

SYMBOLS IN RELIGION: WORSHIP AT THE CATHEDRAL AND / OR THE MOSQUE

AT1:

Pupils will:

- *Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the other principal religions represented in Great Britain and their associated beliefs, experiences and practices.*

AT2:

Pupils will:

- *Respond to core questions with reference to the teachings and practices of religions, and to their own understanding and experience.*
- *Develop positive attitudes of respect towards other people who hold views and beliefs that are different from their own.*

Pupils will be enabled to:

- *Gain an understanding of the importance of symbols and their use in everyday life, as an aid to evoke memories of events or stories.*
- *Identify some religious symbols and some symbolic actions in a religious context and explain that metaphors, symbols, actions and objects convey religious meaning.*
- *Show how religious beliefs can be expressed through art and architecture.*
- *Name some parts of a religious building and religious objects and say why they have value for members of religious communities.*

SESSION 1: Introduction – Looking for signs and symbols

1. Look at signs around the school and local area.

- *Discuss their meaning. Why are they important?*
- *Look at symbols used on food packages, sport and on clothes. Discuss their meanings.*
- *Explain the difference between a sign and a symbol.*

2. Create own symbols to represent everyday objects.

- *Why are symbols important?*
- *How is a sign different from a symbol?*

3. Look at the symbols of a dove, a rainbow and an olive branch.

- *Explore the meanings and the uses of these symbols today.*
- *Find their origins in the story of Noah's Ark (important in three major religions – Christianity, Judaism and Islam).*
- *What are the three symbols used to depict the story of Noah's Ark? What do they mean?*

SESSION 2: Symbols in the Bible

1. Ask the children to think about objects they own which evoke special meanings to them.

- *Discuss how these objects are now symbols representing a story or memory.*

2. Introduce the children to some religious metaphors from the Bible

- *'God is my rock' Psalm 18*
- *'Jesus is the light of the world' John 8:12.*
- *'The Lord Is My Shepherd' Psalm 23.*
- *Discuss words that pupils connect with these three images (ie. rock, light, shepherd).*
- *Choose those which may explain why a religious believer might use such metaphors.*
- *Why did John refer to Jesus as the light of the world?*
- *Why did the first Christians wear the sign of the fish?*

3. Draw some religious symbols from the Bible and write an explanation of what they mean.

SESSION 3: A sacred space.

1. Discuss sacred spaces

- *Why do we need to have a special place of our own.*
- *Children to investigate special places for others in their lives.*
- *Teacher to share with children their own special place.*
- *Where is their special place?*
- *Why is it special?*
- *What does 'sacred' mean?*
- *What does the word 'sacred' mean?*
- *Why is it important to have a quiet place – in church, at home, at school, in a mosque?*

2. Discuss religious special places using pictures.

- *Bring in artefacts which may be found in a religious special place eg. Christian church – Bible, cross, candles – Islamic mosque – Qur'an and stand, symbols and patterns.*
- *Introduce the word 'sacred' and discuss areas in a Christian or Islamic place of worship which would be sacred to members of the faith.*

3. Produce some collage or art entitled 'My Special Place'.

SESSION 4: Signs and Symbols in a Church or Cathedral – VISIT TO CHURCH WITH REV. JONNIE.

1. Examine and unpack the meanings of signs and symbols in places of worship.

- *How are they to be respected?*
- *Show pictures of several Christian symbols eg. a cross, dove, fish, angels, candles, halo. Discuss their meaning.*
- *Name three symbols seen in a church. What do they mean?*
- *On a visit to their local parish church - look for symbols already discussed in class*
- *Look for other symbols in the church and discuss what they might mean paying particular attention to the following:*
 - *Font – its use in baptism symbolising the entry into the Christian faith.*
 - *Stained glass windows – how do they represent stories from the Old and New Testament and lives of saints? Consider use of light and colour. These were originally put into church windows to symbolise stories for those who could not read.*
 - *Altar – look at any symbols that may be displayed on the altar eg. cross, chalice.*
 - *Statues – discuss the stories that pupils know about the person/object the stories represent eg Virgin Mary (Birth of Jesus), Saint Peter (Keys to Heaven, denial of Jesus).*
 - *What are the functions and symbolism of the lectern, pulpit, choir stalls, Cathedra (Bishop's seat), tombstones, gargoyles, carvings, spires, tower.*

2. Make a list of the symbols seen in the church/cathedral.

- *Are some symbols used more often than others?*
- *What meanings come from the symbols?*
- *Observe how many different ways the cross is represented in the building.*
- *Look at the different parts of the church/cathedral and learn about the worship activities that take place in each area.*
- *Consider which areas are best suited to stillness, quietness, reflection, prayer or praise as part of Christian worship.*

3. Discuss the key components of a Christian Communion (Eucharist) service and the fundamental beliefs behind this symbolic act.

- *Where in the church, does each part take place and what objects are used as part of the communion act?*

SESSION 5: Signs and Symbols in a Mosque

1. Look at pictures, images and videos of mosques, both inside and outside.

- *Ask the children to be detectives looking at the pictures to identify features of the building which give clues about how it might be used eg. shape, common features.*
- *Are there any signs or symbols? Are there any clues about how the building has anything in common with other buildings they have seen?*

2. Introduce the children to the fact that a mosque is a sacred place for Muslims, where they can meet together to pray to God and study the Qur'an.

- *The main features of the mosque include: a washing area to enable Muslims to wash themselves carefully as a way of preparing for prayer and showing respect for God.*
- *A tower or minaret – this is to call Muslims to the mosque for prayer.*
- *A main room, the prayer hall – for prayer – usually with a screened-off area for women (men and women do not pray together).*
- *A Mihrab, or niche, to show the direction of Makkah.*
- *Inform the children that Muslims do not use images or pictures of living things because the Qur'an (sacred writings) forbids this. Muslims use beautiful patterns instead, sometimes based on geometric shapes, sometimes on plant shapes and sometimes using the shapes of Arabic writing as symbols instead of images and pictures.*

3. Discuss the meaning of prayer.

- *Children should be aware that Muslims must pray 5 times a day (Salah – one of the 5 pillars of Islam). Muslims always pray facing the holy city, Makkah.*
- *Why do Muslims always face in the same direction for prayer?*
- *In the mosque look for the symbol in the main prayer room which shows the direction of Makkah to show Muslims the direction to face for prayer.*
- *Discuss some reasons for taking off shoes in a special or sacred place.*
- *Discuss reason why Muslims use prayer mats to pray on and how some prayer mats will have a compass attached to enable Muslims to find the direction for Makkah. Look at the patterns and symbols used on a prayer mat.*
- *Discuss the symbolism used by Muslims of the moon and star (Islam guides and lights the way through life, symbolised by the moon and star).*

4. Draw a kneeler for a Church and a prayer mat for a Mosque.

- *What signs and symbols would you put on each of these items?*

SESSION 6: Learning from the symbols of worship.

1. Recap on the topic.

- *Reflect on what is sacred to them, in the light of their learning from Christians and Muslims.*
- *What makes a place sacred?*
- *What value do we give to stillness, quiet, reflection and thoughtfulness?*
- *How do pupils show respect or love for who or what is most important to them?*

2. Produce some writing and drawing, to recap on what they have learnt in this topic.