

Using debating to teach evaluation at GCSE Religious Studies

Beth Eades

beades@repton.org.uk

Session overview

- Context and background
- Why oracy?
- Building skills throughout KS3/4
- Using formal debating



The context

The wider context

- Oracy Commission Report – came out this month
 - Oracy as the 4th 'R' – key part of teachers' repertoire at all ages, stages, and subjects
- OCR review of the 11-16 curriculum
- Oracy APPG
- Voice21 – Oracy Framework
- **Basically:** exciting time for oracy in education
- **But:** how to build into our existing classroom practices?

My research

- Oxford MSc Learning and Teaching
- On That Point! Oracy and empowerment: An investigation in the use of debating and oracy to teach evaluation skills
- Research questions:
 1. What is 'oracy', and how can it be taught?
 2. What are the benefits of debate and oracy?
 3. How is oracy implemented across the curriculum?



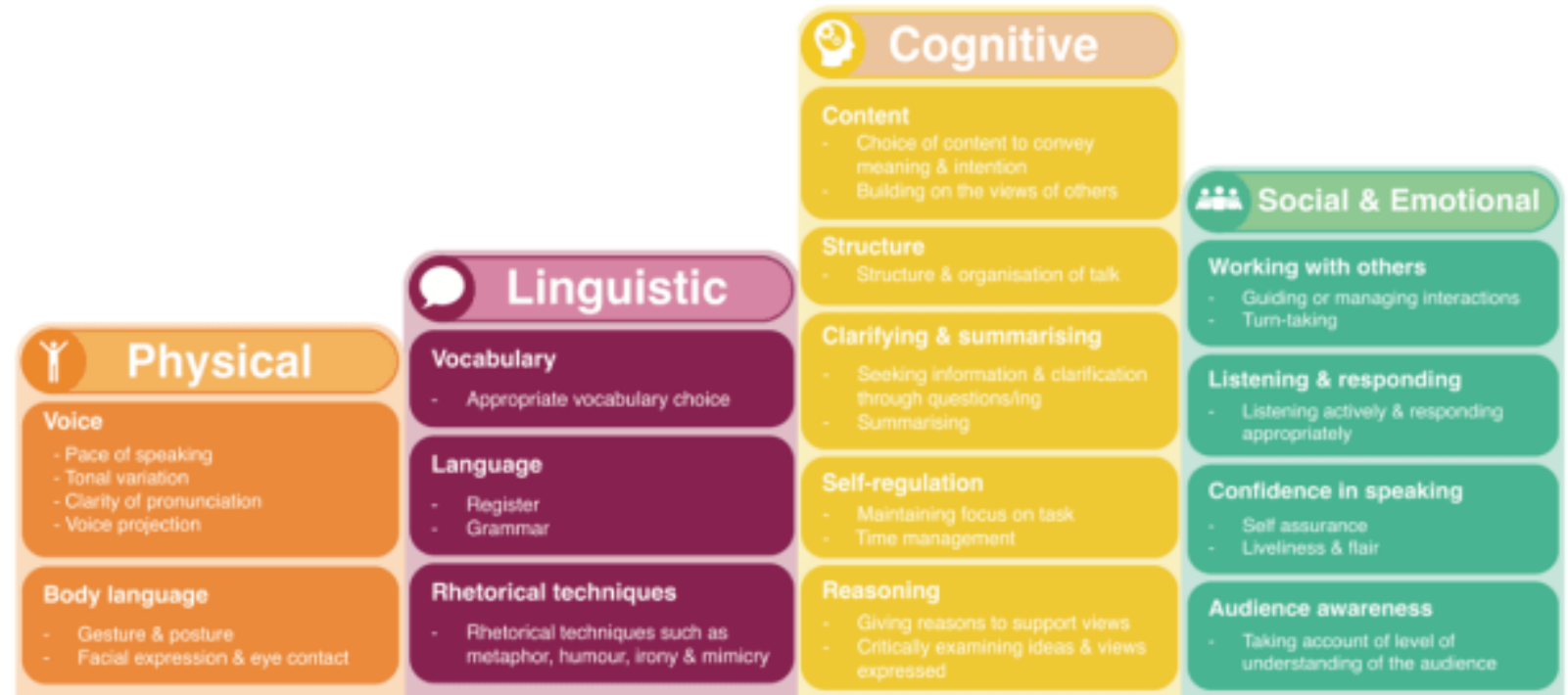
Why oracy?

What even is oracy?

- Tricky to define – not one set definition
- Wilkinson (1965) – “the ability to use the oral skills of speaking and listening”
- Oracy commission (2024) defined it as:
“Articulating ideas, developing understanding and engaging with others through speaking, listening and communication”
 - Learning to talk
 - Learning through talk
 - Learning about talk

Voice 21 – Oracy Skills Framework

The Oracy Skills Framework and Glossary



Newman (2020) – critical vs. performance oracy

- Schools are generally pretty good at performance oracy
- Critical oracy can sometimes be scarier
- “Critical oracy is talk that involves engaging with other people, ideas and the outside world and includes discussion, debate, advocacy, enquiry and role play”
- Philosophy in its purest form IS critical oracy

Barriers to oracy

The barriers

- Nothing in the books – nothing to evidence learning or revise from
- Being that loud classroom – perception you've lost control
- Behaviour
- Perception it should be co-curricular
- SEND

Mindset shift!

- Goal of student outcomes, not SLT accountability
- Written output = poor proxy for learning
- Different kinds of loud
- Start with small tasks and build up
- PE analogy (Newman)
- Scaffolding – can help build the skill

Example of tracking oracy on a digital classroom

← → OneNote for Windows 10 Bethany E

Home Insert Draw View Help Class Notebook

↶ ↷ ✎ 🔄 ⬆️

Why are these stories still useful?

4 marker practice

Belief + belief
Belief + action

- Explain two ways in which the Four Sights the Buddha saw **influence** Buddhists today.

Point + Explain
Point + Explain

4 marker practice

- The Four Sights influences Buddhists today because without them Buddhism would not exist.
- Buddhists follow Buddhism today because Buddha's teaching arose out of the Four Sights.

• The buddha Saw a dead man
↳ finite life - live a good life

• Sick man
↳ help people get better to reduce suffering

- When the Buddha left the palace his predicament for his first time he was surrounded by different versions of suffering old men, sick men, war, women & being poor

The Concept of samsara death, and the re-incarnation but someone that takes it more deeply, even has the potential of saved life if you have one more thing to do, we need to stop pursuing things which bring us happiness for ourselves but also suffering for others, and finally to a life of enlightenment

Buddha explains the 4 sights how as gullible today is to be taken wrong for ignorance if you are unaware of it, you will never adapt to it and make no change like the Buddha did to achieve enlightenment ✓

Analyse

- Life is sacred because the Buddha was shocked when he saw death for the first time, realise it was inevitable due unpredictable ✓

- Encourages enlightenment as life-sorrow is varied matter so we may man inspired him

- Buddha was shocked to find out that people die, life is sacred.
↳ realise.
- Got old age - life has a limit so Buddhists appreciate it. ↳ don't take it for granted.
↳ given it as a gift.

When the Buddha recognised how he began to think about himself, he realised that he was not perfect. He had to accept who he was and what he was capable of. He had to let go of his ego and his pride. This led him to become a Buddhist.

This also happens to be another 3 years later he is a real pain So follows Can accept his mess and see how many to believe him.

Point + explain = 2

explain 2 ways in which the 4 sights the Buddha saw influence Buddhists today

The four sights influenced the Buddha's teachings. The first sight was old age, sickness, and death. The second sight was poverty and suffering. The third sight was the suffering of all beings. The fourth sight was the suffering of the Buddha himself. These four sights led the Buddha to realize that life is suffering and that there is a way to end suffering. This led him to become a Buddhist.

If I remember right, the Buddha said the three truths, the four noble truths, and the eightfold path. The three truths are that life is suffering, that suffering comes from desire, and that desire can be ended. The four noble truths are that there is suffering, that suffering has a cause, that suffering can be ended, and that there is a way to end suffering. The eightfold path is a set of practices that lead to the end of suffering.



**Building skills
throughout KS3/4**

Student confidence?

- You will have some students who don't want to speak in a formal debate
 - Never had any unable to take part in some of the games I'm about to suggest
 - Tactics for including in the development of argument overall
- Generally, practice builds confidence
- Stuff you've never done before – inherently scarier than familiar stuff
- As much about listening as about speaking
- **Avoid:** token oracy

The basics – building up the skills

- Building skills for the more formal methods later on
 - Scaffold – we do this with writing, so do it with talk
- Coloured cards to reflect different responses
- Silent debate
- String rebuttal
- Line game (officially I call it a beliefs continuum, but the kids just call it the line game)

Beliefs continuum...

How it works:

- Stand on the line at the point that best matches your point of view
- Be prepared to defend your view!
- You can move if someone else persuades you

Beliefs continuum...

Crisps are better than chocolate

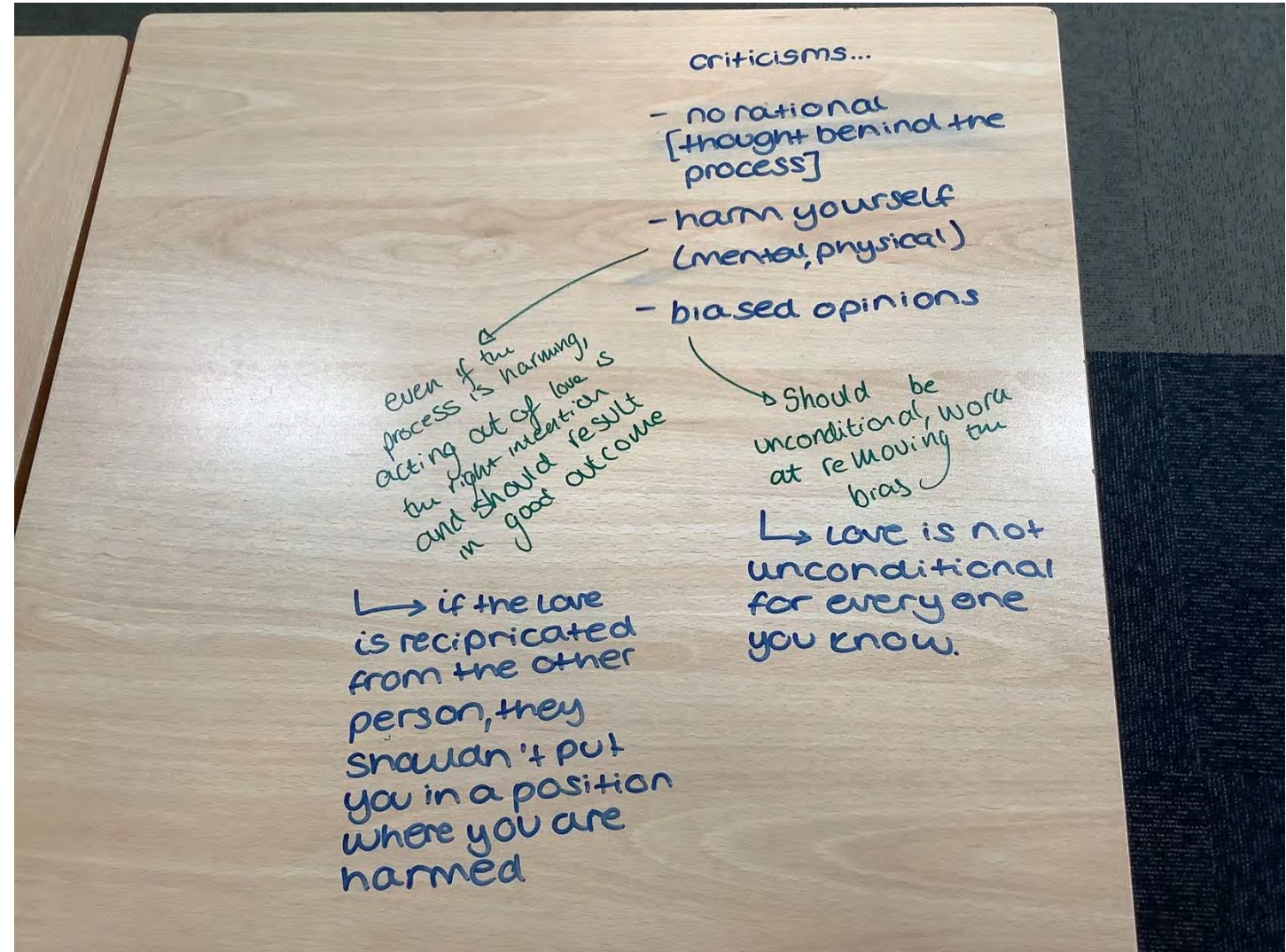
100% agree

50/50

100% disagree



6th form silent debate – is agape all we need?





Using formal debating

Why it works at GCSE

- Context: AQA Religious Studies A full course GCSE
- Wanted a structure that contained entire debate to one lesson
 - Better manages student absence etc.
 - You don't get lots of research time in the GCSE either!
 - Main competition format we use is also a short prep format
- The statements in the 12 markers for AQA often resemble a debate topic

The debate format

- 3 speakers per side; 5-minute speeches (some won't hit this – doesn't matter!)
- 15 minutes preparation with the rest of the class acting as 'research assistants'
 - You can 1-2 assistants per speaker
- You can also utilise students as judges if you have more of them – spend those 15 minutes getting them up to speed on how to decide who has won
- OR just do a class vote – I tend to lean in this direction



Speaker 1: introduce their team's arguments and make 2 of their own

Speaker 2 and 3: make 2-3 points, rebut arguments made by opponents

Speaker 3: make 2 points, summarise their team's argument and why they have won

Rest of class: make notes using essay conclusion sheet (resource 2)

Example essay conclusion sheet

"The Just War theory are the only guidelines we need to decide if we should go to war"

Essay Conclusion

Essay question:

The Just War Theory are the only guidelines we need to decide if we should go to war.

Arguments to agree with the statement (made by the proposition)	Arguments to disagree with the statement (made by the opposition)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ensures fairness and justiceJus ad bellum - rules before war - ensure we only go to war if necessary.Harm reduction - greatest good, but not harm innocent civilians.Rules for war require greatest good → Abu BakrJus in bello - reasonable chance for successJus post bellum - rebuild post war.Sometimes war is lesser of two evils.UtilitarianismEnsure proper oversight and checks are in place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Christian theory - so Muslims need another theory to follow.Lesser Jihad is necessary → 2nd biggest religion. → so largely followed.Killing's wrong, so why do we accept it in war?Quakers - pacifist ChristiansKilling is against God's commands.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Do not repay evil for evil- Turn the other cheek.Islam - means peaceCan't predict the future - reasonable chance of success?'Just cause' is hugely subjectiveAllows violence rather than restraining it.All nations have capabilities to fight.Terrorists ignore 'just' - making nations following just theory vulnerable.

My conclusion (which side I think is right and WHY)

Disagree

- "only" - are examples of other instances e.g. lesser Jihad
- Too subjective - is very possible that what's just to one may be unjust to another.

Essay rebuttal

Way to build that skill of responding directly – avoid evaluation by juxtaposition

Essay Rebuttal

Essay question: 'Infant Baptism is not as important as Believers Baptism'	
Arguments to agree written by: [redacted]	Rebuttal written by: [redacted]
Arguments to agree with the statement	Rebuttal (direct responses to the arguments)
<p>= The decision to live a life dedicated to Jesus is what saves a person, rather than the Baptism itself.</p> <p>↳ Believer Baptism - when asked whether willing to change their lives, the person gives a testimony of their faith to Jesus</p>	<p>The child can be immediately welcomed into the Christian church as soon as possible.</p>
<p>cleanses sin and rising to a new life in Christ</p> <p>↳ Believer Baptism can be used as fresh start. People should be old enough to consciously make a mature decision about their faith.</p>	<p>Infant baptism can be a cleansed start from the very beginning and therefore already has a relationship with God.</p>
<p>Believer Baptism feeling of community and child of god.</p> <p>↳ Become member of Christian church</p> <p>At any age by choice</p>	<p>parents make choices for the best and if brought up in a Christian household then the person won't know any different.</p>

Essay planning sheet

Building that rebuttal into your essay planning

Essay Plan

Essay question:	
The Just War Theory are the only guidelines we need to decide if we should go to war	
First argument to AGREE every element of war, before, during after, bring back together	This argument is strong/weak because... Could you include a counter-point here? - causing deadly damage and trauma - so have no war + no guidelines
Second argument to AGREE Jews showed that violence was necessary: table flipping	This argument is strong/weak because... Could you include a counter-point here? - using goes against God's commandments: Do not repay evil for evil / turn the other cheek
Third argument to AGREE Someone's war is the result of two evils - lost jobs	This argument is strong/weak because... Could you include a counter-point here? - human beings - does not pass categorical imperative
First argument to DISAGREE Christian Theory so Muslims/ other faiths need something else - e.g. Jihad	This argument is strong/weak because... Could you include a counter-point here? - Abu Bakr - rules for war require greatest good
Second argument to DISAGREE who gets to decide to declare war / highly subjective criteria	This argument is strong/weak because... Could you include a counter-point here?
Third argument to DISAGREE (Overlaps + previous) goes with most people's broad rules + just cause	This argument is strong/weak because... Could you include a counter-point here? Subjective
Therefore... (what you will conclude) I partly agree	Because... (why you will conclude it) good general moral criteria some religions may need different criteria due to religion



Any questions?