

KS3: The Broad Picture of a thematic approach

Each theme and sub-theme should give equal value to each of the six world religious traditions and their main divisions (if appropriate), the new faiths and non-theistic traditions such as Humanism. The context should be both local (Lewisham) and what could be termed "catholic" in the sense of universal. Teachers should avoid the temptation to compare traditions or express one tradition in terms of another. A Synagogue, for instance, is not a Jewish Church!

NB: This is not a complete document. It is a discussion document presented for consideration and improvement/completion (especially in the contributions of certain faith traditions which are less familiar to me than others).

Year Seven: Worship

(a) Public and Private Worship

Christianity: Worship at home (family worship) & Grace before meals

Worshipping together in Church
Catholic sacraments
Pentecostal worship

Judaism: Set times of prayer at home, prayers at mealtime
Worship in the Synagogue

Islam: Namaz – five or seven times a day
Men worship in the Mosque

Hinduism: Women as the family priests, the family shrine/puja
Visiting the Temple

Sikhism: Visiting the Gurdwara
Practices of a Khalsa Sikh

Buddhism: Public and private meditation
Buddhist monks

Stress here that worship involves both private piety and public activity, which can be scripted or spontaneous and involve both words and actions. More advanced study can look at the purpose and direction of prayer – both God ward and towards other humans. Work

can include looking at what types of prayer – Praise, Intercession, thanksgiving, dedication, etc.

Humanist contribution?

(b) Holy Books

Hinduism: The oldest holy books:
Different books and types of books would cover a library.

Look at Ramayana and Rg Veda as examples.

Buddhism: Possible specialist study: no single Buddhist holy book.

Judaism: Tenakh.
Explain the different strands – Law, Prophets and Writings.
Written in Hebrew; history of YHWH's dealings with Israel.

Christianity: Bible: 1. Old Testament – show how Christians use the Jewish holy book.

Bible: 2. New Testament – Gospels, History, Letters and Prophecy – looks back to coming of Jesus, shows effect and development of Christian teaching, looks forward to Second Coming.

Bible 3: Links between Old and New Testament

Bible 4: Languages of the Bible – Ancient and Modern.

Modern Christian sectarian holy books like the Book of Mormon

Islam: Holy Book (1) – the Qur'an:
Role of Muhammad; Concept of Wahy (Revelation); how the book was written.

Only authoritative text in Arabic.

Holy Books (2) – Hadith (teaching) of the Prophet.

How it was written, different versions and relative importance.

Sikhism: The Gurus and the Guru Granth Sahib: its writing, role and importance.

Copies only in Gurdwara – extracts at home.

Humanism: The impact of Charles Darwin's Origin of Species (other key texts?)

In each case try to see why the book is important and how that importance is expressed. Some holy books have strict rules governing their use and disposal. Hindu holy books can only be read by Brahmins in their original state. All are central to the lives of adherents. The theme of the year is WORSHIP. It is important that

teachers should show how each faith community uses its scriptures in public and private worship.

(c) Religious Buildings

The focus here again is on worship. However, for many faith communities in UK the religious building is more than simply a place of worship. In the same way Christian churches are multi purpose buildings in e.g. Egypt. Classes could explore why this is.

There is an obvious temptation to look at the physical features of religious buildings, using plans and photographs as stimuli. Although interesting, it misses the point. We want classes to understand the function of the buildings – so a physical feature is only significant in terms of its function – e.g. the Church bell or the Minaret summons adherents to worship.

Christianity: various names – Cathedral, church, chapel, citadel, Kingdom Hall.

Basic meaning of Church – (St Paul) the people who meet there.

Link back to earlier units to show how the building is used.

Look at uses other than worship – how does a local church justify Drop Ins, Pre school classes, uniformed groups, etc.

Judaism: Name – Synagogue.

Rules for its creation.

Different attitudes to men and women in the various Jewish groups.

Synagogue at the centre of Jewish religious life.

Islam: Name: Mosque (Place of prostration).

Importance of Friday Midday prayers and role of Mosque in major festivals.

Rules to create a mosque.

Role of mosque as a community centre and law court.

Men and women in the mosque. The Ummah.

Hinduism: Temples, gods and festivals.

Main god worshipped in UK is Vishnu in the form of Rama or Krishna.

Typical visit to a Temple on a major festival.

Buddhism: Buddhist buildings vary in type and purpose and provide a means for Buddhists to gain good karma by feeding their monks and teachers.

(For both Buddhists and Hindus the religious building is less important than the home. All the other faith communities stress the role of corporate or collective worship. Buddhists and Hindus emphasise individual or family worship.)

Sikhism: Name – Gurdwara (home of the Guru Granth Sahib).

Every Gurdwara is a place of pilgrimage and a rallying point for all local Sikhs.

Men and women in worship.

GGS is the centrepiece of each act of worship.

Also, like Mosque & Synagogue, it has other roles for its members.

(There may be opportunity here to look at specific local places of worship or perhaps the charismatic churches – if local examples exist – or the Ahmadiyya Muslims, if a local mosque exists e.g. the mosque in North Downham.)

It is difficult to see how one can get a Humanist perspective on this topic.

Year Eight: Beliefs

(a) God or no god?

There are three basic theistic traditions. The oldest is called polytheism and was the basic worship of all humans until the development of the other traditions. It survives in the tribal animism in Central and South America, Central Africa and parts of Asia and the Pacific region. Its most formalised survival is in Hinduism. Secondly there is the Judaic – Christian – Islamic tradition connected with Abraham (Ibrahim). Called monotheism, it is fundamentally the worship of one God. Linked with this, but from a different tradition, is Sikhism. Thirdly, there is atheism – the belief that there is no God. Finally there is Buddhism, which, with its two branches, is both polytheistic and atheistic. It is suggested that each tradition be taken in turn.

The Hindu Trinity

Concentrate on the triple role of any concept of God – Creation, Preservation and Destruction (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva). All are expressions of the ultimate deity – Brahman. Vishnu is worshipped

in the form of avatars - the most famous being Rama and Krishna. Hindus are basically divided into worshippers of Vishnu (Vishnavites) and Shiva (Shaivites). Mahayana Buddhists share much of this approach.

The Abrahamic faiths

The importance of Abraham for world religion. Brief study of his life. Jews believe that the one God is YHWH - the Creator and Sustainer of the world - and they are his chosen people. Christians believe that God (called the Father) who created the world but whose authority was rejected by humans, sent Jesus His son) to save the world through his death and resurrection, and the Spirit to guide the world. This is the Christian Trinity. Muslims believe that Al Lah - the God - revealed Himself to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and taught that there is only the one God, with 99 (descriptive) names, which incorporates all that other faiths have divided among different expressions. Islam teaches that to split God up or associate God with others is the ultimate sin of Shirk (idolatry or association).

Sikh monotheism

Guru Nanak combined elements of Hinduism (its individuality) with elements of Islam (its strict rules and belief in the one God).

Atheism

Humanists believe that there is no evidence for the existence of a Supreme Being and no real need to create one. Basically humans are the most important animals on the planet, which shows no sign of having been created with a purpose from an intelligent and supremely powerful source. Humans need no external reason for caring for each other - the duty is a consequence of our humanity. Theravada Buddhists share something of this belief.

It is up to the teacher to decide how best to present this unit. However, it is extremely important that there should be no attempt at suggesting a hierarchy of views. Difficult as it may feel, each tradition must be presented in its own belief system, even though that will lead to an inevitable contradiction in claims.

(b) Social Justice

Teachers should adopt a different approach here. All faith communities, as well as those who would reject the term as a description of themselves, teach social justice. Whether it's the teaching of the Vedas about Caste responsibilities to others, or it's the 10 Commandments, the Golden Rule (and its Buddhist variant) or the teachings of the Qur'an or the Granth, the message is the same.

Humans have responsibility for each other and that includes securing social justice for the oppressed. Within Humanism the teaching of social justice is the same.

Part One: Key Texts

1. The Ten Commandments
2. The Golden Rule
3. Key texts from Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism

Part Two: Modern Exemplars

1. (Christian) **Martin Luther King** and the struggle for equal rights in the USA or **Archbishop Desmond Tutu** and the struggle to end Apartheid and the effects of the Apartheid Struggle in South Africa.
2. (Hindu) **Mahatma Gandhi** and the struggle against Racism, British Imperialism and social inequality in India (and earlier in South Africa) as well as the fight against religious extremism (Hindu/Muslim).
3. (Muslim) **Bangla Deshi Woman** who has campaigned for equal rights for women in Islam and who has been put under a fatwa by the Bengali authorities (Name please?)
4. (Buddhist) **Dalai Lama** and the struggle against Chinese Imperialism.
5. Jewish example.....
6. Sikh example.....
7. Humanist example.....
(Names and details please)

(Teachers should select examples. It is not intended that every named individual should be used. It is better to take two or three examples and explore {a} what they did and {b} what their motivation was.

(c) Suffering and Evil

Great care and sensitivity needs to be used in tackling this issue. It is important that teachers must always be aware the individuals in their class(es) may have experiences of loss and suffering that have left them traumatised.

This is a topic that can be used as a focus for discussion either in straight dialogue or in various forms of role-play. It is not intended to be a cover to spend a term on the role of the Nazis and the Holocaust – although the issue may arise. If it does arise it should not be ducked.

Christianity: 1. Triangle of the problem of suffering: God created everything. God loves us. Suffering (evil) exists.

The Incarnation of Jesus as God's answer to the problem of suffering - Jesus on Calvary absorbs human suffering into God's experience and ends its power.

2. If God created the world - how come there is evil and suffering within it? Consider Genesis 2 - the story of Adam and Evil. What do we believe about the Devil (Satan)? (Story common to Jews and Christians)

Judaism: The Jewish experience of Persecution - from the Roman dispersion of the Jews after the revolt of 66 - 73AD, through the persecutions of Western Europe, to 20th century Tsarist Russia and Hitler's Germany. What does Judaism have to say about Persecution? (Words on the cell wall in the German Concentration Camp.)

Islam: The Qur'an teaches that all suffering is a test from Al Lah. Consider how this works out in practice.

Buddhism: All suffering is caused by selfishness. To end suffering, one must cease to be selfish. To do that, we must follow the Four Noble Truths.

Hinduism: All life is transitory and circular. We are born into a particular role in life and this may involve suffering. The way to bring that to end is to follow the rules for that social class, gain better karma and be reborn into a higher social class with a better expectation of life.

Humanism: Suffering is an inevitable part of human life, associated with both growing up and growing older. There is no reason for assuming that "being good" will stop us suffering. Suffering is neither a punishment for evil doing or an evil in itself. Our job as humans is to use the advances of knowledge given us by science and medicine to end individual suffering.

All belief systems teach that we have a responsibility for one another, and especially for those who are suffering. This subject could also be taught using examples as in the previous unit. It could be that individuals know of outstanding local examples. Otherwise, the various insights can be explored through role-play or story telling or discussion of individual insights or experiences, which should be encouraged.

Year Nine: Challenges

The theme for this year will naturally refer back to much that was covered in the previous two years. As a result, there may be quite a lot of revisiting of earlier material. As a result, the lessons will be likely to be much more child led and discussion oriented than in Years 7 and 8. Teachers should be prepared to insert new material into lessons rather than planning to devote whole lessons to apparently new material.

(a) Challenging the State

What is the state?

Read St Paul's letter to the Romans on the role of the state.

Discuss with the class whether this is a realistic view and how it tied in with the reality of the Roman Empire.

Consider the Judaio-Islamic view.

Should a modern state be, in effect, a theocracy? Is the state the same as the dominant faith community and should its religious discipline be the basis of secular law?

Discuss the concept of sacred and secular.

Is there a division between the two and which is more important for a believer – state law or religious obligation?

What issues divide faith communities and the state?

Racism.

Examples: The Nazi Holocaust

The state of Israel and the Palestinians

Post Apartheid South Africa

The Klu Klux Klan in USA

Racism in Western Europe

Dictatorship and religious intolerance.

Examples: Burma and the Muslims

Stalin and all faith communities

Hitler and the Christian churches in Germany

Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

Social Injustice

This can be a more detailed revisit of the Year 8 topic.

War and Peace

Consider recent issues such as the Gulf Wars of the 2000s and the attitude of religious leaders to them.

Look at Jewish teaching on Holy War (OT), Christian teaching on Just War and Muslim teaching on the Lesser Jihad as well as Hindu teaching in the Mahabarathu on the duty of fighting and Buddhist teaching on harmlessness.

Discuss when (if ever) is a war justified?

Standing up against the state

The names quoted in year 8 can all be used. Others can be added:

Solzenitsin

Dietrich Bonhoefer

Oscar Romero

William Wilberforce

Nelson Mandela

(Mr) Snow (Christian name?)

Discuss these men or women and consider how they stood up against the state and whether their stand was justified (and on what basis).

(b) Witnessing to the Community

Christianity:

The missionary charge in Matthew and the history of the early Church.

Consider the nature of the witness in the Good Samaritan.

Mission work of the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons.

Work of your local churches – priests or ordinary people?

Local associations of Christian churches.

Fastest growing faith communities in UK.

Islam and Buddhism – what is the attraction?

How do Muslims and Buddhists spread their faith?

What of the remaining faith communities?

Judaism?

Hinduism?

Sikhism?

Humanism?

How do these faith communities witness to the overall community and how do they spread their faith?

Discussion topics?

Is the main priority of a faith community to spread the faith or to support the existing members?

Should religious leaders make political comments, especially those critical of the Government and should they try to influence others to support them?

Should members of local congregations seek to influence the ordering policies of local supermarkets (e.g. the Fair Trade initiative)?

Why and how are young Muslims radicalised?

Is there any issue that you would consider worth dying for rather than compromise?

Does organised religion have any role to play in modern life outside of the immediate faith community?

On what basis do individual children make the decisions that they do make or hold the opinions that they do hold and what, if anything, could change their opinion?

(c) Individual or Collective Religion

The idea here is that students should revisit, in some sense, the topic that began the course with in Year 7 – but in the sense of valuing the importance of each and its link with the individual faith communities and other groups. Here is a place for local outside visitors to come in and talk to classes and for class discussions, possibly arising from the visits.

Suggested visitors:

Christian

Catholic priest

Anglican vicar

Protestant minister

Charismatic pastor

Jewish

Rabbi

Muslim

Imam

Sikh

Granthi

Hindu

Local leader

Buddhist

Local leader

Humanist

Local leader

Final Discussion:

So – which is more important – private or corporate religion or are both equally important? Where does School acts of worship fit into this?

From this point, the basis is laid for most GCSE courses and Year Nine can be reduced or curtailed to allow the expansion of the examination course forwards. The principle of topic selection is to provide material suitable to the age and ability of each class. The exact content of each sub unit would be individualised to meet the knowledge and interests of each teacher involved and the interests and abilities of the individual students. As such, each class would potentially be different and every year the topic would have to be revisited, thus preventing staleness.

David