

Books

3.1

What did the Warwick Report say?

That:

- it is left to teachers to choose and interpret the books that have most potential for RE, particularly at Key Stages 1 and 2 where ideas on how to use the material in RE are not usually embedded in the texts
- the contribution of books used in RE to community cohesion tends to be incidental rather than being clearly indicated.

That, at different key stages, books used in RE have different characteristics, reflecting the ways in which they are used (Warwick Report, pp.202–3, 204–5):

- At **Key Stages 1 and 2** storybooks and factual books predominate but with little reference to current initiatives in RE. Texts (sometimes ‘big books’) are often used by the teacher and shared with the class in the manner of storytelling.
- Of all key stages, RE books at **Key Stage 3** are most likely to demonstrate awareness of RE as currently understood, though more emphasis tends to be placed on developing skills rather than attitudes. Books will often be used in typical class textbook fashion or to support structured homework tasks.
- At **upper secondary** (Key Stage 4 and post-16), public examination requirements heavily influence RE books which tend to focus on information and on moral and ethical issues, drawing material from a range of religious traditions. With books usually having little emphasis on either personal development or independent learning, it is up to the teacher to draw out opportunities for ‘learning from religion’. Books will often be used to support examination revision.

That, in the treatment of each religious tradition, there is often very good material but also characteristic weaknesses regarding each. For example (Warwick Report, pp.209–10):

- books on **Buddhism** make little reference to white British and migrant Buddhist communities in Britain
- books on **Christianity** sometimes present Christianity as the default religion, with a reluctance to engage with the real core of the Christian faith
- books on **Hinduism** often have a high number of inaccuracies and oversimplifications, and seldom refer to diversity within the tradition
- books on **Islam** often present oversimplistic accounts, focusing on basic practices and not the underlying beliefs
- books on **Judaism** are often very problematic, presenting Judaism through a Christian lens and making little reference to Jewish thought over the last 2000 years
- books on **Sikhism** suffer from rather superficial descriptive treatment with a focus on externals at the expense of Sikh ideas about how life might be transformed.