

Unit 6F How do people express their faith through the arts?

ABOUT THE UNIT

This unit focuses on some of the ways in which music, art and drama are used to express aspects of faith. The main focus is on Christianity and Islam, with reference to Hinduism. The unit provides opportunities for children to experience how certain art forms can be used to express feelings, emotions and intentions and to learn how these are used in a religious context to express faith.

WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

This unit links with a number of other units by looking in more depth at ways in which faith is expressed through the arts.

PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if children have:

- participated in drama and role play
- visited different places of worship and begun to compare the practices and rituals of believers
- learnt the techniques of mixing colours and of using different materials to create texture
- collaborated with others in group work

VOCABULARY

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

- Christianity, eg *vestments, stained glass, icons, festival, service, miracle plays, Pentecost*
- Islam, eg *prayer mat, mosque, mosaic, calligraphy, Arabesque*

RESOURCES

- examples of music from different religions
- posters, photographs and postcards of paintings
- miracle plays translated for children
- the story of Rama and Sita
- internet sites
- museums and art galleries

EXPECTATIONS

At the end of this unit

most children will:

understand that expressing faith can involve feelings and emotions and that in religions the arts provide a context for this expression; understand that religious beliefs can be expressed through creative and expressive arts; identify the emotions of awe, peace, joy and wonder, which can be expressed through music, art and drama, and the significance and symbolism of these emotions to believers

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

understand that music, art and drama are used in some religions as a means of expressing faith; make simple links between examples of religious expression and the beliefs, ideas and feelings that underlie them

some children will have progressed further and will:

compare and contrast some of the ways in which believers express their principal beliefs, ideas and teachings through the arts; understand that aspects of faith which are difficult to verbalise, can be expressed through music, art and drama in religion; recognise and express feelings in response to ways in which the religious experience is represented through the arts

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

LEARNING OUTCOMES

POINTS TO NOTE

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

HOW DO WE EXPRESS OUR FEELINGS?

- to recognise that expressing faith involves feelings and emotions
- Explore with the children facial expressions, body language and tone of voice, *eg shouting, whispering*.
- Develop a drama activity using examples of expressing fear, pleasure, dislike and joy.
- Discuss other ways of expressing our feelings to others, such as writing poems, diaries, letters, stories, paintings, sculpture, music, dance.
- Watch a video of a piece of dance. Ask the children to note down what feelings are being shown. Discuss their notes as a class.

- use drama to show their understanding of how people express their feelings
- describe how feelings can be expressed through movement in response to music

- There will be children from traditions which do not use the arts as a means of religious expression, *eg Quakers*, so do not assume that the arts are meaningful for all religious groups.

HOW MIGHT MUSIC BE A WAY OF EXPRESSING WORSHIP FOR BELIEVERS?

- that in some religions, music is a form of expressing faith
- Listen to a joyful piece of music. Choose a piece of classical music and ask children to reflect on it. *How does music make you feel?* Let the children choose how they want to respond to the music, *eg through paint, through words, through movement*. Help them to explore by questioning. *What emotions did I feel in the activity on painting, creative writing or dance? What sort of feelings might people of faith experience in worship (eg love, peace, tranquillity, wonder, awe)?*
- In small groups, ask children to prepare a response to the music, from the perspective of a group of religious believers expressing feelings of joy to their god.
- Listen to examples of music used in different religions. Explain links between devotional scriptures and music, *eg psalms*.
- Using a range of instruments, including a tabla and harmonium if possible, let the children compose their own music to express feelings of joy or thanksgiving. Children can present their work to the whole group and then do a performance for an assembly.

- show how religious beliefs, ideas and feelings can be expressed in a variety of forms, and are able to explain their symbolism
- identify and recognise different types of religious music and its symbolism

- There are cross-curricular links with music and PE. Music is an effective medium of communication for children with learning difficulties. This aspect of the unit can be extended for some children if appropriate.
- Include examples of religious words set to music which are familiar to the children, *eg a setting of the Lord's Prayer*.

HOW CAN COLOUR EXPRESS RELIGIOUS FEELINGS AND IDEAS?

- that colour can be used to express religious feelings and ideas
- Ask a member of the clergy to bring the coloured vestments for different seasons of the Christian year. *What do the colours used in church symbolise?* Help the children to carry out research to find out about the stories and symbols in some Christian festivals and design and make a banner for a festival, such as Pentecost.

- explain the meaning of vestments and colour in many churches
- identify and explain the significance of some symbols in Christianity

HOW HAVE ARTISTS EXPRESSED RELIGIOUS BELIEFS?

- that art can be sacred and spiritual for believers
- Ask the children to suggest why people engage in artistic activity.
- Study reproductions of famous artists' portrayals of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and his teachings. Explore how they use symbolism, colour and texture to express meaning. Use icons, supported by a video about the Greek Orthodox Church, to compare a range of traditional and modern art. Explore by questioning. *How does the work of art make you feel? How do you think the artist felt? How are images used to teach religious beliefs, to instil moral values or to inspire passions? How much do artists try to illustrate religious texts authentically or present personal interpretations?* Children could paint in the style of iconography, painting on wood if possible.

- explain the significance and meaning of icons for some Christians
- understand the variety of symbolic meanings in paintings

- There is a wide range of posters and postcards showing icons, as well as videos which show Greek and Russian Orthodox churches. Visit an Orthodox church if possible.
- There are cross-curricular links with art and design, using the correct colours, styles and textures for painting icons.
- Use an overhead projector to enlarge pictures.

HOW DOES ISLAMIC ART HELP MUSLIMS TO WORSHIP?

- how Islamic art helps Muslims to worship
- about the importance of the design of a prayer mat
- skills of comparing and contrasting the use of art in religions
- Ask children why they think the use of pictures or statues is not acceptable to many Muslims. Show how shape, pattern and calligraphy and the shapes of flowers and leaves, as part of God's creation, are used in mosaics. Ask the children to design a mosaic for a water garden in a mosque.
- Examine a prayer mat and its pattern with the children, and ask them to design one themselves. Look at posters of famous mosques, and then discuss architecture as an art form.
- Compare and contrast the use of art in worship in Christianity and Islam. Ask children to work in pairs to produce a booklet which explains and illustrates the differences.

- explain the importance of calligraphy and Arabesque to Muslims
- explain the significance of the design of a prayer mat
- evaluate how art is used differently in Christianity and Islam

- Jews are also not allowed to have pictures of people or statues in synagogues.

HOW IS FAITH EXPRESSED THROUGH DRAMA?

- that drama is a means of reinforcing important stories and teachings in religions
- Children study two religions, learning how drama has traditionally reinforced the faith stories of religions. For example, in Christianity, children read and present miracle plays; in Hinduism, children read and present dramatic versions of the story of Rama and Sita. Children can design and make costumes/masks and write descriptive accounts of their own feelings, and those of the characters they portray. *How do these stories help to answer questions about right and wrong, life and death?*
- Prepare a major presentation for the wider community, including displays of all the work produced in this unit.

- talk about how drama can be a means for presenting and reinforcing religious stories and teachings
- reflect on ways in which stories can be a means of exploring ultimate questions

FUTURE LEARNING

Children could go on to:

- study icons and paintings in more depth, researching the significance of icons and religious paintings in the lives of believers
- extend the unit by studying religious literature and learning of its contribution to expressing faith for believers
- compare and contrast art, music, drama and literature as a means of expressing faith in different religions

OUT-OF-SCHOOL LEARNING

Children could:

- research further using libraries, CD-ROMs, the internet
- visit galleries, exhibitions and religious buildings
- attend a religious arts festival or a particular festival celebration within a religion

