The A-Z of Religion and Belief

Notes and learning ideas from Lat Blaylock, RE Today

This series of 26 short clips from BBC were made in 2017 to support learning in Religious Education for 11-14s. I was engaged as RE consultant to the series, and worked with Mosaic Films and the BBC Commissioner to create the series. I hope teachers of RE all over the UK will find them a valuable addition to our resources. This set of notes is set out to enable pupils to learn at their own pace, and in relation to the particular RE curriculum they are following, with the guidance of their teachers of course. I have devised here 26 learning activities each based upon one of the short broadcasts. These could be used as homework activities because they are set up as supported self study. You could ask pupils to do 13 weeks homework, with two programmes viewed per week, for example.

One way to use these is for the teacher to give a single page from the 26 pages that follow to pupils. They watch the clip, and complete the tasks – which are written directly at the student in each case – writing when they need to on the back of the task sheet.

This is one kind of solution to some issues in setting good quality RE homework.

Other teachers will prefer to use some of the clips relevant to classroom planned lessons with whole classes, so the tasks are all headed ‘Classroom or Classroom or homework task’.

The 26 clips are all animated in a contemporary style. We intended to use a conceptual approach, giving examples, defining key terms, opening up big questions and provoking students to think for themselves about religion and belief. In such short clips, we know that much will be left unsaid, and students will need to gather much more information. The animations intend to use a light touch and stimulate interest and curiosity – while being accurate and respectful to different ideas of course. I thank those at BBC and Mosaic Films who worked so creatively and so hard to make these. Have fun using them.
### ATHEISM

#### What’s it all about?
This clip introduces atheistic ideas. Note that the key idea of an atheist is: ‘I believe there is no God’. Usually with this, the atheist rejects belief in afterlife, heaven, hell, reincarnation, ghosts or angels. But is atheism a belief? Well, if you agree that proof for or against God on either side of the equation is impossible, then it would be over claiming to say ‘I know there is no god’. Maybe better to stick with ‘I believe there is no god.’

Atheism shouldn’t be seen as a negative thing: Humanists, for example, emphasise kindness, love, the beauty of art and the earth. Morals don’t need to depend on religion: humanity can figure out what is right and wrong, good and bad, for ourselves. The same with our sense of meaning: Humanists say ‘we may not believe in god, but life is rich, and we believe in humanity.’

Do note that in under three minutes this little clip raises many issues that need more classroom exploration, and students need time to explore ideas in more depth. Particularly here, Humanism is introduced, but there are many atheists who are not ‘capital H’ Humanists.

#### Why is Atheism included in a series about Religious Education? Is that a good thing?

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which religions and beliefs?</th>
<th>Key Questions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atheism: atheists are people who believe that God is unproven, and enormously unlikely or impossible.</td>
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</table>

- **What does the word ‘Atheist’ mean?**
- **Why study atheism in RE?**
- **Are the arguments between atheists and those who believe in God endless, or can they be solved?**
- **Is an atheist a ‘believer’ too? A person who believes there is no god?**
- **How do atheists decide questions about right and wrong and the meaning of life?**

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#### Classroom or homework task:
Here are eight reasons for believing in god or not. Sort them first, Which point away from belief in god? Then rank them: which are good reasons to be an atheist?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘The world is full of suffering and pain, which hurts innocent people.’</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Life is short: 80+ years fly by. No one can be sure of anything after death.’</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The world is beautiful, intricate, and nearly perfect for human life.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Religions claim to be about love and peace, but often practice hate and war.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘For 2 centuries, things that used to look like miracles have been scientifically explained.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Humanity is capable of huge goodness and also of massive evil. Too random for a god.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Human psychology uses religion to prop up our sense of failure or our fear of death.’</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Life is a mystery: there’s loads we cannot explain about it.’</td>
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#### Suggested outcomes: students can:
- Give an informed account of the meaning of atheism
- Give reasons for their views about whether gods and goddesses can be proved.
- Handle information and ideas effectively by explaining their own views and others’ ideas about evidence for and against god.
It would be sexist to think about a religion only in terms of what women wear. There’s always more to it than that!

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Which religions and beliefs?</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Jewish people |  - When people choose religious dress, what does it mean?  
- Are religious dress codes sometimes sexist? What should be done about that?  
- How do you express your identity through the clothes you choose?  
- Should people be free to ‘wear what they want’ in all circumstances? Does that apply equally to Nuns and Nudists? |
| **BURKA** | **What’s it all about?**  
There are many controversies about religious clothing. Why is this? Clothing is about identity, signifying where we belong – soccer shirts, jeans or Versace say something about us. Religions symbolise meaning through clothing. In Judaism, head covering is a reminder of the Almighty. Sikhs imply human equality with the turban, and modesty, a spiritual virtue to many, is expressed in religious clothing too. But if religions make different requirements about dress for men and women, then is this sexist? In the example of Islam, prominent in the news these days, the hijab, or the burka are seen by many from outside as a way men control women. It’s a point of view. But many Muslim women, including Muslim feminists, see it as a matter of choice, and a liberating thing to be set free from the ‘male gaze’, the pressure of always being evaluated by men for their looks. Of course this topic is huge and controversial, and a couple of minutes only introduces it. Students should also consider, for example, whether it is a mistake to talk about women’s dress so much before learning about Islamic theology in depth.  
**Classroom or homework task:**  
Watch the film, and think about the issues it raises. In a recent famous case, French police forced a Muslim woman on the beach in Nice to remove her ‘burkini’ style swimsuit at gunpoint. See the story here: [http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/burkini-swimwear-ban-france-nice-armed-police-hijab-muslim-a7206776.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/burkini-swimwear-ban-france-nice-armed-police-hijab-muslim-a7206776.html)  
Outline the script and story board for a short two minute film of your own, based on this case, in the style of A-Z, suggesting why the French police’s action is controversial. Consider this view: many discussions about ‘what women wear’ are sexist because they imply that men control how women dress, whether this is a bikini or a burka.  
**Suggested outcomes: students can...**  
- Give an informed account of some issues related to religious dress in the contemporary world  
- Give reasons for their views about freedom and dress: should everyone always be able to ‘wear what they want’?  
- Handle information and ideas effectively by analysing examples of controversies around religious clothing in a balanced way. |
CREATION

What’s it all about? Are we made by God, or an accident?
This clip explores creation stories: are we a designed product of an amazing mind, or a cosmic accident?
Jewish, Christian and Islamic creation stories claim that God created the heavens and the earth. These stories suggest that life is full of meaning and we are created from love, for love.
Hindus and Sikhs describe the emergence of our universe in different ways, but don’t claim certain knowledge.
Scientific study shows that the universe was formed after the Big Bang, 15 billion years ago, and the evolution of life on earth over 4 600 000 years has led to the human species, to our own lives.
Most religious people today do not think the universe was made in 6 days, as Genesis seemed to claim. They think God is the designer of a scientifically explained universe, while atheists give accounts of the origin of the universe that don’t need a divine power: astrophysics and evolution tell us how we came to be. But the old stories may still be interesting, carrying a message, idea or belief about why we exist at all.

Key Questions
- What different beliefs about our origins come from religious creation stories?
- Why are astrophysics and evolutionary biology important in explaining how we came to be?
- Is the human race made from love, for love, or are we an almighty accident, a huge slice of cosmic luck?
- Do religious scientists have the best of both worlds, believing God is the evolver?

Classroom or homework task:
Three viewpoints: read carefully...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creationist:</th>
<th>Theistic scientist:</th>
<th>Atheistic scientist:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I am a believer in God, and I think God made the world and everything in it. Genesis talks of 6 ‘days’ but these might be periods of time – each one millions of years. I thank God for our world and our lives. I believe He made us for His own loving purposes.”</td>
<td>“I am a scientist and a theist, I believe God is the creator, and the methods God used were the Big Bang and evolution. Genesis is an ancient story, and it is about the purpose of life: we are made to find God! God is like the mind behind the universe.”</td>
<td>“Science is much better at explaining things in the modern world than religion. The universe began with a ‘Big Bang’ 15bn years ago, and the earth has evolved to support life over the last 4.6bn years. There is no need to talk about God in explaining this.”</td>
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</table>

Tasks:
1. Ask 5 people at least which of the three statements is closest to their own view. Note what they say.
2. Global Christian leader Pope Francis said he believed in God and the Big Bang in 2014. Is it old fashioned to be a creationist?

Suggested outcomes: students can
- Give an informed account of the controversy about whether religion and science are compatible in their views of our origins
- Give reasons for their own views about God and the Big Bang
- Handle information and ideas effectively by expressing reasons for different points of view.

Which religions and beliefs?
- Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikh, Buddhism, Atheism
**What's it all about? Darwin's theory of evolution**

The theory of evolution which Charles Darwin developed during his voyage on the Beagle, argues that all living creatures have evolved through processes he called ‘Natural Selection’ and when he eventually published this idea in his famous and brilliant biology book ‘The Origin of Species’, many people took it as an attack on the biblical creation story: 'In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth in 6 days and rested on the seventh day.'

The convulsions of Victorian Christianity caused by the spreading influence of evolutionary ideas included some who condemned Darwin, and other Christians who supported him.

Science and religion are usually intertwined: Islamic science, Catholic support for science and many scientists today who follow a religion show that these are not two wholly incompatible world views. But at the same time, some people like the Creationist Christians, more prominent in the USA than the UK, still consider that accepting religion means rejecting evolution.

Of course, there is far more to say in praise of Darwin than we can begin to deal with in three minutes, but what do you think was his greatest achievement?

**Classroom or homework task:**

Take a landscape piece of A4 paper and write down the left hand side ‘Atheistic Darwinian Ideas about the Earth’ Down the other side write ‘Belief in an intelligent designer of the Earth.’ Cut up or copy these quotations, arranging them on the page in the right sequence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Selection</th>
<th>Evolution describes the processes of how humans developed better than Genesis 1-3</th>
<th>God is at work through human evolution.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God is the ‘Great Evolver’</td>
<td>Genesis 1-3 is the truth. God di make the world in 6 days. Evolution is wrong.</td>
<td>The stories of Genesis are not science – they serve a different purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobody needs religion to explain how humanity developed. Science does it better.</td>
<td>Darwin is a hero to all rationalists because he followed the evidence.</td>
<td>Christians in the UK mostly believe in evolution and thank God for it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Write a paragraph to explain your own view of Charles Darwin’s contribution to human civilisation

**Suggested outcomes: students can—**

- Give an informed account of the controversies associated with Darwin, religion and evolution
- Give reasons for their views about evolution and the idea of God
- Handle information and ideas effectively by arguing their case about whether belief in God should survive the Darwinian revolution.

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**Key Questions**

- **Which religions and beliefs?**
  - Christianity
  - Atheism
  - Islam

- **Why was Charles Darwin such a controversial Victorian?**

- **If you believe in God, does that mean you have to take Genesis 1 – 3 literally?**

- **Why might more American Christians be creationists than British Christians?**

- **Can you find out more about key Islamic scientific discoveries?**

- **Does belief in God or confidence in science help humanity most when it comes to understanding where we come from?**
#### EXTREMISM

**What's it all about? Who decides who is an extremist?**
Gandhi was called an extremist, and imprisoned by the British in the 1930s, but most people today think he was a hero of non-violence. Is an extremist just ‘someone I don’t like’?

Free speech is one thing, but using violence to impose your views on others is the opposite of free speech. Religion comes in here, because some minority religious groups in various different religions reject the freedom of others to hold contrary views and seek, by violence or force, to impose their ideas.

Does a group that claims to be Christian, or Islamic, and kills others in the name of religion really represent the religion?

And is it important that non-religious political regimes such as Communism have also used violence to kill millions of their own people?

Is extremism caused by upbringing, by radicalisation, by problems of poverty, by tribalism? No explanation makes complete sense. That’s why we call it extremism.

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**Which religions and beliefs?**
- Christianity
- Islam
- Communism

**Key Questions**
- What does it mean to call someone an extremist?
- Are extremists all bad, or can you be an extremist for love or justice? (Gandhi?)
- How can a free society cope with the tension between extremist views and free speech?
- Should everyone be allowed to ‘say what they think’?

**Classroom or homework task:**
- Draw a huge question mark outline. Inside, after watching the clip, make up ten good questions about extremism.
- What images of extremists does our media offer? Make a sketch of a ‘stereotypical extremist’ Are these images accurate? How can we tell?
- ‘Violent extremism is always wrong, but free speech means we must accept unusual and even dangerous views being expressed.’ Do you agree?
- What matters more: free speech, or controlling extremists?

**Suggested outcomes: students can~**
- Give an informed account of the uses of the word ‘Extremist’.
- Give reasons for their views about the balance between freedom of speech and extremist views.
- Consider the idea that laws should ban violent extremism, but not extremist speeches. Consider the idea that ‘hate speech’ should be banned by law.
# Forgiveness

**What's it all about?**

The significance of forgiveness in different religions.

Does everyone need forgiveness? Jesus’ key prayer, the Lord’s Prayer, asks God to ‘forgive us our sins in the same way we forgive others.’ The idea is that God will forgive, but humans should respond by being forgiven too. Jesus demonstrated what he meant when he was nailed to the cross, praying for forgiveness for those who were killing him.

In the teaching of the Buddha, holding on to anger is no use in seeking enlightenment. Detachment and letting go of wrongs done to us are the way to live so that suffering is reduced. If we forgive, we free ourselves.

113 of the 114 Surahs of the Muslim scriptures, the Qur’an, begin with a reference to the mercy of Allah, and because God is merciful, then Muslims seek to show mercy too.

In Sikhi religion, followers try to overcome evil. Recognise what is wrong, and try to put it right: ‘hate the sin but not the sinner’.

So is forgiveness good for us—and is it good for the world?

As usual with the A-Z programmes, there is lots more to be said about the big questions to do with forgiveness and religion. This is just a start. It's a sensitive issue, so take all the usual care.

## Classroom or homework task: forgiveness scenarios

1. Consider which of these two scenarios is harder to forgive:

   **A**> Lois wanted to win the 200m race a bit too much. As they were getting ready to start, she looked across at Sharmila, the fastest in the school. She spoke quietly, but in the voice of a bully to the tall girl: ‘I’ll kick you in if you win today’. The gun went off and Sharmila was quicker. But in the last quarter of the race she slowed up, looking tired. Lois won by 3 metres. ‘Hah, loser’ she said to Sharmila.

   What should Sharmila say next?

   Difficulty of forgiving: [ ??/10]

   **B**> Gran came to stay most weekends. Callum was living with his dad, six months after his parents split up. Callum didn’t understand it. One Sunday Gran sat him down and told him all about his dad, and gave him some reasons why it had all gone wrong, Callum was very tense, but he wanted to hear. After a bit, Gran said ‘I do hope you’ll be able to forgive your parents, love...’

   What should Callum say next?

   Difficulty of forgiving: [ ??/10]

2. Write two more, one easier, the other harder to forgive. What makes the difference? Share round the class.

## Suggested outcomes: students can...

- Give an informed account of how different religions explain the value of forgiveness
- Give reasons for their views about the reasons why forgiving is hard—but important
- Handle information and ideas effectively by responding to some scenarios of forgiveness.
**GODDESSES**

What is it all about? Goddesses and the female.

Is religion male? Well, there have always been goddesses to worship. Hindus worship the Goddess in different forms: Lakshmi, Kali, Parvati and Ammavaru all symbolise aspects of the divine energy from which all life comes. Followers of the Buddha see Tara, (not a goddess, but a female Bodhisattva) as the feminine embodiment of wisdom and compassion. Her image is a common focus for meditation.

In Christianity, though God is usually called ‘He’, the Blessed Virgin Mary is a key female figure, called the ‘Mother of God’ in Catholic traditions, where prayer to Mary to intercede for us is common practice. Many Christians believe God is beyond gender – not a man, not a woman, but just God.

The most ancient religious artefact discovered by archaeologists, dates back to over 25,000 years ago. It is a big breasted naked fertility statue, so the original ‘god’ might have been a goddess. What do you think? Is it sensible to say ‘he’ or ‘she’ for God?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which religions and beliefs?</th>
<th>Key Questions</th>
<th>Classroom or homework tasks:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>Does God have a gender?</td>
<td>After watching the clip, write down three paragraphs:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Why, in recent years, have all religions come to include members who are feminists?</td>
<td>- Reasons for saying ‘He’ for God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>Would it be good to have complete gender equality in religion? Why doesn’t this happen?</td>
<td>- Reasons for saying ‘She’ for God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>Are some religions more female friendly than others?</td>
<td>- Reasons for not ascribing any gender to God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancient fertility religion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Have you ever heard of ‘feminist theology’? Find out and note what it means.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some scholars in religious studies claim that Hindu traditions, with their many goddesses are more gender-equal that religions which usually say ‘He’ for God. What do you think?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Should religious people be feminists? Give your reasons.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Suggested outcomes: students can</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Give an informed account of issues about religion and gender</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Give reasons for their views about speaking of God as ‘He’ or ‘She’</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Handle information and ideas effectively by analysing information from different religions about God, masculinity and femininity.</td>
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</table>
What’s it all about? Life after death

Many religions teach that the soul – the real you – can live beyond the grave. If that is true, where does the soul go? Heaven and hell are words in common use, but what do different Christians believe about these two Hs? In the contemporary world many Christians don’t follow the medieval idea that hell is – literally – a place where some souls are burned forever. Maybe hell is more like a metaphor for the harm we do ourselves? Will a God of love send people to hell? Heaven is where God reigns eternally: the perfect divine kingdom. Purgatory, the place between heaven and hell, where your sinful soul can be purged, is part of Roman Catholic belief. Jannah is the Muslim word for Paradise: ‘the dead will lie in the ground until the Day of Judgement, when Allah will weigh up our hearts and lives, taking the good to Jannah.

Buddhist thinking is different: rebirth follows this life because of the attachments we gather through our bad actions, but our good actions and thoughts can help us towards a more virtuous rebirth. Being born human is a precious gift – don’t waste it, or you’ll be back. The end of the cycle of rebirth and attachment is Nirvana – bliss beyond this world, the state of enlightenment.

All religions do agree though that the way this life is lived will have an impact on the life beyond. Is it as if this life is a test, and death is results day?

The concept of hell seems medieval to some people: does a God of love punish sinners with eternal fire? But does human freedom mean that if there is heaven, there would have to be hell too?

Key Questions
- What do different religions say about what happens when we die?
- Can you deduce ideas about afterlife from belief about God, e.g. that God is loving or merciful?
- Which is easier to believe in – heaven, hell or annihilation?
- There’s no proof, but is there evidence for and against afterlife?

Which religions and beliefs?
- Christians
- Muslims
- Buddhists

Classroom or homework task: evidence and arguments, but no proof

There are many different views about life after death, because no one can prove it except by dying! Here are 6 arguments, or claims to evidence about life beyond the grave. Give each one a mark out of 10 for its quality, then write them into a ‘two sides of the coin’ argument about afterlife.

Near Death Experiences, when someone comes back from the brink, are evidence that the soul lives on.

The soul or ‘true you’ is more than physical so it could possibly live without a body.

Humans have been convinced of life after death throughout their history. Maybe there is something in it.

About 6 billion believe in life after death. They are not all stupid.

Religions disagree about afterlife, weakening each other’s claims to know what happens when we die.

God has not given us pointless and meaningless lives: only an after life makes sense of this life.

Suggested outcomes: students can...
- Give an informed account of different beliefs about life after death in at least two religions;
- Give reasons for their views about whether a soul can live without a body, and whether humans have a soul
- Handle information to create ‘double sided’ arguments.
What’s it all about? A countdown of religion.
This clip is a good way to introduce the whole series of the A-Z of religion. It shows you the animation style of the series and might just get you thinking. Here is our countdown of religious factoids!
10. **The Ten Commandments**: given to Jewish leader Moses as a basis of faith and morality.
9. **A Hindu divine number**: it reflects perfection and completeness.
8. **The Eightfold Path** of the Buddha leads to enlightenment.
7. **The Seven Deadly Sins** in Catholic Christianity are lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy and pride.
5. **Pillars of Islam**, the duties of belief, prayer, giving, fasting and pilgrimage for those who want to be good Muslims.
4. **The Four Noble Truths** which the Buddha taught map put the way to reduce suffering.
3. **Trinity and Trimurti**: the Christians believe in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Hinduism teaches that Brahma the creator, Vishnu the Preserver and Shiva the Destroyer are three key manifestations of the divine ultimate, called Brahman.
2. **Ying Yang**: a Chinese philosophical symbol for bringing opposites into harmony.
1. **One and only singular God**. A teaching shared by Jewish, Muslim Christian and Sikh religions.

‘Religion by numbers’ It is surprising how many times a number is really important inside a religion. Can you add ten more to our ten examples, make a countdown of your own?

**Classroom or homework task: Religion Top Ten**
A> **Your own Ten-to-One** Before you watch this (and without looking at the list above if you can be that self-disciplined!), write 10-1 down the side of a piece of paper. Can you make a link to religion from each number? Note down your ideas, then watch the clip.
B> **What did you learn?** List all the factual points from the clip that you did not know before.
C> **Create another clip of your own.** If you were devising ‘Part Two’ of ‘A-Z: N is for Numbers’ then which ten things would you feature, in addition to the ones we chose, and why? Research, describe and explain ten numbers that matter in several different religions.

**Suggested outcomes: students can**
- Give an informed account of some key numbers in different religions.
- Give reasons for their ideas about the importance of numbers in different religions,
- Identify and consider thoughtfully a range of questions about religions cropping up through the study of numbers.
What’s it all about?
The clip begins by asking students to consider ideas of ancient gods and goddesses: superhuman in powers, but often a bit wild in their behaviour. Something over 3000 years ago, the Hebrew people – ancestors of today’s Jewish religion – were developing the idea that if God is, then God is One, The One God would – it seemed logical – have all powers: seeing everything, knowing everything, being everywhere at once and having all powers. The philosophical terms for these qualities or ‘attributes’ are:

- Omnipotent = all-powerful
- Omniscient = all-knowing
- Omnipresent = everywhere.

This Jewish vision of One Supreme God passed on, after centuries, to the Christians and after more centuries to the Muslims:

- Muslim scripture: “To Allah belongs the east and the west.”
- Christians: “Even the hairs of our head are numbered.”

A fourth ‘Omni’ – the word means ‘All’ matters as well. Religions teach that God is good. Completely good. The fourth word is ‘Omnibenevolent.’

This concept of God has superseded the old gods and goddesses of ancient Greeks, Romans and Egyptians: today maybe over 4 billion people believe in one God, all powerful, all seeing, all loving and present in all places.

Do note that in under three minutes this little clip raises many issues that need more classroom exploration, and students need time to explore ideas in more depth. Particularly, this clip conflates a thousand years of the history of theology rather quickly: Jewish, Christian and Muslim theologians have much more to say. And also, Sikhs and Hindus hold teachings about the supremacy of the divine, which are not examined here, but are both similar and different to the ‘religions of the Book’, as Judaism Christianity and Islam are sometimes called.

Ancient ideas of the gods ascribed different powers to different gods

In Judaism, and later in Christianity and Islam, the idea of One God, with all power, knowledge, presence and love emerged.

### Which religions and beliefs?
- Jewish people
- Christians
- Muslims

### Key Questions:
- If there was a god, what would the god be able to do?
- The ancient gods of Egypt, Greece and Rome are not worshipped today. Why not?
- How would an atheist respond to these 4 philosophical ideas about God?

### Classroom or homework task:
Split a page into 4 and head each quadrant with one of the ‘Omni~’ words. For each of the words, in its section, A] Give a definition. B] Explain why this idea is important to religious people today. C] Formulate two questions you would like to ask in this format: ‘If God is omni~, then why...’

**Suggested outcomes:** students can
- Give an informed account of the four attributes or features of God introduced in the clip;
- Handle information and ideas effectively by raising and responding to key questions about the nature of God

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**OMNIS**
## Qur’an

QUR’AN

Sacred texts – similar and different, like most things religious. It’s impossible in a couple of minutes to introduce them all properly, so do some research to find out more.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which religions and beliefs?</th>
<th>Key Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Christian</td>
<td>• Why do many religions have books that are called ‘holy’ or ‘sacred’?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Jewish</td>
<td>• Are the key messages of these texts similar?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Muslim</td>
<td>• Does a book become holy because it is revealed by God or by Angels, or is it holy because millions of people find it inspiring?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sikh</td>
<td>• Just imagine (for a moment) that you were starting a religion: would you have a holy text in the new religion? Why? What would go in it?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Classroom or homework task: signs of love, symbols of respect. Here are nine signs of respect for and love of holy texts. Which ones go with which religion? Which show most respect? Make an annotated and ranked list of them. |
|-------|-----------------|
| Some people love their scriptures so much they memorise them off by heart. | Many religions have annual festivals to remember key stories from their holy texts. | One religion treats its holy book like a living person, including going to bed at night. |
| Some scriptures are written out by hand to symbolise the significance of every copy. | One religion has a charity that puts free copies of its holy book in millions of hotel rooms all over the world. | One holy text is written by hand onto special paper on rolled scrolls and kept in the holy building. |
| Sacred texts are read with rituals to go with them, e.g. stand up, keep silence, wash first and many more EGs. | One religion gives people who learn the whole scripture by heart the new name of ‘Hafiz’. | Some say that the best way to respect your holy text is to do what it says – e.g. serve God, love others, pray, make peace. |

Suggested outcomes: students can

- Give an informed account of two or more sacred texts from different religions
- Give reasons for their views about the idea of revelation in a book: do sacred texts become holy because they are revealed, or because they are revered?
- Handle information and ideas effectively by ranking and annotating the list of signs and symbols of respect.

What’s it all about? The Qur’an and the nature of sacred writing.

What makes a book holy? Why do some books get the status of scripture? What makes them different from other texts? Factually, begin with the Qur’ān – which Muslims read, recite and learn by heart in Arabic, was first written down nearly 1500 years ago. Islamic belief says it was given from Allah via the Angel Jibril, to Prophet Muhammad [PBUH] through a series of revelations. It is highly respected. Then take the Christian Bible – two testaments, a total of 66 smaller books put together over a period of hundreds of years. It is the world’s bestselling book – 5 billion copies. Then note that the Jewish Torah, the 5 books of the revelation to Moses, is a holy telling of the formation of the Jewish community from the freed Hebrew slaves in Egypt, events from about 3400 years ago. To the Sikhs, Guru Granth Sahib is not just a book – it is treated as a human guru, never placed on the floor, even put to bed at night. It contains not just the teachings of the Ten Gurus, but also of some wide examples of Hindu and Muslim writers too.

Sacred texts are read with rituals to go with them, e.g. stand up, keep silence, wash first and many more EGs.

Suggested outcomes: students can

- Give an informed account of two or more sacred texts from different religions
- Give reasons for their views about the idea of revelation in a book: do sacred texts become holy because they are revealed, or because they are revered?
- Handle information and ideas effectively by ranking and annotating the list of signs and symbols of respect.
RITUALS

The Hindu Aarti ceremony uses lit burning ghee lamps, and devotees give thanks to the gods and goddesses daily. All religions have rituals, some to mark births, marriages and deaths others for everyday living, or once in a lifetime to show thankfulness, worship or to glue a community together.

What’s it all about? The significance of rituals
A religion without ritual would be boring. No such religion exists. So what do examples of some major religious rituals tell us about how religions – and humans – work? By bringing everyone together to experience what is deeper than everyday life. Muslim and Jewish baby welcoming ceremonies are examples of ‘rituals of passage’ – the big steps through life.

Aarti (in Hinduism) uses flame, daily, to remember and thank the gods and goddesses. Eucharist is an enactment of Jesus’ Last Supper, a remembrance of Jesus using bread and wine. Some people take a ritual journey – pilgrimage. Hindus, for instance, go to the River Ganges, the Mother River. And millions of Muslims go to the Haram Mosque in Makkah – it is extended in between pilgrimages almost every year!

A religion without ritual would be a club for people who believe the same things. But rituals such as festivals, pilgrimages, baby-welcome ceremonies and weddings can all function inside different religions to be joyful, thankful, challenging or relaxed. And that point probably applies as well to non-religious rituals – can you think of examples?

The Hindu Aarti ceremony uses lit burning ghee lamps, and devotees give thanks to the gods and goddesses daily. All religions have rituals, some to mark births, marriages and deaths others for everyday living, or once in a lifetime to show thankfulness, worship or to glue a community together.

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<tbody>
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<td>Hindu</td>
<td>What is a ritual?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>Why do religions have rituals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>What difference do they make?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Can rituals make us open to the deeper meanings of life?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which rituals are daily, weekly, annually or once in a lifetime?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What non-religious rituals can you identify? (e.g. from sport, in annual celebrations like Red Nose Day, Valentine’s Day or Remembrance Day?)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Classroom or homework task: Rituals Explained

A> Take one ritual… How is this ritual practiced? What do believers say it means? How does it connect to the emotions of joy, thankfulness, challenge or relaxation? How might joining in with the ritual ‘glue the community together’?

B> Compare religious and non-religious. There are lots of ritual associated with sport – fan’s and player’s clothing, pre-match courtesies, singing, non-standard body language, celebrating success, holding up the cup. Give some examples. How are these similar to religious rituals? Suggestion: soccer is a great sport, but a poor substitute for religion.

C> Religion’s best bits. Annual festivals (Divali, Christmas) are religion’s most popular bits. Should religions open these up to non-members, or is Christmas just for Christians, Divali just for Hindus?

D> A new ritual? Can you suggest a ritual for ‘being recognised as an adult’ in a society like modern Britain, where very many people are not religious? Would you include: a period of learning, a test, a public promise, new responsibilities and rights, gifts, partying?

Suggested outcomes: students can
- Give an informed account of some different religious rituals.
- Use examples to show they understand the concept of ritual in religious and non-religious settings
- Handle ideas effectively by make a creative suggestion for a new ritual in which people are accepted as adults in modern Britain.
## SAINTS

Saints are the holy people of Christianity and often provide exemplars for Christians to copy and think about: role models.

### What's it all about?

#### Holy people, saints: what makes them great?

‘In a time of crisis, when hope seems lost, heroes will rise’. Are saints Christianity’s superheroes? The word ‘saint’ means ‘holy person’ and in one sense all Christians are saints, believing that God makes them holy. But some are exceptional: there are over 10,000 examples recognised by the Catholic Church, some very famous, others only remembered locally in one place.

Take an example or two to develop your understanding of the concept.

- **Saint Francis of Assisi** lived in Italy about 850 years ago, rejecting his family’s wealth he followed Jesus into poverty. He sought peace with both animals and members of other religions.

- **Julian of Norwich** (a holy woman, born over 650 years ago in 1342) recorded her ‘Revelations of Divine Love’ after prayer led to her recovery of good health. Her visions are the earliest book written in English by a woman.

- England’s Patron Saint, George, was originally from Lebanon, where he achieved fame as a dragon slayer. Other national Saints include Andrew, for Scotland, David, for Wales and Patrick, for Ireland. There are special days for Saint Valentine (Feb 14th) and Saint Nicholas (6th December, Santa!). Christians believe these saints are in heaven, and can relay their prayers to God and help believers on earth.

- Tests for modern saints include living a good life and interceding with God for miracles. Tough tests, passed recently by Saint Teresa of Kolkata. So does it make sense to call the Saints ‘Christianity’s superheroes’?

**Saints are the holy people of Christianity and often provide exemplars for Christians to copy and think about: role models.**

### Which religions and beliefs?

**Christianity**

### Key Questions:

- Do we all need role models and other humans to inspire us?
- Are the Saints of Christianity more than role models?
- How does a person become a Christian saint?
- Do saints have to be perfect?
- Sometimes a person who has been named as a saint is found to have done something wrong. What might happen then?
- Who do you recognise as exemplary, a role model or an inspiration?

### Classroom or homework tasks:

**A> Pick a saint, any saint…**

Select a saint (your teacher might narrow the choice a bit for you) and find out about their life. Answer these 5 questions about them:

1. What made this person an exceptional Christian?
2. How did this person follow Jesus’ teaching and example?
3. Why do you think this person is remembered today?
4. How might Christians in today’s world be inspired by this life story?
5. What two questions would you like to ask this saint?

**B> Your own sources of inspiration ~ pick three to compare**

Select three people – from history or alive today – who you admire a lot and say why you chose them. How do they compare to the saint you studied above? Similarities? Differences?

### Suggested outcomes: students can

- Give an informed account of the life and impact of a Christian saint.
- Give reasons for their views about role models and inspiring leaders.
- Handle information and ideas effectively by explaining similarities and differences between saints and their own chosen examples of inspiring people.
**TEMPLES**

The impulse to create great buildings to honour your God or your religion is very widespread in all religions and has created some of the wonders of the world.

### What’s it all about?
Sacred space and holy buildings: what are they worth?

Humans are builders, like no other species on earth (except perhaps termites). And so we apply our love of bricks and planks to religion. Churches mosques, synagogues and temples can be found everywhere, but there are also some buildings with global significance, like the Muslim Kaaba, the Christian church of St Peter in Rome, the Jewish ‘Western Wall’ in Jerusalem – which also has holy sites for Christians and Muslims in it too. But you don’t have to worship in grandeur: for some, a shack, or an open space is a good place to worship. So perhaps, if you want to worship, you need an attitude not a big building.

It is easy to research holy buildings online, and there is very much more to find out about them. Can you develop your own criteria for selecting 5 top religious buildings in the world?

Would you balance your list, with just one building for one religion, or might you choose two Christian or Muslim buildings (they are the biggest religions, with billions of followers)?

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### Key Questions

- What makes a space or a building holy?
- Why do religious communities like to ‘build for God’?
- WHICH DO YOU THINK MATTER MORE - LOCAL RELIGIOUS PLACES TO WORSHIP OR THE BIG EXAMPLES OF GLOBAL IMPORTANCE LIKE Makkah, Jerusalem or Rome? Why?
- Can you imagine a sacred space for all humanity, including all religions?

### Classroom or homework task: List, analyse, design

**A>** What facts about temples did you learn from the clip? What did you know already?

**B>** Make a list of the buildings referred to in the clip. Can you add 5 more examples to your list? Which are most important, and why?

**C>** Compare the value of having a local place of worship – mosque, synagogue or church to practice your religion all the time with the significance of global sites, maybe where the religion began, like Jerusalem, Rome or Makkah. Which do you think is more significant and why?

**D>** Many non-religious people continue to enjoy some places for their spiritual significance: a mountain top, riverside, favourite walk or place with memories. Are these places as important as any temples or religious buildings?

### Suggested outcomes: students can...

- Give an informed account of the significance to believers of different places of worship
- Give reasons for their views about whether it matters where people worship.
- Handle information and ideas effectively so that they can answer with reasons the questions above.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Christianity</th>
<th>Judaism</th>
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**BBC Religious Education / RE Today Notes / An A-Z of Religion / Lat Blaylock © 2017**
UNCERTAINTY

What’s it all about? Are we dreaming? What about doubt? Theology and religious study is a study of faith, not certainty. So ‘spiritual convictions’, based on a leap of faith, are all we have. Maths maybe nice and provable, but it doesn’t tell you the meaning of life, love, laughter and music, as spiritual convictions can. Since no religion has the whole truth, for certain, but all offer something to believe in, it may explain why religions often have lots of small variations of belief inside them. An agnostic is a ‘don’t know’ when it comes to religious questions. Atheists and religious people may share certainty: they are sure of their position. But agnosticism is for those who see the rationality of uncertainty. Maybe that is actually a majority… Who do you know who is 100% sure of their views, even when they are thinking about the meaning of life, the origins of humanity of the destiny of the world? Is it wise to be agnostic, and make your belief proportionate to the evidence?

When faced with the biggest mysteries of the universe, it may make sense to say ‘I don’t know’. A person who is a ‘maybe’ about God is called an ‘agnostic’. Very common in the UK.

Which religions and beliefs?

Agnosticism

Key Questions

- Is it good to be 100% certain about everything? Why or why not?
- What is an agnostic?
- How do the agnostics approach life?
- Why might it be good to stop short of claiming 100% certainty about the biggest mysteries of life?

Classroom or homework task: 4 questions answered

Divide a page into 4 quarters for your answers to these questions after you have watched the clip. Use and consider ideas from the clip, from your own mind and from other study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Some say trust in God is good, because we have no proof. Others say ‘if you can’t prove it, I think it is rubbish’. What do you say? Why?</th>
<th>What is an agnostic? How is an agnostic different from an atheist?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Being agnostic is a cop out. You have to decide how to live, for God or for the random nothing ness of purpose. Take a leap of faith, don’t sit on the fence.” Do you agree?</td>
<td>“Being agnostic makes total sense. There is no proof of God, for or against. The evidence points both ways. Maybe a beautiful world is created, but look at the evil as well. Do you agree?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Suggested outcomes: students can

- Give an informed account of the meaning of agnosticism
- Give reasons for their views about whether certainty about religious and belief questions is good.
- Develop an argument for or against agnosticism.
What’s it all about? Goodness and virtue.
Are you lazy? Greedy? Impatient? Do you give in to temptation?
None of us lives up to our high ideals. Religions offer people ways to train themselves to be good humans.

For example:
Sikhs teach that the ‘five thieves’ of greed, rage, lust, attachment and conceit can rob you of your best life! These things steal your common sense and stop you enjoying your life. You can beat them with the weapons of the five virtues: truth, compassion, contentment, humility, love.

Hindus note that we have different duties at different times of life: dharma is the way to live – fulfilling the duties life lays on you today. This, of course, leads to a better reincarnation in your next life. This includes parents caring for children, but also children respecting parents – and looking after them in turn.

All religions note that there is a temptation for humans to take pride in their virtues: ‘Look at me, I’m the best!’ A little humility is an antidote to this kind of bigheadedness. And all agree too that the good habits of practicing virtues pay off: you can be a better person if you practice!

Is virtue a simple matter? Maybe it is. A Jewish Rabbi summed it all up quickly: “what is hateful to you, don’t do it to others.” But we don’t find it simple to put it into action.

Sikh teaching urges humans to fight the 5 thieves of life with the 5 virtues. Try your best to be truthful, loving, compassionate, humble and content. A good life will grow from this.

Which religions and beliefs?

- Sikh
- Hindu
- Jewish

Key Questions

- What are virtues?
- Can a person become more virtuous by practicing?
- What do Hindus, Sikhs and Jewish people say about living the virtuous life?
- What’s the difference between virtues and values?

Classroom or homework task: List + explain the virtues

Task 1: Your views of some virtues. Watch the clip, and take note of the three approaches to virtue from the three religions. Is this a good definition: ‘Virtues are the habits of behaviour that make a person good.’ Everyone says they have values these days – but virtues go way beyond saying ‘I value peace’. To make it a virtue, you have to put it into practice. So, here’s a list of 14 virtues the clip touches upon: patience, hard work, generosity, truth, compassion, contentment, humility, love, duty, respect, kindness, determination, empathy, trust. Choose three you think you are doing OK with and ay how you put them into practice. Choose two more you think the world needs now, and explain why.

Task 2: Heroes and their virtues

Think of three people who are held to be human heroes – people who are great because of how they live, not stars of sport or music, but fine humans. For each one, consider: are there three virtues that they practice which set an example for others. E.g: Nelson Mandela: patience, strength, courage. Saint Teresa of Kolkata: compassion, determination, love.

Suggested outcomes: students can

- Give an informed account of the nature of virtues.
- Give reasons for their views about putting virtue into action
- Apply different ideas about virtue to life and to other people.
What’s it all about? Money and wealth.

Here we have a quick survey of different faiths and the ways they ask their followers to use their cash. Is money good or bad? Using your money for goodness is a Christian principle: if you love it too much then it can replace God in your life. You should use your cash for the benefit of others, not worship your bank balance.

Sikhs follow the teaching of compassion, so charity matters a lot. The Sikh gurus teach hard work and generosity instead of selfishness. In Hindu community, earning wealth honestly is good, and is one of the key stages of life. Worshipping generous Lakshmi might bring blessings of money, but then what you do with it matters.

The Buddha wanted that money in showers won’t make you happy. Enlightenment does that! Islam also teaches Zakah, as one of the 5 pillars: 2½% Using it well, money does good, but watch out for the danger of it capturing your heart! Greed is a sin in all these religions, but money well used can be a blessing.

Religious teaching often points out that grabbing money looks like the way to be happy, but it is a lie: all religions suggest true fulfilment in life is not just about how much cash you stash.

Key Questions
- What matters most – money or spiritual life?
- Does money buy happiness? If not, where do we find deeper fulfilment in life?
- Is money a temptation? Why does greed for money seem to be such a big part of human life today when we all agree with John Lennon (“I don’t care too much for money: money can’t buy me love”)?

Classroom or homework task: The 1%.

The richest 1% of the world people own half of the wealth. The other 99% share the other half. Is there any religion on earth that would say this was OK? But the richest sometimes give away the most: Bill and Melinda Gates have given more than $28 billion to charity since 2000. Does that make it OK to be rich? If you were president of the world for one day, how would you share the money out?

Think about the teachings of a religious figure you know – Jesus Christ, Gandhi, Prophet Muhammad [PBUH], Guru Nanak or the Buddha. If everyone followed their example with regard to money, how would the world change?

Suggested outcomes: students can
- Give an informed account of a variety of examples of religious teaching about money
- Give reasons for their views about the place of greed, dishonesty and selfishness in relation to money in our society
- Handle information and ideas effectively to give their views about the fact that 1% of the world owns 50% of the money.
XENOPHOBIA

What’s it all about? Fear of the Stranger
This clip introduces the concept of xenophobia, hatred or fear of others, all too common in human affairs. One recent historical example is the racist Apartheid regime of South Africa, ended by the movement Nelson Mandela led. Religion has been used to support xenophobic hatred in cases from the Ku Klux Klan to Bosnia in the 1990s, to modern anti-immigrant hatred here in the UK.
In the worst case, Hitler’s Nazi xenophobia led to anti-Jewish genocide.
Why is this so common, when it looks so destructive? Answers include the idea that humans behave as tribes, and identify ourselves positively by being negative about others. Where two ‘tribes’ want the same thing (land, money, power, a win at football) then conflict seems like a solution. Another aspect of this is that some people can stoke up hatred of ‘the other’ for social or political or religious gain.
No one can miss the fact that we live in a xenophobic world. But it is not always easy to see our own fear or hatred of the other: much easier to tosspot this in other people!
In three minutes, it is barely possible to present the concept in all its diversity. Do some more research to understand the social, psychological and maybe religious aspects of this important concept.

Religious people have sometimes practiced xenophobia and used fear and hatred of the other to ‘big themselves up’. But those who truly follow spiritual teachings of love for all humanity have sometimes become religious heroes of love and equality. Why the difference?

Key Questions:
- What is xenophobia?
- Why are humans so often caught up in tribal fear and hatred of others?
- How does it happen that religious, which preach peace and love, still practice xenophobia against those they disagree with?
- What can be done?

Classroom or homework task:
- The ‘Golden Rule’ of treating others as you would like them to teach you can be found in all religions and in non-religious views as well. Can you find at least three different versions of it? If everyone followed this rule, would xenophobia be reduced? Give two or more reasons for your answer.
- Can human communities plan to be less racist, sexist, homophobic? Discuss and then create a ‘Charter for Reducing Xenophobia’ Can you write ‘5 Commandments for a Less Xenophobic World’? If everyone followed your charter, how would your school, your town, your country be changed?

Suggested outcomes: students can...
- Give an informed account of examples of xenophobia
- Give reasons for their views about the causes of the ‘fear of the other’, using reasons and examples
- Handle information and ideas effectively by suggesting a charter for a less xenophobic world, supported with arguments.

Which religions and beliefs?
Examples from Christianity, Judaism.

Examples from
Christianity, Judaism.
Yom Kippur

What’s it all about?
This program begins with the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur, a time for sorrow and remembering and asking forgiveness for the wrongs of the past year. All religions observe yearly occasions – often called ‘Celebrations.’ But Yom Kippur is a time for penitence and forgiveness. There is something to celebrate there, but sorrow comes first. True at Easter too, and in Islam, Eid Ul Fitr follows the Ramadan fast. Charitable giving, feasting, and the idea of the victory of good over evil are also celebrated at Diwali. So are all festivals similar?

Festivals use food, drink, song, old stories retold, community events, charitable giving and gifts and cards to bind a community together, to celebrate ‘who we are’ and ‘what we believe’. In that sense they are all similar – and then again, all different. In under three minutes we can only hint at the depths of meaning in the festivals: use this as a tart to do some research and find out much more.

Classroom or homework tasks: festivities are...

- Answer this in 100 words: Religious festivals are some of the ‘best bits’ of faith. Many Jewish, Christian, Muslim or Hindu people don’t go to their place of worship every week – but they do like their festivals. Mosques are full at Eid, and Churches are full at Christmas. Why? Is it because festivals are more fun than weekly worship, or because the meaning, culture and community life of festivals all tie in to childhood nostalgia and memories? Or some other reasons?

- People celebrate whether they are religious or not. Consider New Year, the Glastonbury Festival, Remembrance Day or Valentine’s Night. What is being celebrated and / or remembered on each of these occasions? In what ways are they similar to and different from religious festivals. Note that maybe 100 000 people ‘do Glastonbury’, while over 20 million do Yom Kippur, and over 2 billion do Christmas – religious festivals are the biggest human events on earth.

Suggested outcomes: students can
- Give an informed account of common elements of different annual ‘big days’ in religions
- Give reasons for their views about why festivals are some of the most popular parts of a religion.
- Handle information and ideas effectively by making a comparison between religious festivals and other kinds of celebrations.

Which religions and beliefs?
- Jewish
- Christian
- Hindu
- Muslim

Key Questions:
- What matters most at Yom Kippur. Easter, Eid Al Fitr and Diwali?
- Are these festivals and celebrations basically the same or essentially different?
- How do religious festivals compare with occasions like New Year, the Glastonbury Festival, Remembrance Day or Valentine’s Night?
**ZOROASTRIANS**  
*(And other smaller religions)*

Saying you are a Jedi Knight may be a decent joke in a census, but it is not really a religion. What has made humanity such a religious species? Why do we have so many different faiths?

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**Which religions and beliefs?**  
- Zoroastrians  
- Jains  
- The Baha’i faith

(*Jedi knight* is not a real religion)

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**Key Questions:**
- How come there are over 4000 religions in the world?
- Why do you think it is that about 4% of the world is atheist? Is that figure surprisingly small or surprisingly big?
- Will religions grow and proliferate, or wither and die out in the next 50 years? Why?

---

**Classroom or homework tasks:**

A. Choose one of these three 'medium sized' religions, Zoroastrians, Jains or Baha’is and find out ten facts about the religion. Turn these into a quiz for other members of your class. Remember: these religions have many millions of members!

B. Consider the key question: Will religions grow and proliferate, or wither and die out in the next 50 years? Why? Write two long paragraphs giving opposite points of view about this. Can you use these keywords: conflict / revival / sociology / science / technology / progress / Spirit of God?

**Suggested outcomes:** students can

- Give an informed account of a 'medium sized' religion from their own research.
- Give reasons for their views about the possible decline or future growth of religions.
- Analyse key questions and attend to opposite views in a balanced way.

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What is it all about? About 4200 religions on earth! The biggest religions number billions – Christians, Muslims, Hindus. But Zoroastrians, Jains and the Baha’i faith are examples of religions whose followers may be less than 10 million, but offer a ‘full set’ of beliefs, ethics, community, places to worship, narrative and scripture to their followers, and have been around for hundreds or thousands of years. From the programme, you can note five facts about each of these three smaller religious groups. These three are not ‘small’ religions: they are medium sized. 6 million followers of the Baha’i faith could fill Wembley Stadium over 70 times. It’s almost as if humans are all living in a religion-factory!

In the UK census of 2001 – and again in 2011 – lots of people who did not like religion, or did not like being asked for their religion, said they were Jedi knights. That kind of throwaway remark doesn’t turn Star Wars into the new religion of the world, but does raise the question: how did all these thousands of religions start? They often grow out of older religions – as Islam emerged from Jewish and Christian faith, for example.