

E

## EXTREMISM



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?

**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.

Which religions and beliefs?

- Christianity
- Islam
- Communism

Clip available here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/religious-education-ks3-a-z-of-religion-and-beliefs-e-is-for-extremism-animated-film/z4gv47h>

**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? Dr Martin Luther King?)
- How can a free society cope with the tension between extremist views and free speech?
- Should everyone be allowed to 'say what they think'?
- In France there is no RE – but in Britain we all learn about all the religions. What do you think of our way of doing RE? Does it reduce extremism or increase respect?

**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?
- What can be done to reduce the appeal of extremism? What could government, teachers and schools, religious communities and the media do to calm things down? Make two suggestions for each of these four areas of society.

**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.

## E is for Extremism

- What does it mean to call someone an extremist?

- Are extremists all bad, or can you be an extremist for love or justice? (Gandhi? Dr Martin Luther King?)

- What images of extremists does our media offer? Who is a 'stereotypical extremist' Are these images fair or accurate? How can we tell?

"It may be noble to die for your beliefs, but it is evil to kill for your beliefs." What do you think?

Free speech is very important: in our society you're free to criticise other people's views and say what you truly believe. But 'hate speech' (which might encourage other people to be violent) is not allowed. What is more important, free speech, or protecting women, minorities and others from hate?

### **A Charter against Extremism:**

List 4 or more ways that our society needs to act to reduce violent extremism.