

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 U2.1 What does it mean for Christians to believe that God is holy and loving? [God]

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.
<p>Teachers will enable pupils to achieve these outcomes, as appropriate to their age and stage, so that they can:</p> <p>Make sense of belief:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify some different types of biblical texts, using technical terms accurately Explain connections between biblical texts and Christian ideas of God, using theological terms <p>Understand the impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make clear connections between Bible texts studied and what Christians believe about God; for example, through how cathedrals are designed Show how Christians put their beliefs into practice in worship <p>Make connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weigh up how biblical ideas and teachings about God as holy and loving might make a difference in the world today, developing insights of their own. 	     	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask pupils to put together some words to describe a divine being, a god. If such a being existed, what would this god be like? Collect their ideas from their previous study of religions in RE, naming specific ideas from different traditions where they can. Explore what Christians believe about God, using a selection of Bible texts, e.g. Psalm 103 (a prayer of King David); Isaiah 6:1–5 (where a prophet has a religious experience); and 1 John 4:7–13 (where one of the followers of Jesus writes a letter about what God is like). Gather all the words and ideas describing what Christians believe about God and compare with pupils' ideas from the first section. Explore which parts of the texts talk about God being holy and which are about God being loving. Examine the difference between these ideas, coming up with good definitions of both terms. Listen to some Christian worship songs, both traditional and contemporary. Find some that talk about God and look closely to work out how much they emphasise the idea of God's holiness and/or love. (Modern songs can be found here: www.praisecharts.com/songs/ccli-top-100-songs and a list of more traditional hymns from BBC Songs of Praise here: bbc.in/1PSm10Q). Medieval Christians built cathedrals 'to the glory of God'. Talk about what kind of God cathedrals suggest the builders had in mind. Investigate how different parts of cathedrals express ideas about God as holy and loving, connecting with the ideas about God learned earlier in the unit. Ask pupils to express creatively the Christian ideas they have learned about God in this unit. They should use symbols, images, signs and colours to represent the qualities and attributes explored. (Bear in mind the prohibition on depicting God in Judaism and Islam, and teach appropriately for the pupils in your class. Writing poems might be an acceptable alternative for classes with Jewish and Muslim pupils.) Set a short writing task where pupils explain why it is important for Christians that the God they believe in and worship is not only holy, and not only loving, but holy <i>and</i> loving. Many people do not believe in God, so what kinds of guidelines for living might they draw up? Compare with Humanist ideas. Consider whether these guidelines reflect more of a 'holy' or a 'loving' response to humanity: i.e. do they balance justice and mercy, are they more strict or relaxed, stern or forgiving? Discuss how far it is good that there are strict rules and laws in the UK, and how far it is good that people can be forgiven. Compare their own experiences: what are the advantages/disadvantages of having strict rules in a school (for example) or of being in a place where forgiveness is offered? What could the world do with more of?

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Unit U2.3 Why do Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah? [Incarnation]

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.
<p>Teachers will enable pupils to achieve these outcomes, as appropriate to their age and stage, so that they can:</p> <p>Make sense of belief:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the place of Incarnation and Messiah within the 'big story' of the Bible • Identify Gospel and prophecy texts, using technical terms • Explain connections between biblical texts, Incarnation and Messiah, using theological terms <p>Understand the impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show how Christians put their beliefs about Jesus' Incarnation into practice in different ways in celebrating Christmas • Comment on how the idea that Jesus is the Messiah makes sense in the wider story of the Bible <p>Make connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weigh up how far the idea of Jesus as the 'Messiah' – a Saviour from God – is important in the world today and, if it is true, what difference that might make in people's lives, giving good reasons for their answers. 	      	<p>Read the 'big story' of the Bible in Guidance p. 140 as background for this unit. Recall the term 'incarnation' – Christian belief in Jesus as God 'in the flesh', one of the three persons of the Trinity – Jesus comes to heal the effect of sin and 'the Fall'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a way in, consider what kind of person is needed when people need help (e.g. if they are being bullied, in an accident, if one country is under attack from another one, etc.). Discuss the qualities someone might need to 'save' the situation. • Outline the situation of the People of God (see Guidance p. 140) – their land occupied by enemy forces for over 500 years, hopeful that God would send them a saviour – the hoped-for 'Messiah'. Ask pupils to list the qualities such a Saviour would need. • Set pupils up as investigative journalists to find the answer to the question: Was Jesus the hoped-for Messiah? Give them the following Bible texts (from books of the prophets in what Christians call the Old Testament) that point out the Jewish expectation: Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6–7; Isaiah 11:1–5; Micah 5:2. Summarise the expectations creatively (e.g. an annotated 'Wanted!' poster for the Messiah). • Read Matthew 1:18–24, 2:1–12 – texts from a Gospel. Ask your investigators to look for evidence in Matthew's account that he saw Jesus as the Messiah – any clues that Jesus meets the expectations from the Isaiah and Micah texts? Interview some witnesses – get Mary, Joseph, Herod, some wise men into the class hot-seat and grill them. Write up the final news article, claiming the Messiah has arrived and it is Jesus, presenting evidence. (Note that while Christians believe Jesus – who was Jewish – was the promised Messiah, most Jewish people were not convinced at the time, and Jews today still don't think he was.) • Gather together all ideas pupils associate with Christmas. How many of them are to do with Christianity and Jesus? Investigate some Christian advertising campaigns to put across the 'true meaning' of Christmas as being about God sending a 'Saviour' (e.g. churchads.net/#sthash.zlXKBJ2E.dpuf). What message are they putting across? How do they show the belief that Jesus was the Saviour, come to heal the division between people and God, and between people? Ask pupils to do their own advertising campaign, expressing the Christian meaning of Christmas, including the idea of incarnation. Explore how Christians might celebrate Christmas in ways that reflect the belief in a saviour bringing peace with God and good news for all people, e.g. helping at homeless shelters, www.presentaid.org or Urban Outreach's 'Christmas Dinner on Jesus' programme: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ltPW4k3LG8 • Ask pupils to express clearly an answer to the unit question, giving good reasons: Why do Christians believe Jesus was the Messiah? Expand this idea: why do Christians believe the world needs a 'Saviour'? Make connections with earlier learning about sin and 'the Fall' (see Unit L2.1). What difference would it make if everyone believed Jesus is the Saviour? Obviously, not everyone thinks Jesus is a Saviour sent from God. Explore the non-religious response that humans need to sort the world out by themselves: how might humans heal division and bring peace? Reflect on ways in which your pupils might make a difference.

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Unit U2.4 How do Christians decide how to live? ‘What would Jesus do?’ [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.
<p>Teachers will enable pupils to achieve these outcomes, as appropriate to their age and stage, so that they can:</p> <p>Make sense of belief:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify features of Gospel texts (for example, teachings, parable, narrative) Taking account of the context, suggest meanings of Gospel texts studied, and compare their own ideas with ways in which Christians interpret biblical texts <p>Understand the impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make clear connections between Gospel texts, Jesus’ ‘good news’, and how Christians live in the Christian community and in their individual lives <p>Make connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make connections between Christian teachings (e.g. about peace, forgiveness, healing) and the issues, problems and opportunities in the world today, including their own lives Articulate their own responses to the issues studied, recognising different points of view. 	       	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine Jesus’ teaching about the two greatest commandments – to love God and love your neighbour (Matthew 22:36–40). How do these help Christians to decide how to live? Keep these commands in mind as pupils explore the following teachings. Christians might ask ‘What would Jesus do?’ as they encounter issues in life. So, what <i>would</i> Jesus do? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foundations for living: the wise and foolish builders: Matthew 7:24–27. Why did Matthew record these words? Why did Jesus have to teach them? What were people doing? What did the wise and foolish builders learn? So, what is the message for Jesus’ listeners? Is it the same message for Christians today? Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5–7. Note that these help Christians to think about ‘what Jesus would do’. Are there any surprising ideas in the passage? Take extracts from the Sermon and ask pupils to suggest what they think they mean. What does Jesus think people are like if he needs to give this sermon? Is he right? Look for clues as to what people at the time thought was the right way to live. In what way was Jesus’ view different? If this is ‘good news’, who is it good news for? Collect the vivid metaphors/similes Jesus uses. What are the most effective for communicating Jesus’ teaching about loving God and neighbour? A healing miracle: The Centurion’s Servant: Luke 7:1–10. Dramatise this story. For whom does Jesus bring ‘good news’ here? Remember that the Romans were the occupying forces in Israel. Jesus’ ‘good news’ is meant to extend beyond the ‘people of God’. Explore ways in which Christians try to use Jesus’ words as their ‘foundations for living’: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prayer: recall the common components of Christian prayer – praise, confession, asking, thanking [see units 1.1 and 1.4]; find some examples of Christian prayers; what prayers might Christians say on the topics of justice, health, kindness or peace, linking to the Sermon on the Mount? Justice: there are many people who are persecuted and who mourn; look at the work of Christian Aid in trying to bring justice www.christianaid.org.uk/whatwedo Illness and healing: e.g. explore the work of www.leprosymission.org.uk and its connection with Jesus’ life and teachings; find out about the role of the Roman Catholic Church – it runs over 5,000 hospitals, 17,000 dispensaries, 577 leprosy clinics and over 15,000 houses for the elderly and chronically ill (see Catholic Herald, bit.ly/1UgFg11): how do they put Jesus’ teachings into practice? Turning enemies into friends: Jesus talks about turning the other cheek, not using violence: find out about Community Peacemaker Teams, who stand between warring forces to stop violence (cpt.org/work); look at the work of Desmond Tutu and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or stories from the Forgiveness Project, or Taizé. Can pupils work out what it is that helps people to forgive? Is there anything we can learn from these examples? Look at ways in which people show generosity to those in need, e.g. supporting foodbanks, volunteering for charities. Non-religious and people of other faiths are also committed to serving others; why do they do it? Which of these examples is the most inspiring to pupils? Are there any practical ways they can help people in need? Should they?

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Unit U2.8 What does it mean to be a Muslim in Britain today? [Tawhid/Iman/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.
<p>Teachers will enable pupils to achieve these outcomes, as appropriate to their age and stage, so that they can:</p> <p>Make sense of belief:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and explain Muslim beliefs about God, the Prophet* and the Holy Qur'an (e.g. <i>Tawhid</i>; Muhammad as the Messenger, Qur'an as the message) Describe ways in which Muslim sources of authority guide Muslim living (e.g. Qur'an guidance on Five Pillars; <i>Hajj</i> practices follow example of the Prophet) <p>Understand the impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make clear connections between Muslim beliefs and <i>ibadah</i> (e.g. Five Pillars, festivals, mosques, art) Give evidence and examples to show how Muslims put their beliefs into practice in different ways <p>Make connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make connections between Muslim beliefs studied and Muslim ways of living in Britain/ Worcestershire today Consider and weigh up the value of e.g. submission, obedience, generosity, self-control and worship in the lives of Muslims today and articulate responses on how far they are valuable to people who are not Muslims Reflect on and articulate what it is like to be a Muslim in Britain today, giving good reasons for their views. 	     	<p>Note that this unit builds on two previous units on Islam (1.6, L2.9) and some thematic study (e.g. 1.8, L2.12), so start by finding out what pupils already know. Recall key concepts: <i>ibadah</i>, <i>Tawhid</i>, <i>iman</i> (see Guidance p. 144)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set the context, using the information in the 2021 census (see Guidance p. 150). Ask pupils how many Muslims they think there are in Britain and in your local area. This unit explores what it is like to be one of these Muslims. Talk about the fact that there are different Muslim groups. The largest group (globally and locally) are Sunni; the next major group are called Shi'a; some Muslims are Sufi. Find out how many Sunni/Shi'a/Sufi mosques there are in your area. Give an overview of the Five Pillars as expressions of <i>ibadah</i> (worship and belief in action). Deepen pupils' understanding of the ones to which they have already been introduced: <i>Shahadah</i> (belief in one God and his Prophet); <i>salat</i> (daily prayer); <i>sawm</i> (fasting); and <i>zakah</i> (almsgiving). Introduce <i>Hajj</i> (pilgrimage): what happens, where, when, why? Explore how these Pillars affect the lives of Muslims, moment by moment, daily, annually, in a lifetime. Think about and discuss the value and challenge for Muslims of following the Five Pillars, and how they might make a difference to individual Muslims and to the Muslim community (<i>ummah</i>). Investigate how they are practised by Muslims in different parts of Britain today. Consider what beliefs, practices and values are significant in pupils' lives. Find out about the festival of Eid-ul-Adha, at the end of <i>Hajj</i>, celebrated to recall Ibrahim's faith being tested when he was asked to sacrifice Ismail. Consider the significance of the Holy Qur'an for Muslims as the final revealed word of God: how it was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by the Angel Jibril; examples of key stories of the Prophets (e.g. Ibrahim, Musa, Isa, Prophet Muhammad) noting how some of these stories are shared with Christian and Jewish people (e.g. Ibrahim/Abraham, Musa/Moses, Isa/Jesus); examples of stories and teachings, (e.g. Surah 1 <i>The Opening</i>; Surah 17 – the Prophet's Night Journey); how it is used, treated, learnt. Find out about people who memorise the Qur'an and why (<i>hafiz</i>, <i>hafiza</i>). Find out about the difference between the authority of the Qur'an and other forms of guidance for Muslims: Sunnah (model practices, customs and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad); Hadith (sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad). Reflect on what forms of guidance pupils turn to when they need guidance or advice, and examine ways in which these are different from the Qur'an for Muslims. Explore how Muslims put the words of the Qur'an and the words and actions of the Prophet Muhammad into practice, and what difference they make to the lives of Muslims, e.g. giving of <i>sadaqah</i> (voluntary charity); respect for guests, teachers, elders and the wise; refraining from gossip; being truthful and trustworthy. Investigate the design and purpose of a mosque/<i>masjid</i> and explain how and why the architecture, artwork and activities (e.g. preparing for prayer) reflect Muslim beliefs.

*Note: Many Muslims say the words 'Peace be upon him' after saying the name of the Prophet Muhammad. This is sometimes abbreviated to PBUH when written down.

Unit U2.9 Why is the Torah so important to Jewish people? [God/Torah]

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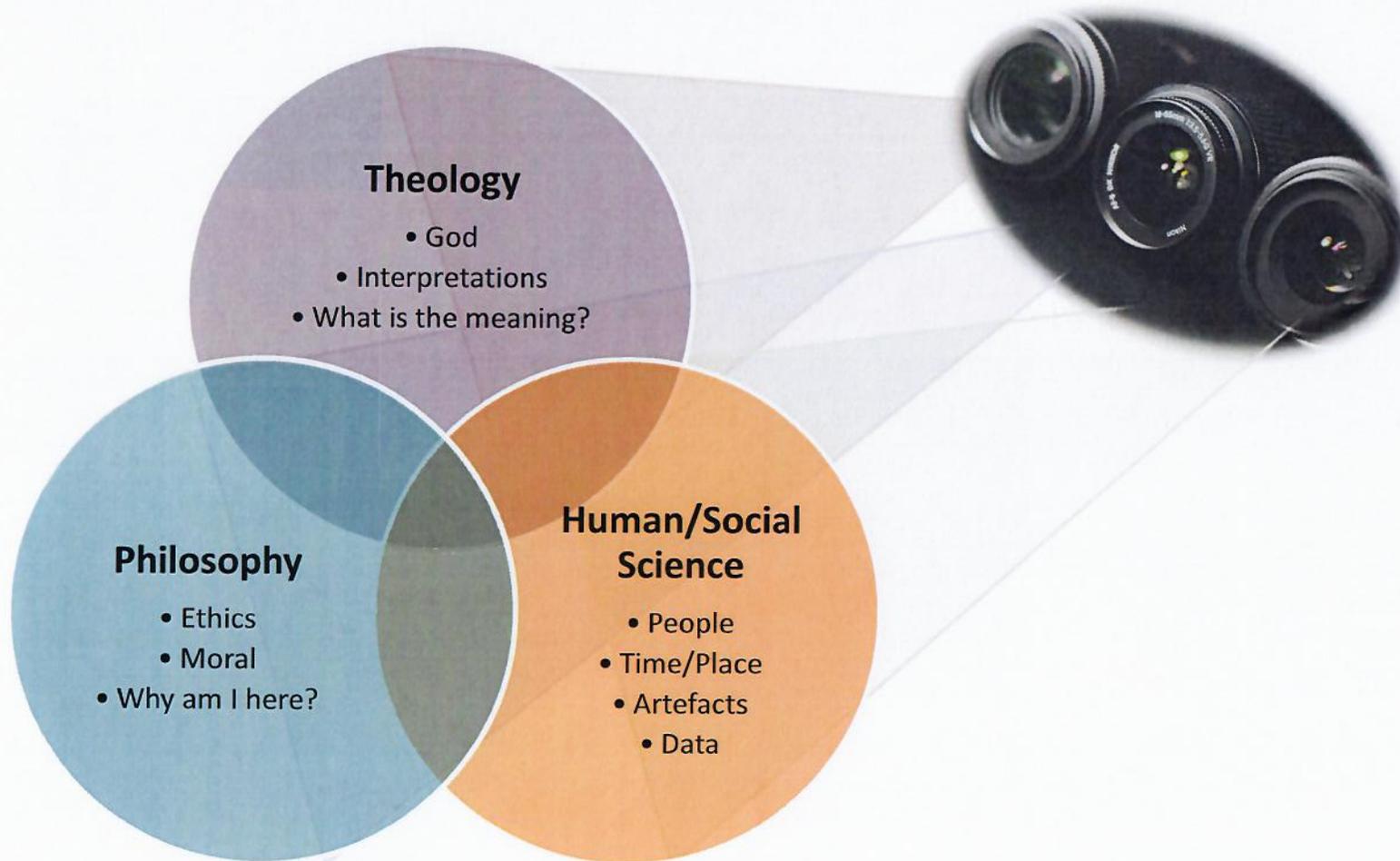
Learning outcomes (intended to enable pupils to achieve end of key stage outcomes):	Ways of knowing e.g.	Ideas and some content for learning: Teachers can select content from these examples, and add more of their own to enable pupils to achieve the outcomes.
<p>Teachers will enable pupils to achieve these outcomes, as appropriate to their age and stage, so that they can:</p> <p>Make sense of belief:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and explain Jewish beliefs about God Give examples of some texts that say what God is like and explain how Jewish people interpret them <p>Understand the impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make clear connections between Jewish beliefs about the Torah and how they use and treat it Make clear connections between Jewish commandments and how Jews live (e.g. in relation to kosher laws) Give evidence and examples to show how Jewish people put their beliefs into practice in different ways (e.g. some differences between Orthodox and Progressive Jewish practice) <p>Make connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make connections between Jewish beliefs studied and explain how and why they are important to Jewish people today Consider and weigh up the value of e.g. tradition, ritual, community, study and worship in the lives of Jews today, and articulate responses on how far they are valuable to people who are not Jewish. 	     	<p>Note that this unit builds on two previous units on Judaism (1.7, L2.10) and some thematic study (e.g. 1.8, L2.11, L2.12), so start by finding out what pupils already know.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find out about some contemporary Jews, both local and global. Use this to reflect upon the diversity of the Jewish community. Find out about local Jewish communities (www.jewishgen.org/jcr-uk/england_geographic.htm and www.jewishgen.org/jcr-uk/London/london_boroughs.htm) Recap prior learning about Jewish beliefs about God in 'the Shema', including belief in one God and the command to love God with all their heart, soul and might. Recall where it is found (Deuteronomy 6:4–9), how it links to beliefs about God and its use in the <i>mezuzah</i>. Learn about Orthodox use of the Shema in the <i>tefillin</i>. (Note: some Jews do not write the name of God out fully, instead they put 'G-d' as a mark of respect, and so that God's name cannot be erased or destroyed.) Find out more about the titles used to refer to God in Judaism and how these reveal Jewish ideas about the nature of God (e.g. Almighty, King, Father, Lord, King of Kings). Use some texts that describe these names (e.g. the Shema, Ein Keloheinu and Avinu Malkeinu. <i>These Jewish prayers might be found in a siddur, a daily prayer book, although Avinu Malkeinu is only said at Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.</i>) Find out about how a <i>Sefer Torah</i> (handwritten scroll) is produced, covered and treated and the reasons for this; how it is used each week in the synagogue and for the annual cycle of readings. Talk about the Jewish holy book – the Written Torah or TeNaKh: this name refers to Torah (Law), Nevi'im (the Prophets), Ketuvim (the Writings). (Note the overlap with the Christian Old Testament.) Look at some examples of texts and stories from these different parts of the Tenakh. Find out about the place of the Torah at the heart of Jewish belief and practice and the importance of regular Torah study for many Jews. Build on prior learning: e.g. Recall the Creation story and how it is used at Rosh Hashanah; how Shabbat is inspired by God resting on day 7. Note how much of the Torah (the first five books of the Tenakh) is devoted to the story of Exodus and Passover, and the laws that were then given – and are still followed by the Jewish community today: the Torah contains 613 commandments (<i>mitzvot</i>), including the Ten Commandments. One group of these <i>mitzvot</i> deals with which foods may or may not be eaten. Find out about kosher food laws and how they affect the everyday lives of Jewish people. Note that not all Jews keep all these laws. Explore the fact that there is diversity within Judaism, which explains why Jews do not all keep the kosher laws in the same way. Find out some features of Orthodox and Progressive Judaism in relation to kosher, and Shabbat observance. Explore two synagogues: one Orthodox (e.g. www.birminghamsynagogue.com) and one Progressive (e.g. www.bpsjudaism.com). Compare them and find out similarities and differences: objects found in them: e.g. ark, <i>Ner Tamid</i>, <i>bimah</i>; layout, services (bit.ly/2m3QWwg for a comparison). Find out about the place of the synagogue in the life of the Jewish community. Reflect on the value of ritual and tradition in Jewish communities, comparing its value in schools, families and other communities.

Unit U2.10 What matters most to Humanists and Christians?

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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.
<p>Teachers will enable pupils to achieve these outcomes, as appropriate to their age and stage, so that they can:</p> <p>Make sense of belief:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and explain beliefs about why people are good and bad (e.g. Christian and Humanist) Make links with sources of authority that tell people how to be good (e.g. Christian ideas of 'being made in the image of God' but 'fallen', and Humanists saying people can be 'good without God') <p>Understand the impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make clear connections between Christian and Humanist ideas about being good and how people live Suggest reasons why it might be helpful to follow a moral code and why it might be difficult, offering different points of view <p>Make connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise important questions and suggest answers about how and why people should be good Make connections between the values studied and their own lives, and their importance in the world today, giving good reasons for their views. 	     	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk about what kinds of behaviour and actions pupils think of as bad (examples from films, books, TV as well as real life). Rank some of these ideas – which are the worst, and which are less bad? Why? Reflect on the question: why do people do good things and bad things? Are we all a mixture of good and bad? Explore pupils' answers. Make a link with previous learning on the Christian belief about humans being made in the image of God (Genesis 1:28) and also sinful (the 'Fall' in Genesis 3). Why do some Christians think this is a good explanation of why humans are good and bad? Note that not everyone agrees with this idea. Other faith traditions have different explanations. People who are non-religious may just say that people have developed with a mix of good and bad. Humanists are one group of non-religious people (see Guidance p. 149); they say that humans should work out their own way of being good, without reference to any 'divine being' or ancient authority: they say people can be 'good without god'. <i>Humanists might say that, as there is no life after death where wrongs might be put right, we need to work for justice in the one life we have. They might aim for helping people to flourish and lead full lives. Talk about what actions or attitudes might help bring that about.</i> Talk about how having a 'code for living' might help people to be good. Look at a Humanist 'code for living', e.g. Be honest; Use your mind to think for yourself; Tell the truth; Do to other people what you would like them to do to you. How would this help people to behave? What would a Humanist class, school or town look like? Connect with Unit U2.11. Explore the meanings of some big moral concepts, e.g. fairness, freedom, truth, honesty, kindness, peace. What do they look like in everyday life? Give some examples. Christian codes for living can be summed up in Jesus' two rules: love God and love your neighbour. Explore in detail how Jesus expects his followers to behave through the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) and Jesus' attitude on the cross (Luke 23:32–35). Jesus talks about actions as fruit. What does he mean? If a person's intentions are bad, can their actions produce good fruit? Discuss what matters most, e.g. by ranking, sorting and ordering a list of 'valuable things': family/friends/Xbox/pets/God/food/being safe/being clever/being beautiful/being good/sport/music/worship/love/honesty/human beings. Get pupils to consider why they hold the values they do, and how these values make a difference to their lives. Consider some direct questions about values: is peace more valuable than money? Is love more important than freedom? Is thinking bad thoughts as bad as acting upon them? Notice and think about the fact that values can clash, and that doing the right thing can be difficult. How do pupils decide for themselves? Consider similarities and differences between Christian and Humanist values. They often share similar values but the beliefs behind them are different – see Unit U2.11 for more. What have pupils learned about what matters most to Humanists and Christians?

Multi-Disciplinary Approach



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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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?



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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	
Fanta	Oliver Dylan Naryah Seb Naryan Marley Ayan Aanya Frankie Maisie Noah Iraaya Annt Saarah Kenaya Garcia	Farrah Eustace G Oliver Aanya Beatrice Hasan Hanson Kia Neha	
3%	62%	35%	
Unit review notes:			

Upper Key Stage 2

U2.7 Why do Hindus try to be good?

We are going to be theologians and human/social scientists

Being Theologians

What do Hindus believe about the Atman?

Atman is the central part of a Hindu. Atman is a part of Brahman, often known as the spark of Brahman. Animals and humans carry this around with them and take this with them through their daily lives.

What might this tell them about Brahman?

Explore pupils' different responses. Brahman is part of all Hindus; he lives within, and enables people to live.

Man in the Well

Where does this story come from?

Book 11, Chapter 5 of the Mahabharata. Adaptation in English found in appendices.

Who is it important to?

What does this source of authority tell us about Brahman/Hindus/ways of living?

How is this source of authority used?

Does it have the same meaning for all Hindus?

Look at the interpretation of the story using the resource. How would you interpret it? Why is yours different? Are different interpretations equally valid?

How does this story show us that the Atman is important?

Hindus might say that this story shows that this world is great, and they may want to cling on to it, but really it is not satisfying. Some Hindus say they need to wake up and see that they are in a bad situation. The Atman is tangled in this physical world and needs to get out – back to Brahman. People get easily distracted by the world, so they need to think about the truth of the world and find a path back to Brahman.

Karma/Dharma

Do all Hindus share the same dharma?

Look at the ashramas – 4 stages of human life. Explore how very few UK Hindus reach stage 4. Why might this be? What might be the differences in dharma for the 4 different stages? (See appendices)

Can there be such a thing as a 'universal dharma'?

It is difficult to have a universal dharma, as the diversity within Hinduism means that everyone can take their own path, depending on their view of Brahman.

Being Human / Social Scientists

Is karma important to everyone?

Do all Hindus respond in the same way to dharma, moksha etc?

Look at the purusharthas (See appendices).

Does the understanding of dharma change around the world?

Explore the caste system in Hinduism. Discuss that there is a different dharma for different castes, as well as stages of life. Think about whether family life and priorities are the same around the world.

How might people live differently if there was no reincarnation or no moksha?

Case Study: Pandurang Shastri Athavale

What is the impact of moksha/karma on individuals?

U2.8 What does it mean to be a Muslim in Britain today?

We are going to be theologians and human/social scientists

Being Theologians

How do Muslims view different sources of authority?

Read Surah 1 – The Opening; and Surah 17 – The Night of Power. What might these sources tell Muslims? Help pupils to understand that the Qur'an is the revealed word of Allah.

What might this tell you about the Qur'an, how it is viewed and treated? Why is it important to treat the Qur'an this way?

Consider stories of other prophets such as Ibrahim, Musa, Isa. Explore how these are shared with Christian teaching - Ibrahim/Abraham, Musa/Moses, Isa/Jesus. Understand the importance of prophethood as a source of authority in Islam. Explore Qur'an, Sunnah and Hadith and how they all help to explore how to live life.

Being Human / Social Scientists

Why might Muslims live in certain areas?

Look at 2021 Census data for Worcestershire. How has the data changed over the years? What might be the reasons for this? Compare the data to data for London or Gloucester; why might there be differences? Look at the global population of Muslims. What might this tell us about being a Muslim today?

Do all Muslims believe the same thing?

Explore some of the differences between Sunni/Shi'a/Sufi Muslims. What are some of the differences in the way that they think? <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/articles/z4q8382> may provide some support to this exploration.

What might be some of the challenges in being a Muslim in Britain today?

Links can be made to experiencing racism; wearing a Hijab; going to university as someone who doesn't drink; or working/socialising when fasting etc. How might the ummah (community) support one another?

Useful video at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z43pfcw/revision/1>

Why are the 5 Pillars of Islam so important? Are they all equally important? Which one might be the most important? Are they experienced the same way by all Muslims, everywhere?

Explore the 5 Pillars of Islam. Explore the concept that the pillars are expressions of ibadah (worship and belief in action). Look at how the 5 Pillars impact on daily life.

Case Studies

How does faith support people?

Look at Nadiya Hussain (Winner of Great British Bake Off), Mo Farah (Double Gold Medal winning Olympic Athlete) or Baroness Sayeeda Warsi (First Muslim to serve in the British Cabinet)

Being Philosophers

How do I know that the data is valid?

Explore where the data we use comes from. What difference does this make? Are there more reliable places to get data?

What might a Muslim do?

Through the understanding of the 5 Pillars of Islam, what might a Muslim do in particular situations? Explore different thought experiments.

Upper Key Stage 2

U2.9 Why is the Torah so important to Jewish people?

We are going to be theologians and human/social scientists whilst exploring what philosophers might think

Being
Theologians

What do Jewish people believe about God?

Recap on the Shema prayer, particularly where it is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Look specifically at the words; what do they mean? What might they tell Jewish people about God? Look at other stories, such as the creation story, and explore the concept of God resting.

What does the Torah say about keeping kosher?

Explore concept of kosher. Remind pupils that Jewish law has 613 commandments, that incorporate the 10 commandments, which cross over with Christianity. Look deeply at Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, which is where most of the 'mitzvot' regarding kosher comes from. What do they mean? What do Jewish people learn about God from these passages? Why would Jewish people want to keep kosher? What happens if they don't? Explore the concept that not all Jewish people keep kosher. Why might this be the case?

What other writings are important?

(It is important that pupils do not just relate the Torah to the 'Old Testament' of the Christian Bible. Although there is cross over, there is more to it. Likewise, Jewish law is not just the 10 commandments but rather 613 commandments. Although the stories are from Daniel, Deuteronomy etc, which are the same names as in the Christian Bible, it is important that we help pupils understand which part of the Jewish holy book they are coming from e.g. Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim)

Read stories from parts of the Jewish holy book e.g.

Nevi'im (the prophets) – David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17), Jonah and the whale (Jonah 1&2)

Ketuvim (the writings) - Daniel in the Lion's Den (Daniel 6), Story of Esther (Esther)

or another story from these parts of the holy text. What do they tell Jewish people about God? How might a Jewish person respond? How do these stories give you a sense that the Torah is important? Are these writings as important today as they were in the past?

Being Human /
Social Scientists

What is the Jewish community like?

Find out about contemporary Jewish communities. Where are they? How many people are there within the communities? Look at census information to determine local, national and global diversity within the Jewish community.

How easy would it be to keep kosher in Britain today?

Explore diversity within Judaism, that not all people keep kosher. Why might this be? If you wanted to keep kosher, how easy would it be? Why is this the case? Is it as easy for Jewish people today, as it may have been in the past, or in Israel?

Do all Jewish people believe the same thing?

Explore some diversity between Orthodox and Progressive Jewish people. Look particularly at different synagogues (Birmingham has an Orthodox and Progressive synagogue which are both worth looking at). Identify key aspects such as Ner Tamid, bimah, the layout etc. Explore why these differences are there. Do they matter? Why might they be important to different Jewish people? Explore whether Orthodox Jewish people in Britain share similar or different beliefs to Orthodox Jewish people in Israel, or another country.

Being
Philosophers

How does the Torah enable Jewish people to make good choices?

U2.10 What matters to Humanists and Christians?

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

Being Theologians

What do sources of authority say about being good?

Read Genesis 1:28 and Genesis 3. What might these readings tell us about what Christians think about why people do good things and bad things? Explore the concept of sin entering the world and 'perfection' changing. People have free-will, and sin has enabled people to choose to do the wrong thing. Explore that not all Christians take this view.

What do sources of authority say about codes for living?

Look at the Story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and Jesus on the Cross (Luke 23:32-35). Jesus talks about actions as fruit. Can bad intentions produce good fruit? Explore the premise of a Good Samaritan in terms of racial tension (see additional notes in booklet).

Being Human / Social Scientists

How do different people understand being good and bad?

Explore that Humanists are a group of non-religious people. They should work out for themselves what is good or bad; there is no divine being. Look at the Humanist code for living – 'be honest, think for yourself'. How does this help people to behave? Is it useful; if so why? If not, why not? What might the world look like if everyone chose for themselves?

Does my understanding of good or bad change, depending on where I live or what I have experienced?

Explore how our opinions might change if we have experienced war, seen the destruction of an area that we love, or lived in another part of the world. Use case studies of individuals to explore peoples' changing understanding.

What things are important to different people?

Discuss what matters most, e.g. by ranking, sorting and ordering a list of 'valuable things': family/friends/Xbox/pets/God/food/being safe/being clever/being beautiful/being good/sport/music/worship/love/honesty/human beings. Get pupils to consider why they hold the values they do, and how these values make a difference to their lives.

Being Philosophers

What does it mean to be good or bad?

Explore the concept of good and bad. Are these real things, or constructs of human nature? Create lists of behaviours that pupils consider bad. Which one is worst/least bad?

How do I know my understanding is valid?

Explore where their thoughts and ideas have come from – TV, film, books, school, etc. Does knowing where our information comes from, make it more or less valid? Why might this be? Will everyone have the same opinion?

How does my worldview affect the way I think?

Pose the question 'Is peace an unachievable concept?' Discuss from different points of view. How might our own worldview (religious or non-religious) impact on the way we think about this topic?

Have my views changed?

Consider the question 'What matters most to Humanists and Christians?' Look at similarities and differences between the views. Have pupils' views changed in light of their learning?

Upper Key Stage 2

U2.11 What does it mean to be Humanist in Britain today?

We are going to be human and social scientists and philosophers

Being Human / Social Scientists

How many people consider themselves as non-religious or Humanist? How do I know the data is accurate? What might influence it?

Explore the data from the most recent census. In 2001, 15% of people said they had no religion and in 2021 this was 37%. Look at data specifically for Humanists, in Worcester, Britain and worldwide. What might this data tell us?

What questions might you pose about the data that you are looking at? What might have an impact on the way that we see the data?

What do Humanists believe? Do all humanists believe the same things?

Review the 3 central beliefs of Humanists (The world is a natural place, we should support the wellbeing of others, we can lead happy and meaningful lives) and the 5 approaches to Humanist life.

Explore what each of the 3 central beliefs mean. What do pupils understand by them? How might they see them in action? Use these differences to explore how Humanists see that there is some disagreement within these areas.

Case Studies: Stephen Fry or Sandi Toksvig

Being Philosophers

What questions can and cannot be answered by science? How do I know that my answer is valid?

Humanists believe that the world is natural and look to science for most answers about how the universe began. Explore questions that can be answered by science. Can they be fully answered by science? Explore how scientific theories change with new information – e.g. What temperature does water boil? Explore questions that can't e.g. What is the right thing to do? Is there a God? One can still use reason – but how do I know that my/other people's answer/reason is valid?

If there is a God, why does suffering occur?

Consider some reasons why Humanists reject the existence of God (e.g. brought up in a non-religious home, suffering proves there is no God, you cannot find evidence of God, religion causes conflict). Which is the most compelling? Explore the Humanist concept that people just make bad choices. What makes a good choice or a bad choice? Present pupils with the 'Trolley Experiment' (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yg16u_bzjPE) – what would they do? Is it a good choice or a bad choice?

What do freedom, truth, happiness, empathy, love, justice, equality, peace etc. mean? Are these achievable concepts without faith?

How might we define some of these concepts? Do all people think of them in the same way? What actions would we expect people to take if they were living these values? Would everyone do it the same way? Explore these concepts with pupils, how have they come up with their thinking?

What does it mean to live a 'good life'?

Humanists believe in one life and making it meaningful. But what might this look like? Is it the same for everyone? What might be the guidelines for a good life? Compare their ideas with the Amsterdam Declaration (<https://www.tinyurl.com/yb4t88wm>) or ReThink prize winners (www.atheistmindhumanistheart.com/winners)

U2.12 How does faith help people when life gets hard?

We are going to be theologians and philosophers

Being Theologians

What does this source of authority say?

Read Psalm 103. Look carefully at the words. What do they say about being grateful and giving thanks in all circumstances? Why does the author (David) want to give God thanks? How might this help someone when life gets hard?

What do we learn about religious faith from sources of authority?

Explore prayers, pictures, liturgies and songs that express views about what happens after death. These may be religious or secular. What do they tell us? How might they be of comfort to people?

Being Philosophers

What questions do I have about life, death and suffering?

Allow pupils to ask/share questions about life, death and suffering, such as: Why is there suffering? Where do you go when you die? Explore the sensitive nature of these questions. Analyse questions – what makes them difficult to answer? Look at how different people might answer these questions.

What do others think about this topic?

Explore the concept of thankfulness and gratitude. Explore that for some, always giving thanks is a way of feeling better and being healthier. Explore Humanist thoughts about gratitude, using www.happierhuman.com/benefits-of-gratitude. Also look at Psalm 103. How might these help someone who is finding life tough? Are these things beneficial to everyone?

What do people think happens when you die?

Explore different beliefs about death. For example, Humanists understand that nothing happens physically or spiritually when you die. You remain in someone's thoughts and memories, but death is final. Many Christian beliefs explore the concept of an afterlife and salvation through Jesus Christ. (NB. There are a diverse range of understandings of the afterlife, within the CofE and across different denominations. It is worth exploring some of these different views, particularly Mormon views, compared to many CofE views). Hindus believe in karma and how this results in reincarnation and finally reaching Moksha to be one with Brahman.

How might someone's world view affect the way they answer the question about what helps when life gets hard?

Explore the topic question. How important is the role of religion when religious belief is declining in the UK, but rising around the world?

	Ruth 1-4 - The Story of Ruth and Naomi	10
1.10 What does it mean to belong to a faith or belief community?	Luke 15:1-10 – The Lost Sheep and The Lost Coin	27
	John 13:34-35 – A New Commandment	31
	Mark 12:30-31 - Love everybody	21
	Leviticus 19:18 – Love your neighbour as yourself	10

Lower Key Stage 2

Unit	Story	
L2.1 What do Christians learn from the Creation Story?	Genesis 1 – Creation Story	6
	Genesis 2:1-3 – God Rests	6
	Genesis 3 – The Fall	6
L2.2 What is it like for someone to follow God?	Genesis 6:5 – 9:17 – The Story of Noah and the Flood	7
L2.3 What is the 'Trinity' and why is it important for Christians?	Matthew 3:13-17 – The Baptism of Jesus	15
L2.4 What kind of world did Jesus want?	Matthew 4:18-22 – First Disciples	16
	Mark 1:40-44 – Man with Leprosy	20
	Luke 10:25-37 – Good Samaritan	26
L2.5 Why do Christians call the day Jesus died 'Good Friday'?	Matthew 21:7-11 - Palm Sunday	20
	Luke 23:26-56 – Death	29
	Luke 24:1-12 – Empty Tomb and Resurrection	30
L2.6 For Christians, what was the impact of Pentecost?	Acts 2:1-15,22,37-47 – Pentecost	32
L2.12 How and why do people try and make the world a better place?	Exodus 20:1-21 – The 10 Commandments	9
	Deuteronomy 5:1-22 – 10 - Commandments (Again!)	10
	Mark 12:28-34 – Greatest Commandment	21
	Matthew 7:12 – Golden Rule	17

Upper Key Stage 2

Unit	Story	
U2.1 What does it mean for Christians to believe God is holy and loving?	Psalms 103	11
	Isaiah 6:1-5 – A Picture of Heaven	12
	1 John 4:7-13 – What is God like?	34

U2.2 Creation and Science: conflicting or complementary?	Genesis 1 – Creation Story	6
	Genesis 2:1-3 – God Rests	6
U2.3 Why do Christians believe Jesus was the Messiah?	Isaiah 7:14 - Immanuel	13
	Isaiah 9:6-7 – A New Type of King	13
	Isaiah 11:1-5 – The Messiah	13
	Micah 5:2 – Great Among the Least	14
	Matthew 1:18-24, 2:1-12 – Birth of Jesus	15
U2.4 How do Christians decide how to live? What would Jesus do?	Matthew 7:24-27 – Wise and Foolish Builders	18
	Matthew 5-7 – Sermon on the Mount	16
	Luke 7:1-10 – Faith of the Centurion	25
U2.5 What do Christians believe Jesus did to 'save' people?	Mark 14-15 – Easter	21
U2.6 For Christians, what kind of king was Jesus?	Luke 4:1-13 – Jesus in the Wilderness	23
	Luke 14:12-24 – Feast	26
	Matthew 18:21-35 – The Unforgiving Servant	19
U2.10 What matters most to Humanists and Christians?	Genesis 3 – The Fall	6
	Luke 10:25-37 – Good Samaritan	26
	Luke 23:32-35 – Jesus' attitude on the Cross	29
U2.12 How does faith help people when life gets hard?	Psalms 103	11

period of Jewish history can often be characterised by a feeling of people doing whatever they thought was best, with little guidance or leadership.

There are many key themes that should be explored.

1) **Loyalty**

This story is full of loyalty. Ruth is a character that demonstrates great loyalty. She refuses to leave Naomi, even though following her may have been detrimental to Ruth. Ruth is also loyal to Boaz. She remains working in the fields, working hard and ensuring the work is done properly even when others have fallen away. Boaz is also loyal to God and plays his part in ensuring that Ruth and her family are well looked after.

2) **Treatment of the outsider**

Ruth was an immigrant. She was an outsider. Not only did she come from a foreign land, but she was also a widow. She may have been seen by many as a burden to society. Despite this she is welcomed into Boaz's family, cared for and ultimately blessed by God. Boaz shows her kindness and allows her to glean in his fields and through this she is protected from harm.

I Samuel 17 - David and Goliath

Historically speaking, Israel's first king, Saul, became king around 1050BC. The events in the story of David and Goliath took place several years after this, approximately 1023BC. The Philistines were a group of people that possibly came from Crete or other coastal regions of Canaan. The term Philistine was used to refer to a combination of tribes rather than a specific one. They were known as Sea People as they used the seas to travel from place to place. Philistines were great warriors.

The story of David and Goliath is not the first time we meet the Philistines in the Bible, before this we see stories of the Philistines in Genesis 10 and in Deuteronomy 2. Due to their chequered history with the Israelites, the Philistines became a symbol of the thing that Israel is most afraid of.

Goliath is the Philistine champion. It is interesting to note that in different translations of the Bible in different cultures, Goliath varies in size from approx. 7ft tall to over 10ft tall. This might be something to explore in terms of looking at diversity in religion and focussing on the question of "does the size of Goliath change the perception or feeling of the story?". Ultimately, the physical size of Goliath is not important as what he represents is Israel's fear.

The overriding theme of David and Goliath is about triumph over fear. The Israelites were too afraid of Goliath. It wasn't that David was not afraid but rather that he wasn't going to let his fear hold him back. Again, fighting with stones and a sling shot against someone with a spear is not the most important part. For Christians, it is the understanding that God was on David's side. David put his trust in God and that allowed him to conquer his fear.

We may explore this in a modern setting by thinking about what things hold us back from achieving our goals and what might we put in place to overcome our fears.

The Psalms

The Psalms are a beautiful piece of Hebrew literature. Generally believed to be written over a period of a thousand years, they cover themes throughout Israel's history. Most of the Psalms are credited to the author David. They are songs and hymns written in a poetic form and should be read as poems enjoying the figurative and metaphorical language that is contained within them. Like all songs and poems, the Psalms can be categorised as either Psalms of thanksgiving and praise or Psalms of lament. Many of the Psalms had a specific function within Jewish festivals and worship.

Psalm 8 – Psalm of Creation

This psalm is David's great psalm of praise. Through the psalm, he acknowledges God's greatness through his creation of the Heavens and the Earth. He also shows awareness that part of creation is about God's care for mankind (v4). This psalm is also David reflecting on the wonder of mankind. Namely, God creating mankind to be in charge of the land and tending to it carefully. David finishes with praising God – this is a psalm of David being in awe of what God has done.

Original hearers of this psalm would have been able to reflect on everything that they can see in creation and attribute it back to God, using the Psalm to praise God for everything he has made.

Psalm 103

Another psalm of David. It is unclear exactly when this psalm was written. The psalm is set as a psalm of praise, focussing on all the good things God has done for his people. Original hearers would have listened to the psalm as a reminder of God's faithfulness to them. This would have been a comfort when the Israelites were going through challenging times.

Through the psalm, David talks about his own personal experiences of God. He then moves on to how God has dealt with the Israelite nation as a whole and finally encouraging all creation to praise God.

For modern hearers, this psalm provides a comfort to those who are experiencing difficulties, recounting the blessings and promises that God has given. It also serves as a reminder of how precious life is.

Psalm 139 – Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Psalm 139 is the grandest of all the psalms and one of the most well-known; second only to Psalm 23. In this psalm readers are brought face to face with the majesty of God. The psalm makes clear several aspects of God's character, which are important to Christians.

1) **God's omniscience (all-knowing)**

Verses 1-6 speak of God's knowledge. God knows words before they have even been spoken. This may bring up questions about predestination vs free-will, as if God knows everything then do humans really have free-will. (See Christian Theological Dictionary for a discussion about free-will and predestination).

For many Christians, this story is a confirmation that Jesus did what he said he would do, which was to come back to life. This is what is celebrated on Easter morning. Jesus triumphs over death, rises from the grave and through this enables people to have a way back to God. For many Christians, the resurrection is the most important aspect of the Easter story. It is through the resurrection that Christians believe that they too will be raised back to life, not in this world but in a life to come when Jesus returns.

Gospels post-note

Gospel means 'Good News' and throughout each of the four gospels, the writers have carefully written stories about the life of Jesus in order to share the Good News of God. From a Christian perspective the gospels did not come to replace the writing of the Old Testament, but rather to show how Jesus interpreted and fulfilled those writings.

It is also important to note that Muslims also regard the Bible, and specifically the Gospels, as an important source of authority. However, as they read it, they are not looking at Jesus as the Messiah but rather as an important prophet (similar to Mohammed PBUH) that came to tell people about God and how to live.

Acts of the Apostles

The book of Acts was written somewhere between 60 and 90 CE. Christian scholars widely agree that it was written by the historian and physician, Luke – the same person who wrote Luke's gospel. It is thought that this is like part two of a two-part novel. The book of Acts takes place in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the surrounding area and tells of the events that lead to the growth of the Christian church. It centres around how Jesus acted through the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:1-15,22,37-47 – Pentecost

The story of Pentecost is one that is often misunderstood when teaching RE. Pentecost is often referred to as the church's birthday, and whilst there is some mileage in this claim, it is not strictly true.

It is important to understand that many of the festivals and practices that happened in the New Testament are not new things, but Jewish festivals that later take on a new or different meaning. Pentecost is no different. The event described in Acts is not the first time we see Pentecost in the Bible. People were gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost. Pentecost was a Jewish festival which marked the harvest. It happened 50 days after the Passover and is also traditionally a time when Jewish people celebrate Moses receiving the Torah (God's law). Therefore, the disciples and the crowd were in Jerusalem to celebrate this Jewish festival, as was their custom.

The events in Acts happen a few days after Jesus' ascension into heaven. Due to what has happened with Jesus' death and talks of resurrection, the disciples are in hiding for fear of their lives. When the Holy Spirit comes, it comes as wind and fire. This relates back to the Old Testament when the spirit of God was often seen in either wind or fire. (You could make reference to Moses and the Burning Bush; the Israelites being led by a pillar of fire at night or stories in Ezekiel about the valley of dry bones and God breathing life into them.) Therefore, you could think of it as two Pentecosts. The

2) **God's omnipresence (always present)**

Verses 7-12 speak of God being always present. The psalmist speaks about how he cannot hide from God because wherever he goes, God is there. This statement is designed to bring comfort and to remind people that they are never alone, even when they feel it.

3) **God's omnipotence (all-powerful)**

Verses 13-18 speak of a powerful God. Through the power of creation God has created people individually, each person unique, special and wonderful. Each person is created in the image of God. As a result, Christians understand the importance of treating each person with dignity and respect.

4) **Hope**

Christians would argue that the whole psalm is a psalm of hope, showing an understanding that God is always present and giving people a glimpse that there is something bigger in life.

The Book of Isaiah

Isaiah was a prophet of God; he lived in Jerusalem. Most of Isaiah's prophecies were directed to the people of the Kingdom of Judah, generally because they were quite a rebellious nation. It is believed that the book was written approximately between 739 and 681 BC. As with all prophecies, Isaiah's messages had two functions: either to let people know what was about to happen or to explain things that had already happened. Some of the most well used prophecies in Isaiah are ones foretelling Jesus' birth. (See Christian Theological Dictionary for a discussion on the role of prophets and prophecy in the Bible.)

Isaiah 6:1-5 – A Picture of Heaven

These verses present a strange sight for the prophet Isaiah. Children may be fascinated with the picture of seraphim. Seraphim, along with Cherubim are angels in God's throne room. In Jewish, Christian, and in fact Islamic traditions, Seraphim are the highest rank of angels. Although the image of the seraphim is strange, the most important aspect is to understand that seraphim were responsible for the worship of God in Heaven.

The main point of this passage is the understanding of the holiness of God. The passage describes how the walls shook and smoke filled the room. This is an understanding that God is so Holy and special that people cannot look at his face. It would be like staring at a really bright light for too long. Within this passage, all of creation reflects His glory. In other words, all of creation not only worships God, but also everything in creation shines a piece of God's holiness.

Many Christians debate what Heaven looks like and there is no general consensus. However, it is possible in this passage that when Isaiah refers to the temple, he is referring to the temple in Jerusalem.

Isaiah 7:14 - Immanuel

In this one verse of Isaiah, we see a prophecy of the birth of Jesus. There are a number of interesting things to point out here:

- 1) The verse starts with a 'Therefore'. In the preceding verses, Isaiah addresses the people who were feeling afraid of an impending invasion. They wanted to know that everything was going to be OK, and that the Israelite nation would remain in the land. Isaiah enables them to see that everything is OK, because God has a plan, which will be worked out.
- 2) It explores in some detail what we know about Jesus' birth. He will be born of a virgin and even as a baby will understand right from wrong (knowing all that God knows).
- 3) The name given 'Immanuel' means 'God with us'. This demonstrates clearly that Jesus was God incarnate, God in human flesh.

For many Christians this key text is an important insight as to what God promises in the life of Jesus. There would have been some confusion for original hearers of this text as their view of a saviour would have been someone with power and strength, coming from noble birth rather than someone coming from humble settings. This reading is often used to frame Advent services in the run up to Christmas.

Isaiah 9:6-7 – A New Type of King

Another key prophecy about Jesus, and another one that is often used during Advent/Christmas. This prophecy is ultimately one of hope. Isaiah speaks to the people who feel that they are walking in darkness. They feel rejected, isolated and alone. They have been defeated in battle and are longing for some relief to their struggle. Isaiah brings a prophecy to declare that something new is coming; something better, something to take them out of darkness and bring them into light.

However, the promise is not what is expected. People are expecting a warrior, but Isaiah predicts something different. This is about subverting people's expectations, they want power, but God is bringing peace.

A few key points to note. There are a series of names used in this piece, which are significant:

- 1) **Wonderful Counsellor** – Beyond all human understanding, guiding and supporting with the mind of God.
- 2) **Mighty God** – He is God, the Almighty. Here are allusions to the Trinity.
- 3) **Everlasting Father** – Not a reference to Jesus being the 'Father' as in the Trinity but rather that he is the source of all things. He is the creator, the creator of time and ages.
- 4) **Prince of Peace** – He is one to bring peace. This may be tricky to think about especially when we see war etc. However, it is more accurate to think about peace between man and God – undoing the separation caused by The Fall.

For Christians this passage is a clear expectation of hope, not only in the fact that Jesus was born but that one-day Jesus will return and bring peace to the world once more.

Isaiah 11:1-5 – The Messiah

Another prophecy pointing to Jesus being the Messiah. Historically, we continue to sit in a period of fear, unrest and turmoil for Judah. In chapter 10, Isaiah uses the metaphor of cutting down trees to explain how God is going to remove those who have been leading Israel astray. The metaphor is extended to explain that out of the stumps of those trees, one will rise who is good, decent and righteous and will be the salvation of the people. Jesse is King David's father, alluding to the fact that Jesus is descended from King David, who was referred to by God as 'one after my own heart'. In other words, he was righteous and an all-round good person.

For those hearing this prophecy, they would have heard aspects of leadership that they would have never encountered before:

Judging with righteousness, rather than by sight and hearing. Having the spirit of wisdom and spirit of counsel.

These were aspects people would have known as being attributes of God. Therefore, the implication is that someone really special is coming - someone coming from God.

Isaiah 49:16 – You are Not Alone

This short verse is a reminder that God has not forgotten his people. This is important as the historical background places this passage very much in a period of time when Israel were exiled in Babylon. This would have been a message of hope and how God was going to bring salvation to his people. The verses before verse 16 talk about how a mother may forget about her baby, but in contrast God will never forget about his people.

We find an important statement that says, "names have been engraved on his hands". This illusion serves two purposes, firstly it suggests that names are always known by God, but secondly it refers to Jesus' work on the cross. The engraved names are the nail marks. For Christians, this is an important aspect, that Jesus' death for them was personal and showed his love for all people.

Micah 5:2 – Great Among the Least

Historically we sit somewhere in the seventh and eighth centuries BCE. Possibly somewhere around 722 BCE. Judah remains in great turmoil and are still under attack from their enemies. Micah's prophecy speaks into this pain of exile and threat, in order to bring hope to the nation.

The prophecy is of Jesus and in it we see a mention of Bethlehem. It is called the smallest of the clans of Judah. Again, this is God subverting the norm. People expected great kings and powerful leaders to come out of places of great power; however, in this case we see the greatest coming from something described as the least. For original hearers this would have brought confusion as they didn't think much of the clan of Bethlehem, and so why would something great come from there?

As readers today we may look at this and think about how we perceive greatness. Where perhaps are the leaders among the youngest and weakest etc? How do we view those around us who we perceive as not as good as us?

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

They were held in high esteem due to their position. However, Jesus was already turning things on its head by saying those who are going to share in the gospel are the common man. The ones that nobody really gave the time of day to.

Part of Jesus calling his disciples is about what we deem as important in terms of what makes people good enough to do particular jobs etc. Another key aspect is the trust that the fishermen had - they dropped everything and followed Jesus. Christians believe that this is how they should behave too. To follow God wholeheartedly, leaving their old life behind.

Matthew 5-7 – Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount is the first time that we begin to see Jesus teaching large crowds of people that have specifically come to see what he had to say. Again, Jesus' whole reason for teaching is to turn everything on its head. He is not getting rid of what the Jewish law or tradition has said, but rather taking time to suggest that maybe people have spent too long following the letter rather than the spirit of the law.

The first part of the Sermon on the Mount is known as 'The Beatitudes' and is sometimes thought of as a contemporary to the 10 Commandments and a statement to the way people should behave. It is also quite difficult to make sense of.

The key word within 'The Beatitudes' is the word 'Blessed'. This is often translated as 'happy, 'joyful' and can bring an understanding that says, when life is tough you should still be joyful. Or when things aren't great then you still have things to be happy about. This is not really what Jesus is saying and can lead to difficulties if that is how we think about it.

The Greek word for 'Blessed' in the Sermon on the Mount is *Makarios*. When *Makarios* is used in the New Testament it is often referring to people who are wealthy. In other words, the wealthy are blessed as they have everything they need. However, Jesus is trying to turn people's perceptions on their head. Jesus was being counter-cultural and going against the expected convention at the time. He is arguing that the poor are also wealthy, those who mourn are also wealthy. They have value and they are important. The 'happiness' or 'joy' that Jesus is referencing here comes from an inner peace, or inner joy that is not based on circumstance, it is based on being loved by God. This doesn't mean that they won't mourn or that they won't experience difficulties but rather that they are still loved and still important and still have great wealth to God.

A similar argument can be made with the understanding of 'Let your light shine'. People often look at this, saying that to let your light shine is about making sure that you live out your talents and be the best you can be. However, given that Jesus is being counter-cultural, it could be argued that when Jesus says, 'let your light shine', the good deeds that he is talking about is how people are seen and treated. Jesus' expectation was that everyone would be treated with value and worth. It's not about talents but doing the right thing to all people regardless of who they are.

Matthew 6:26 – Value of People

A small verse with a lot going on. When reading the Gospels, it is important to keep in mind that Jesus is trying to be counter-cultural throughout. He is subverting the norm. Up to now society has been about the haves and the have nots. Its focus has been about people putting their trust in themselves and their wealth and position.

Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem. In our traditional nativity we see Jesus born in a stable. As there is no direct mention of a stable, it is understood that this idea comes from the fact that Mary places Jesus in a manger – an animal feeding trough. In some translations it also states that this was because there was “no room from them in the inn”. Other translations refer to their being no guest room for them. Historical and cultural evidence would suggest that the understanding of a guest room is more accurate. The notion of an inn, generally referred to an upstairs room on the top of someone’s house which was used for guests. As Joseph was going to his hometown, it is more likely that he would have stayed with a family member rather than a hotel. However, someone else was already staying there. Furthermore, historical evidence suggests that many people kept their animals within their own house rather than a barn or stable and so therefore, when Jesus was placed in the manger it would have been in the main part of the house rather than a barn or stable.

For many Christians, where Jesus was born (stable, barn, house) isn’t that important, what is important is that Jesus was born and was born in lowly circumstances. He was born in a way that you wouldn’t expect him to be born. This humility sets up what his ministry is going to be like – humble service – and shows a pattern of how Christians should behave and demonstrates further, the miracle of his birth.

The first to visit Jesus were shepherds. Shepherds were deemed as ordinary folk, often quite smelly and dirty from sleeping out in the fields. However, it shepherds and not people of great importance that were chosen to be the first visitors of Jesus. For Christians this marks an important part as, if shepherds were welcomed in to see Jesus, then ordinary people are also welcome to visit him.

Luke does not refer to the Magi coming to see Jesus. It is unclear as to why he left this part of the narrative out. It could be because he wanted to focus on the humanity of Jesus and discussing the visits from the Magi may have complicated this.

Luke 4:1-13 – Jesus in the Wilderness

Jesus in the wilderness marks the start of Jesus’ ministry to the world. There are some key facts that are important to understanding this story. Jesus is in the wilderness for 40 days. This echoes the 40 days and nights of rain during the flood and the 40 years that Israelites wandered in the wilderness in Exodus. The wilderness is often captured as an ‘existence without God’ rather than a specific place.

Much has been written about who the devil is. What is relatively agreed by theological writers is that the devil is not a red beast with horns, cloven feet, tail and a pitchfork. Rather the devil was once an angel who challenged God for power and was then thrown out of heaven. This would account for the devil’s command of what God had said.

The temptation of Jesus is part of his identity and an expression of his human nature. For Christians, Jesus being tempted by the devil demonstrates that he has experienced many things that humans go through – this is his human nature. However, because Jesus also had God’s power, he was able to overcome this temptation and so many Christians are empowered that they too can break temptation through the power of God. This is a change to Adam and Eve, who succumbed to that temptation, but Jesus overcame it. For Christians it is the power of God that helps them to overcome temptation rather than anything they do on their own.

The Old Testament

Genesis I – 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 I, 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 I 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 I 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.

Luke 5:1-11 – Jesus' Friends

In this passage Jesus calls his first disciples. The Lake of Gennesaret is also known as the Sea of Galilee and is a freshwater lake in Israel to the north-east of Nazareth. The area of Galilee was a fishing region, and many people made a living through fishing in the waters there. Given that Galilee was a fishing region, it is perhaps unsurprising that Jesus' first disciples were fishermen. And Jesus' comments about being fishers of people are not lost in their metaphorical tone.

For Christians, this calling of the first disciples is significant. Jesus chose ordinary, hardworking people. People who had skills and had something to offer; however, these were not the most educated, eloquent and respected people. Just as the shepherds that came to see Jesus, fishermen were not the sort of people that you would expect to be the mouthpiece of a great leader. For many Christians, this means that they too can be used by God to do great things. They do not need to be rich or powerful.

It is worth considering who might be the modern-day equivalent of the fishermen. It may still be fishermen, factory workers or taxi drivers. It is important not to demean these roles in society, but rather ensure that children understand that Jesus was not looking for the sort of people that we may think are successful; he was looking for people who would follow him.

Luke 5:17-26 – Paralysed Man

Many of the stories surrounding Jesus' healing ministry, were not so much about healing people, but rather subverting what the Kingdom of God was really about. The impact of disabilities, illness, and other afflictions that people had, meant that they didn't just need healing, but also needed reintroducing to society. People like the paralysed man would have been an outcast. They were unable to work and so would have resorted to begging on the street. This in turn meant that they would have been ignored by society and there were not the same benefits available in those days as they might be today.

In healing the man, Jesus was making a statement about how people, particularly the Jewish leaders, cared for the whole of society. He was taking society to those who needed the love the most; not just because of their illness, but also because of how they were treated by others.

Within the text Jesus says, 'your sins are forgiven'. The Pharisees are upset because only God can forgive sins. Jesus was explaining to all, that he was God incarnate.

For many Christians, passages like this bring hope that they can be healed from their illnesses, although it is sometimes useful to think about, not so much the physical illness of being paralysed, but rather a spiritual understanding that people have been paralysed with sin through a lack of compassion etc. For many Christians, this is the healing that Jesus brings rather than a purely physical one.

Luke 6:37-38 – Judging Others

This passage is part of what is known as the Sermon on the Mount. This encompasses the Beatitudes as well as a number of additional passages. It is important to remember that Jesus is trying to turn people's understanding of the Kingdom of God upside down. Up until this point, many people believed that you were a good person if you followed the religious laws. However, many

needing the right amount of money for taxes and sacrifices which could have placed the woman into debt (see notes on The Unforgiving Servant to understand thoughts on debt). Therefore, for both characters in the story finding the one coin or one sheep is hugely important.

Jesus continues to use this analogy about how important people are to God. Christians understand that people have immense value, and God will do anything to have them as part of his family. Although many Christians today are not shepherds and people do not need to pay temple taxes or buy animals for ritual sacrifice, these parables still resonate in terms of the understanding of God's care for humanity.

Luke 15:11-32 – The Lost Son

This story is similar to the parables of The Lost Sheep and The Lost Coin, in the sense that it speaks to Christians about God accepting people even when they have wandered off. Again, Jesus uses this particular story as it would have been understood culturally by those who were listening. Forgiveness is a key part of the story but there is also more to it.

Historically, we know that inheritance was an important part of Jewish culture. Inheritance wasn't about money, per se, it was more about land and business transfer. Therefore, when the father died, the sons would have taken over the land, the workers and the business from their father. It was not uncommon for some sons to ask to be 'bought out' of their inheritance, in other words take the monetary value instead. However, it was also custom that if the money was lost or misspent then the son would be cut off from the community.

Therefore, when we look at how this story relates to the people of God, Jesus is saying that those who squander the life God has given them, should, just like the younger son be cut off. However, just like the father, God, by his grace welcomes them back to the family as if nothing has happened.

For Christians this is a powerful parable about how grace works. Grace is understood as getting something that is undeserved. In this case receiving forgiveness and welcome when what is deserved is rejection.

With this parable it is worth exploring it from different points of view. Perhaps to focus on the older brother's reaction. Culturally, older sons would have been tasked with supporting the father; essentially being their right-hand man. The older son should have tried to prevent the younger son from leaving, we assume that he didn't. But he should have also helped the father to welcome the younger brother back. Which again he didn't. From a Christian perspective there is an important lesson as to how people support one another and treat one another, even other Christians, even when it is challenging.

Luke 17:11-19 – The Ten Lepers

Another story about healing lepers. Many have suggested that this is the same story as the one in Mark's gospel, but it is unclear why Mark focusses on one leper but Luke focusses on ten. It could be to do with Luke's medical background and so looking to emphasise the power of the healing.

As already discussed, lepers were social outcasts. They were deemed as being unclean, both physically and spiritually which meant that nobody wanted to go near them due to risks of, under Jewish purity laws, becoming unclean themselves (See Leviticus 14:46). Therefore, lepers were cast out of society and required to live solitary lives not seeing any members of the public. They were not able to make a living and often begged for money. Leprosy was something that stole people's