

Unit 6E What can we learn from Christian religious buildings?

ABOUT THE UNIT

This unit is designed to help children understand how religious buildings exemplify the beliefs and values of religious communities. It enables them to acquire knowledge of two Christian denominations and to explore how signs, symbols and metaphors are used to extend and deepen religious understanding.

WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

The unit builds on work that children have done on Christian beliefs and the key stage 1 unit on a visit to a church, and the key stage 2 unit on signs and symbols. It also links with visits to other religious buildings.

PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if children have:

- identified meanings of signs and symbols
- classified information in different ways
- learnt the names of different parts of a church
- interviewed people and made notes of discussion

VOCABULARY

In this unit children will have an opportunity to use words and phrases related to:

- Christian buildings, *eg font, altar, pulpit, vestry, ecumenical*
- describing meanings beyond the literal, *eg 'it is like', 'sounds like', 'bit like', awesome, mystery*
- metaphors and similes that communicate meanings in religious and non-religious contexts
- connectives to give reasons, *eg it is like this because ...*

RESOURCES

- pictures of interiors and exteriors of churches
- plans of churches
- pictures of religious objects
- videos of religious worship
- members of local churches to talk about how buildings are used

EXPECTATIONS

At the end of this unit

most children will:

describe the interiors and exteriors of Christian religious buildings, identifying key features and explaining how they are used in worship and what they mean in terms of the religious beliefs of worshippers; identify similarities and differences between two contrasting Christian denominations, and explain that metaphors, symbols and objects convey religious meaning

some children will not have made so much progress and will:

name some parts of Christian religious buildings and religious objects, and say why they have value for members of religious communities; suggest meanings for religious objects and words and know that not all such words are taken literally

some children will have progressed further and will:

explain how the key features of two contrasting features of religious buildings relate to different Christian traditions, beliefs and forms of worship; explain why and how metaphors, similes and objects convey meanings to members of religious groups and how they relate to religious beliefs

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

LEARNING OUTCOMES

POINTS TO NOTE

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

WHAT DO WE VALUE?

- that the value placed on objects and experience varies
 - that there are links between what is valued and how people live their lives
 - that what people own and regard as precious reveals their priorities and underlying values
- Ask the children to identify things which are precious. Help them move from concrete things, *eg jewels, gold*, to intangible things, *eg happiness, joy*. List the words on the board and group them into categories, *eg things which are worth a lot of money, things money cannot buy, things made from valuable materials, things to do with families*.
 - Introduce the children to the idea of a box of treasures. Show them a box of treasured objects which have personal meanings, *eg photographs, wedding rings, old toys*. Ask the children to produce a list of 10 things they would put in their spiritual treasure box and give reasons for their choice. Children then give their list to a partner who uses it to work out what the person values. Explore how objects have a value because of the links they have to personal experience.

- identify objects which are valued
- categorise objects, showing understanding of different values
- discuss why different things are valued
- identify and explain how an individual's choice of valuable items shows what he or she values and how concrete things link to intangible values and value systems

- The purpose of this activity is to provide a reference point in children's personal experience for future work.
- The teacher needs to establish pace and to help the children use the categories to extend their understanding of 'preciousness'.
- This activity is designed to help children learn how objects carry multiple meanings and that what we ascribe value to, reveals our underlying value system.
- This activity could be extended to look at what things, *eg objects, advertising*, reveal about an individual's or society's values.

WHAT DO CHURCHES SHOW ABOUT WHAT CHRISTIANS VALUE?

- to classify different types of religious buildings and objects
 - that beliefs, ideas and feelings can be expressed in a variety of ways
- Explain that exploring churches can help us find out what Christians value. Give the children pictures of some church exteriors. Ask them to choose one elaborate and one simple building. Ask the children to brainstorm words to describe each picture. *What do the words show about the differences between the two churches? Do you think different things are of value, eg simplicity, grandeur, display?*
 - Give the children pictures of the types of things they will find in the two different types of church. Ask them to sort the objects into groups for each of the two churches and give reasons for their decisions. Ask them to sort the objects into things that are friendly and intimate, and things that are mysterious and awesome. *Are the groups the same for the two churches? Explore the reasons for their answers.*

- show understanding of different styles of Christian building and worship by classifying pictures of buildings and religious objects
- communicate their understanding that religious beliefs, understandings and feelings can be expressed in a variety of forms

- This activity is designed to help children understand some of the differences between different denominations. Teachers will need to feed in specific knowledge about the two churches/denominations to extend children's understanding of the significance of spaces, layout and objects. For example, teachers could ask the children what the objects are used for and add specific information, *eg font, altar, bible, pulpit*. This activity reinforces children's understanding of how religious buildings convey meaning. Links could be made to the buildings of other faiths.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM A VISIT TO A CHRISTIAN BUILDING?

- what sorts of things are found in religious buildings
 - that religious buildings and objects have meanings for their users
 - to give reasons for the relative significance of different objects and to relate them to religious teachings of Christianity
 - why members of different Christian religious groups ascribe meanings to objects
- Arrange a visit to two very different churches: one Catholic, Orthodox or High Church Anglican; the other non-conformist, *eg Baptist, Methodist, Quaker meeting house*.
 - Discuss with the children how they should behave and what they are going to do when they visit the two buildings. During the visit, ask the children what they think are the most important things in the building. Get them to choose six to ten things, *eg altar, windows, a cross*, and explain why they think they are important, *eg size, position in the building*. Children can select or draw the object and note the reasons for its significance. Talk about what makes things friendly and intimate, and what makes them mysterious and awesome. *What is the overall impression of the building? Is it mysterious? Is it light? Does it make people feel part of a group?*
 - Explain, or ask a member of the church to explain, the significance of the different objects, and why they are placed in particular places. Ask the children to record their findings. Talk about things that enable members to worship as a group and those which enable them to worship individually. *Is the church organised for people to listen, to kneel, etc? Are they close to the altar, far away, etc? How does the layout relate to the beliefs of the people who worship there?*

- describe objects, explaining why they are found in churches and their use in services
- explain why members of the church community value certain objects
- interpret the significance of objects and buildings and explain how aspects of religious buildings relate to different Christian beliefs
- link the views of members of church communities, about the value of buildings and objects, to their beliefs

- Children will need to be briefed before the visit about expected behaviour, how to ask questions, and how to record information.
- The purpose of starting from an overview question, *eg What is most important?*, is to allow children to construct their own enquiry and to begin to classify the information.
- It is important to brief the church members so that they respond to children's questions rather than simply convey information. They will need to move from descriptions of objects, through to explaining their use in worship, to their links with Christian traditions and beliefs. Children's depth of understanding and the rigour of the activity will depend on the way extra information is provided throughout the visit.
- If you visit a Quaker meeting house, the focus will be on why there are no objects and how this reflects Quaker beliefs and values.

HOW CAN WE DEEPEN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE MEANING OF THE PLACE?

- to use metaphor and symbol as a way of explaining meaning
 - that religious objects and symbols carry multiple meanings
 - to reflect upon what a Christian building they have visited means to a believer
- Ask the children to sit down and do some breathing or concentration exercises. Choose an object, *eg book, candle, bell*. Model how you can develop other words from candle, *eg light, dark, ray, melt*, and how each word can be extended. Ask the children to do the same for other objects. Play the metaphor game: if this object was a car, it would be ...; if this object was an animal, it would be ... Ask the children to share their ideas and talk about words and meanings and how reflecting on something can deepen our understanding of it. *Which objects are linked to comforting 'intimate' words and which are more mysterious objects?* Discuss how reflection helps us to extend the meaning and symbolism of objects.
 - Ask the children to close their eyes and revisit one of the places of worship they visited. Think about their impression of the building or space and then ask them to write a poem about what the place might mean to a believer.

- describe ways in which reflection can deepen understanding of religious objects
- discuss how similar objects convey different meanings to different religious groups
- understand the meaning of a Christian building as a place of worship

- This activity is designed to help children understand that objects carry multiple meanings and can be used as an aid for reflection. Understanding the symbolism of objects is an important part of understanding religious traditions. The absence of objects is, of course, as significant as their presence. Links can be made with English and art and design.
- You could use a 're-entry device', such as asking children to imagine they get in a lift. With their eyes closed, count down from 10 to one as the lift goes down. When the doors open on the first floor they are back in the Christian building.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

LEARNING OUTCOMES

POINTS TO NOTE

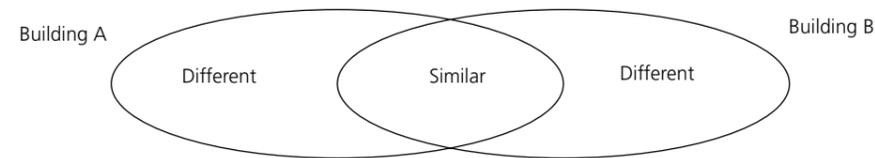
CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

HOW DO BUILDINGS AND OBJECTS RELATE TO RELIGIOUS WORSHIP?

- how the form of a building and its furnishings are linked to religious worship and beliefs
- about the beliefs of different Christian denominations
- that some aspects of Christian belief are shared between churches and others are not
- how different communities and traditions express religious belief
- to classify and structure information and communicate understanding to others

- Look at video/CD-ROM resources showing aspects of worship for each of the two styles of religious buildings visited. Ask them to record some of the objects and activities they see used in worship. As follow-up work, ask the children to draw two overlapping circles.



- Ask the children to sort out information into different things which are similar in both buildings and then things which are different. Ask them to do a similar exercise sorting objects into categories that emphasise intimacy and awe (use words like 'friendly', 'distant' and 'grand').
- Ask the children to devise other categories for sorting information, eg *things used for worship, decoration, type of service*. Feed in extra information about the types of Christian denominations or churches you visited. Ask the children to produce a 'little book' for each of the two buildings, to summarise the key elements of Christian worship that are revealed through objects or the building using the categories they have already chosen. Children should be told that they must choose the most significant items of information under each heading.

- discuss how buildings relate to different types of worship and belief
- describe how different Christian communities express aspects of belief
- identify similarities and differences between two Christian denominations
- communicate the key aspects of the beliefs, worship and religious buildings and objects to an audience

- The purpose of this activity is to add additional knowledge about the two denominations, and to help children structure the information in different ways to answer questions. This is likely to be more effective if questions tease out existing knowledge and understanding.
- The sorting activities help children classify information. The teacher can draw the results together on the board by discussing how the categories relate to each other. *Are the mysterious aspects only in one or both places? Are certain types of decoration found only in one place?*
- 'Little books' are small books prepared from folded A4 paper. The restriction on length forces children to summarise, and to decide which pieces of information are the most significant using the categories they have chosen.
- This activity could be developed by exploring the evidence of other activities found in the church, eg *missionary work, social work*.

HOW COULD WE SHOW WHAT CHRISTIANS VALUE IN A DESIGN FOR A RELIGIOUS BUILDING?

- that beliefs, ideas and feelings can be expressed in a variety of ways

- Discuss with the children what they, as a class, value. Ask them to work in groups to prepare a brief for an architect to design an ecumenical church to be built in a new village or on a new housing estate. *Is the building about friendliness or grandeur? Ask the children to identify which groups will be using it. What do you think they will value in the building? Will they value cooperating with each other more than the physical features from their own traditions which they may want in the buildings?* Tell them to include detailed instructions about the floor plan, and windows and furnishings.

- communicate through their design specification their understanding that religious beliefs, understanding and feelings can be expressed in a variety of forms

- This activity reinforces children's understanding of how religious buildings convey meaning. Links could be made to the buildings of other faiths. An ecumenical church is based on the idea of unity amongst Christians.
- Information about the Christian groups who may be using the building can be found in reference books, on the internet and from the groups themselves.

FUTURE LEARNING

Children could go on to:

- explore the value of symbolism and religious objects in other religions

OUT-OF-SCHOOL LEARNING

Children could:

- look out for signs and symbols of value in advertising and places of communal entertainment, *eg football grounds, cinemas*