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.

The vision of RE behind these clips is of a multidisciplinary field of enquiry. You will find here lessons that begin with textual study, phenomenology, philosophy of religion, ethics, theology and sociology or psychology of religion. This range is important in RE teaching and learning. Highly able students can distinguish which of RE’s disciplines they are using.
ATHEISM

What’s it all about? This clip introduces atheist 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 of 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’.

Which religions and beliefs?

Atheism: atheists are people who believe that God is unproven, and enormously unlikely or impossible.

Key Questions

- 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?

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 the m: which are good reasons to be an atheist?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘The world is full of suffering and pain, which hurts innocent people.’</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Life is short: 80+ years fly by. No one can be sure of anything after death.’</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The world is beautiful, intricate, and nearly perfect for human life.’</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Religions claim to be about love and peace, but often practice hate and war.’</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘For 2 centuries, things that used to look like miracles have been scientifically explained.’</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Humanity is capable of huge goodness and also of massive evil. Too random for a god to have made us.’</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Human psychology uses religion to prop up our sense of failure or our fear of death.’</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Life is a mystery: there’s loads we cannot explain about it.’</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 bother their own views and others’ ideas about evidence for and against god.
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. It would be sexist to think about a religion only in terms of what women wear. There’s always much more to it than that!

Which religions and beliefs?
Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Jewish people

Key Questions:
- 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?

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
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.
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 4.6 billion 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.

All religions tell stories of origins, explain where we come from, why we matter and what we might believe about God. Are any of these stories true, or useful today?

### Key Questions

- **Which religions and beliefs?**
  - Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikh, Buddhism, Atheism

- **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?**

### 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>&quot;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>&quot;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>&quot;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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</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.
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 can completely explain why humans exist</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 did 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.

Which religions and beliefs?
- Christianity
- Atheism
- Islam

Key Questions
- 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?
**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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**The philosopher Voltaire famously taught ‘I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.” Is freedom of speech more important than dealing with extremism?**

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**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’?

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**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.

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**Which religions and beliefs?**

- Christianity
- Islam
- Communism
**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?

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### Classroom or homework tasks:

**After watching the clip, write down three paragraphs:**
- Reasons for saying ‘He’ for God.
- Reasons for saying ‘She’ for God
- Reasons for not ascribing any gender to God

**Have you ever heard of ‘feminist theology’? Find out and note what it means.**

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?

**Should religious people be feminists? Give your reasons.**

**Suggested outcomes: students can**
- Give an informed account of issues about religion and gender
- Give reasons for their views about speaking of God as ‘He’ or ‘She’
- Handle information and ideas effectively by analysing information from different religions about God, masculinity and femininity.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which religions and beliefs?</th>
<th>Key Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>- Does God have a gender?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>- Why, in recent years, have all religions come to include members who are feminists?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>- Would it be good to have complete gender equality in religion? Why doesn’t this happen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>- Are some religions more female friendly than others?</td>
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</tbody>
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**GODDESS**
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.

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

### 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.
### 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 or 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.

### 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>&quot;Being agnostic is a cop out. You have to decide how to live, for God or for the random nothingness of purpose. Take a leap of faith, don’t sit on the fence.” Do you agree?</td>
<td>&quot;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 big headedness. 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.

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.
**WEALTH & POVERTY**

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Questions</th>
<th>Classroom or homework task: The 1%.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- What matters most – money or spiritual life?</td>
<td>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? <strong>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?</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td>- Does money buy happiness? If not, where do we find deeper fulfilment in life?</td>
<td><strong>Suggested outcomes: students can</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td>- 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”)?</td>
<td>- Give an informed account of a variety of examples of religious teaching about money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 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.</td>
<td>- Give reasons for their views about the place of greed, dishonesty and selfishness in relation to money in our society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Which religions and beliefs?**
- Sikhs,
- Hindus,
- Buddhists
- Muslims
- Christians

**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.

**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%**

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**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?

Which religions and beliefs?
Examples from Christianity, Judaism.

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.
### 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 Divali. 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.

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

#### Key Questions:
- What matters most at Yom Kippur, Easter, Eid Al Fitr and Divali?
- 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?

#### Classroom or homework tasks:
- 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.
### ZOROASTRIANS
(And other medium sized 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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which religions and beliefs?</th>
<th>Zoroastrians</th>
<th>The Baha’i faith ('Jedi knight' is not a religion)</th>
<th>Key Questions:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zoroastrians</td>
<td>The Baha’i faith ('Jedi knight' is not a religion)</td>
<td>How come there are over 4000 religions in the world?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jains</td>
<td></td>
<td>Why do you think it is that about 4% of the world is atheist? Is that figure surprisingly small or surprisingly big?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Baha’i faith ('Jedi knight' is not a religion)</td>
<td>Will religions grow and proliferate, or wither and die out in the next 50 years? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 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: they are millions!

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.