

	<h1>IDOLS and ICONS</h1>	<p>What's it all about? Is picturing the Almighty a bad idea or an aid to worship?</p> <p>Idols are negative! Quite a few religions say 'don't worship idols'. But many religions, including some of the most ancient, have made statues and images of their ideas about gods and goddesses to use when they worship. So what makes an idol bad? Islam rejects all images of Allah because Allah is too splendid, majestic, remarkable and awesome for any bit of wood, clay – or even gold – to come close to the reality of the Divine. That line of reasoning is found in the Jewish Ten Commandments too. Some Christians won't use statues in worship – but in Orthodox Christianity images of Christ and the Saints are not seen as idols, but as icons. An icon is an image through which prayer and the sense of God can become real to the worshipper. That doesn't sound very different from Hindu ideas about murtis – images of the gods and goddesses used in worship. Murtis are not representations of Brahman, the Ultimate Reality, but they do show aspects of the Divine One in the forms of the gods and goddesses. The clip finishes by saying 'of course we are all far too sophisticated to worship idols these days'. Ahem. Cue pictures of Slebs.</p>		
 	<p>Images of the divine are a big problem for some, and an essential way of expressing devotion for others. RE requires you to understand both sides and find examples to support your own view.</p>			
<p>Which religions and beliefs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslim • Jewish • Orthodox Christian • Hindu <p>Clip available here: www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/religious-education-ks3-a-z-of-religion-and-beliefs-i-is-for-idols-and-icons-across-different-religions/zhqdmfr</p>	<p>Key Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it right or wrong to make an image of what you think God is like? Why? • Does it help worshippers or distract them to have a place of worship full of images? • 'God cannot be pictured' Do you agree? • 'Trying to picture God is dangerous.' Do you agree? • 'Anything that helps people feel close to their God is a good thing.' Do you agree? 	<p>Classroom or homework tasks:</p> <p>A> Similar Opinions? Reasons for not showing God in art</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="703 1021 1489 1424"> <tr> <td data-bbox="703 1021 1094 1424"> <p>"I am Jewish. We never make pictures of G-d. We don't even pronounce the divine name. Humans have small minds, and do much we are not proud of. G-d knows all, and is perfect. It would be arrogant for even a great artist to claim they could picture the Eternal. The Ten Commandments forbid it as well."</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1098 1021 1489 1424"> <p>"As a Muslim, I have three reasons for never picturing Allah. It is against the teaching of the Qur'an. It might tempt me to worship a picture instead of Allah, and that is a big sin in Islam. It is impossible anyway: no human has the mind to understand Allah or the skill to paint his likeness."</p> </td> </tr> </table> <p>Write a paragraph that describes the similarities between Jewish and Muslim views on picturing the Divine. State your view of these ideas clearly. 150 words maximum.</p> <p>B> Opposite Ideas? Reasons for using images at worship?</p> <p>Consider how and why Icons (Orthodox Christian) and Murtis (Hindu) represent opposite views to those above. Whose ideas do you come closest to accepting or finding reasonable?</p> <p>Suggested outcomes: students can...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Give an informed account of two sides of the debate about whether picturing God is helpful or dangerous. ▪ Give reasons for their views about the similarities between the Muslim and Jewish rejection of images of God and the similarities between the Orthodox Christian idea of Icons and the Hindu idea of Murtis. ▪ Consider reasonably the idea that if God exists, then God must be beyond human understanding and therefore possibly formless. 	<p>"I am Jewish. We never make pictures of G-d. We don't even pronounce the divine name. Humans have small minds, and do much we are not proud of. G-d knows all, and is perfect. It would be arrogant for even a great artist to claim they could picture the Eternal. The Ten Commandments forbid it as well."</p>	<p>"As a Muslim, I have three reasons for never picturing Allah. It is against the teaching of the Qur'an. It might tempt me to worship a picture instead of Allah, and that is a big sin in Islam. It is impossible anyway: no human has the mind to understand Allah or the skill to paint his likeness."</p>
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I is for Idols and Icons

To see some ways other students have given a visual answer to the question 'Where is God' look at the Art in Heaven gallery: www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/spirited-arts/spirited-arts-gallery/2019/?ThemeID=66

The main differences between an idol and an icon are:

Jewish and Muslim views about picturing God: some similarities.

Hindu views about images of gods and goddesses and Orthodox Christian views about picturing Christ: some similarities.

"Modern idol worship doesn't usually involve a statue of a god. But people today worship money, fame, celebrity, popularity, the self. These kinds of self-centred worship are often all about 'me, me, me.' Worshipping your God is the opposite of worshipping yourself: it calls you to be unselfish and live a life of love." What do you think?

'Anything that helps people feel close to their God is a good thing.' Do you agree? Start your essay below and continue on another sheet of paper.