

Worcestershire Agreed Syllabus 2025 sample long-term plan: Model 1

	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6
FS2	F4 Being special: where do we belong?	F2 Why is Christmas special for Christians?	F1 Why is the word 'God' so important to Christians?	F3 Why is Easter special to Christians?	F5 What places are special and why?	F6 What times/stories are special and why?
Year 1	1.10 What does it mean to belong to a faith community?	1.1 What do Christians believe God is like?	1.7 Who is Jewish and how do they live?		1.2 Who do Christians say made the world?	1.9 How should we care for the world and for others, and why does it matter? (C, J, NR)
Year 2	1.6 Who is a Muslim and how do they live?	1.3 Why does Christmas matter to Christians?	1.6 Who is a Muslim and how do they live? Part 2.	1.5 Why does Easter matter to Christians?	1.4 What is the 'good news' Christians believe Jesus brings?	1.8 What makes some places sacred to believers? (C,M)
Year 3	L2.1 What do Christians learn from the Creation story? L2.2 What is it like for someone to follow God?		L2.9 How do festivals and worship show what matters to a Muslim?	L2.10 How do festivals and family life show what matters to Jewish people?	L2.4 What kind of world did Jesus want?	L2.12 How and why do people try to make the world a better place? (C, M/J, NR)
Year 4	L2.3 What is the 'Trinity' and why is it important for Christians?	L2.7 What do Hindus believe God is like?	L2.8 What does it mean to be Hindu in Britain today?	L2.5 Why do Christians call the day Jesus died 'Good Friday'?	L2.6 For Christians, when Jesus left, what was the impact of Pentecost?	L2.11 How and why do people mark the significant events of life? (C, H, NR)
Year 5	U2.1 What does it mean if Christians believe God is holy and loving?	U2.8 What does it mean to be a Muslim in Britain today?	U2.3 Why do Christians believe Jesus was the Messiah?	U2.9 Why is the Torah so important to Jewish people?	U2.4 Christians and how to live: 'What would Jesus do?'	U2.10 What matters most to Humanists and Christians? (C, M/J, NR)
Year 6	U2.2 Creation and science: conflicting or complementary?	U2.11 What does it mean to be a Humanist in Britain today? (NR)	U2.7 Why do Hindus want to be good?	U2.5 What do Christians believe Jesus did to 'save' people?	U2.6 For Christians, what kind of king is Jesus?	U2.12 How does faith help people when life gets hard?

Note: this model allows systematic religion units to lead into the thematic units, where pupils can make some comparisons between beliefs, at the end of each year. This model keeps the study of Christmas and Easter close to the appropriate time of year.

Unit L2.1 What do Christians learn from the creation story? [Creation]

The principal aim of religious education is to explore what people believe and what difference this makes to how they live, so that pupils can gain the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to handle questions raised by religion and worldviews, reflecting on their own ideas and ways of living.

Learning outcomes (intended to enable pupils to achieve end of key stage outcomes):	Ways of knowing e.g.	Ideas and some content for learning: Teachers can select content from these examples , and add more of their own, to enable pupils to achieve the outcomes.
Teachers will enable pupils to achieve these outcomes, as appropriate to their age and stage, so that they can: Make sense of belief: - Place the concepts of God and Creation on a timeline of the Bible's 'big story' - Make clear links between Genesis 1 and what Christians believe about God and Creation - Recognise that the story of 'the Fall' in Genesis 3 gives an explanation of why things go wrong in the world Understand the impact: - Describe what Christians do because they believe God is Creator (e.g. follow God, wonder at how amazing God's creation is; care for the Earth – some specific ways) - Describe how and why Christians might pray to God, say sorry and ask for forgiveness Make connections: - Ask questions and suggest answers about what might be important in the Creation story for Christians and for non-Christians living today.	      	- As a way in, get pupils outside to experience some of the sights and sounds of nature, focusing on what they find wonderful about the world, identifying 'wow factors' in nature. Take photos for a display and add to it through the unit. - Read the Jewish/Christian creation story, Genesis 1:1–2:3 (using e.g. the International Children's Bible on www.biblegateway.com or Bob Hartman's <i>Lion Storyteller Bible</i>). Ask pupils to say, write or draw what the story suggests is wonderful about the world. - Point out that Christians and Jews believe that God created the world. From the story, collect some ideas about what kind of God it is who creates the world. Count how many times the story says the world was 'good' or 'very good'. Talk about why humans are good in the story. Add to the ideas about what God is like, according to this narrative. - Think about some 'wow' things people have created, including pupils. Talk about how they have looked after these things and make the connection with Christian beliefs about God wanting humans to look after the world too. Look at Genesis 1:28–30. Get pupils to make up some more detailed instructions from God to humans to keep the world 'very good'. - Find some examples of how Christians try to look after the world – to be 'stewards' or 'caretakers'. E.g. Mucknall Abbey, Worcestershire; A Rocha and their 'Eco Church' and 'Living lightly' campaigns; Christian Climate Action https://christianclimateaction.org/who-we-are/cca-principals-and-values/. - Find out what they think about God and find some evidence that they do these things because they believe in God as Creator. - Find and listen to some songs and hymns that celebrate the Christian idea of God as creator (e.g. Fischy Music's 'Wonderful World' and 'Creator God'). Collect examples of things that Christians thank God for. Compare these with the 'wow' ideas in nature and from humans. - In groups, discuss what pupils think Christians could learn about God, humans, animals, nature, creation, and caring for the world from the creation story. Ask them to decide which are the most important two for Christians and why – allow a range of views. Gather any questions pupils have about the ideas studied. Talk about whether believing in God might make a difference to how people treat the Earth or not. - Remind pupils that many people are not Christians and don't believe the world was created by God. Ask pupils to think of other reasons why nature/humans are important and why we should look after the world/each other. See if pupils decide upon one thing everyone in the class can try to do over the next week to make the world 'very good' (whether or not they believe in a God). - See how the story continues: read Genesis 2:15–17 and chapter 3 in a dramatic and engaging way. Hot-seat the characters (get someone to be a spokesperson for God). Explore how this story teaches Christians that Adam and Eve went their own way, against God, and that this messed up everything. Introduce the term 'the Fall', which describes the way Adam and Eve 'fell' from their close relationship with God. Most Christians see this as a picture of how all people behave: everyone 'sins', they say; and that this is why people are separated from God and do bad things. - Find out a bit more about how Christians say sorry to God (see Units 1.1 and 1.4) and how Christians say this is needed because people sin and are separated from God, and need to have that separation repaired (see units on Salvation).

Unit L2.2 What is it like for someone to follow God? [People of God]

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Learning outcomes (intended to enable pupils to achieve end of key stage outcomes):	Ways of knowing e.g.	Ideas and some content for learning: Teachers can select content from these examples , and add more of their own to enable pupils to achieve the outcomes.
Teachers will enable pupils to achieve these outcomes, as appropriate to their age and stage, so that they can: Make sense of belief: - Make clear links between the story of Noah and the idea of covenant Understand the impact: - Make simple links between promises in the story of Noah and promises that Christians make at a wedding ceremony Make connections: - Make links between the story of Noah and how we live in school and the wider world.	     	- Introduce pupils to the Bible – Old Testament and New Testament, books, chapters and verses. Teach them how to find their way around using book-chapter-verse. Explain that the stories of the Old Testament happened many years before Jesus, and that they focus on the friendship between the main characters (such as Noah, Abraham, Joseph) and God. - Read the story of Noah from Genesis 6:5–9:17 (use a child-friendly version such as the <i>Lion Storyteller Bible</i>; compare with a full online version such as International Children's Bible on www.biblegateway.com). Act it out in dramatic fashion! Ask pupils to think about the story: puzzling questions, favourite/least favourite parts, turning points, surprises, how they felt about the characters and events. List the qualities Noah had that made God choose him, and what Noah does in obedience to God. - Collect together the rules God gives Noah and his family after the flood (Genesis 9:1–7). Compare this with the commands in Genesis 1:28 and 2:15–17 (link with Unit L2.1). Note that both stories show God giving humans some responsibilities – part of being the 'People of God' is trying to live by God's commands. - Ask pupils to define a 'pact' and talk about if they have ever made one. Explain that when God gives rules in the Noah story, he makes a covenant – a pact (Genesis 9:8–17). God is not just giving humans rules to obey, but he also has a promise to keep. Collect the promises he makes in the story. Talk about how the rainbow is used as a sign of hope for the future for God's people and all creation. Get pupils to answer the questions: what was God's covenant with Noah and what was it like for them to follow God? - Think about the agreements/pacts/covenants people make (e.g. keeping to the rules in sport, shops giving customers goods they have paid for, friends playing when they have promised to do so). Remind pupils that God in the Noah story was trying to do away with evil in the world and make it a better place. In groups, list what they think we could do without from today's world in order to make it a better place. Ask pupils to split their list into two categories: 'Things we could stop' and 'Things we can't stop'. Discuss how pupils in the class think they could help to stop items on the first list, and pick two or three that everyone in the class will work hard to stop. - Come up with a list of people who make promises, and the promises they make (e.g. Brownies, police officers, parents at christenings). Look at photos or watch a video of a Christian wedding. Building on learning from Unit 1.10, look at the promises people make to each other, and how this wedding is the beginning of a pact between the couple and – for Christians – with God too. Make connections with the promises in the story of Noah. Give pupils a list of promises, including ones that are not found in a wedding, and get them to work out which ones are real. - Remind pupils how many Jews and Christians use the rainbow as a reminder of God's promise, so they trust God to keep his promise; ask pupils to identify some symbols that show promises, commitment and hope at a wedding. Talk about what people can do to keep to their promises – starting with weddings but looking at all kinds of pacts/covenants we make. Talk about what is good about being able to trust each other when we make promises. Recall the unit question: what is it like to follow God? Christians say it includes trusting God, obeying God, believing that God promises to stay with them and to forgive, and believing that God will do this.

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Unit L2.4 What kind of world did Jesus want? [Gospel]

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Learning outcomes (intended to enable pupils to achieve end of key stage outcomes):	Ways of knowing e.g.	Ideas and some content for learning: Teachers can select content from these examples , and add more of their own to enable pupils to achieve the outcomes.
Teachers will enable pupils to achieve these outcomes, as appropriate to their age and stage, so that they can: Make sense of belief: - Identify texts that come from a Gospel, which tells the story of the life and teaching of Jesus - Make clear links between the calling of the first disciples and how Christians today try to follow Jesus and be 'fishers of people' - Suggest ideas and then find out about what Jesus' actions towards outcasts mean for a Christian Understand the impact: - Give examples of how Christians try to show love for all, including how Christian leaders try to follow Jesus' teaching in different ways Make connections: - Make links between the importance of love in the Bible stories studied and life in the world today, giving a good reason for their ideas.	     	- Introduce this unit by getting pupils to think about their favourite possessions and what things they spend their time doing on a regular weekend. - Read the account of Jesus calling his first disciples (Matthew 4:18–22). Note what Jesus asks these people to do. What would they have to give up? How much would pupils be prepared to give up of their weekend routines? Why did these men leave everything to follow Jesus? Role-play this, getting pupils to suggest what the disciples thought and why. What might a 'fisher of people' be expected to do? Note that the word 'Gospel' means 'good news' – Jesus must have seemed like good news to them. This unit explores some examples of why people thought he and his message was 'good news'. - Tell pupils that this story is part of a 'Gospel', which tells the story of the life and teaching of Jesus. It's a kind of biography, and the writers made choices about what to include — they don't tell everything he ever said and did (and not all Christians agree about whether they include the actual words of Jesus). Ask pupils why they think Matthew included this story in his Gospel. Why didn't Matthew just give a list of qualities Jesus was looking for in a disciple — like a set of entry qualifications? - Look at some other stories that show what kind of world Jesus wanted. E.g. the story of the healing of the leper (Mark 1:40–44; note how lepers were viewed at the time – as unclean and rejected; explore why Jesus touched and healed this person; note Jesus' practice of showing love to those most vulnerable and often rejected by society); the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37). What kind of world did Jesus want? How did he want his followers to behave? - Look for evidence that churches are making the world like the one Jesus wanted: look at local church noticeboards or websites to see what they spend their time doing; get pupils to reflect on the impact of these actions by weighing up which is more important to Christians: toddler groups or food banks; worship services or caring for the elderly; celebrating a baptism, a wedding or a funeral; reading the Bible or giving to charity, etc. These are all important to Christians, so pupils need to give good reasons, connecting with Jesus' teaching and example of love for others. - Imagine a day/week in the life of a church leader – what do pupils think will be involved? How much time is spent 'fishing for people'? How will they show love for God and for their neighbour? Then invite a church leader in to talk about their week. - Find some examples of Christian leaders going beyond the everyday routines to show love for others (e.g. Keith Hebdon fasting for 40 days; local examples). - Of course, it is not only Christians who want a better world – so do people from other faiths and those who are non-religious. First, ask pupils to describe what kind of world they would like to see and why, and what they would do to bring it about. Second, ask pupils to describe what kind of world they think Jesus wanted (e.g. showing love for all, even the outcasts). Compare these two worlds – similarities and differences. What is good and what is challenging about Jesus' teaching of love? Talk about what pupils think are the most important things all people can do to make a better world.

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Unit L2.9 How do festivals and worship show what matters to a Muslim? [*Ibadah*]

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Learning outcomes (intended to enable pupils to achieve end of key stage outcomes):	Ways of knowing e.g.	Ideas and some content for learning: Teachers can select content from these examples , and add more of their own to enable pupils to achieve the outcomes.
Teachers will enable pupils to achieve these outcomes, as appropriate to their age and stage, so that they can: Make sense of belief: - Identify some beliefs about God in Islam, expressed in Surah 1 - Make clear links between beliefs about God and <i>ibadah</i> (e.g. how God is worth worshiping; how Muslims submit to God) Understand the impact: - Give examples of <i>ibadah</i> (worship) in Islam (e.g. prayer, fasting, celebrating) and describe what they involve. - Make links between Muslim beliefs about God and a range of ways in which Muslims worship (e.g. in prayer and fasting, as a family and as a community, at home and in the mosque) Make connections: - Raise questions and suggest answers about the value of submission and self-control to Muslims, and whether there are benefits for people who are not Muslims - Make links between the Muslim idea of living in harmony with the Creator and the need for all people to live in harmony with each other in the world today, giving good reasons for their ideas.	     	Recall learning from Unit 1.7 about <i>ibadah</i> (worship and belief in action). Remind pupils about the Five Pillars – they have explored <i>Shahadah</i> and <i>salah</i> already. This unit builds on that learning by digging a little deeper into prayer, then looking at fasting in Ramadan and the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr. Introduce the meaning of the words 'Islam' and 'Muslim': based on the Arabic root 'slm', which means peace; Islam means the peace that comes from being in harmony with God; and Muslim means one who willingly submits to God. - Read Surah 1 (chapter 1) of the Qur'an. What does it tell Muslims about what God is like? Explore how this chapter shows the nature of God in Islam (<i>Tawhid</i> – the oneness of God). - Re-visit <i>salah</i> – prayer five times a day. Build on learning from Unit 1.6. Start by asking pupils why they think Muslims pray. For Muslims, the God revealed in Qur'an Surah 1 is worth worshiping, submitting to and praying to. Recalling basic introduction covered in Unit 1.6, look at what happens in prayer: the preparation and the <i>rak'ah</i> (prayer positions), etc. Use this to help find out about the significance of prayer to Muslims – why it is important to worship God and pray, and what difference it makes to Muslim ways of living; talk about how regular praying might make life easier and/or harder. Compare prayer at home with Friday prayer at the mosque. Look at the use of <i>subhah</i> beads as part of prayer. How does prayer show what matters to a Muslim? - The mosque/<i>masjid</i> is important within the Muslim communities. Explore how it is a place of prayer, teaching and community support. - Another of the Five Pillars is fasting during Ramadan. Find out about the experiences of a Muslim fasting during Ramadan and how Muslims celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr at the end of the fast: - Explore how Muslims show self-control by fasting during Ramadan and why this is important. What are the benefits for Muslims of fasting, and what can they learn from this experience? - Explore the 'Night of Power' (<i>Laylat-ul-Qadr</i>) which is celebrated during the last ten days of Ramadan, to mark the giving of the Qur'an. What happens in the community and why? - Explore what happens in a Muslim household at Eid-ul-Fitr and how this shows that Muslims worship Allah. Why do they celebrate the end of Ramadan? - Willing submission to God is central to Islam; ideally Muslims demonstrate this through <i>ibadah</i>, worship. What are the benefits for anyone of living a self-disciplined life? What things might people who are not Muslims stop and reflect on five times a day, and what benefits could it have? How can pupils live more harmoniously? What steps could the class, school, neighbourhood, country and world take to live in harmony?

Unit L2.10 How do festivals and family life show what matters to Jews? [God/Torah/the People]

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Learning outcomes (intended to enable pupils to achieve end of key stage outcomes):	Ways of knowing e.g.	Ideas and some content for learning: Teachers can select content from these examples , and add more of their own to enable pupils to achieve the outcomes.
Teachers will enable pupils to achieve these outcomes, as appropriate to their age and stage, so that they can: Make sense of belief: - Identify some Jewish beliefs about God, sin and forgiveness and describe what they mean - Make clear links between the story of the Exodus and Jewish beliefs about God and his relationship with the Jewish people - Offer informed suggestions about the meaning of the Exodus story for Jews today Understand the impact: - Make simple links between Jewish beliefs about God and his people and how Jews live (e.g. through celebrating forgiveness, salvation and freedom at festivals) - Describe how Jews show their beliefs through worship in festivals, both at home and in wider communities Make connections: - Raise questions and suggest answers about whether it is good for Jews and everyone else to remember the past and look forward to the future - Make links with the value of personal reflection, saying sorry, being forgiven, being grateful, seeking freedom and justice in the world today, including pupils' own lives, and giving good reasons for their ideas.	      	Note that this unit builds on learning from Unit 1.6. This unit explores the importance of the family and home in Judaism, as you look at ways in which festivals are celebrated. You could re-visit the celebration of Shabbat and deepen pupils' understanding in this context. - Use a variety of creative and interactive ways to explore the stories behind Jewish festivals: what they mean, their significance, and how believers express the meanings through symbols, sounds, actions, stories and rituals: Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: Explore Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year festival; consider how Jews examine their deeds from the past year and look to make a fresh start for the next one; find out about the <i>shofar</i>, eating sweet foods, <i>tashlich</i>. Yom Kippur, the 'Day of Atonement': a day of fasting and praying for forgiveness; what happens and why; and the main themes of repentance, deliverance and salvation; consider how for Jews this is both solemn (because of the reality of sin) and joyful (God's readiness to forgive). (Note that some Jewish people write G-d, because they wish to respect the name of G-d and do not want it to be erased or defaced.) Talk about the value in pupils' own lives of reflection, saying 'sorry', being forgiven and making resolutions to improve. Pesach/Passover: explore the epic story of the Exodus through text, art, film and drama, exploring the relationship between the people and God; find out how this dramatic story is remembered at the festival of Pesach and celebrated in Jewish homes, including the preparation and the seder meal. Reflect on the important themes of Pesach (e.g. freedom, faithfulness of God; the Jewish people's place as God's Chosen or Favoured People – rescued from slavery to demonstrate this; brought into the Promised Land) and what Pesach means to Jews today. Talk about the ways in which slavery is still present in the world today, and how important freedom is. What role do all of us have in bringing freedom? - Learn that after their escape from Egypt, the Jewish people were given the Ten Commandments. Consider the importance of the commandments to the Jewish people at the time, and why they are still important to Jews (and Christians) today. - Find out about some of the prayers and blessings that Jewish people say through the day (e.g. the Talmud teaches that Jews should say 'thank you' 100 times a day! The Siddur prayer book contains numerous '<i>baruch atah Adonai</i>' prayers – 'Blessed are you, King of the universe'). What are the benefits of expressing gratitude regularly? Note that non-religious people are encouraged to keep 'gratitude journals' today because it makes them happier. Make connections with the practice of gratitude in Jewish living (and other faith traditions). - Compare and consider the value of family rituals in pupils' own lives; make connections with the way Jewish family life and festivals encourage a reflective approach to life and living; talk about whether there are good opportunities for reflection, remembering past times and looking forward in school life as well.

Unit L2.12 How and why do people try to make the world a better place?

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Learning outcomes (intended to enable pupils to achieve end of key stage outcomes):	Ways of knowing e.g.	Ideas and some content for learning: Teachers can select content from these examples , and add more of their own to enable pupils to achieve the outcomes.
Teachers will enable pupils to achieve these outcomes, as appropriate to their age and stage, so that they can: Make sense of belief: - Identify some beliefs about why the world is not always a good place (e.g. Christian ideas of sin) - Make links between religious beliefs and teachings and why people try to live and make the world a better place Understand the impact: - Make simple links between teachings about how to live and ways in which people try to make the world a better place (e.g. <i>tikkun olam</i> and the charity Tzedek) - Describe some examples of how people try to live (e.g. individuals and organisations) - Identify some differences in how people put their beliefs into action Make connections: - Raise questions and suggest answers about why the world is not always a good place, and what are the best ways of making it better - Make links between some commands for living from religious traditions, non-religious worldviews and pupils' own ideas - Express their own ideas about the best ways to make the world a better place, making links with religious ideas studied, giving good reasons for their views.	       	Throughout this unit, make connections with pupils' learning from earlier in the year: what have they already learned about how believers try to live? Why do believers want to follow the commands and teachings of their traditions? - Think about some of the ways in which the world is not such a good place: you could start small and local, and end up big and global e.g. from upsetting people in the dinner queue through to messing up the environment. Talk about why people are not always as good as they could be. Connect with Units L2.1 and L2.4 which explore the idea for Christians (and Jews) that people prefer to do their own thing rather than obey the Creator (sin) and so keep needing to say sorry and ask for help. Recall that Christians believe God helps them through the Holy Spirit (see Unit L2.1). Muslims believe people do good and bad deeds, and also need God's mercy. - Religions suggest that people need help and guidance to live in the right way. Explore teachings which act as guides for living within two religious traditions studied during the year, and a non-religious belief system, e.g. the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–21, Deuteronomy 5:1–22), the Two Commandments of Jesus (Mark 12:28–34) and the 'Golden Rule' (Matthew 7:12). Note that the Golden Rule is important in many traditions, including for Humanists. Work out what people must have been doing if they needed to be given those rules. Do people still behave like that? What difference would it make if people keep these guides for living? How would it make the world a better place? - Explore some ideas and individuals that help inspire people to make the world a better. Choose from the following ideas, building on prior learning: - The Jewish teaching of <i>tikkun olam</i> (mending the world) and <i>tzedaka</i> (charity): find some examples of Jewish charities who try to make the world better; what do they do and why? (e.g. Tzedek, Jewish Child's Day); find out about how the Jewish new year festival for trees (Tu B'shevat) and how that can 'mend the world'. A modern festival is Mitzvah Day, where Jews may take part in voluntary work in the community. - The Muslim belief in charity (<i>zakah</i>): find out what it is, and how Muslims give charity; use some examples of charities such as www.Islamic-Relief.org.uk or www.muslimhands.org.uk and find out how and why they help to make the world a better place. - Explore the lives of inspirational Christians (e.g. Desmond Tutu, Martin Luther King Jr, Mother Teresa, etc.). Consider how their religious faith inspired and guided them in their lives, and their contribution to making the world a better place. - Compare the work of Christian Aid and Islamic Relief: can they change the world? - Compare non-religious ways of 'being good without God': e.g. what do Humanists use to guide their ways of living? Many use the Golden Rule (which is common across many religions too), using reason, listening to conscience. Look at some inspiring Humanists who fight for justice (e.g. Annie Besant fought for women's rights) and why they did this. Find examples of non-religious people (not necessarily Humanist) who work hard to make the world better, such as Greta Thunberg. Look at the work of the secular charity, Oxfam. How have they made the world a better place? - Enable pupils to reflect on the value of love, forgiveness, honesty, kindness, generosity and service in their own lives and the lives of others, in the light of their studies in RE.

excellent progress or falling behind. Summative assessment is important, but it should take second place to what is going on in the classroom between pupil and teacher.

Teachers and pupils should not assume that summative assessment will always indicate upward progress, e.g., showing that a pupil has moved up a grade or step, etc. Consider the effect of pupils encountering a completely new unit, encountering knowledge about Hindu ways of living for the first time, at the age of 8 or 9. It would be inappropriate to expect the same depth of learning in this as we do in an aspect of Christianity, where learning may have been built up over several years. At the very least, unfamiliar vocabulary may mean learning is slower. Conversely, it may also be the case that a pupil studying their own religion or worldview can demonstrate learning that exceeds expectations, and which is not typical of what they know, understand or can do in relation to other elements of the syllabus.

It is clear, therefore, that when creating a summative assessment system, careful thought needs to be given as to what is being assessed and how often. One important point to consider when planning summative assessment is to have a realistic expectation of how much time is being spent on assessment. In most schools, RE will have no more than one fifth of the curriculum time of, say, English, and should only require a commensurate amount of time for summative assessment.

When planning for assessment in RE, key questions to consider are:

- How often is summative assessment really required?
- How will the resulting information be used?
- With whom is it shared? Is it meaningful to them?
- Is it worth the time?

Assessment in primary RE

The purpose of assessment in primary RE is to ensure that pupils improve what they know, understand and can do regarding the different aspects of RE they are studying. There are different ways of achieving this depending on whether you are teaching 5- or 9-year-olds. Whatever strategies are being employed it is the formative strategies, those that go on in the classroom, that are of most importance.

There is a danger that when making a judgement on a pupil's progress in RE, teachers may be unsure how to judge pupils and have ended up making judgements based on a pupil's ability in, say, English or history. In order to prevent this, teachers need to be confident in what needs to be learnt in a unit. They need to be informally and continually using lots of formative assessment

strategies as part of everyday teaching and learning. Putting information into a summative assessment system should not then be an issue. The teacher can use their knowledge of the pupils and their professional judgement to record how pupils are achieving, as in the example below.

An example of a summative model in primary RE

In this example, the teacher has produced a useful document that succinctly and effectively conveys summative information about how their class has responded to a unit from this syllabus. This will be a useful starting point for discussion with the subject leader, perhaps making comparisons with other groups of learners undertaking the same unit.

With this overview, groups of learners within the class can be identified, e.g. by gender, pupil premium, and so on, and strategies can be put in place to deal with attainment gaps. Review notes could include reflection on what specific areas of learning need to be targeted in the next unit, and how learners who have not met the expected outcomes might be supported.

Year 1 Unit 1.5	Term Spring 2 Strand Salvation	
Key question: Why does Easter matter to Christians? Pupils can: - Recognise that Incarnation and Salvation are part of a 'big story' of the Bible. - Retell stories connected with Easter and Holy week with links to Salvation (Jesus rescuing people). - Ask questions about whether the story of Easter has anything to say to them about sadness, hope or heaven, exploring different ideas. - Give examples how Christians show their beliefs about Jesus' death and resurrection in church worship at Easter.		
Children: 26	SEN	
Emerging	Expected	Exceeding
Jonta Oliver Dylan Maryah Seb Morgan Marley Azan Aanya Frankie Maise Noah Tracya Annt Sarah Kenaya Garcia	Farrah Farlean G Olivia Anaya Beatrice Hasan Harrison Kia Neha	43 %
Unit review notes:	62 %	35 %

Lower Key Stage 2

L2.9 How do festivals and worship show what matters to Muslims?

We are going to be theologians and human/social scientists, whilst considering any philosophical viewpoint

Being Theologians

How do I know what God is like?

Read Surah 1 of the Qur'an. Look carefully at the words – (Most compassionate, Most merciful, Lord of Lords etc) What might these words tell a Muslim about God? How might a Muslim respond to these words? Look carefully at Surah 1:5 How might this link to the Shahadah and help to explain the understanding of Tawhid? Why is this text an important one?

What can we learn about the Night of Power?

Read the Night of Power. Is this text important and why? What is this text/source of authority about? Highlight key words and phrases. What might these tell a Muslim about Allah? How might they respond?

Being Human / Social Scientists

How does prayer show what matters to a Muslim?

Explore the concept of Salah – One of the 5 Pillars of Islam. Explore why a Muslim would pray 5 times a day. Explore how prayer is about connection with God, guidance, respect and devotion. How might prayer make a difference to a Muslim? Explore some written prayers. Look at the timings of prayer, prayer mats and the rituals of prayer. Why does a Muslim go through so much to pray? See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zj626yc/revision/4>

Do all Muslims pray in the same way?

Explore how different Muslims pray. Explore similarities and differences between home and mosque prayer. What happens when people are working? Look at prayer around the world; is it the same in Saudi Arabia as it is in Britain? Explore whether all Muslims value prayer in the same way.

Do all Muslims express faith in the same way?

Look at the importance of Ramadan and Eid. Why are these festivals important. Look at what it teaches Muslims about self-control. Explore why this might be important to people. Look at Ramadan in different communities; is it celebrated the same way? Does everyone fast in the same way? Why might there be differences? You may wish to explore Sunni and Shia Muslims or look at differences between different countries. Explore what happens at the end of Ramadan and the links back to the Night of Power.

How is a mosque important to a community?

Explore what is in and what happens in a mosque. How might the interior help us to understand a little bit about what is important to a Muslim? What questions might we want to ask? Why might coming together as a community be important?

Being Philosophers

How does what we have learned about Islam help with an understanding of right and wrong?

Explore the understanding that Islam means 'submission' and it is about peace. Submission to God comes through Ibadah (worship). What might this look like? How might some behave when they submit to God? Explore the benefits of living a self-disciplined life. What are the advantages or disadvantages? What might we stop and reflect on 5 times a day? How has my own worldview shaped my understanding of right and wrong?

How does worship impact on living in a community?

Explore the understanding of living in a community and living in harmony. How might a Muslim live in harmony with others if worship is central and important to them? How should people live in harmony? what does it look like? Is true harmony really achievable? What do people do to try and achieve harmony?

Case Study: Malcom X

L2.10 How do festivals and family life show what matters to Jewish people?

We are going to be theologians and human/social scientists

Being Theologians

Why is this story important to Jewish people?

Explore the story of the Exodus. Compare artwork, film and text from the Torah to explore the relationship between God and His people. Why is the story important? Does it have the same importance today as it did in the past? Why might this be the case? Explore themes of slavery and how God may have felt. Through the story, explore the concept of the Jewish people as 'God's chosen people'.

Further explore the story of The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27-28). Explore through art, and the Torah. Use the story to explore the concept of forgiveness. What does this story tell Jewish people about God? How does He behave and what might people's response be to this?

Explore the story of the giving of the 10 Commandments. What might have been the purpose of the 10 Commandments? Explore the idea that these were about safety, relationships and a way of life, rather than 'rules to follow'. Ensure that children understand that in Jewish tradition, Moses came down from Mount Sinai with 613 Commandments not just the 10 that are focussed on in Christianity.

Being Human / Social Scientists

How do Jewish people show their belief in God?

Explore the importance of different festivals within Jewish culture. Through these festivals, explore what they are, why they are important, what symbols mean and how these are used as an expression of understanding of who God is.

Explore differences within progressive and orthodox Judaism and differences between Jewish people in Britain and Jewish people in Israel. It is also worth looking at how the understanding of these festivals have changed over the years.

- 1) Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur
- 2) Pesach/Passover

Is prayer important to all Jewish people?

Explore the importance of prayer. The Talmud says Jewish people should say thank you 100 times a day. Explore how practical this is. How do you know you have done it? Explore benefits of expressing gratitude regularly. Think about benefits to individuals and communities, both from a human perspective and a faith perspective.

Being Philosophers

How can I use what I have learned to help me?

Explore the notion of being grateful. Non-religious people also talk of the benefits of being thankful. Are there times when we shouldn't be thankful or is everything a learning point to help us grow? Would society be a better place if everyone was a little more grateful for what they have?

Should I always forgive people?

From learning about The Day of Atonement, Jewish people understand how important it is to forgive people when they have done wrong. God has forgiven them so therefore they should forgive. Is there ever a time when you shouldn't forgive, or it would be really difficult to forgive? How does my own worldview impact the way that I think about this?

L2.12 How and why do people try and make the world a better place?

We are going to be human/social scientists and philosophers

Being Human / Social Scientists

What are the statistics? Is the world worse today than it was in the past?

What things make the world not as good as it could be? Think about school, local, national and international. Discuss why people are not as good as they could be. Look at some statistics; have things got worse? What might be the reasons for this?

What helps different people to try and make the world a better place?

Look at Humanist attitudes towards looking after the world. Remind children of the Golden Rule. Revise the Christian understanding of God creating the world, and how this might inspire people to change the world. Look further at Mark 12:28-34 and Matthew 7:12. What do these say about caring for others? What are the similarities and differences between these and non-religious views?

How do people make the world a better place?

Explore concepts in Judaism of tikkun olam (mending the world) and tzedakah (charity), Islamic views of zakah (charity), or fighting for human rights. How have these been inspired by belief (either religious or non-religious)? Why would people want to do this? What is driving them?

Do all people live in the same way? Has this changed over time?

Case Studies: Demond Tutu, Malcom X

Being Philosophers

Do people deserve to be saved? Why do I think what I think?

How might we make ethical choices about who/how we help? What makes one thing more deserving than another? Is the world really a terrible place?

Explore the work of charities. Some might include Christian Aid, Islamic relief, Oxfam etc. What might make one charity more deserving than another? Explore the understanding that people may choose charities based on their personal feelings or beliefs. Where do we get our information about charities from? How do we know that it is real/valid?

What if the world remained as it was? What would happen?

Explore these questions appropriately with the class. Delve into the depths of why it is important to be courageous advocates.

What do I think? How might I change the world?

Explore courageous advocacy and being agents of change. What could pupils do to help? How might the learning of this unit inspire them to be agents of change?

Questions in Theology

There are questions we can ask that help us understand that stories, texts and sources of authority...

are important to a group or individual.	have particular meanings and significance.	are written in context which might affect its meaning.	are interpreted differently due to a readers own worldview and personal experience.
• Where does this story come from? • Is this story important to me? (If not, why not?) • Is this story or text important to people? If so, to whom? • Why is it important to them? • Is this text a source of authority for anyone? If so, how is it used? • Is its authority widely acknowledged (within and beyond the worldview)? • Do some people question its authority? If so, why?	• What is the story about? • Who is this story about? • What happens in this story? • Why is this important? • How can it help us understand the 'hidden meaning' of the story? • What is this text / source of authority about? • Who is it significant to? Why is it significant to them? • How is this source of authority used? • Has the way in which it is used or interpreted changed over time? • Is it used differently in differently contexts and if so, why? • How (if at all) does it relate to other sources of authority within this worldview?	• Who told this story? • Who wrote this text? • When did they tell/write it? • Who did they tell it to/write it for? • Why did they tell/write it – what difference did they think it would make? • What type of text is this? • Is it a particular genre of writing? • Where/when/why was this written? • Who was/is the intended audience? • What can we say about the origin of this source of authority? • Who was/is the intended audience? • Does it matter whether we know this or not?	• What does this story tell me? • Does everyone draw the same meaning from this text? If not, why not? • How might context affect how someone understands the meaning of the text? • What genre is this source of authority? • How might this affect the way in which it is read/interpreted?



Questions in Human/Social Science

There are questions we can ask that help us to understand how people live...

when looking at objects, places,
photographs, videos, surveys, case
studies, etc.

- What is this?
- How is this used?
- Who uses this?
- Where might I find this?
- When is this used?
- What is happening here?
- When is this? How do I know

through examining their context,
including time, place, culture and
gender.

- Who does this? How do they do it?
- Why do they do it like this?
- Is this done the same way today as it was in the past?
- Is it done the same way in one place as in another?
- Is this done the same way by one person as another?
- What does this tell me about how context affects this activity? Who uses this thing?
- Do different people use this same thing? How is this thing used?
- Does everyone use this thing in the same way? If not, why not?
- Is this thing used the same way today as it was in the past?
- Is this thing used the same way in one place as in another?
- Is this thing used the same way by one person as another?
- What does this tell me about how context affects this thing?
- What happens here?
- Would it happen the same or differently somewhere else? Why?

by examining the origin of sources.

- Where is this information from?
- Does this matter?
- How might this make a difference to the way I understand it?
- How else can we find out about this?

by examining how our own worldviews
and personal experiences affect the way
we interpret sources.

- How might someone's worldview affect the way in which they analyse this information?
- How might my worldview affect the way in which I analyse this information?



Questions in Philosophy

There are questions we can ask that help us understand more about how people think or reason...

about themselves, others and the world around them, including their understanding of 'good' and 'bad' or 'right' and 'wrong'.

- What questions do I have about this thing?
- What do I think about this?
- What questions could I ask about this?
- What are good questions to ask?
- What are bad questions to ask? How do we know?
- How might asking questions help us to know more and to think more deeply?
- How does this way of thinking about [x] tell us more about this person's understanding of 'right' and 'wrong'?

in different ways about themselves, others and the world in different ways, including their understanding of 'good' and 'bad' or 'right' and 'wrong'.

- What questions do I have about this?
- What questions do others ask about this?
- Do we all have the same questions? Why do I think this?
- Do I think the same thing as others? (If not, why not?)
- How does this person think about what it means to live a 'good' life?
- Why do they think this? What does this tell us about what they understand 'good' (and 'bad') to be?
- How might my/someone's worldview impact on the way I/they think about this?
- Based on what we have learned about [x], how might this person justify that doing this is the right / wrong thing to do?

about moral and ethical issues in reliable.

- How do we know what we know?
- What evidence do we / I have?
- Can I give a reason why I think what I think?
- Is this/your argument/position coherent/reliable?
- Does this make sense? How do we know? Is this a well-structured argument?

and the importance of considering how different people articulate their understanding of 'validity'.

- Is this a valid argument/position?
- How do you know?
- What evidence is there to support this?
- What different types of evidence might there be?
- Are all types of evidence equally valid? Why/why not?



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The Old Testament

Genesis 1 – Creation Story

Genesis is attributed to the author Moses, who would have written down the text many years after the events took place. Many stories in the Old Testament, including the Creation Story, were told around campfires. Telling stories was a way to keep traditions alive. Although opinions vary, the most widely held belief is that Genesis was formally written down somewhere between 1500-1290 BCE.

Looking at the structure of Genesis 1, we can see repeated words and phrases in particular places, such as, the beginnings of paragraphs. This, along with a feeling of rhythm and metre, suggests that Genesis was written in a poetic style and therefore many scholars argue that Genesis 1 is not meant to be a literal account of 7 days of creation, but rather a metaphor explaining what God did. However, some Christians dispute this and maintain that Genesis is a literal retelling of God creating the heavens and the Earth.

Whether we want to explore an understanding of 7 actual days, or 7 periods of time, one key thing to understand is that there were 7 creation 'activities' or 'events'. In Hebrew writing, 7 is important as it is a number that signifies completeness. Throughout Hebrew writing, 7, and multiples of 7, is used to show a perfect order or that something is complete.

Another important aspect to notice in Genesis 1 is that everything that is created is considered 'good'. Through this, Christians understand that everything that God has created is good, and he is only capable of creating good things. Notice how humans are said to be 'very good', demonstrating an important relationship between man and God. Interestingly, when God creates man in Genesis 1:26, we see the phrase 'Let us make mankind in our own image'. Many Christians understand the use of the plural to mean a few things. Firstly, it demonstrates an importance of relationship; God wants to be in relationship with man. Secondly, if man is created in the image of God, then when they look at people it's like looking at God. This should inspire Christians to treat people well. And thirdly, we see the first glimpse of the Trinity. When God says 'let us' and 'our image' he is referring to the three parts of the Trinity and all parts were involved at creation.

There may be something else to consider with the story of Creation. Some Christians have argued that the point of the story is not that God has created 'heaven and earth' as such. The Hebrew word for 'heaven' literally means skies, and the Hebrew word of 'earth' literally means 'land'. So, this is not about creating the universe but rather organising the skies and the land. Remember Genesis 1:2 states that the world was 'without form', and what follows is an explanation of how God 'formed' everything. This idea supports many Christians in having a view that science and religion can be two sides of the same coin rather than opposing views.

Genesis 2:1-3 – God Rests

In the beginning of Genesis 2, we see God resting on the final day of creation. By resting on the 7th day, God is again creating a perfect order to life - 6 days of labour, 1 day of rest. This is something that continues as part of the 10 Commandments - "Keep the Sabbath day holy".

As part of Genesis 2 we also see God saying that the 7th day is holy. In other words, it is 'set apart', made separate from all the other days. God makes it holy or 'separate' in order for the time to be spent with him. Again, this is made clear in the 10 Commandments.

Genesis 3 – The Fall

In Genesis 3, the story begins to go a little wrong. Remember that God created everything to be good and in relationship with him. Here we see that something begins to get in the way of that perfect relationship.

In Genesis 2, God says to Adam and Eve that they can eat from any tree in the garden apart from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Eve is tempted by the devil and eats the fruit off the tree; she then persuades Adam to eat. In most Christian tradition there are two ways people interpret the story:

1) **Adam and Eve directly disobeyed and rebelled against God.**

In other words, they willingly disregarded God's rules and ate from the tree. They hid from God because they knew that they would be in trouble and didn't want to face the consequences.

2) **Adam and Eve were naive.**

They were curious about what would really happen. Similar to when a child is told not to touch the radiator because it is hot, and they do it anyway - they just want to see what it is like. In the same way, Adam and Eve ate from the tree and gained all the knowledge that God had. Many argue that they even gained his knowledge of how the world was going to be. This scared them and because they were not mature enough to understand everything they now knew, they hid.

Whichever way you look at it, we begin to see the concept that says that humans have always wanted to be 'God-like' - being better than everything else. Not content with ruling over the land and animals, they wanted to rule over everything. This is a story that is repeated throughout the Old Testament and throughout history. The fall brings sin into the world and so the relationship between God and man is broken.

Genesis 3, like Genesis 1 and 2 before it, are intended to be metaphors or literary works explaining the complexities of human existence and the human condition of sin. Many Christians argue that there wasn't a literal talking snake but rather that it represents the devil trying to tempt Adam and Eve. As with many aspects of biblical interpretation there are some Christians who take this story literally and believe there was a garden, a tree and a talking snake.

Genesis 6:5 – 9:17 – The Story of Noah and the Flood

The story of Noah can be quite an interesting one and may produce some conflicting thoughts for children. Moses is still credited as being the author as he wrote down all of the first 5 books of the Bible.

In the story we find Noah being 600 years old. One thing that is important to point out is that how we understand time today may not have been the same as in biblical times. The calendar, as we know it, was not invented until the later Roman era. Although early Jewish calendars worked on cycles of the sun and the moon, it was not set into our simple 12-month structure; month end and beginning often changed. Therefore, although the Bible suggests that Noah was 600 years old, at the time of the flood, it may not have been the same as how we calculate 600 years now. Having said that some Christians believe that Noah really was that old and the only reason we do not live that

It is important to understand that the 10 Commandments fit into a much larger body of laws that the Israelites were supposed to follow. As such, for Jewish people, there are in fact 613 Commandments that make up the Jewish law. Although these laws are still present in Christian tradition, Christians tend to focus on these 10 as the most important. These laws were put in place, not to restrict people, but rather as a sign from God that he loved and cared for them. They were there to keep people safe - demonstrating God's love.

In general, the 10 Commandments, and all the laws given to Moses, fit into a number of categories which supported everyday life:

Ritual/Ceremonial Laws – These were laws to do with sacrifice and ritual - what to do if you have sinned etc. These laws also regulated the calendar, ensuring that festivals happened at particular times.

Moral Laws - These were laws about how-to live-in harmony, detailing how people should treat each other.

Civil Laws - These were the laws of the land and centred around correct behaviour for living in the country.

There is often debate in Christian circles about the relevance of the 10 Commandments today. In the New Testament, Jesus challenged much of what the Jewish leaders said about the Jewish law which has made people believe that Jesus rendered the law obsolete. However, Jesus said that he had come to fulfil the law and not abolish it. Many Christians believe that what Jesus was trying to do was ensure that people lived by the spirit of the law and not solely the letter of it. Furthermore, many of our laws in society today are built around many of these 10 Commandments.

It may be interesting, in the spirit of Global Christianity and diversity, to compare the fact that different denominations have slightly different wording of the 10 Commandments and place them in a slightly different order. This is based on how different groups have interpreted and translated the original text.

Here is a diagram showing some of the different understandings of the 10 Commandments:

TEN COMMANDMENTS -- DIFFERENT NUMBERING SYSTEMS IN USE			
	Jewish	Catholic (and Lutheran)	Orthodox and Protestant
Pre- amble	I am the Lord your God who brought you out of slavery in Egypt.	I, the Lord, am your God. You shall not have other gods besides me.	I am the LORD your God... You shall have no other gods before Me
1			You shall not make for yourself a carved image--any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth
2	You shall have no other gods but me.	You shall not take the name of the Lord God in vain	You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain
3	You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.	Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day	Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy
4	You shall remember and keep the Sabbath day holy.	Honor your father and your mother	Honor your father and your mother.
5	Honor your father and mother.	You shall not kill	You shall not murder
6	You shall not murder	You shall not commit adultery	You shall not commit adultery
7	You shall not commit adultery	You shall not steal	You shall not steal.
8	You shall not steal	You shall not bear false witness	You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9	You shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor	You shall not covet your neighbor's wife	You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.
10	You shall not covet	You shall not covet your neighbor's goods	

Deuteronomy 5:1-22 – 10 Commandments (Again!)

Unit L2.12 refers to looking at the 10 Commandments in 2 different places. It is not unusual for the Bible to have two versions of the same event, there are two creation stories in Genesis for example (Genesis 1:1-2:4, and Genesis 2:4-25). Furthermore, the gospel writers cover the same stories between them but tell them from a different point of view or try to make a slightly different point.

It is understood that the 10 Commandments in Exodus are a retelling of how Moses received them from God at the top of Mt Siani. In Deuteronomy, the 10 Commandments form part of a larger discourse. The people are on the edge of the Promised Land; however, Moses will not enter it, as he is about to die. As he passes the baton on to Joshua, his successor, he uses this time to address the people to remind them of everything that God has told them about how to live. It may be seen as understandable then that there are a few minor differences between the Exodus account and Deuteronomy account, as one is written and the other spoken.

The major difference is in the command about the Sabbath. In Exodus we see, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." However, in Deuteronomy we see, "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you." It is argued that the difference was to encourage people to actually keep the Sabbath holy, rather than just having a memorial to celebrate that there was a Sabbath. In other words, Moses was clarifying its use rather than changing the understanding of it.

Leviticus 19:18 – Love your neighbour as yourself

'Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people; but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord.'

On the surface this is a very simple command from God. However, Leviticus 19:18 sits in a much wider context of laws given to Moses by God on how people should behave – supporting living a good life. These laws were primarily about how people should treat one another as they looked to enter the Promised Land.

At this time, there were many tensions between the Israelites as they wandered on the path to freedom. Many felt that the journey was taking too long, and many were wanting to turn back to Egypt. Because of this, they grumbled and fought with one another. This added to the need for God to bring in new rules on how to treat one another.

Here, the word 'love' (*ahab*) means to be an ally with, or to love as a friend. In other words, God was stating that people should support one another. Another way of looking at this was to say that when we do something wrong, we can be hard on ourselves, but then we get over it and move on. People should do the same thing when others do things to them.

Ruth 1-4 - The Story of Ruth and Naomi

This is a long story to go through, and it is suggested that an abridged version should be used. It is recommended that you use the Lion's Storyteller Bible as there are several adult themes, such as prostitution, that are inappropriate for children.

The author of the book of Ruth is unclear. Due to the style of writing and general themes of the book, many commentators suggest that the author was a woman. The book was written for the Israelites and was written during a time of peace between Israel and Moab. It is generally believed that it was written after David became King, around 1010BC, during a time of 'The Judges'. This

Prophecies post-note

There were many prophecies in the Old Testament which foretold Jesus's birth and his eventual death on the cross. When reading these prophecies, today's Christian readers understand these to be about Jesus. However, when Jesus came, many Jewish people didn't believe that Jesus was the one who the prophecies spoke of and therefore rejected Jesus as the Messiah. Jewish followers are still waiting for these prophecies to be fulfilled. It may be worth exploring this when thinking about the differences between Christian and Jewish traditions.

The New Testament

The Gospel of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew is believed to be written by Matthew, one of the original disciples. He was a tax collector in the Roman Empire. The Gospel describes the life of Jesus from birth to his ascension and covers the historical period between 10 B.C.E and 40 C.E. Geographically it sits in Palestine, which at the time was ruled by the Roman Empire. The text was most probably written down sometime after 70 CE. Matthew's focus is on the fact that Jesus is of the line of David: he is a new type of teacher and that he is God with us.

Matthew 1:18-24, 2:1-12 – Birth of Jesus

Matthew's Gospel opens with Jesus' birth. Matthew is the only Gospel writer that writes about Jesus' genealogy. He does this to make the point that Jesus is descended from David just as the prophets foretold. Matthew's account of the birth focusses on Joseph's response and is relatively short, but there are several important things he mentions.

- 1) Joseph wants to divorce Mary
 - a. In Jewish tradition and law, any woman who was found to be pregnant and not married was breaking the law. By law this was an act that was punishable by death. Joseph too would have likely lost his own reputation as a carpenter and people would not have bought his goods. Both Mary and Joseph would have been excommunicated from their families to avoid the public disgrace.
- 2) Joseph marries Mary
 - a. Despite the possible ramifications, Joseph obeys God and still takes Mary as his wife. An act of great faith.

Matthew continues with the visit of the Magi. Magi have often been pictured as wise men or kings. Probably the most accurate understanding of Magi would be to think of them as astrologers. They were people who understood the stars and used the stars to predict the future and understand

previous prophecies. This is why they talk about seeing a star and have an understanding of what it means.

Traditionally the Magi appear in the Nativity story on the night Jesus was born. However, due to the length of journey that they took, it is estimated that they walked for several years, and it is more likely that they arrived at the house when Jesus was approximately 2 years old. This is what is celebrated in the Church on Epiphany. It is also worth considering some other variations within the appearance of the Magi. Although our Nativity story generally shows 3 Magi (because there were three gifts), it is likely that there were many more that made the journey. It is also possible that these Magi included women. Although we understand culturally that it would have been men who were the more educated individuals, many scholars argue that it would be entirely possible, in this culture, for some women to be part of the Magi group.

Matthew 3:13-17 – The Baptism of Jesus

In Matthew's gospel, the Baptism of Jesus is the first time we encounter Jesus as an adult about to start the ministry that he came to do. In the agreed syllabus this story is used to explore the understanding of the Trinity and baptism. There are some significant things to explore.

Jesus is baptised by John (known as John the Baptist). John was Jesus' cousin, he was the son of Elizabeth, Mary's cousin. John is seen as a forerunner, someone who prepares the way. In other words, some of the things that he did, point the way to what Jesus was going to do in a different and better way.

Baptism is often seen as a Christian thing which was instigated by Jesus. However, Jesus was baptised by John because, historically, baptism was a Jewish ritual which symbolised repentance and a desire to be right with God. In Jewish culture baptism was carried out in a pool of water and done by full immersion. It is because of this that Jesus is baptised the way he was. He was first and foremost Jewish and so following the Jewish customs was important. However, Christians understand Jesus to be perfect and have nothing to repent for. It is for this reason that John says, "I should be baptised by you." But Jesus' desire to be baptised again demonstrates that Jesus was not there to disregard the Jewish faith, law and customs but rather show how to interpret them correctly.

There are many different understandings of how baptism should occur across different denominations and world cultures. Many Christians believe that people should be baptised by full immersion (going under the water) just as Jesus did. In some cultures, this is done in rivers and lakes to imitate how Jesus was baptised. Some Christian denominations, particularly Church of England, prefer to baptise babies. It is believed that this came out of the Middle Ages when infant mortality rates were high. If babies were baptised but didn't live long, they would go to heaven.

Matthew 4:18-22 – First Disciples

When looking at the story of Jesus calling his first disciples, it is important to know a couple of things. The town of Capernaum was on the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum was a fishing town and many of the people made their living as fishermen. The metaphors of being fishers of men were used because they were things that ordinary people could relate to. They knew what it was like to catch fish and so could apply that understanding to what Jesus wanted in terms of bringing people to God.

Secondly, Jesus deliberately chooses ordinary people to be his disciples. Jewish leaders were people who were the most intelligent. They had been to school; they had studied scripture and the law.

used to build them are the same. The rain that hits them is the same. The only difference in the two houses is the foundations that they are built upon.

Jesus uses this as an analogy for life. The external process of giving to charity or being religious or doing good deeds may be the same for many different people. However, the foolish man does these because the religious law tells him to, or because he wants personal credit. The wise man does this because of his love for God and humanity. Jesus was trying to tackle a problem, particularly with the Pharisees where their deeds were based on what the law stated rather than what God would have wanted.

Many Christians use this passage as a plumbline for testing their own motives. Why do they do the things that they do? It shouldn't be because they are religious but rather that they believe God loves all people and so Christians should treat people the way that God would.

Matthew 9:9-13 – Calling of Matthew

Another story of Jesus going against cultural norms and subverting people's expectations. Jesus calls Matthew to be one of his disciples and went to his house to eat. The decision to have Matthew as a follower and the decision to eat at his house caused a problem for the Pharisees, who were the Jewish ruling elite.

Tax collectors had a dubious reputation at this time. Their role was to collect taxes for Cesar for a variety of different things, including using toll gates, sales of food and other everyday items. However, it was not uncommon for tax collectors to steal from ordinary people. They often added their own tax which they kept, or they used uneven weighing scales, which meant that people paid more tax. Anything additional, to what was owed to Cesar, that they added, was kept.

The religious rulers would not have associated with tax collectors and sinners because they believed it would have made them 'unclean'. However, Jesus's response was one to suggest that if people are going to repent from sin, they need to be shown the right way.

Jesus' final comment, 'I desire mercy not sacrifice', is Jesus again making reference to the fact that the Jewish leaders were more interested in keeping the letter of the law rather than caring for people. The Jewish leaders participated in the correct rituals and traditional aspects of their culture but did not shown mercy to those around them. Jesus was challenging them to think deeper.

Matthew 18:21-35 – The Unforgiving Servant

This is an interesting passage about forgiveness. The disciples talk to Jesus about forgiveness and want to put a cap on how often they should forgive someone. Jesus's answer suggests that there is no cap, and you should forgive someone repeatedly.

During this period of history, it was what not uncommon for people to be sold into slavery if they could not repay the debts that had built up. Debts could have a negative impact on a person's social standing and that of their family. Being sold into slavery would have brought shame on themselves and on their family. Therefore, being let off the debt was not just about not having to pay the money back but also being given the opportunity to continue to live a free life.

Jesus makes the analogy that sin is a bit like that huge debt. It has the power to change people negatively and the penalty for sin is like being sold into slavery. Christians believe that just like the master who forgave the large debt, God forgives their sin, and they do not have to face the

punishment that sin brings. Therefore, if God can forgive really big things, humans should forgive one another.

Jesus often uses the phrase, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is like...'. What he is trying to say, is not that there is a place called Heaven that will be like x or y, but rather that the Kingdom of Heaven is here on earth, now, and it is rooted in how people mirror God's actions, share love with one another and treat each other.

Matthew 19:13-15 – Jesus and the Little Children

Many of the conversations that Jesus had were about addressing misconceptions that many people had, about the law. Those conversations were also about challenging the religious leaders' understanding of the law.

In Jewish culture, children were a vital means of legacy and passing on inheritance. However, children were also thought of in terms of being seen and not heard. In a world that was very dangerous to children, some argue that people brought children to Jesus as they thought if he blessed them, it would protect them. In earlier chapters, Jesus talked about how important children are. Children are very trusting of their parents, and they need them for sustenance. Furthermore, children have great value in the Kingdom of God. Jesus wanted to make the parallel that people should be trusting of God and look to him for sustenance, because they have value too.

When the disciples became annoyed with the parents for bringing their children to Jesus, Jesus rebukes them. In this moment he is annoyed that the disciples have not taken on board what he said earlier about children being of great value in the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 21:7-11 - Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday is a vital part of the Christian calendar and the understanding of Easter. This is a multi-layered story that has much symbolism and a wealth of importance to Christians. It marks the end of Lent, a time of preparation for Easter.

Historically and culturally, Palm Sunday happens just before the festival of Passover. When Jesus and his disciples entered Jerusalem on what is now known as Palm Sunday, they entered to celebrate the Passover, an important Jewish festival. This is now at the end of his 3 years of ministry.

The disciples took a donkey for Jesus to enter the city on. Historically, how kings approached cities or other leaders, showed what their intentions would be. If kings entered or approached on horseback, then their intention was war. However, if they approached on the back of a donkey, then their intention was peace. As Jesus entered on a donkey, he is setting out that his intentions are for peace. In this instance we often refer to the peace being about the tensions between the Jews and the gentiles. In a world which was full of racial tension, this understanding of peace was important. Jesus was bringing everyone under God's umbrella.

The crowd wave palm branches as he enters. The waving of palm branches was part of the Jewish celebrations happening at the time. Just before this text, in verse 5, the Bible mentions that Jesus coming on a donkey was done to fulfil the prophecy set out in Zechariah 9:9. People at the time would have known what the prophecies had said and when they saw Jesus coming, they would have related what they saw to Zechariah's prophecy. The only suitable response would have been to wave branches and shout as their saviour entered the city.