

## New BBC Programmes for Religious Education 2014

### A Question of Faith: Marriage

Age range	14-16
Topic	Muslim marriage. Wedding practice and ethical ideas about marriage from different viewpoints.
Clip content described  12 minutes	<p>The programme begins with some questions: does marriage today matter less than in the past? What is good about having a religious wedding, or a secular ceremony? Three young people, from Muslim, atheist and Christian communities go together to watch an Islamic wedding in 2014 Britain. They find out about the ways the bride and groom symbolise their love and respect for each other. They are surprised at some aspects of the ceremony.</p> <p>Back in the studio a discussion about marriage and sex ethics between the twelve young people in the 'A Question of Faith' series shows that marriage is not the same for everyone, either in terms of ritual where Muslim and Christian ceremonies are very different or in relation to beliefs and ethics. Some atheists attack religious marriage, and perhaps even the whole idea of marriage, for making too many rules about sexual behaviour. Some people from different faiths defend their ideas.</p>
A short synopsis of the programme	An atheist, a Muslim and a Christian hear and see the Muslim bride and guests explain Islamic marriage. Other wedding practice raises issues: can marriage avoid sexism? Does it matter where weddings happen? Is marriage 'in God's sight' a good idea? Angellica Bell leads a discussion with 12 young people.



## Possible uses of the programme in the classroom

Here are three learning activities teachers could use to bring out the potential of the programme for their students.

- 1. Comparison.** Use a two circle Venn diagram to compare Muslim and Christian weddings and / or marriages. What is unique to each, and what is shared by both? Make the task easier by giving students 20 words or phrases to insert into the diagram. Make the task harder by having three intersecting circles (this thinking skills structure is sometimes called a 'similarity and difference triad'). Compare Muslim, Christian and atheistic beliefs about marriage.
- 2. Commentary and response: listen, list, reply.** Ask students to note from the discussion what issues are raised and how they would have responded if they had been part of the discussion group. Ask them to listen to the programme carefully, listing key comments and proposing how they would respond if they were present. Students do this as an individual activity, and then make pairs, then fours to consider what each might have contributed to the discussion. You could even film your own 'episode' of 'A Question of Faith', based on visiting a Christian or Humanist wedding and on your own students' ethical questions and ideas.
- 3. Debating the meaning of statistics of marriage and divorce in the UK.** Use information from, for example, [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk) to explore the changing patterns of marriage and divorce in the UK in recent years. Numbers of marriages remain high. There are increasing numbers of second – and third - marriages. Over 40% of marriages finish with divorce, but religious marriages are more likely to last, with Muslim divorce rates particularly low. What do these figures mean? In small groups or whole class groups, students debate some of the following propositions, raised by the discussions.
  - a. A marriage should not involve religion, because it is an agreement between two people, so it is best if 'God' is left out of it.
  - b. A successful marriage needs all the help it can get, so if people find 'the help of God' through prayers and marrying in church, then that is good.
  - c. The rate of divorce increases where societies become less religious, which shows that religion is like glue, and can keep families together.
  - d. A society where marriage was an option rather than a social convention would be a healthier society.
  - e. Marriage makes trust, equality and gender-fairness more likely.
  - f. Marriage reinforces sexism
  - g. In comparison to good marriages, good weddings don't matter.Successful classroom debating – a common area of interest between RE and English 16+ qualifications – needs careful preparation and some scripting. Students who work towards contributing to these debates by making accurate notes and developing two or three step arguments will find that RE is teaching them to be better at arguing, a key skill in many jobs and in every life.

<b>Key words</b>	<b>Christianity, Islam, Atheism, wedding, marriage, Nikah, culture, sexism, gender equality, ethics, morality, religion, spirituality, discussion, opinion, thinking skills, debate</b>
<b>Take note</b>	Good RE makes no assumptions about the relative values of different kinds of marriage, and enables students to learn from the experience of others as well as to reflect on their own lives. These sensitive issues of course need careful and thoughtful handling by the teacher.

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