



Good Learning in RE

Films for teachers from NATRE: sponsored by Culham St Gabriel's Trust and the Diocese of Saint Albans

Film 5: A Pastor's Week in 9 Objects / 9-11 year olds

This lesson aims to help pupils understand the life and worship of a Christian community, and to reflect on life in their own communities. It is part of a longer sequence of lessons on worship and community, through which pupils deepen their understanding of the impacts of Christianity on life. The stimulus, or 'raw materials' are nine artefacts, set in the context of a story of a Minister's week. The story of the week includes activity for children, welcoming a baby, celebrating a wedding and taking a funeral. The pupils consider what the meaning of the events might be, and how the Minister's work might help people in different times of their lives, making links to their own lives. They think about how Christian community life reflects and interacts with stories of Jesus and scripture.

Key RE Concepts:

Beliefs, religious practice, worship, community, questions of meaning and belonging.

Key vocabulary and ideas:

- Vocabulary and concepts: cross, crucifix, baptism, wedding, funeral, worship, thanksgiving, God, Minister, church.
- Pupils learn more about the community life of a church and some ways the community supports people at different times. They apply their own ideas about 'life cycle rituals' in the context of the Christian community.
- Engaging with values and purposes: whether pupils are themselves members of a faith community or not, the work will challenge them to think about who matters to them, and how it shows, comparing the Christian community's ways of caring with others they know about, enquiring into the meanings of symbols and actions.



Pedagogy and Learning Method:

This film shows Helen Melidoro, the teacher, using 9 artefacts that are set in a story context. The learning methods are all focused on children thinking for themselves – information is provided, but the learning happens when the pupils use it and link it to their own experiences. Imagine the minister (he's local – the children know him from their school life) has four things to do this week, and decides to choose an artefact to help him with each of the four events. The children work out which artefact is best suited to meeting spiritual needs in each event, and say why. They think about how to explain the meaning of the artefact in the context. They consider the cash value, but also the symbolic value and meaning, of each artefact. They think about the ways the community supports people. They move on to design and make artefacts themselves, suggesting meaning and symbolism. Through all the work, Helen focuses on the idea of worshipping or serving God, building creative conceptual links between each part of the work.

Links to key RE strands:

This work is about beliefs and teachings, religious practices and ways of living and questions of belonging and value.

Lesson outline:

Pupils hear the beginning of a story about their local Minister. On Monday morning, Reverend Hudson, sits down at his desk and gets out the diary. It says:

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|-----------------|--|
| • Monday PM: | Take the Infants School Assembly |
| • Tuesday AM: | Meet John and Diana about the Christening for baby Joe next Sunday |
| • Wednesday PM: | Meet Evie and Jonathan: Wedding planning for Saturday |
| • Thursday 1pm: | Mr Stringer's funeral. |

He looks in the desk drawer, and finds nine artefacts – crosses and so on, which people have given him recently. He decides to use one for each of the four events. Which should he take to each of the four appointments? Why? What will he say to each of the people he meets? Children begin by ranking the nine artefacts in order of cost, guessing what they are worth. Then they rank them again, from more to less 'child friendly'. Then a third ranking asks: which of these would mean a lot to a Christian person, and why?

At the primary school, the assembly is great. Then the head teacher says 'It's really nice of you to take the Year 6 lesson. We're all looking forward to it, especially because you're doing such a tricky topic: 'What makes you feel close to God'. The minister screams inside: he has forgotten all about this. But he goes to the lesson, says a quick silent prayer for help and puts the nine artefacts on the floor in circle time. He asks the pupils: can you organise these into a diamond nine? Which are most likely to help a Christian feel close to God? Which are least to do with God? The lesson goes well.

He meets the couple having the baby Christened, and does the wedding planning. At the funeral, he gives Mrs Stringer the object he chose for her. Ask pupils: what would you write in these three cards? You could give them some Bible verses to choose from for this part of the task. They could be asked to write prayers, meditations or reflections (keep it inclusive, of course!)

Learning intentions:

In this lesson, we wanted pupils across a range of abilities to learn to:

- Use religious words to identify some objects Christians might use on different occasions (e.g. at Church, at a Christening or a wedding, in a time of trouble); [L2]
- Ask lots of questions about worship and praying, and look for some answers for myself; [L2]
- Describe how a Christian minister helps people during one week; [L3]
- Describe some Christian beliefs and teachings about prayer, Jesus, community life; [L3]
- Describe some different aspects of Christian community life; [L3]
- Understand some similarities and differences between different occasions when belief is shown or prayer is used; [L4]
- Use the right words to show understanding of how and why a Christian minister works to help people; [L4]
- Apply the ideas of community, praying, believing or celebrating for themselves; [L4]
- Enquire into the ways a Christian community works and the reasons why Christians value their church, explaining points of view [L5]



What makes for good learning in this example?

There are many features of good RE learning in this short film.



- The teacher uses **artefacts** well. Religious objects in the classroom are used for education not devotion. If they are treated with respect and care, teachers' actions speak louder than words in demonstrating these attitudes.
- The objects **open a window** into the realities of religious life as it is. The pupils are enabled to use skills of empathic imagination and to think of meanings behind actions, objects and symbols.
- The information the pupils have, or learn, is functional: they do something with it, **constructing meanings** as part of their engagement with the story of Rev Hudson's week.
- All the work makes **links to the child's own experience**
- **Resources** are well used: sometimes a school has spent money on a collection of artefacts, but does nothing much with them. Here, by contrast, every object is part of a story.
- **Decision making** and judgement tasks make pupils **discuss thoughtfully** the meaning, use, value and significance of the objects.
- **Higher achievers** are challenged to raise questions of their own and investigate, giving pupils lots of opportunities for simple interpretation. Not all the good learning is seen in the film, because the lesson is part of a longer sequence of ideas and practice.

Running a lesson like this: what do you need to do?

The lesson model is simple – any teacher can use this. Pupils will, sequentially, be involved in:

- **Exploring:** 'Playing' with the objects, guessing their value, talking about what they are, labelling them, fitting them into a story. They use all the senses and think and feel as well.
- **Questioning:** How many questions can the children ask about the objects? The story makes them ask what each would best be used for, what they symbolise, what they mean to believers. They find some answers for themselves, by sharing ideas and making decisions. It is good to speculate: they make guesses to answers to all their questions.
- **Reflecting:** On the different reasons why objects are special or significant for Christians, and to themselves or others in different situations. They think about how and why the object is used – e.g. in worship, for comfort, to feel close to God, to tell a story, to mark a special day.
- **Responding:** Good RE says – 'do something active to express and develop your thoughts and questions.' E.g. design a 'questions and answers' sheet, create a story about the object, make a container to hold it, design a similar one yourself, do a labelled diagram that include 4 emotional words.

You could use 9 artefacts, with small copied pictures of them to give to groups of pupils. Photos are not a good as the objects themselves, but will still work. A similar lesson using Jewish or Hindu artefacts would work well, telling a story of a Rabbi or a Swami.

The pupils' activities include:

1. Diamond 9 (A). Arrange the cards in rows of 1-2-3-2-1 with the most child friendly at the top, the least child friendly at the bottom. What do you think makes a religious artefact child friendly?
2. Diamond 9 (B). Rearrange them: most expensive at the top and cheapest at the bottom.
3. Which for whom? Suggest which of the nine objects you might choose to send to a person getting married, with a new baby, or going to a funeral. Which would you give to an infant school assembly? Which of the nine are more to do with God and which are the least to do with God? Would they make some people feel close to God? Use the 1-2-3-2-1 pattern to show your views. (What would an atheist do with this task?)

Creative Curriculum Connections

The work here links RE to some other curriculum areas including PSHE and design technology. Pupils might do some D&T creative work making objects themselves. Teaching could make historical connections if the artefacts you chose were from long ago: a local church might loan some objects for this, making local history a focus.

Resources

From RE Today (www.retoday.org.uk): the folder of copiable materials called RE Ideas: Christianity is useful, along with books in the series 'Opening Up RE' on Christianity, Easter, Thankfulness and Belonging

Also see: www.reonline.org.uk

Notes written by Lat Blaylock, with thanks to all the teachers and pupils involved.