



Creative RE with the 2023 **Spirited Arts** competition

This presentation invites to you to enable all pupils to make a piece of artwork or poetry on one of our six themes.

The National Association of Teachers of RE will give prizes to the winners.

See more details on our online gallery at

www.natre.org.uk

A photograph of a desk setup. At the top, a silver tray holds several sharpened colored pencils in various colors (red, blue, green, yellow, purple, orange). To the left, there are small white flowers. Below the tray is a white sheet of paper with text. In the bottom right corner, a hand is visible holding a dark blue pencil, ready to write on the paper.

What is Spirited Arts?

- Spirited Arts is an annual competition run since 2004 for RE pupils. We are delighted to once again welcome art and poetry entries for 2023. And other art forms - sculpture, tapestry, music, dance, video have all won prizes previously The competition gives you a chance to be creative and imaginative in RE. It is all about spiritual ideas and your learners' skills.
- There is a wonderful online art gallery & poetry collection. Each year tens of thousands of RE and arts pieces are created, and some of the best are on show there.
- Perhaps your pupils' art or poetry will be in the gallery next time! Have a look and choose some favourites of your own.
- Pupils and their teachers are warmly invited to join in! We welcome entries from January of each year and the closing date is 31 July 2023. Click here to see full entry information and last year's amazing gallery of winners and commended entries. <https://www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/spirited-arts/spirited-arts-2023/>

Six themes to choose from

Spirited Arts & Poetry has six themes for 2023. Pupils or teachers can choose a theme with you for the school's entries.

The themes are:

- We have more in common than what divides us
- Green faith, green future? God's good earth?
- Where is God today?
- Faith in action, values in action
- Sacred space and holy buildings
- All God's Creatures?

Where is god? I've got him
I have god tied up in my basement
I have tied him up using ordinary string
I have tied him to an ordinary chair
Doesn't seem so great now, does he?

Never mind why I have him.
If he got himself into this mess,
Don't you think a great lord could get
out?

If you ever want to see god again
Send me £100 000 in an unmarked bag
Or alternatively
£5 a viewing
£10 a picture
£50 a punch!

Jon Ord, Age 16

Why does your RE need a creative dimension?

- Some see RE as a rather intellectual enterprise where students gather rich knowledge of different religions and worldviews and compile factual understandings of the different beliefs they study
- But RE also has a rich history and present expression of focusing sometimes on the pupils' own self expression
- The latest OFSTED research report takes a very broad view of RE's 'rich knowledge' which includes enabling learners to see clearly their own position or standpoint and to articulate clearly their own viewpoints, ideas and responses to the material they study.
- Additionally, religions - in their most dynamic phases of beginnings, growth and reform in particular - are powerhouses of creativity: giant sculptures and tapestries, amazing temples, cathedrals and mosques, Sufi poetry and Handel's Messiah, the Sistine Chapel and the world's most read and loved literature (Bible, Qur'an) are testimony in the present that religion and creative power go together.
- And further: pupils are creative. Many do their best work in RE ever when the task links their rich knowledge of religion to their own self expression in a creative form.

This year there are six themes.
Schools or pupils can choose
which theme they enter.

- Theme:
- “We have far more in common than whatever divides us” - Jo Cox MP
- Here are some examples

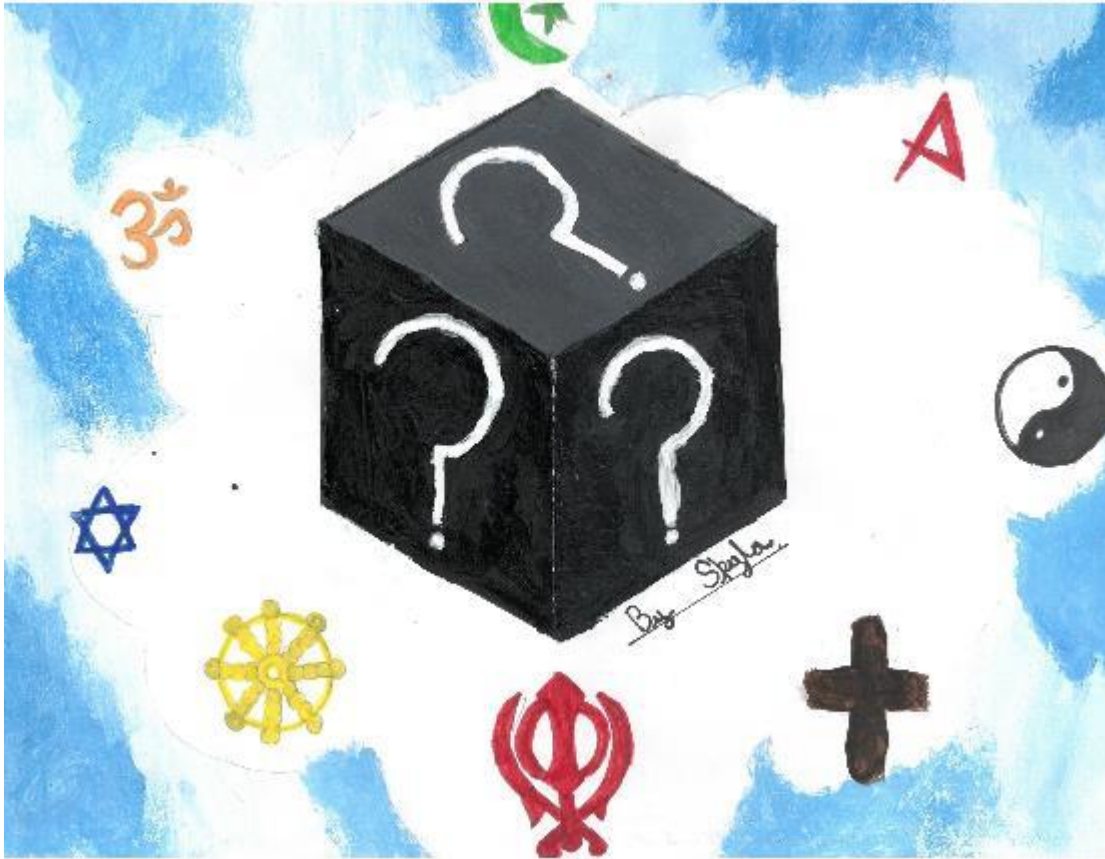
Flag Masks by Eleanor, age 10

“My artwork was inspired by when in lockdown people were saying ‘we are all in this together’ and I thought of lots of different people and countries working hard to fight off Covid.

So that inspired me to represent different countries and lots of different people and different religions in my artwork, because I was thinking of masks then the flags of different countries.

The quote ‘we have more in common than that which divides us’ by Joe Cox made me think of how there are so many different diverse people in this world but we are all still one human race working together.”





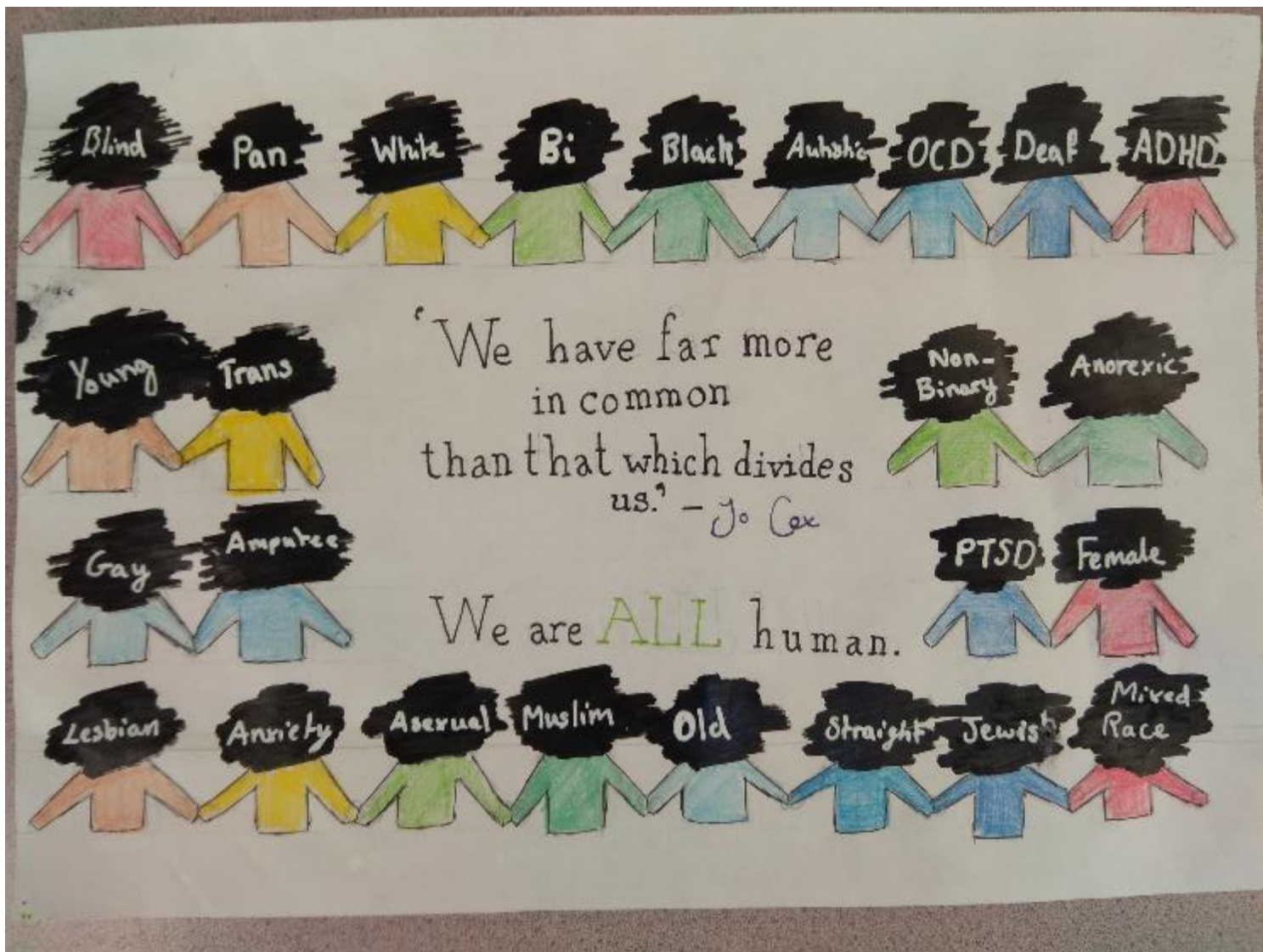
Skyla, 11 The Question Cube

“This piece of artwork is my response to this statement, “we have far more in common with each other than that which divides us”. I believe this includes everyone from all around the world no matter what race, faith, nor religion they follow.

In my artwork, I have drawn a black box representing, all the same questions each of the different religions are still yet to answer, the symbols representing each of the different faiths. The faith are all in the same cloud: we are all in the same universe together.

Since the dawn of time, people have wondered what happens to us when we die? How did we come to live in this world? Is there a God and if so where? Different religions have given different answers and it has caused conflict. For example Christians believe in one overall God in Trinity who looks over our lives. However, Hindus believe more in a way of living life and being responsible for their own karma. It seems unfortunate that everyone shares the same questions but do not always respect the fact that there will always be different answers.

But we do have our humanity in common.”



No commentary needed.

Diversity and unity

Age 12

“This image expresses my vision for humanity. It is not that we should all be the same. It is good that we might be Sikhs, Muslims, Christians or Buddhists or have no religion.

But the vision is that we can be united and celebrate everything that makes us unique.”



Can you use this theme for your creativity?

- **“We have far more in common with each other than that which divides us.”**
- The quote from Jo Cox MP introduces this theme which is about the question: are we one human race, despite our differences and divisions? We are all different, and all religions are different – but are we all the same too?
- Can we all be united? What holds humanity together? Is it faith? Hope? Love? Music? What threatens to tear us apart? How can we overcome the divisions that affect us?
- Use some specific religious ideas and quotes in this. Make a work of art that shows what unites us, brings us together, joins humans as one people and expresses our harmony. Use the disciplines of theology, but also of psychology and sociology to explore the questions and create your responses.

Can you use this theme for your creativity?

- **God's good earth?**

- Does a beautiful world like our imply a wonderful God? Are we spoiling God's good earth? Does the Earth belong to God? Should we be thankful for it? Can we save it in time from the threats of climate change?
- The beauty of the earth is celebrated in many religions, but the human spoiling of the earth is a danger and a coming crisis. In this theme, learners are invited to explore ideas and beliefs about the natural world, human responsibility for the earth and ways of praying about climate justice. Great work will show some originality: the globe in God's hands won't win!
- Challenge pupils to use varied scripture quotations thoughtfully, but also the methods of scientific enquiry and moral study to develop deep answers and good writing to go with stunning images.



Charles, age 8 from St James Junior School, made his artwork with the help of his classmates.

I do not believe in any religion or any God...After oceans arose and the first life forms appeared like fish and the Turtle I (with the help of my class) have created. The humans evolved from the life forms in the ocean and started inventing materials such as plastic. These plastics are destroying sea life and we have showed that in our artwork, that the turtle is covered and made from plastic. All the creatures are slowly dying, and they have the same value as humans. I believe if there was a God, would he really let this happen?

The Tree of Life Rosie is 8

"The tree can be seen as the centre of the earth where every animal and person rely upon the tree and look to it to give them shelter, food and oxygen. The tree needs people and animals to treat it respectfully and honourably so that it is able to do these things for many centuries to come, filling the world with life and laughter and making God's earth a happy place.

If we do not respect our earth with the animals, insects, plants and trees on it the earth will never recover and slowly crumble away leaving only destruction behind."



Rosie's art
close up!



Amy, 10.

Awful sea of plastic.

“The girl’s head is full of an overheated world - is this real, or just imagination? At the moment it might still be imagination, but in 10 years, it is real.

The sea, full of plastic and dead fish, is rising around her shoulders. We haven’t just ruined it all for the fish, but we will ruin the earth for ourselves to. We are literally drowning in our own stupidity. God help us!”





Isabelle, Charlotte and Astrid (all age 12) entered a group piece of artwork titled 'Mother Earth'.

The religions that inspired our work were Hinduism and Paganism. Hinduism inspired us because of the Hindu belief that Brahman, the Hindu God, is in everything and is. But the original idea of Mother Earth came from the Pagan religion, based on the worshipping of nature and that God is like a mother because she has given us life and continues to sustain us.

This work is spiritual because it may remind people that the earth is a gift to us, we belong it and should look after it. This, therefore, is very relevant at the moment because humans are at a stage in their existence in which they really need to start caring and putting the earth and others before their own desires.



'God's Mystery' by Amneek, age 14 from Stratford

My painting is influenced by Job 12:7-10. The bottom half of the painting is in greyscale, to contrast with the bright colours above. This is to show that Job doesn't see the full wonders of the universe – only God can see because he is omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent. The man at the bottom is meant to be Job, and the river leads him to the Earth. I drew a plant, a dove and a turtle in reference to the old scripture: "But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you" (Job 12:7-8).



Humanity's God Complex
makes us think we can do
anything. A delusion.
www.natre.org.uk



Humanity's God complex. Artist is 15.

“Humans are ruining the earth because we think we are gods. We behave as if we are all powerful, but we are stupid. A man wearing a blindfold which says ‘God Complex’ below two hands copied from the Michaelangelo painting of God creating Adam, God’s gift of life on Earth to humanity.

A ‘God-complex’ is a psychological disorder. Those afflicted believe themselves to be infallible, worth more than other people, blinded by their own arrogance and hubris - as the blindfold here shows. Such a ‘god complex’ means that a person may fail to acknowledge any evidence of a power higher than themselves. The blindfolded man refuses to acknowledge God, breaking the link between human and divine.

I wanted the unnatural and inhuman bright colours I used to paint the man to create a surreal and dehumanising effect: he believes himself to be, wants to be, more than human. While painting the hands of God and Adam, I used more naturalistic colour. I wanted to ‘humanise’ God. There is a disparity between these hands and the man, showing just how distorted man has become, far from the image of God. This distortion may ruin the earth.”



I wonder: Gaia

(Gaia: the idea that Earth should be seen as one living organism)

Poppy, age 13

I wonder what it was like at the start

When Gaia was a child?

She cared for us, gave us life

We saw no poverty, no pollution, no strife.

I wonder what it is like now

Backstage in the theatre?

Is Gaia on a torture rack,

As we search for coal, roughly breaking her back?

I wonder can we stop

The inevitable from happening?

Can we give our life giver

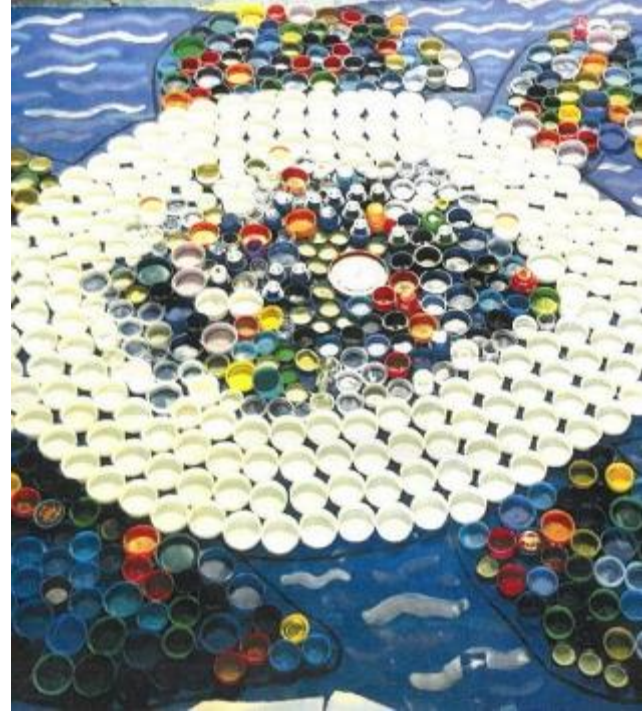
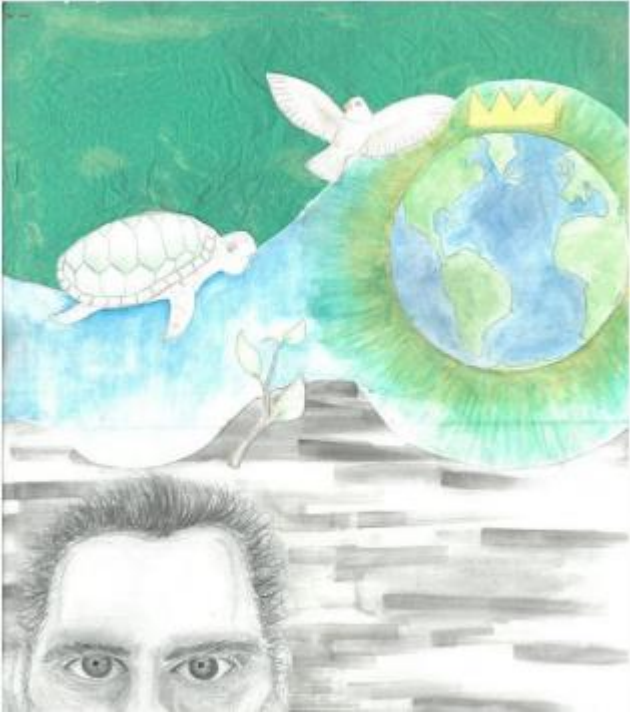
The chance not to wither?

You wonder why the 'natural' disasters

Are repeatedly occurring?

Gaia sees the backstage shows

Yes, my friends - she knows!!



PAUSE

- Which of these images is a winner for you?
- Can you already begin to plan 7-11, 11-14 and 14-19 uses of the competition?
- Does your RE / RME / RVE look likely to benefit from this sort of creative boost?

Can you use this theme for your creativity?

- **Where is God today?**

- Pupils who are atheists, agnostics and believers in God can all respond to this theme. We invite expressions of their sense of the search for God. Where's God? In your heart? In prayer? In the temple or the universe? Or is she hiding? Is he not there at all? Unreal? Imaginary?
- Looking for God, searching for him or her, matters to many, but how are we doing in finding God?
- Would you search with google or a 'god-detector'? Is God on Instagram, TikTok or whatsapp? Can God be found by prayer or by looking among the world's suffering people?
- This popular 'Art in Heaven' theme produces great work where pupils use ideas from religions clearly: The Jewish Psalms 42 and 43 are where it starts – there are parallels in many scriptures. Use theological reflection as well as philosophical argument to make great work.



Penny, 15:

“Your request has been denied”
“This expresses the feeling that God, if he exists, is unreachable and hidden. When we need God most, such as the peril the girl is facing, we reach out. No one grabs our hand. The masses of paper falling from the sky suggest that our prayers never reach anyone. The phrase ‘your request has been denied’, written on every piece, suggests that I can’t reach God. I feel there is no personal response to my prayers. All we receive is a weak cover up, an automated message: your request ~ to be happy, to be alone, to do well, to get better ~ has been denied. I feel it is very unlikely that God exists. This is what my paint and ink expresses.”



Where is God?

Newspaper clippings from today's news with barbed wire. My way of symbolising war and suffering for the world. In the top left there's a big tear in the fabric; underneath is bright gold. This is where I think God is, forever growing larger in the world and in our hearts, biding his time to cover the whole image in gold.

Nicky, 14

Rebecca, 15

“Seek and you will find him”

Where is God? Seek and you will find him. I depict a girl looking at her shadow. Newspaper cuttings in the shadow speak about the everyday: terror, murder, death. Jesus stands behind her, surrounded by light and colour.

I put cuttings from newspapers in the shadow, to do with what you see and hear about on the news every day: terror, murder, death, tension, crisis. It's easy to focus on the shadow in life, as it's presented so frequently. If you think of God, it's in the situations when good things happen. But in the shadow, God is there.

In the most war torn area people's lives can be transformed because of him. The image of Jesus behind the girl and the colour that surrounds them both illustrates that even where things look dark, God is working there. There is light even in the shadow.



The search for God. Sam, 15

“Amidst the millions of not so useful words humans have written about God, I have shown a prism. The light of God might be blinding for us, all too much. But the prism splits the blinding light into all colours. In the iridescent patterns of light through the prism I have included all the symbols of different faiths, spiritual paths and human insights I could. I think it is like this: human minds are weak. Too weak to know God or see God. But religions and other pathways give us a break down of the truth. Maybe we can all see one colour, our own ideas. Maybe we can learn to see other colours, the ideas of others. I don't think any of us can see it all.”



PAUSE

- **Planning**
- **Many teachers do a ‘Spirited Arts Week / Day’**
- **Some launch the competition with an assembly - use this PPT**
- **It makes a great focus at the end of a year**
- **Many schools see it as a quick win to improve the image, status and enjoyment of RE across the school**
- **Go on the website and see what is available**
- **The themes can all connect to 14-16 examination courses and make for memorable and exciting RE / RME / RVE**

Can you use this theme for your creativity?

• **Celebrations: Big days and big ideas**

- This theme enables pupils to create work about religious festivals from Divali and Eid to Wesak or Vaisakhi, Easter or Shabbat, Christmas and Remembrance.
- Festivals can be annual – or weekly, celebrated in places of worship or on the streets. Encourage learners to connect their vision of today's festivities to stories and memories from long ago, and to use scripture and other holy words in their work.
- Pieces of work might look at one festival, but some will be up for the challenge of looking at more than one celebration and noticing what's similar and different, how excitement, memory, love and community are drawn together by big days and big ideas.
- Some great group entries, in which pupils from a whole class offer their own contribution to collage, mosaic or group modelling are expected – and very welcome.



6-7 year olds from Copmanthorpe Primary School created this creation display based on the days of creation in the story of Genesis

Children's comments:

"God created everything to give us life on earth."

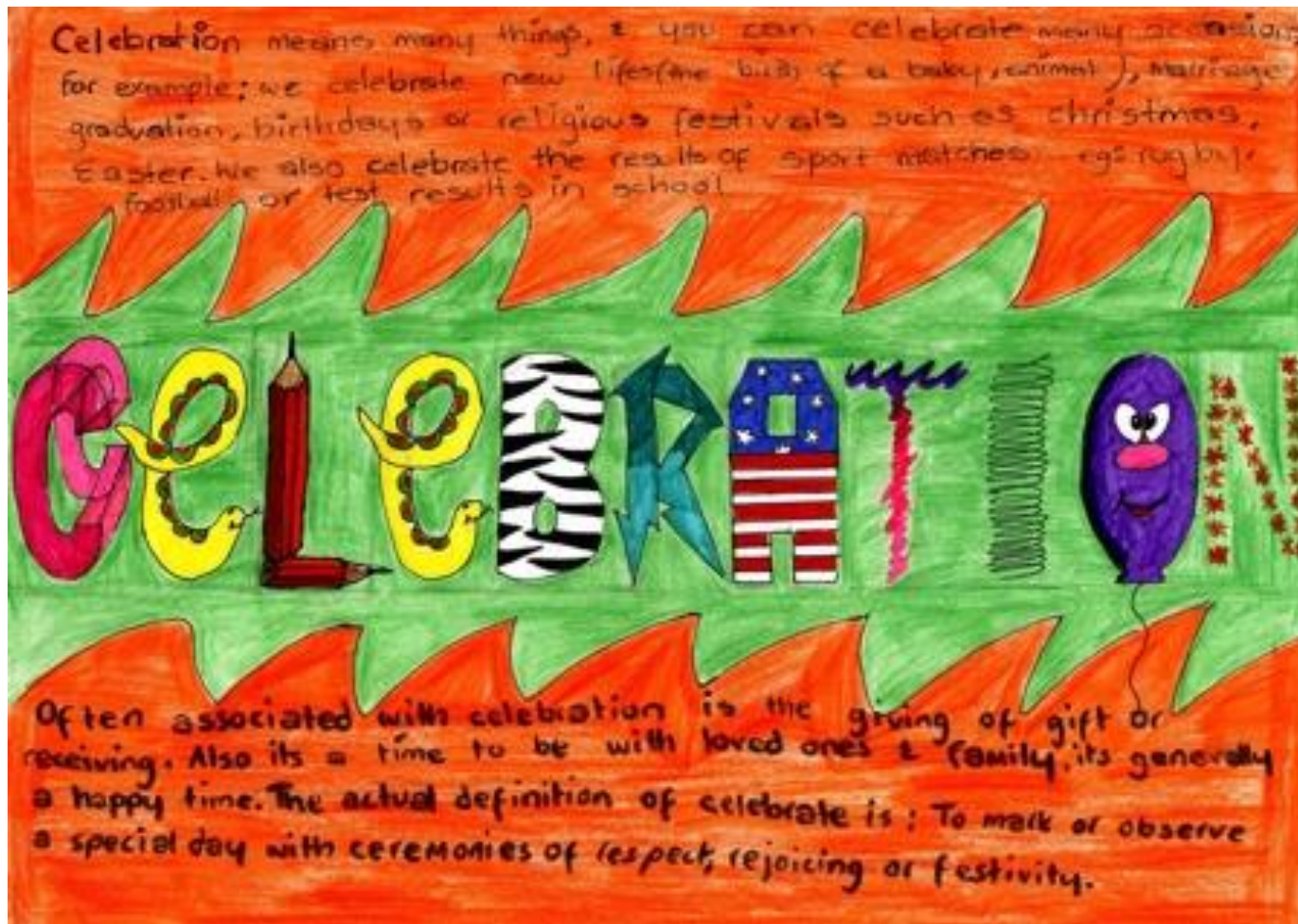
"God made life on Earth."

"God made a good earth for us to live on"

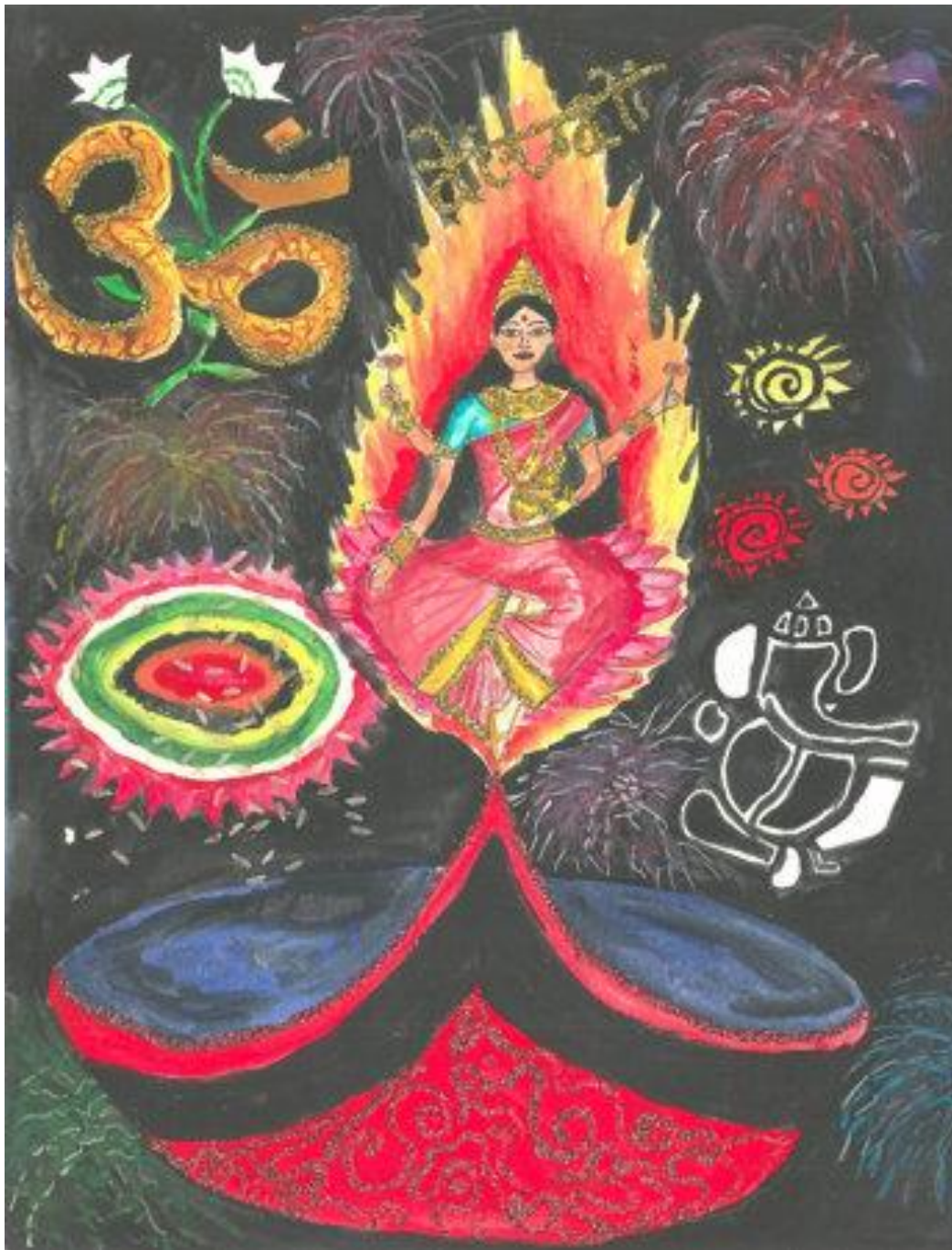
"We can celebrate the earth by looking after it."

"God made everything that is beautiful. We can care for all the animals like God does."

**Celebrating life and
celebrating creation.**



Emma, 13
Religious studies looks at all the different religions in relation to each other and if you do this you can find out that what Christians or Muslims think is unique to their religion is very similar. They talk about historic events, give gifts, do charity, rejoice together in families and communities. And if you are not religious this is also pretty similar to a big sports event or a big gig. We are more similar in celebrating our big days than we sometimes notice.



Remembering Divali

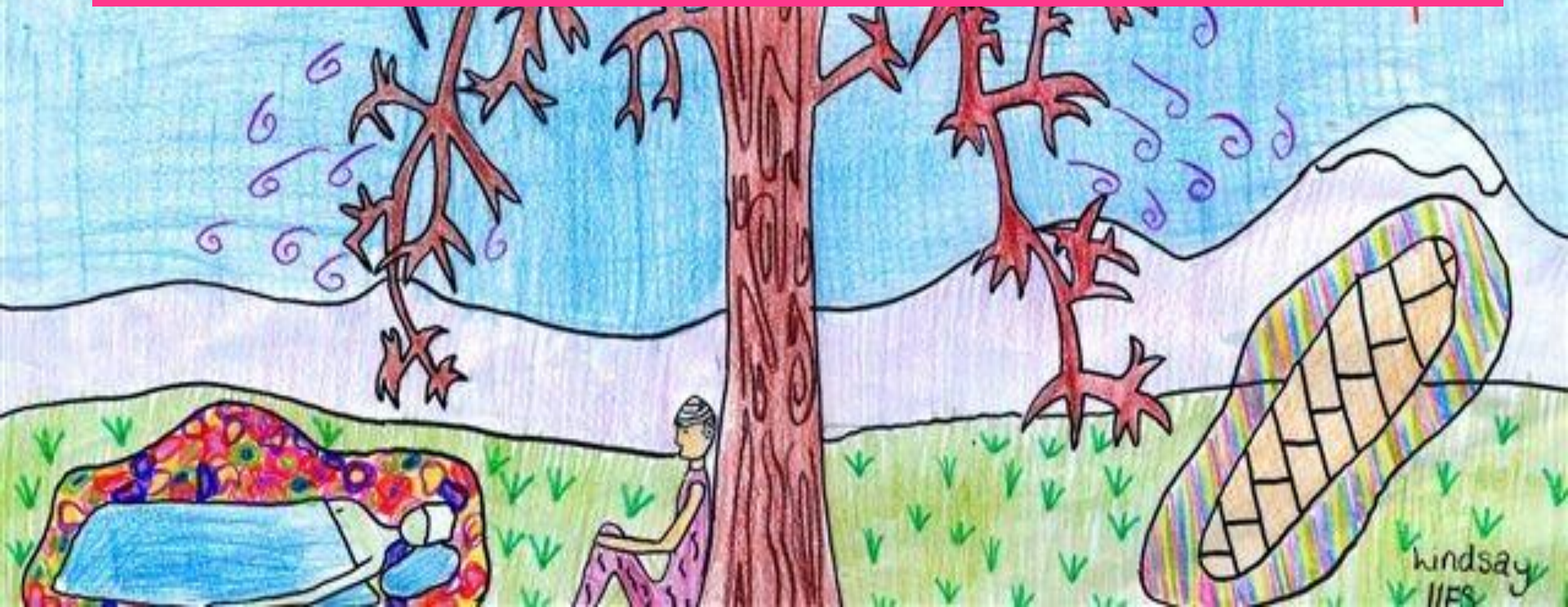
Jemma, 14

“I have learned about Divali from when I was a small child in primary school. I didn’t think about it for myself until recently., Hindus use rangoli patterns and story telling to show the possibility of a joyful celebration or a changed life this year, Divali celebrates light and the ways it triumphs over the darkness. I heard this as a small child, but now I’m older I can see that this is a kind of universal meaning. We all need a fresh start, and having a festival of new beginnings every year seems a good way to remind ourselves of this, which we often forget.”

Responses to suffering: Celebrating the Enlightenment of Siddhartha Gautama

“My picture shows Siddhartha Gautama under the bodhi tree. The purple swirls symbolise that the pictures are only thoughts. I’ve linked his enlightenment to the Four Sights he saw years ago. When he sees the holy man he realises to release yourself from suffering you must follow a middle path. This is why this picture is above the sun. He realises there is so much suffering in the world, and he must do something about it. The stripes from the dead person show the life coming from it and the flowers around the ill person show other people care and they have put the flowers there to show their suffering it shows that suffering affects so many people. I find the 4 Noble Truths difficult to explain, but they must link up with the 4 Sights in the story, I think. Buddhist celebrate this festival every year.”

Lindsay is 13



Can you use this theme for your creativity?

• A view of the world.

- Our subject is increasingly called 'Religion and Worldviews'
- This theme invites pupils to express their own world view. That might include beliefs and values, identities and truths as you see them.
- A religion is one kind of worldview and so are Humanism, atheism and being 'spiritual but not religious'. Encourage pupils here to think about their own view of the world – or maybe some older pupils will present a view of the world they disagree with!
- Looking through a lens, some tinted glasses or a microscope is a common image for trying to understand how our worldviews work – will your pupils use that, or some more original idea?



A view of the world

Yolande: 9. 'My model is called 'All you need is love'. Some people don't believe in god, but they do believe in love. I am one of these people.'



My worldview

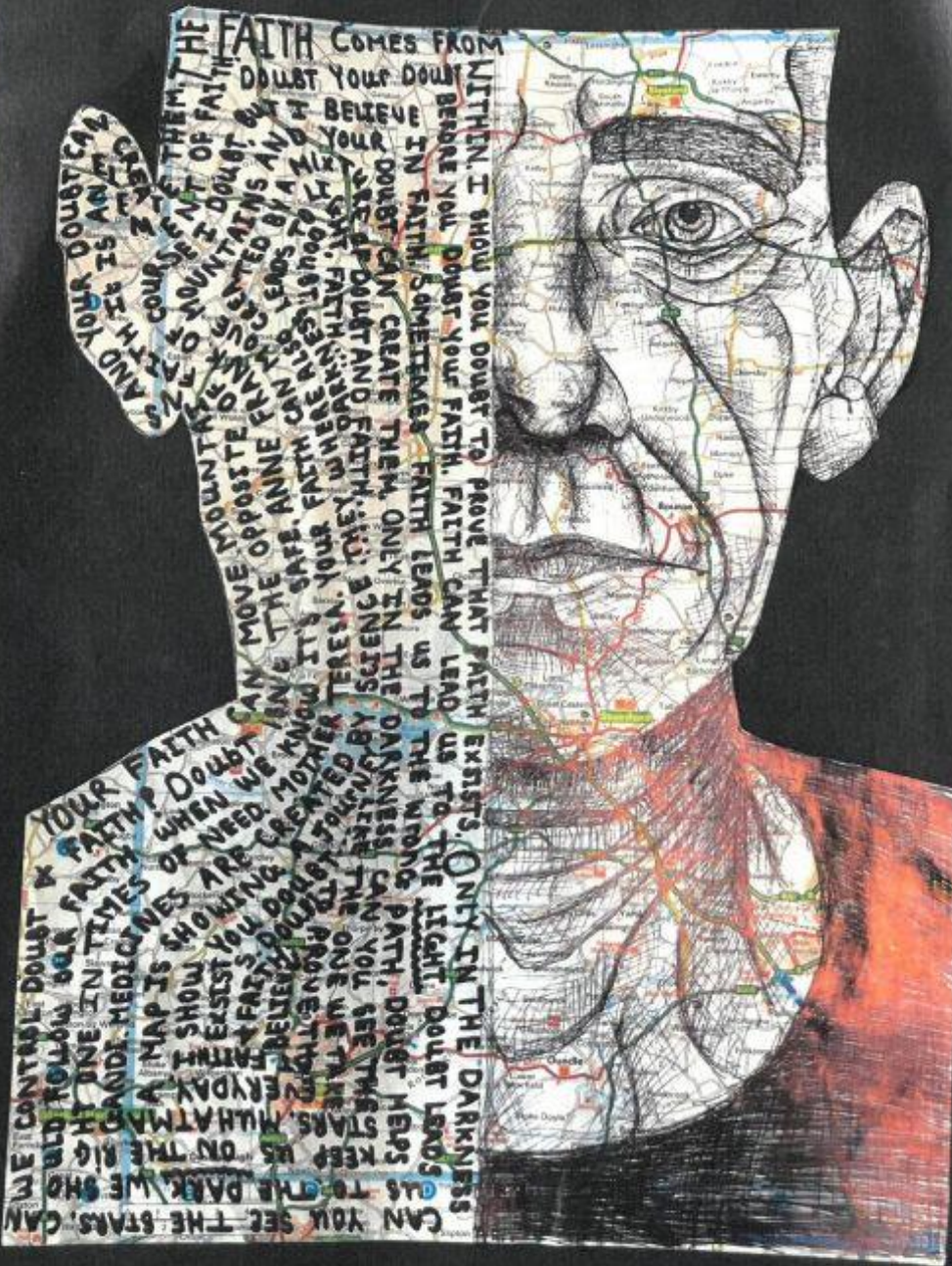
We are the Big Bang

By Lara, 10

“In my picture you can see two planets colliding to form the ‘Big Bang’. There are millions of particles; different shapes, sizes and colours. The particles came together to form our solar system.

The tiny particles are just as valuable as the big particles. I thought that humans are all equal even though we are different shapes, sizes and colours.

I am left wondering... was God responsible for the Big Bang?”



Mia (13) Marlborough

Doubt: Our Journey changes our view of the world

“My artwork resembles the journey we take everyday and our path through life. I’ve chosen to draw on a map to show the different paths doubt and faith can lead us on.

An old man’s face symbolises mortality: the decisions we make in life to do with faith and doubt shape us: giving up on faith may be like ‘losing the will to live’ for some people.

The other half of my face expresses my ideas in text. Names such as Anne Frank, Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa used their faith to promote equality.

I also used the quote “I show you doubt to prove faith exists.” This is my opinion, in a few words, which speak a whole story. Will the journey of life take us to faith, or doubt, or both?”



A view of the world – from where I live

18-year-old Lauren created a 2m x 1m mural representing the architecture of her hometown – Kendal, in the Lake District.

As Gaudi (the great Catalan architect) said ‘The straight line belongs to man, the curved line belongs to God.’ Nature is used widely in the Bible to blend inspiration from nature with God – e.g. Psalm 121 v 1-2 ‘I look up to the hills, but where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.’

The basic shape of my fabric mural is that of the hills and river, with parts of the buildings inside the hills, as they are surrounding our town like the feeling that God surrounds us. We are shaped by our birth, our place, our times and our lives.”

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Some principles and key questions for the Spirited Arts methods

- A. Religions are, in their most dynamic phases, highly creative.
- B. Meaning-making is the essential mode of creativity in religion – not music, poetry, architecture, literature or invention (though these all matter too)
- C. Is every human creative? Arguably, yes!
- D. Do some pupils do their best work when creative horizons are opened up for them? Yes, many.
- E. Is creativity close to varied forms of spirituality?

What for you are the principles that make creative RE a part of what we should do in RE?

Different approaches to the competition.

Success in many forms

Over the years, teachers have developed many ways of running Spirited arts. All these and others are welcome.

- A. A Spirited Arts Week for the whole school
- B. A unit of work over 6-8 lessons in RE for a year group
- C. A homework club competition
- D. A collaboration with the art department
- E. A launch in assembly with follow up lessons (you could use this PowerPoint to demo)
- F. The support of an outside body from a faith community
- G. Group project work from teams of students
- H. Linking with local artists
- I. Getting older pupils to run the show for younger ones

What can you do to make sure that you give your pupils the very best opportunity to show off their talents and insights?



And what about you?

- You have seen a lot of examples of the brilliant entries to the Spirited Arts & Poetry competition.
- Now plan how to enable your learners to take part. They need to be challenged to think over their own ideas, beliefs and skills. Use their knowledge of religions and beliefs in quotation and in depth.
- Plan for super entries, to send in before the end of the Summer Term. The closing date is 31 July.
- Write about how good it is! A writing frame on the website gives prompts - we suggest writing about each piece of art up to 250 words maximum.
- Don't forget you can see hundreds of interesting entries and other winners on the online gallery. Click <https://www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/spirited-arts/spirited-arts-2023/>

Good luck!

SPIRITED ARTS

A competition for creative RE
for every pupil

Lat Blaylock, editor of RE Today, suggests ways for RE teachers to engage RE learners through their own creativity for their own self expression. ENTER NOW!

<https://www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/spirited-arts/spirited-arts-2023/>