

Using religious artefacts in the classroom

Benefits of using artefacts and/or artistic interpretations

Exploring artefacts and/or artistic interpretations can help pupils to engage with and understand aspects of religion from different perspectives through alternative experiences that do not always rely solely upon the teachers' understanding or ability to explain.

In particular, the use of artefacts and/or artistic interpretations can be used to help pupils develop specific RE skills to:

- Recognise and name various features of religions, symbols beliefs and religious expressions
- Make links between beliefs and sources, including stories, art, text and symbols
- Interpret a variety of different forms of religious, moral and spiritual expression
- Express their own and others' views and responses to ultimate questions and ethical issues
- Describe the impact of beliefs and practices on individuals and communities
- Explain how and suggest why differences in belief may be expressed in different ways

Planning learning using artefacts and/or artistic interpretations

Artefacts/artistic interpretations can be used to both support pupils' *learning about* religions/beliefs or to develop pupils' *learning from* others, if used as a stimulus to compare with and/or reflect on their own beliefs and values.

Thus, when planning the use of artefacts/artistic interpretations in learning, teachers should first be clear about the desired learning outcomes. This will therefore influence *how* they are used.

Artefacts and artistic interpretations can be used in a variety of teaching and learning activities.

Many items can be used in a multitude of ways, depending on the skills the teacher wishes to develop, for example:

Using artefacts/visual images

Item	Engagement	Activity
Candle	To aid reflection, or as a focus	e.g. sitting quietly all focusing on a 'stimulus' item to promote calm, allowing individual reflection and thinking on an ethical issue/ultimate question
	To promote knowledge and understanding through demonstration	e.g. teacher explanation using a candle about why Jesus is believed by Christians to be 'the light of world'
	As a stimulus for discussion, to promote critical/philosophical/ enquiry thinking	e.g. using a range of artefacts/artistic interpretations/visual images to create/express their own and others' views on ultimate questions/ethical issues, such what is as 'evil and good' and why might they be described as dark and light
Seder plate	To promote knowledge and understanding through demonstration/role play	e.g. identify the key symbols on the plate, teacher explanation of what they represent, eat foods as follow the order of service
	As a stimulus for discussion or activity to promote critical/philosophical/ enquiry thinking	e.g. use as stimulus for a discussion about for example: fate, punishment, faith in G-d and persecution.
	As a stimulus for discussion to promote critical/philosophical/ enquiry thinking	e.g. having revised symbolism and how/when used, and considered the implications of these beliefs on the lives of Jews today
	To promote understanding through kinaesthetic activity and to enhance interpretation skills	e.g. create own 'seder plate': what symbols would they include in response to the ultimate questions/ethical issues considered
Picture depicting the sacrifice of Ishmael/ Isaac	To create an impact, stimulating excitement or other emotion and/or reflections	e.g. teacher shows and explains picture e.g. pupils identify/explain features of picture using text
	To promote understanding through kinaesthetic activity and to enhance interpretation skills	e.g. re-enact a story from picture, such as the sacrifice of the son of Abraham/Ibrahim, or use as a 'freeze-frame' or 'hot seating' exercise to understand what faith and sacrifice meant to believers and those involved in the story
	As stimulus for own creative writing/production	e.g. having learnt their key features and beliefs/concepts of the story create/retell their own modern day version/examples

Some suggested artefacts/visual images

Religion	Suggested Artefacts	Possible images
Judaism	Dreidles, chanukiah + candles, seder plate + matzah cloth, mezuzah case and copy of scroll, shofar, gregor, Shabbat candles + sticks, Challah cloth, kiddush cup, havdallah candles, holder and spice box, tefillin + case, yartzheit candle, copy of Torah scrolls, Yud (pointing stick for reading Torah), kippah, tallit + bags, tzitzit	Western Wall in Jerusalem; Synagogues (both Ashkenazi and Sefardi) from around the world; family Shabbat meal; Jews living in different cultures
Christian	Different types of cross (Palm cross, plain cross, crucifix); chalice; altar wafers; hymn book; various bibles; witness pin; icons; rosary beads; priests' stole; baptism and advent candles; advent calendars and wreath; christening shawl;	Christmas, Easter cards; depictions of the crucifixion and events in the life of Jesus; Christian buildings; key Christian figures
Islam	Qur'an translation; Qur'an stand; prayer mat; tasbe/sbhah prayer beads; clothing for Hajj; prayer cap; compass; Woman's head scarf	Photos of key Islamic places: Ka'aba, mosques; printed Instructions of how to pray; assortment of celebration/festival cards; samples of calligraphy and Arabesque design
Sikhism	Each of the 5 K's (kara- wristband, kangha – comb, kacchera – undershorts, kirpan – short sword) and a turban; nishan Sahib flag; mala beads; copy of the Gutka (prayer book); chauri (fan); Statue or image of Guru Nanak; copy or excerpts from Guru Granth Shahib	Images of the 10 Gurus and Amritsar; images of European gurdwaras and Sikh followers
Humanism	fossil, a Happy Human lapel badge or brooch, a programme (order of service) for a humanist funeral, a book (to symbolise our intellectual side!)	Images of followers, quotes and images of famous Humanist idea-holders e.g. Darwin
Hinduism	puja set with aum and lights/candle; mala (prayer beads); arti lamp and tray; copy of Bhagavad Gita text; statues/images of baby Krishna 'beds', Ganesh, Hanuman, Lakshmi and other Hindu deities including the Trimurti	Divali cards; images of celebrations; images of Hindu temples and key figures including Mahatma Gandhi
Buddhism	'Shrine kit': flowers and vase, Buddha statue/image, candles or butter lamp, cloth, bell	Images of Buddha; images of monks and Nuns, Zen gardens and other Buddhist practices; lotus flower; images of stupa