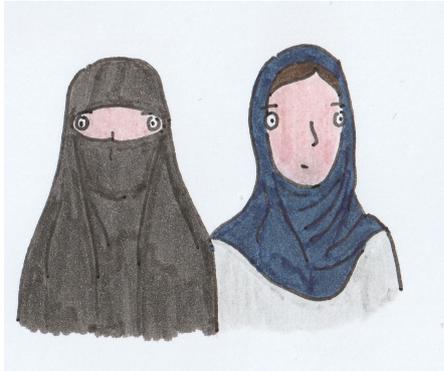


B**BURKA**

It would be sexist to think about a religion only in terms of what women wear. There's always more to it than that!

What's it all about? Religion asks for special clothes: why? What's going on there?

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, often prominent in the news, 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.

Which religions and beliefs?

Muslims,
Sikhs,
Christians,
Jewish people

Clip available here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/religious-education-ks3-a-z-of-religion-and-beliefs-b-is-for-burkas-religious-clothing/zkgv47h>

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:

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.

B is for Burka

Clothing = identity. It's the most popular art form on the planet. Choosing your own clothes shows who you are. How do you express your identity through the clothes you choose? Describe what you like to wear, and why.

Can you list 5-10 items of clothing that people wear because of their religious beliefs?

Are there any examples of clothing other people wear that make you feel uncomfortable? Is it sometimes true that we identify our 'tribe' with our clothes, and react badly to others? (Think of the soccer shirts of Manchester or Liverpool as examples)

From the news reports of French police making a Muslim woman strip off her 'burkini' on a French beach, what are the main issues of freedom at stake here? What was wrong with the actions of the police?

Are religious dress codes sometimes sexist? What should be done about that?