

Starters

for

Religious Education

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Starters for Religious Education

Introduction

One of the great things about being an RE teacher is the variety in the subject. Imagination has no limits and when it comes to starters you can pick up ideas from most other areas of the curriculum and adapt them for your own purposes. This is useful, because a casual exploration of the internet reveals a lot of material and ideas for Maths teachers but not for us mere Humanities teachers. There is clearly a shortage of good short and effective starters for Religious Education. What follows is a modest list of ideas that you could adapt and develop for your own RE lessons. I have worked on the premise that a starter should not take more than ten minutes of an hour long lesson and if your lessons are shorter, then you want them to be even pithier. I hope you find them useful.

Aims and Purposes of Starters

Something I found really useful in drawing together these ideas is an internet article by Barbara Wintersgill (a former HMI for RE) and available on www.reonline.org.uk (RE Matters – Article- Starters). In the article Ms Wintersgill outlines what a good starter should achieve and when creating you own starters it is useful to bear these principles in mind.

It should;

1. capture the interests and curiosity of the pupils,
2. get the pupils engagement in learning right from the very start of the lesson,
3. link back to previous learning or introduce new learning,
4. set the scene for the lesson in terms of lesson objectives,
5. set a good challenge and appropriate pace for the lesson,
6. minimise disruption in the lesson since it should focus pupil learning from the beginning of the lesson.

Keeping to Time

This is very important and there are a number of ways that you could limit the amount of time available to do a starter. It might be difficult when introducing the time limits but the idea is that the student will eventually get it and speed up. Clock watching is the most basic and obvious way but you could bring in your egg timer from home and use that as a bit of a novelty. Music is another method of timing something. Some stressed year elevens asked for some whale music to calm them down while they did a task that I had put a limit on. I found some live whale music on the internet and played that for five minutes. (To be honest, after 5 minutes I had had enough of the sound anyway). The music/sound should be instrumental. Make sure you know the length of the track, when the music stops so does the task. The track should be clear but low in volume. Another method is to ring a bell or use some other noise to mark the end of the task. Once the pupils have the idea of a limit being established, I think that changing the method of marking the end of a task is a good idea; it keeps them on their toes.

Ideas for Starters

Starters can fall into a number of areas. These would include the following:

- **Pictures:** ideas like odd one out, compare and contrast, making connections between pictures, naming a topic and imagination and empathy tasks. You could also ask pupils to classify some items.
- **Diagrams:** by this I mean that the pupils create pictures or flow charts. Venn diagrams are useful and so are mind maps and spider diagrams. A good idea adapted from Geography is to have a diagram or map and the pupils have to label it or produce a key. Devising a simple chart can help pupils clarify information and ideas appropriately and quickly.
- **Mystery Objects:** one of the joys of RE is the number of artefacts that we can have at our disposal. These religious artefacts can be supplemented with ordinary items from home that have a link with the topic you are studying. Place the appropriate object in a large bag and a pupil has to describe what they are feeling. The rest of the class work out from the description what it is and what its connection to the topic, theme or concept is. Alternatively their peers could ask them 5 questions about the object. Or you could have standard ones like:
 - What is this?
 - Who might use this?
 - When might they use it?
 - Where might they use it?
 - Why might they use it?
- **Sounds:** as an extension of the mystery object, you can have the mystery sound or a selection of sounds that the pupils have to guess. Devise a magical mystery tour using different sounds - a trail of sound leads them to clues, when these are put together they reveal the topic, theme or concept for the lesson. You can also play music that is associated with a topic. This is easier if it is linked to themes like war, death, birth and creation, but you may be able to find pieces that link other key areas of RE like for example rites of passage.
- **Games:** these can be based on television shows; the big advantage of that is that most of the pupils will know the rules before you start. You can include for example Pictionary, Articulate, Taboo and even Scrabble. The most used of the television games is of course Blockbusters; however, you can also use Blankety Blank, Mr and Mrs, Jeopardy and variations of Guess that Tune. There are also the standard True and False games, Hangman, Who Am I and even Battleships! Radio programmes such as Give Us a Clue and Just a Minute can also be effectively used.
- **Words:** This would include card sequencing activities, snowballing, odd one out, fact or opinion, making links between words/topics. Making connections between concepts is very important and you can do this in starter activities so that one lesson is linked with another. This is also useful if you want to link concepts or skills between subjects. Filling in blanks and comprehension exercises can also be developed.
- **Talking:** I have put this one last because on the surface it appears the easiest, but in fact it is the hardest to make work as effective learning. You need to be very clear about your learning objectives are and what you hope to achieve by these activities. It may not always be appropriate for classes who take a long time to settle, however, if it is done well it can open up the lesson to every one and give them an exciting and interesting way to start the lesson. Oral Pictionary, Just a Minute and hot seating are activities that can be developed. You can do word associations or you can get the pupils to plan an activity in pairs that includes an object, picture, sound or word. You can pick one or two of the best ideas and get the class to do them. Keep this simple because of timing issues.

The above are all general ideas that you can develop into starters for your classes. However, I have developed a few ideas so that you can have some ready made starters to use straight away. Each Starter I have given as a detailed example will include information about the target audience i.e. Key Stages 1, 2, 3 or 4, differentiation (where appropriate), the details of the activity and the resources needed. With some changes the starters could, in some cases, be used Post 16 although they are not directly designed for that purpose. Not all starters can be used at every Key Stage but you may be able to adapt them for use in your Key Stage.

Objective covered: AT1 level 1

Key Stage: KS1

Aim: For pupils to recognise the name of some things to do with religion.

Activity: Christian based – being able to select key points from a Christian story. This is a pair or group based activity.

Differentiation: You can add pictures to the cards to aid recognition and you can select the number of correct and misleading cards you give the pupils.

Resources: Cards with words associated with a story you are looking at or the Bible itself.

The selection below is based on the Christmas story. However, you can also do this on the specialness of the Bible, parables or stories told about Jesus.

| | | |
|---------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Manger | Baby Jesus | Inn keeper |
| Mary | Star | Easter Bunny |
| Joseph | Angels | Gifts |

* See appendix 1 for picture version

* The pupils are to select the odd one out, i.e. The Easter Bunny (all others associate with Christmas)

Objective covered: AT1 level 2

Key Stage KS2

Aim: For pupils to recognise and describe some things to do with religion.

Activity: Christian based – being able to select Christian key concepts associated with Jesus’ baptism and match a definition or description to them. This is a pair or group based activity. (The words and definitions read across)

Differentiation: You can add pictures to the cards to aid recognition and you can increase or decrease the number of cards you give to the pupils.

Resources: below are cards with words associated with Jesus’ Baptism but you could do it with any aspect of Jesus’ life or those of Guru Nanak or Guru Gobind Singh or indeed the role and function of a Mosque in Islam or the role of a Rabbi in Judaism.

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Mission | A religious task, often to tell people about God. |
| Commitment | To make an agreement to do something. |
| Blessing | When God or someone on God’s behalf shows God’s love for us. |
| Sin | When we do something wrong. |
| Disciple | A follower of Jesus. |

Objective covered: AT1 level 4

Key Stage KS3

Aim: For pupils to describe simple similarities and differences both within and between religions.

Activity: Christian and Sikh based – this activity assumes that the pupils have done some work on Sikhism and Christianity - this could be done early in Term 1 of Year 7 to draw on work completed in the primary school. This is a pair or group based activity. Choose whether to emphasis the similarities or to work on the unique features of one religion. Pupils are to select the statements that they think reflect the same (or different) beliefs or actions in the two religions being studied.

Differentiation: You can add pictures to the cards to aid recognition and you can increase or decrease the number of cards you give to the pupils. The complexity of the terms and definitions can also be altered.

Resources: Cards with words associated with common features between Christianity and Sikhism.

| The Bible (Christianity) | The Guru Granth Sahib (Sikhism) |
|---|--|
| Christians believe that the Bible has authority and they follow its teachings | Sikhs believe that the Guru Granth Sahib has authority and they listen to what it says about how they should live. |
| Christians believe that the Bible should be used in worship and often read from the Bible during Church services | Sikhs believe that it is right that the Guru Granth Sahib be the focus of worship. |
| Christians believe that it is right that the Bible should guide a Christian's conscience. | Sikhs believe that the teachings of the Gurus contained in the Guru Granth Sahib should guide their moral decisions. |
| Christians believe that the Bible should have a place of honour in the Church and often put it on a lectern to the side of the Altar. | Sikhs believe that the Guru Granth Sahib should have a place of honour in a Gurdwara and will always place it at the front centre on the Manji Sahib, covered by a canopy called a Palki |
| Christians believe that you can have different interpretations of the words recorded in the Bible. | Sikhs believe that the Guru Granth Sahib can only be interpreted in one way. |
| Christians believe that the Bible was written by many different people over many years. | Sikhs believe that the Guru Granth Sahib was written by several different writers including some of the Gurus, Muslim and Hindu writers. |
| Christians believe they should show respect to the Bible by studying it. | Sikhs believe that you should show respect to the Guru Granth Sahib by keeping it in a special and protected place and carrying it above your head when you move it. |
| Christians can have many copies of the Bible at home. | Sikhs rarely have copies of the Guru Granth Sahib at home because the requirements for keeping one are challenging in a modern home. |
| Christians have translated the Bible in to many languages; it is no longer readily available in Britain in its original languages. | Sikhs have kept the Guru Granth Sahib in the same language and do not use translated versions for study or worship. |
| The Bible has many different types of writing within it including poetry and history. | The Guru Granth Sahib mainly contains poems or hymns. |

Key Stage KS4

Aim: For pupils to identify and discuss reasons why religious believers would care for the poor.

Activity: Pupils will identify reasons why a Christian would care for the poor. This can be done through brain storming or you can give the reasons to the pupils on cards. The pupils will then try to prioritise these reasons or decide what the most important factor is. If you give the cards to the pupils it is a good idea to put in some bogus ideas. This activity should be done in small groups of 3-4.

Differentiation: You can increase or decrease the number of cards you give to the pupils. The complexity of the terms and definitions can also be altered. You can add or reduce the number of reasons and you can make students come up with the ideas themselves. An effective way of preparing for this starter activity is to ask pupils to think about it for homework and then set the activity as a small group activity asking for similarities/differences etc.

Resources: Cards with words associated with caring for the poor and a ranking board if you want to use this. You will find an outline for a ranking board below.

| | |
|--|--|
| “Do not store up riches for yourselves here on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and robbers break in and steal. Instead, store up riches for yourselves in heaven....” | “Remember my son, that in your lifetime you were given all good things, while Lazarus got all the bad things. But now he is enjoying himself here while you are in pain” |
| “Take care of him: and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.” Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbour to the man who fell among robbers? He said, “The one who showed mercy on him.” (The Good Samaritan) | “Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?’..... And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my children, you did it to me.’” |
| “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you....” | “Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.” |
| “Thus when you give charity, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised be men.” | “Love your neighbour as yourself” |
| You should not be sorry for those in poverty but you should help them. | Help everyone even those that hate you. |

Ranking Chart

| | | | |
|-----|-----|-----|--------------------------|
| [] | | | Strongly agree |
| [] | | [] | Agree |
| [] | [] | | Disagree |
| | [] | [] | Strongly disagree |

Objective covered: AT2 level 2

Key Stage: KS1

Aim: For pupils to talk about the meaning of light as an important religious symbol. This activity can be linked with Diwali.

Activity: Hindu based – show a picture of a light. The pupils are to identify words, objects experiences that they associate with light to lead on to talking about the things that Hindus associate with light if you are lucky there will be some over lap in the ideas. This is a whole class based activity.

Differentiation: You can use the no hands rule to get pupils involved that are not normally involved. You can start with the pupils discussing their ideas in pairs to build up confidence.

Resources: An image of light.



Objective covered: AT2 level 3

Key Stage KS2

Aim: For pupils to describe how special times, places, or experiences are important or sacred to some people

Activity: A Muslim based activity that assumes previous learning– for pupils to select true statements about why the Hajj is important for a Muslim. This is a pair or group based activity. This is best done as a game. A pile of cards is put onto the table face down. Each pupil takes it in turn to turn over the top card. They must then state whether it is true or false and give a reason for this assertion. At the end one pupil from each group selects one of the true cards and explains why this is true to the class.

Differentiation: You can add pictures to the cards to aid recognition and you can increase or decrease the number of cards you give to the pupils.

Resources: below are cards with feelings and experiences associated with the Hajj, but this activity could be done with any religious experience that you cover for example festivals, places and acts of worship.

| | |
|---|---|
| Muslims complete the Hajj because it is one of the five pillars of Islam. | Muslims complete the Hajj because it is a good holiday destination. |
| Muslims complete the Hajj because it allows them to experience the historical routes of their religion. | Muslims complete the Hajj as a reminder that Muhammad (PBUH) reclaimed the city of Makkah for Allah (God) |
| Muslims complete the Hajj because as pilgrims they are walking in the footsteps of Muhammad (PBUH). | Muslims complete the Hajj for the exercise. |
| During the Hajj Muslims experience a sense of community and joy. | Muslims complete the Hajj to get together with family and friends. |
| Muslims complete the Hajj to visit a foreign country | Muslims complete the Hajj because they have to. |

| | | |
|---|---|----------|
| Muslims complete the Hajj because it is one of the five pillars of Islam. ✓ | Muslims complete the Hajj because it is a good holiday destination. X | B |
| Muslims complete the Hajj because it allows them to experience the historical routes of their religion. ✓ | Muslims complete the Hajj as a reminder that Muhammad (PBUH) reclaimed the city of Makkah for Allah (God) ✓ | |
| Muslims complete the Hajj because as pilgrims they are walking in the footsteps of Muhammad (PBUH). ✓ | Muslims complete the Hajj for the exercise. X | C |
| During the Hajj Muslims experience a sense of community and joy. ✓ | Muslims complete the Hajj to get together with family and friends. X | D |
| Muslims complete the Hajj to visit a foreign country X | Muslims complete the Hajj because they have to. X | E |

A – The Hajj is a religious pilgrimage not a holiday and Saudi Arabian Muslim’s aim to complete the Hajj at sometime during their lifetime.

B – As above.

C – Whilst the Hajj is physically demanding it is completed for spiritual not physical reasons.

D – Whilst a sense of community is a central theme of Islam, again this is not the main purpose and it is the idea of unity with strangers that is emphasised, whatever their race, language or social status.

E – The 5th Pillar of Islam is optional. It depends on a Muslims financial and physical ability to complete the Hajj, also their spiritual readiness is an important factor.

Objective covered: AT2 level 6

Key Stage KS3

Aim: Pupils will explain why Buddhism uses symbolism to express its ideas

Activity: This is a Buddhist based activity – the pupils will select or will be given (*only give one image and three possible descriptions, only one of which will be correct*) an image of the Buddha. Then using the cards provided, they will in pairs or small groups, decide what this image of the Buddha is trying to convey in a symbolic way and explain why they think this.

Differentiation: You can add more pictures you can increase or decrease the number of cards you give to the pupils. You can also include some false explanations to make selection more difficult.

Resources: Cards and images of the Buddha.

ICT: There are lots of images of the various Buddha's on the web which can be downloaded and your own cards made up. Some images are in meditative poses.

* **Bodhisattva:** One who seeks enlightenment for the sake of all living beings; a figure representing an aspect of enlightenment.



The Great Bodhisattvas

This image is most popular in Tibet where he is known as *Chenrezig*. He also represents compassion, he is often shown meditating and some images have a thousand arms which symbolize that he has a hand to help in every situation.



Manjusri

This name means 'Sweet Glory' and is a Mahayana image or Bodhisattva. Again compassion is represented, but also wisdom. His special task is to destroy ignorance and awaken spiritual knowledge. He is depicted with lotus flowers and/or holding a flaming sword to cut away ignorance.



Tara

A female image that represents compassion. She is often shown as green.



Maitreya

This is the popular image of a Bodhisattva. In China he is known as Mi-lo-fo, in the west we refer to him as the 'Laughing Buddha.' He represents kindness and is said to be the next incarnation of the Buddha. He is often shown with a sack.



Vajrapani

This image expresses energy and is often shown stamping the obstacles to enlightenment underfoot. He is sometimes described as wrathful.

Key Stage KS4

Aim: For pupils to reflect on whether the Universe is designed or is random chance.

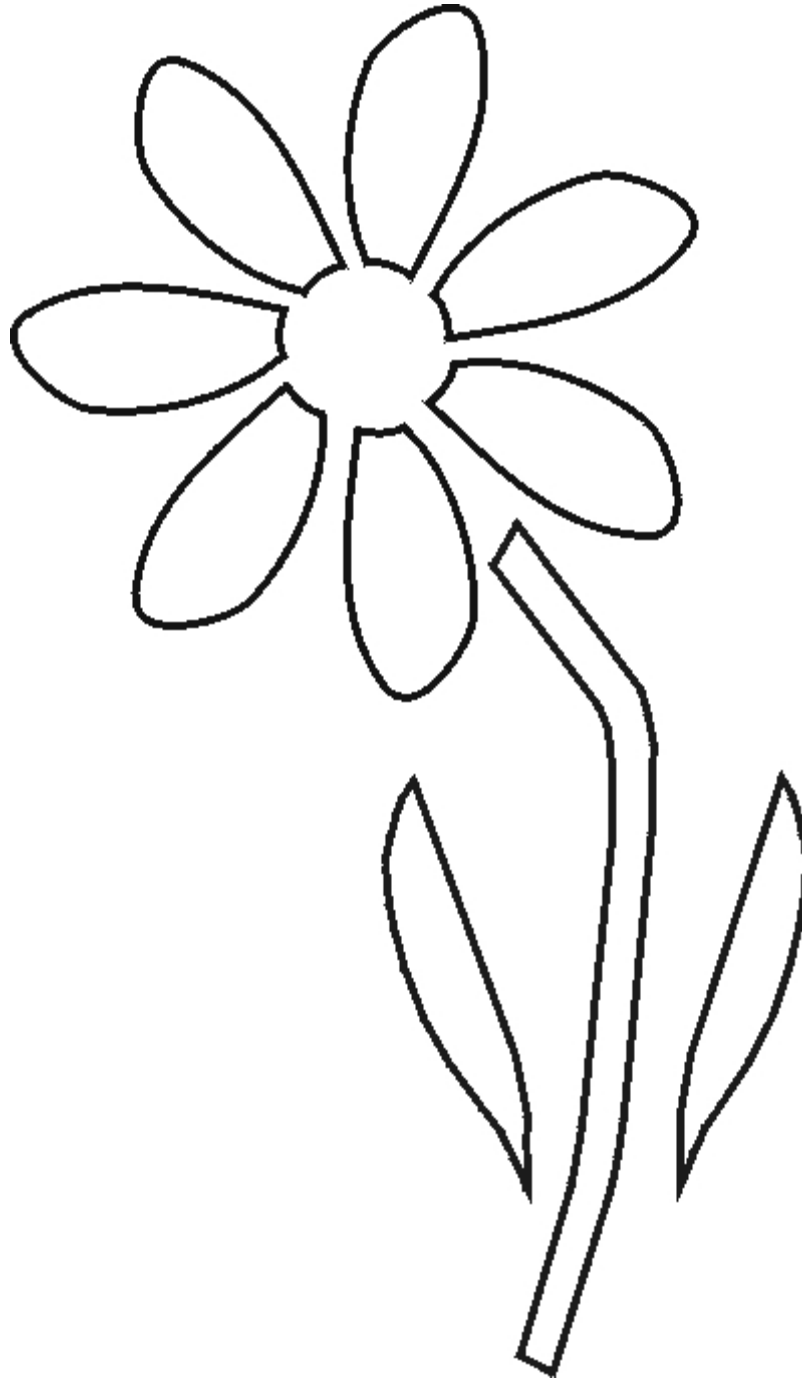
Activity: Pupils should do this activity in pairs or 3s. The pupils will throw the dice or flower pieces and record the number of times a certain combination of numbers come up or the number of times a flower is formed. You could just do two sixes with the dice if you want. They can then work out probabilities and practise their maths and you can discuss the changes of the universe being random chance or designed. The flower petals rarely form a shape that resembles a flower. This would produce a random chance of a flower forming of zero. This can be a good point of discussion on the probabilities of a flower ever forming from this method. More gifted pupils may be able to discuss the probability of the number of times a recognisable flower might be form if the petals were thrown a billion times.

Differentiation: This will mainly be done in the way pupils report back their results and conclusions. If they give oral feed back then this should be done through the no hands rule, but you could get them to write a conclusion.

Resources: Dice or the flower shape below cut out and a means of recording their results.

Cross-curricular: Maths

| Record the number of times the dice come up with the combinations below. | | |
|--|---------|---------|
| 6 and 6 | 2 and 4 | 1 and 1 |
| | | |
| None of the above | | |
| | | |



| The number of time a flower was formed | The number of times a flower was not formed |
|--|---|
| | |

The activity below can be adapted to any key stage by altering the image and the complexity of the drawings. At KS3 it should also include words or even instructions for a diagram type images.

Objective covered: AT1 level 1

Key Stage: KS1

Aim: For pupils to recall a story they have been taught

Activity: Judaism – being able to recall a story by sequencing the pictures in the right order. This is a pair or group based activity.

Differentiation: You can add words to the pictures. (*I have included enough pictures for a lesson activity – select 2-3 for a starter.*)

Resources: Cards with images and or words associated with a story you are studying. Larger versions can be found in the appendix.







With special thanks to Otis Marriott (GGGS) for the illustrations.

Objective covered: AT1 level 2/3

Key Stage KS2

Aim: For pupils to recognise and describe some things to do with religion.

Activity: Judaism – divide the pupils into teams of 4. One pupil is the ‘artist’ in the group and they must draw what the other pupils describe. One by one the other pupils will come up to the front where they will spend 30-40 seconds looking at a third of the image below. It is important to keep the rest of the image covered. Give them 1 minute to describe what they saw to the ‘artist’ and for the artist to draw it. Then the next pupil comes up and they see the next third of the image and so on. Keep the pace up; do not let the starter take more than 5 minutes. At the end each group shows their work and explains what they think the images is of, you then can reveal the original image. It is a good idea to reward the best groups attempt at the image.

Differentiation: The images complexity can be altered. Colour can be added.

Resources: The image and paper and pencils if the image is in colour you may need colouring pencils plus a piece of paper the same size and shape as the image with $\frac{1}{3}$ or $\frac{1}{4}$ removed to facilitate the pupils only seeing one segment of the image at a time.



Seder Plate

Objective covered: AT1 level 5

Key Stage KS3

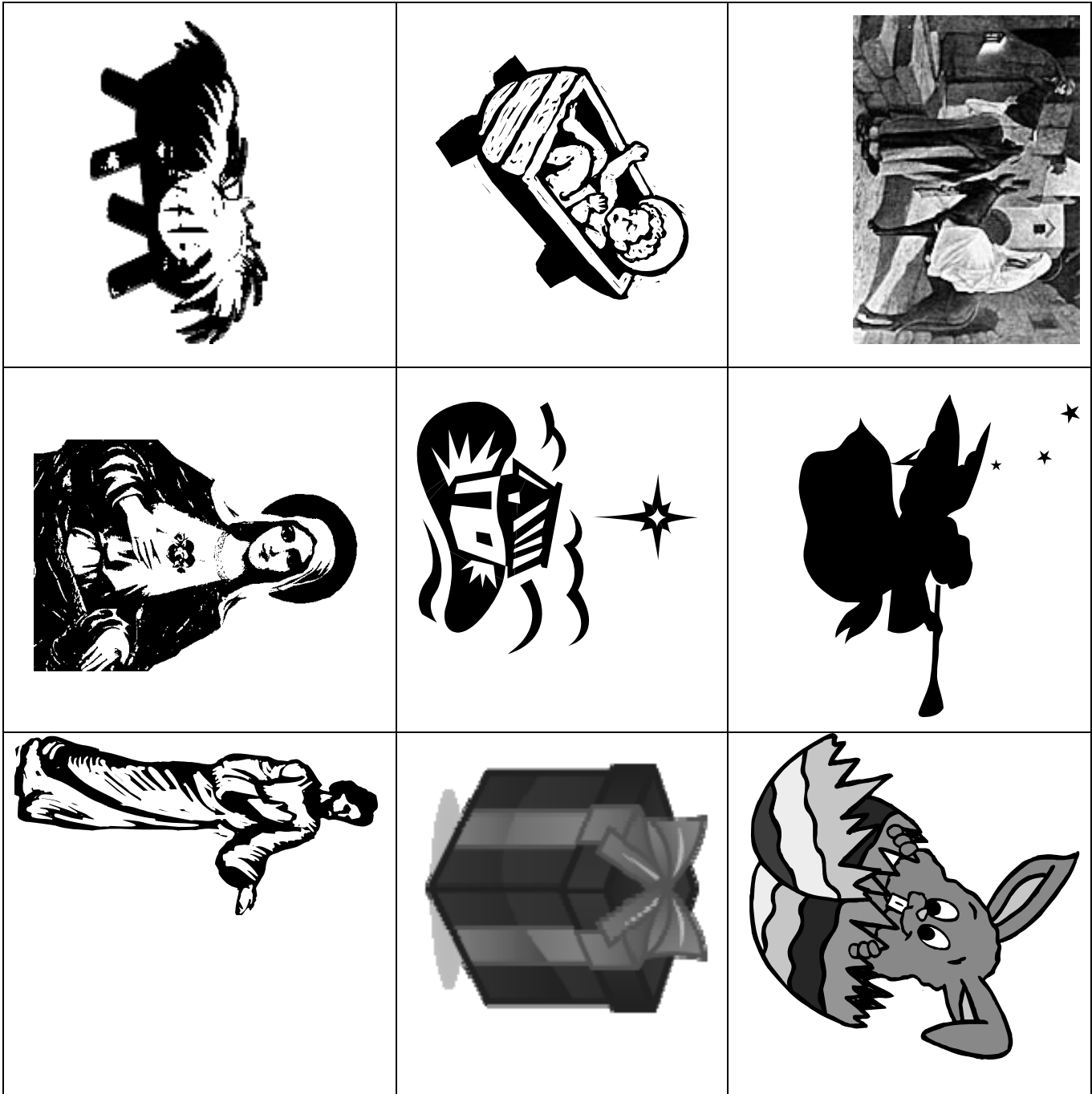
Aim: Pupils will explain and use a wide range of terms when studying religions

Activity: This is a Sikh based activity – The pupils will be given a selection of Sikh principles and they will have 2 minutes to work out a simple mime to depict this principle. A selection will then perform to the class and the class will have to guess the principle.

Differentiation: You can do this activity as a group or pair activity or you can have the pupils working on their own. You do not have to use all the cards below, select as appropriate.

Resources: Cards

| | |
|--|--|
| Generosity – Vand chakraa | Honest work – Kirit Kama |
| Equality | Respect |
| Service – Sewa | Tolerance |
| Commitment | Not to take non-medicinal drugs |
| To respect and enjoy the natural world | Not to abuse the use of alcohol |
| To remember God’s name through meditation | To remove self-centeredness |
| To control lust | To control greed |
| To control anger | Not to have worldly attachments |
| To be humble and not show pride | To over come ignorance |



Appendix 2









Appendix 3

Post 16

Starters for Post 16 students can and often should be very different from other year groups. You will often plan a series of lessons and so may only want to do a planned starter activity for the first of these, preferring to do recap activities in the other lessons. These planned starters could justifiably therefore take longer than just 10 minutes and should be skills based and not content led. Some teachers prefer to have a ritual start to the lesson which is based on getting the students into a working frame of mind. Others believe in originality. The style of teaching affects what we choose to do at this level. One teacher I know offers a challenge at the start of his lessons with money incentives for the first pupil to achieve or answer the challenge. In the 30 odd years he has been teaching I do not think anyone has won the money, but it does not stop the students from trying. This would be regarded as a 'brave activity' by most of us and I would not necessarily recommend that most of us try it but it does illustrate that A level teaching can be very different and while we can adapt some starters from lower down the school sometimes we need to think 'outside of the box' to stimulate our sixth formers.

Another issue to consider is the length of lessons. In my school there are often double and sometimes triple lessons for AS and A2. Doing three starter activities appears a little silly but we do need to ensure some short activities to break up the lessons consolidate learning and move learning onto the next stage. It helps keep the students on task and keeps their (and our) interest going.

I would suggest that what we are looking for is not so much a starter activity as an introduction or a recall activity from a previous lesson. These activities are best when they are active. Get your students moving! Put questions around the room based on the key skills needed for an essay, or analysis of a text. Give them a text with the answers in it and let them work it out in pairs. The first pair to complete all three or four questions correctly gets a prize. Instead of getting them to match words and definitions from a selection on their desk, give each a definition and a word that do not match and they have to move around the class to find both their partners within a given time frame.

Drawing and even colouring can be turned into a short activity to get them going. Give each student a word or short phrase that is central to a new topic. They then have to find out what it means and then turn that into an image. Once every one has completed their image they are posted around the room and students work out what the key phrases or words are from the images. It will take longer than ten minutes but the students will enjoy it and they are more likely to remember the words and phrases.

A good recall activity is to give each pupil an A3 piece of paper and get them to start a mind map. They can draw an image, write a word or a short phrase that sums up what they think is an important aspect that they learnt from the previous section of the lesson. The pieces of paper are then put aside and left. Between 30 and 45 minutes later (depending on the length of the time you have together) they get a different A3 sheet back, one started by another pupil, and they now have to add to that in a way that shows a clear connection between the ideas that is on the paper and something that they have just learnt. This is repeated as often as you want or as the time allows and each time the student has to justify the links being made. By the end of you double or triple lesson you should have several mind maps each with a contribution from several or even all of your students (depending on the size of the group) showing connection between the ideas you have been studying.

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