Teachers’ Guidance

Faith and Justice

We are looking for evidence of students grappling with content such as this in response to the theme of faith and justice. Winning work will reflect religious teachings as well as ideas about fairness. Older pupils might explore how faith can lead to a vision of justice. Younger pupils might offer their understanding of fairness in response to what they have learnt. The material below are examples only. We look forward to seeing art inspired by a wide variety of stimuli.

Faith
Trust and confidence in a person, belief or ideal vision.

Justice
Fairness, equality, lack of prejudice.

‘Sell your possessions, give to the poor’: Jesus
In Matthew 19: 16-24, Jesus tells a rich young man to ‘sell your possessions, give to the poor’. Does Jesus really want the rich man to give up everything he has? What could ‘possessions’ symbolise?
Do the class think it is ok to stay rich if you help others? If you are rich, is that a sign that you haven’t been generous enough?
Find out about poverty in the UK and around the world through charity websites. What do people lack? Could we in the rich world share a bit more? In this passage Jesus describes how difficult it is for a rich man to enter heaven, saying, ‘it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle’. Can pupils come up with other colourful images about being rich when others are poor?
Jesus asks the rich man to give his possessions up to help the poor and then invites him to ‘follow me’. If such an offer was made, after a request to give up a lot of money, would that make it worthwhile? Do we need to have faith in something; fairness, love, God, etc, in order to make the world more just? Would a rich person give up their possessions if they did not have faith in God, justice or a vision of a better world?

A vision of social justice: Muhammad
Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, lived in Arabia in the 7th Century CE in the city of Mecca. Arabs had recently started to live in settled communities, making their living buying and selling goods, when for most of their history they had been nomadic desert people. Muhammad felt the old laws that held people together were collapsing. The old, the poor, widows and orphans would have been cared for by the tribe in the old desert days, but now they were abandoned. Men drank and gambled and no one seemed to care about God or their spiritual sides.
When Muhammad was praying one night he heard the Angel Gibril (Gabriel) telling him to recite the words of Allah. He had become a prophet of God.
Guided by Allah’s words, Muhammad became the leader of the new Muslim community. He put the need to care for each other at the centre of his teachings. Muhammad said, ‘one who sleeps while his neighbour lies hungry is not one of us’.
Muslims must always be thinking of others. When Muslims fast at Ramadan they think about people who are poor and hungry all year round. At the end of Hajj they celebrate the Eid ul Adha (feast of sacrifices) and always share their food with those less fortunate in the neighbourhood. Every year Muslims must give a percentage of what they have as zakat (charity). Do pupils think that faith gives Muslims the inspiration as well as the structure for charitable giving?

Serving others, serving God: Sikhism
Guru Nanak, founder of Sikhism, taught his followers that serving others was essential to a good life. This is still central to Sikhism today. The Sikh holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib, states that ‘there can be no worship without performing good deeds.’ Sikhs can perform these ‘good deeds’ by helping in the langar. This is a kitchen and eating area which is part of all Sikh Gurdwaras (temples). Sikhs donate food or money to support the kitchen, cook meals, serve meals or wash up afterwards. All these voluntary actions mean that anyone who wants to eat at the gurdwara is entirely welcome. For Sikhs this is part of worshipping God. Pupils could reflect on how it might feel to do something as simple and yet powerful as feeding others. Find images online of Sikhs taking the langar out onto the streets of Britain’s cities to offer food to homeless people. Pupils could reflect on how this is seen as part of worshipping God.
Sikhs should also give time and money in charitable work as well as the langar. This is also seen as worship. In fact the Guru Granth Sahib goes so far as to say that monks, religious leaders and holy men will not reach God if they also do not perform service to others. Pupils could think about the difference between something personal like prayer, and something sociable like working for others. Do they think that actions to make the world a better place could be a form of prayer or worship?