

# art in heaven?

...A CREATIVE OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUR PUPILS IN RE  
WITH A WEB GALLERY, AND SOME NICE PRIZES  
... FOR PUPILS AGED 6-16, INCLUDING SPECIAL SCHOOLS

**S**pirited Arts is a PCfRE project, designed to help teachers of RE to open the frontiers between religion and spirituality, between RE in school and the expressive arts subjects such as art, drama, dance, music and photography.

RE's traditional partnerships in the curriculum have often been with humanities subjects, or PSHE. But some of the best of what RE needs right now is on the new frontier with the expressive arts, enabling children to learn about spiritual expression in different faiths, and to find some ways of expressing themselves spiritually too.

PCfRE is currently piloting some ideas for artists from different faith communities to work in schools alongside RE teachers, and we are making funding approaches that we hope will enable this idea, and others in art, photography, sculpture and poetry, to pour new creativity into many RE classrooms all over the country.

Through this competition, we hope to make a small contribution to well-set creative RE tasks, and we warmly invite every *REtoday* reader to use one of the four flexible 'art in RE' activities given on the next page over the coming 6-8 weeks, and send in five pieces of pupils' creative work for our web gallery, which will be launched in the early autumn.

## How to enter your pupils' work for 'Art in Heaven'

Choose one of the tasks on the facing page which fits well with your current curriculum, and set it carefully to a class of pupils. Give them examples of art based on the theme if you can, and discuss their approach carefully.

Spend quality class time and homework time on the art work. Make time for finished products of which learners can be proud.

Talk to subject leaders in other curriculum areas and seek to run the project jointly in two lessons. Give pupils freedom about the medium they use – paint, pastel, pen and ink, collage or whatever, the sky is the limit.

Allow time and give encouragement to pupils to plan, draft and redraft their work.

Ask pupils to write a paragraph about what they have shown in their work, and what its significance is for their own spiritual lives. You might ask: What did you do? What does it mean? Why is it spiritual? This text should be typed or word-processed if at all possible; it will be included if the picture is displayed in the online gallery.

You may wish to choose some prize winners in the school, and celebrate

the achievements. A gallery of 'art in heaven' work is a nice outcome.

Select no more than five items of work which you wish to enter for our national web gallery, and write the following details on the back of each: pupil's name, gender, age, and class; teacher's name, school address, telephone and e-mail (if possible). Label the work of art with subject 'A, B, C or D'. This information will not be published, but assists our administration greatly.

Send the chosen entries to Spirited Arts, RE Today Services, 1020 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6LB to arrive by 30 June 2004 at the latest. If the work is larger than A3 in size, please send a photograph rather than the original.

A panel of judges will award six small prizes of PCfRE and RE Today Services' publication *Picturing Jesus* to the schools from which winning entries are selected. The National Spirited Arts web gallery at [www.pcfre.org.uk/spiritedarts](http://www.pcfre.org.uk/spiritedarts) will feature work from participating schools. Regrettably, work submitted for the competition cannot be returned to schools.

Judges will look for inspiring examples of work that shows authentic spiritual and creative merit, and is thoughtfully presented.



## Four themes for 'art in heaven'

### The turning-point of the story

This activity can be applied to any significant story in the RE curriculum – the lost sheep, or Jesus walking on water, the rescue of Sita, the four sights of the Buddha or the creation of humanity are just five out of 5,000 stories that could launch the idea.

Ask pupils to study the story carefully and pick out what they consider to be the key moment, the turning point. In faith stories, this is often when divine action becomes clear, or when safety emerges from danger, or when a new awareness dawns on the lead character.??? Discuss the possible turning-point of your story carefully with the class, and ask them to illustrate the event with a carefully and beautifully made picture.

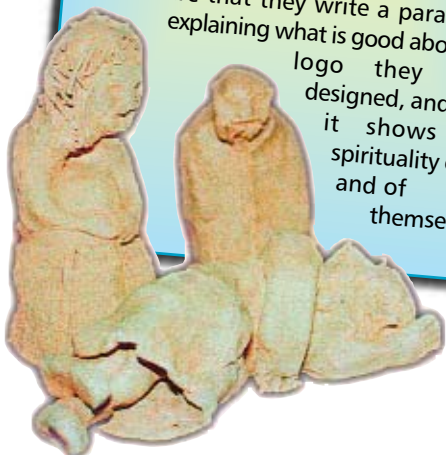
Colour, shape, character or representation might be the way to begin – pictures don't have to narrate, but can do.

### Design an RE logo

This activity works well if you want pupils to think through what respect between religions means. We have tried it out in making new covers for RE Agreed Syllabuses in several parts of the country. Talk to pupils about the ways in which RE is a co-operation between different religions, alert to what is significant in each faith, but also drawing attention to how faiths share some values and ideas.

Ask them to design a syllabus cover that shows that RE respects six different religions, and that shows what can be fun in RE. Look together at some symbols for different religions. Consider what balances and distinctive colours are good for different religions. Give them the challenge to show their vision of all the religions, not just copy out a symbol nicely!

Make sure that they write a paragraph explaining what is good about the logo they have designed, and how it shows the spirituality of RE and of themselves.



### Peace!

This theme is central to RE in many ways – pupils could learn about the inner peace which Christians seek through prayer, or the stillness and tranquillity Buddhists find through meditation. But inner peace and peace in the world are contrasts – and the ethics of peace and conflict give other angles on the theme.

Talking to pupils about the meanings of peace is a good beginning for this topic. Questions such as 'What does it mean to have peace through the storm?' 'Where is peace to be found?' 'Does God bring peace?' and 'How can anyone be peaceful when the world is so troubled?' are the stuff of RE, and make good 'launchers' for this work.

Pupils will find it helpful to have a clear brief for this theme, which is of course very wide. Ask them to make a symbol for peace to use on a United Nations greetings card, or devise a logo for a divided city (Jerusalem? Belfast?) that is aiming for communal harmony, or a symbol for the peace of the heart.

Simple colour, considering alternatives carefully and looking at the ideas of others will stimulate better work.

### A spiritual moment

This topic for art work enables pupils to use the difficult concept of 'the spiritual' for themselves. Ask them to think about their own vision of life and of the spiritual. For some this links to God, or to the living earth, or to their inner vision. Pupils might choose a symbol for their spiritual lives (you could explore the place of rock, water, flame or the eye in different religious traditions).

Pupils will need time to think about this idea, and encouragement to choose a simple image, but to work carefully on expressing themselves truly and beautifully using the image.

The paragraph they write to go with this work of art is really important – and drafting and redrafting it to get it just right is a good idea.



### Four tips

- ➔ Quality resources help pupils to feel the ways their work is valued – give them time, suitable paper and paint or other materials, and watch the creativity flourish.
- ➔ In these four activities, the balance between technical skill and vision is what might make them both good RE and good artistic activity. It's worth thinking about this as a teacher, and talking to the class about it carefully.
- ➔ Simplicity is good. The most effective work on these four themes may well be the simplest, where children and young people have spent time skilfully using one idea at some depth. If teachers encourage this, then pupils will be more confident with a single concept.
- ➔ Remember to be careful with the integrity of the religions you draw upon in all these activities. For example, Muslims, Jews and Christians share concerns about the trivial portrayal of the sacred.