words from today’s story that are listed in the word bank.

When the children have found all the words, have them answer the question by writing all the remaining letters in order on the lines below the puzzle. What did Queen Esther ask the king to do?

**LOVING AND SERVING GOD**



Ask the children to help clean the space.

Invite the children to gather in a circle. Sing “Alabad al Señor (Let Us Give Praise to God)”—**MM 21; SCM 20**.

Encourage the children to look for times that they can be brave and stand up for what is right.

Place the candle in the middle of the group and turn it on. Explain that in some countries, people use a *Presente* (pre-SENT-eh) prayer to recall people who are justice heroes or who have done things to help others. *Presente* is a Spanish word that means “present” or “I’m here.” Together, brainstorm the names of people who are working for justice in your community or around the world. Consider what they did to help bring about justice. Pray:

God, we give you thanks for the many people who have worked hard to stand up for justice. We remember them now and give thanks for each one of them.

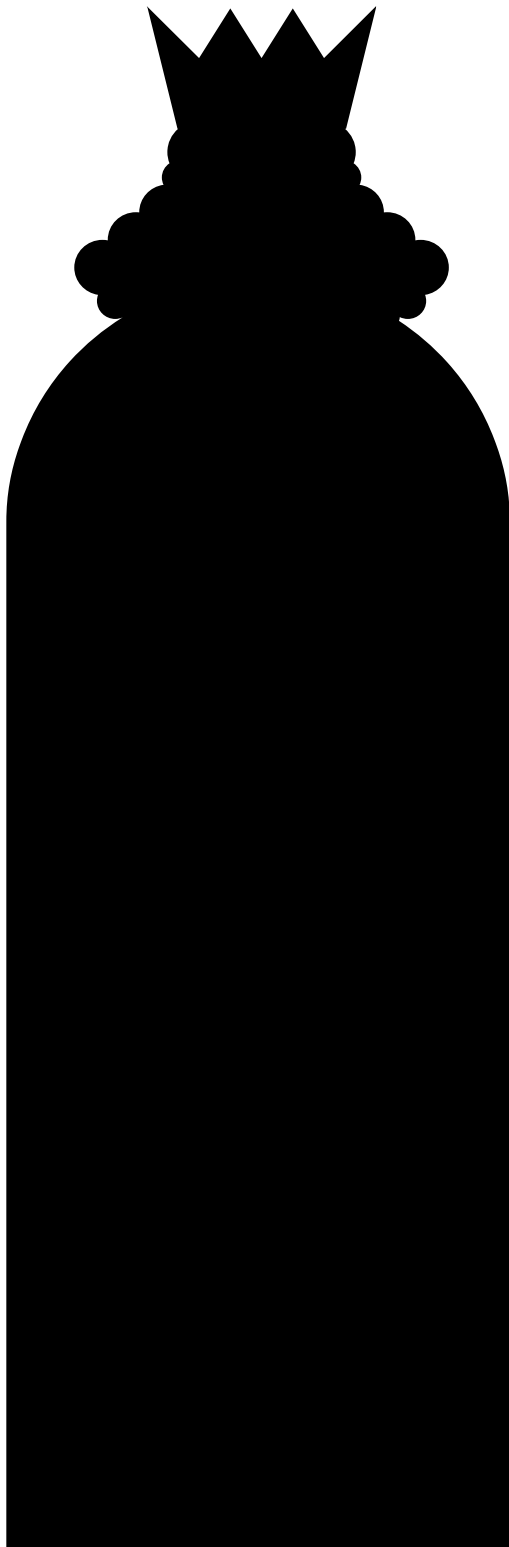
*(Each person in turn names one person he or she believes is a justice maker. Then the group responds, “Presente,” together.)*

God, we ask that you help us to learn to be justice makers too. Amen.

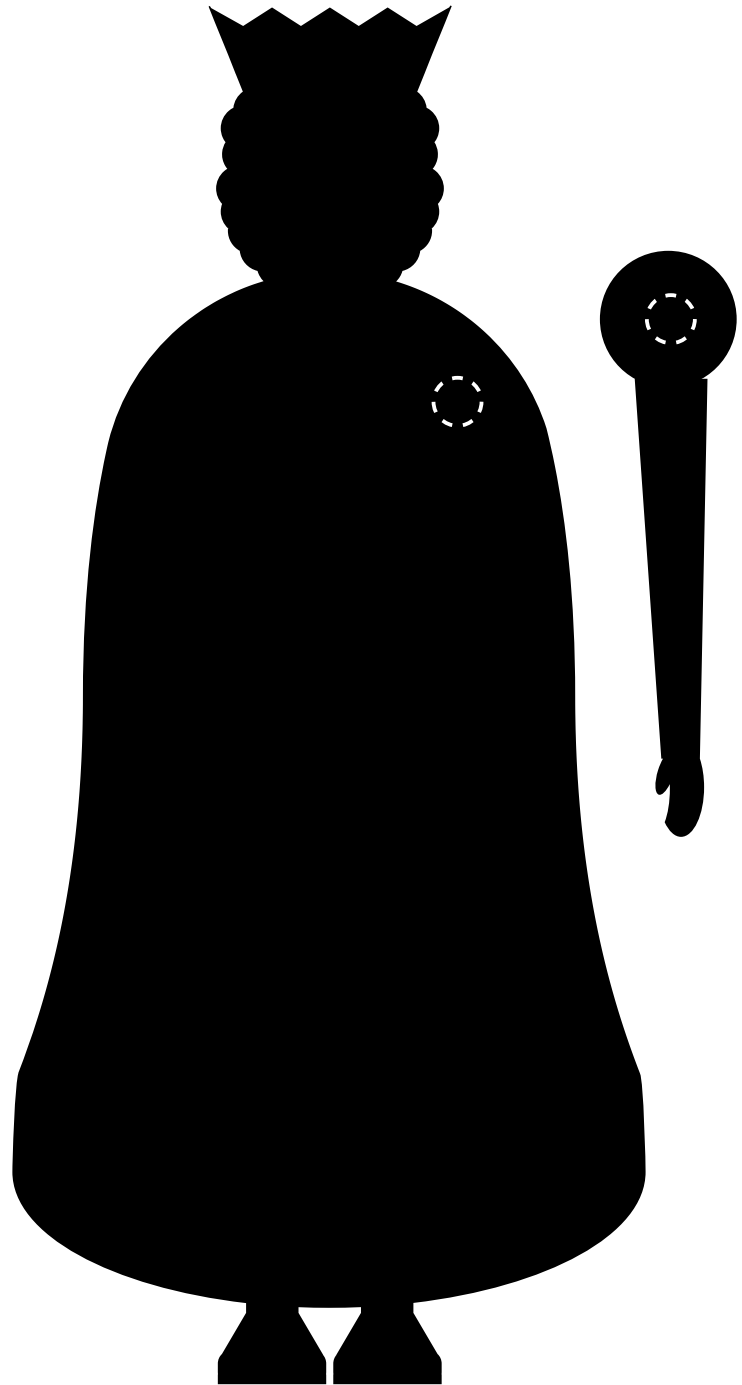
Say the following blessing to each child, “(Name), go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit [www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads). Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).



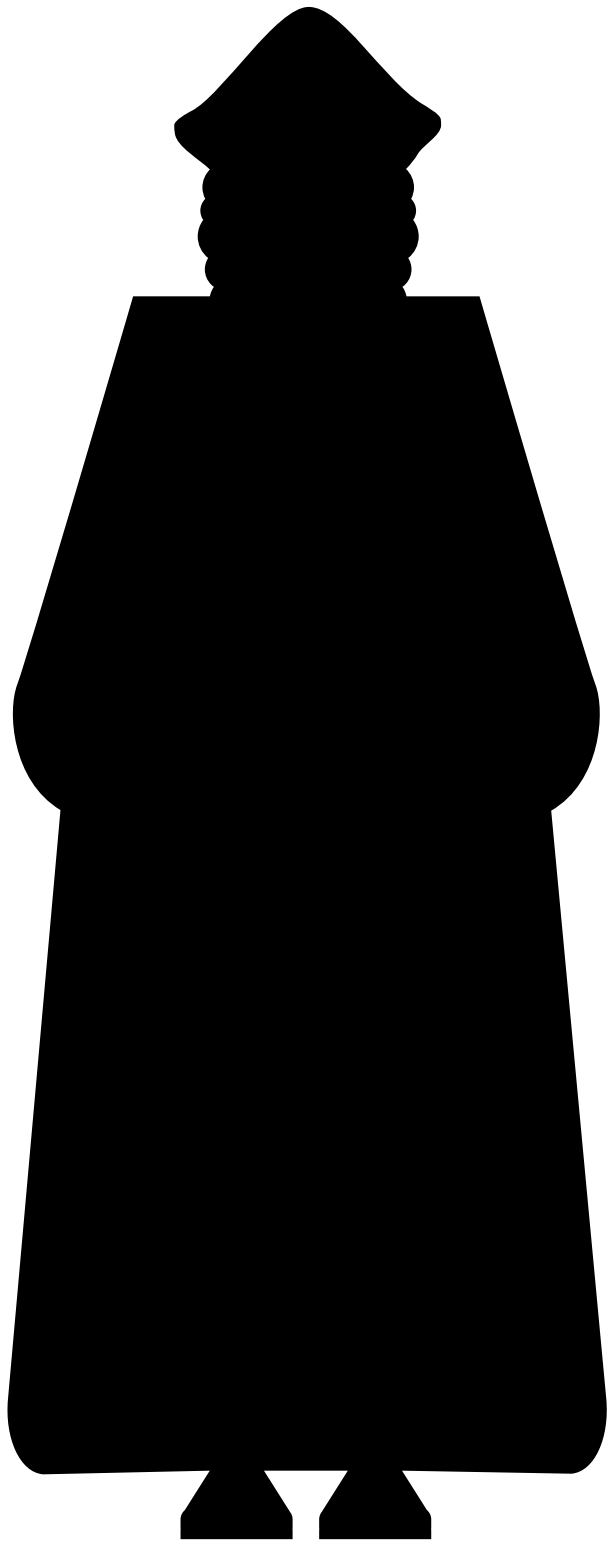
King Ahasuerus



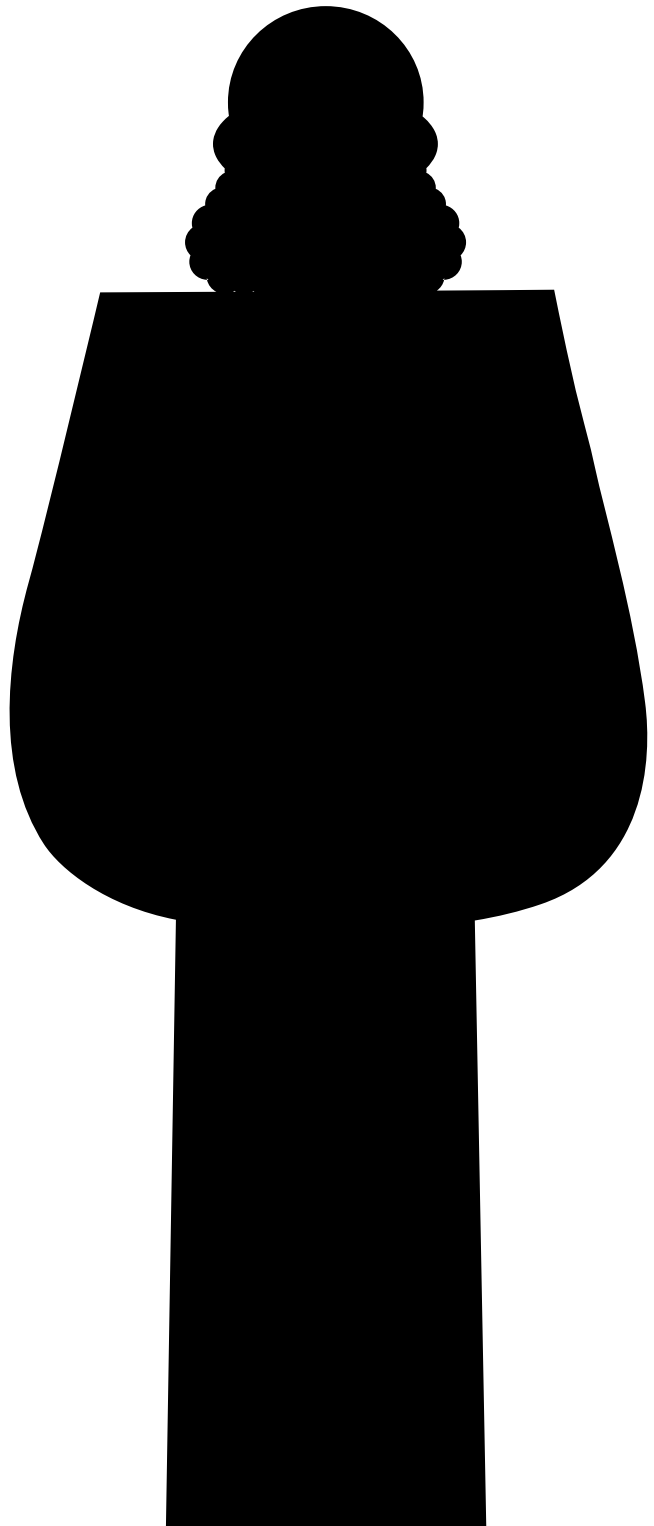
Queen Esther







Haman



Mordecai





### Word Bank

AFRAID  
BRAVE  
ESTHER  
GOD

HAMAN  
HELP US  
KING  
LAW

MESSAGE  
MORDECAI  
OBEY  
PURIM

QUEEN  
STORY  
SPEAK

What did Queen Esther ask the king to do?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

