

## Common Pupil Misconceptions in Religious Education

Misconceptions are barriers to learning that need to be addressed before pupils can progress. Please note that this list is not comprehensive, and not everyone will agree that these are all misconceptions - we need to be mindful of that. However, the 'misconceptions' listed here are claims that teachers will often hear from pupils that are either incorrect, or need careful placing in a wider context in order to help pupils to have a better understanding.

I am mindful that these, by their very nature, are sensitive and potentially controversial. However, I believe that we must be authentic and balanced in our representations, and not shy away from the darker, more problematic aspects of our subject. The intention is to support teachers to identify and begin to work through how they might address these important aspects of RE. There is no claim that these responses are definitive and I am very keen to be advised on how to improve the guidance. Email me [k.steele@worc.ac.uk](mailto:k.steele@worc.ac.uk)

### Initial teacher training and early career framework

*2.7 Where prior knowledge is weak, pupils are more likely to develop misconceptions, particularly if new ideas are introduced too quickly (**plan to avoid misconceptions**)*

*3.4 Anticipating common misconceptions within particular subjects is an important aspect of curricular knowledge; working closely with colleagues to develop an understanding of likely misconceptions is valuable (**anticipate misconceptions**)*

*6.1 Effective assessment is critical to teaching because it provides teachers with information about pupils' understanding and needs (**check for misconceptions**)*

## General Misconceptions about Religion and Worldviews

Misconception	Clarification
Only religious people have worldviews.	Everyone has a worldview; some may be partially or very influenced by religion, and some not much at all. See this great video to explain: <a href="https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/comment/2021/05/12/worldviews-film">https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/comment/2021/05/12/worldviews-film</a>
All religious people believe exactly the same thing.	Religions are diverse and internally varied; each person has a worldview that might be shaped by religion, but also by a variety of other factors (see above)
Religions never change/ Religious people are conservative	Beliefs and practices evolve constantly. We need to present pupils with a range of religious believers and help them to understand the context in which religious ideas have emerged and developed. There are many examples of religion acting as a force for change. We should engage our pupils in discussion of this issue – a great enquiry question would be ‘is religion conservative or radical’?
Being ‘religious’ and being ‘spiritual’ are the same.	Religious affiliation and personal spirituality may be connected, but they are different. Some people claim to be spiritual but not religious.
If someone doesn’t believe in God, they have no moral values.	Morality can exist independently of religion (this claim might be scrutinised with older pupils, and is covered in A-level content)
Religious belief is based on ‘blind faith’.	Reason, experience, and tradition are all central to belief. We need to question the idea that religious belief is random and irrational.
All religions teach the same thing.	Religions share values but differ theologically and culturally; be aware of the lens through which religions are being viewed and consider if that distorts what is being taught. Avoid over-generalisations.
RE teachers are all religious/ RE is about making you religious	The purpose of RE is not to make pupils believe anything, but rather to use a range of academic disciplines (theology, philosophy, social sciences etc.) to develop a greater knowledge and understanding of religious and non-religious beliefs/practices/ worldviews.
Religion is not important in society/ RE is of no value	The 2021 Census shows that the majority of the population in England describes themselves as religious, and our political structures still have strong connections with the Church. The Bloom Report looks at the role of religion in the UK in some detail <a href="#">Link to Bloom Report</a> . It is also worth looking at international data on religious affiliation (see the Pew Research Centre for a good source of data <a href="#">Link to Pew Research</a> ).

	The data suggests that religion is still growing globally and non-religion is nowhere near as prevalent as our pupils tend to think. Help pupils to understand that secularisation is very evident in the west, but not so much in other parts of the world (but this is an increasingly complex picture – RELIGION IS MESSY!).
Religion causes problems in society/ wars etc.	This is a very common view among pupils and should be examined carefully with them. It is important to recognise the dark side of religion and take pupils' concerns seriously (see the Bloom Report mentioned above for an examination of some of these concerns in the UK). However, as the report shows, religious organisations also contribute a huge amount to society, and there are many studies that say religious people benefit greatly from their faith. There are many misconceptions about religion and wars (the Crusades and Nazi persecution of Jews is often raised by pupils in this context). This might be a good opportunity to work with our history colleagues to unpick the complex causes of such events. We need to challenge the lazy, misinformed and dangerous claim that is often heard. that religion caused WW2 and the persecution of Jewish people.
God is male/ religion is sexist/ homophobic etc.	Again, this is a common claim made by pupils and can lead them to have very negative attitudes towards religion. We must acknowledge that there is a case to be made here, but also that there are a huge variety of interpretations of scripture and tradition and challenge the generalisations and over-simplifications that these claims are often based on. There is much in the life of Jesus and the early Church, or the life of Muhammad and early Islam, for example, that would raise significant questions about such claims (e.g. role of female Deacons in the letters of St. Paul, or the role of Khadijah and Aisha in early Islam). In terms of homophobia, some voices are given much more airtime than others; teachers should help pupils to explore the diversity within traditions and examine religious teachings and texts to ensure a fully rounded and nuanced understanding of these complex issues.
Religion and science are in conflict/ Religious belief is unreasonable i.e. not based in reason	See section on Christian interpretation of the Bible below. This is a complex area and many pupils have very fixed ideas about the nature of science and religion that need careful unpicking. This film can be helpful for allowing you and pupils to consider the relationship between science and religion - <a href="#">Worlds Apart</a>
Heaven and hell are physical places.	This is complex. Some religious people do view them as physical places. The Qur'an, for example, gives detailed descriptions of them However, they are often viewed symbolically or spiritually.

Arranged marriage

Common misconceptions about arranged marriages include that they are forced, loveless, lack compatibility, and deny agency, but modern arranged marriages often involve significant consent, allow love to grow over time through shared commitment, focus on family values & compatibility (not just strangers), and give individuals choice, with success depending on mutual effort rather than the initial meeting method. Careful unpicking of this is necessary, including the extent to which religion and culture are factors. It is important to make a distinction between forced and arranged marriages, and to use this opportunity to safeguard against forced marriage (see link to a government leaflet on forced marriage: [Link](#) and an article on the difference between arranged and forced marriage: [Link](#)). Here is a link to a video on finding a partner in Islam: [Link](#)

## Christianity

Misconception	Clarification
Jesus did not exist/ is a fictional character	Most historians agree that Jesus really existed as a historical person. There are records about him outside the Bible, written by people at the time or shortly after, like the Roman historian Tacitus and the Jewish historian Josephus. While different people have different beliefs about who he was — for example, whether he was the Son of God — the idea that Jesus didn't exist at all isn't supported by history
Jesus founded Christianity/ Jesus was a Christian	Jesus did not found Christianity, and he was not a Christian. He was a Jewish man who lived and taught about God. Christianity started after Jesus died, when his followers believed he was the Messiah and began spreading his teachings. The term 'Christian' was first used in Antioch around AD 44–45 to describe Jesus' followers (Acts 11:26 in the Bible).
All Christians interpret the Bible (especially Genesis) literally.	Not all Christians interpret the Bible literally. Some read it as a guide for faith and morals, while others believe parts of it, like the story of Genesis, are symbolic or teach spiritual lessons rather than being exactly true in every detail. Different Christians understand the Bible in different ways. The Catholic Church, for example, does not reject evolution. In fact, estimates of Creationism are often hugely inaccurate. See this Church Times article about a poll which shows what a minority view it is: <a href="#">Link</a> It would be helpful to equip pupils with terms like 'theistic evolution' and help them to engage in different ways in which the Bible is read (hermeneutics).
The Old Testament is only about Jews, not Christians.	See above. We need to be careful about the representation of Judaism in relation to Christianity. Again, careful laying of foundations so that pupils understand the Jewish origins of Christianity will help. Pupils need to understand that Christians view the Jewish scriptures in the light of Jesus and therefore interpret them differently.
Jesus was reincarnated/ Christians believe in reincarnation	Some careful vocabulary teaching (making clear distinctions between incarnation, reincarnation and resurrection) and analysis of 1 Corinthians 15 (St Paul's teaching on resurrection) will help to avoid this confusion. However, be careful not to cause further confusion by ignoring the fact that religion is messy and it may be that in a multi-faith, global context, there may well be people who call themselves Christians but also claim to believe in reincarnation.
The Bible was written by a single person and is just one book	Pupils need to understand early on that the Bible is a compilation of a variety of texts written in different genres, at different times and for different purposes. Teaching a basic overview of the structure, form and content of the Bible will enable you to explore the complexities of Christian belief as the curriculum

	progresses. Here are some helpful videos: <a href="#">Holy Books: The Bible</a> : <a href="#">The Bible Project: What is the Bible (animated)</a>
Christians are homophobic/ sexist	See above. There is no single Christian view on homosexuality, and it is inaccurate to label Christianity as either homophobic or accepting. Denominations, churches, and individual Christians hold a wide spectrum of beliefs, ranging from outright condemnation to full LGBTQ+ affirmation. This diversity stems from differing interpretations of biblical passages and a history of evolving theological views on sexuality.
Christians are not the victims of persecution	In some countries, especially where there are strict religious or political controls, Christians may face violence, imprisonment, discrimination, or restrictions on worship. These cases are well-documented by human-rights organisations. See the work of the Open Doors charity: <a href="#">Link</a>
Catholics are not Christians	Pupils often struggle to understand the complex 'family tree' within Christianity and sometimes think that Catholicism is a different religion. Doing some early work on the development of Christianity (I like to draw a tree with the roots in Judaism and then the big branches of Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodox etc.). It is useful to teach the difference between the use of the term 'catholic' (small C) as in universal church, and the Roman Catholic Church.
Protestants are a denomination	Help pupils to understand that the term 'Protestant' is an umbrella term. Help them to understand the historical context of protest that led to Protestantism. This will need to include the Reformation and maybe addressing some misconceptions about Henry VIII. This animated video gives a good introduction to Church history: <a href="#">Link</a>
Catholics say no to everything!	It might help as superficial knowledge for an exam, but it is a stereotypical and ill-informed assertion. To understand why the Catholic Church does not allow abortion, for example, pupils need to understand the underpinning beliefs and values that inform this position. It is also important to make a distinction between official Church teaching and the real lived experience of Catholics. Data suggests that many Catholics have different personal beliefs to those expressed by the Church (as does the Pope sometimes!), It would be helpful to look at some examples of this with pupils.
The Pope is never wrong	The concept of papal infallibility is much misunderstood. Papal infallibility is the Catholic belief that the Pope is protected from making errors only when he officially teaches on matters of faith or morals, speaking in his role as Pope for the whole Church. It does not mean the Pope is always right, sinless, or infallible in everyday opinions or decision. See <a href="#">here</a> for more information.
Love your neighbour is one of the ten commandments	'Love your neighbour' isn't one of the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are rules given to Moses, like 'Do not steal' and 'Do not lie.'

	<p>'Love your neighbour as yourself' comes later in the Bible, and Jesus taught it as one of the most important commandments of all. So, it's a key Christian teaching, but not one of the Ten Commandments</p>
<p>Trinity misconceptions e.g. "Christians believe in three gods."; "The Trinity is like water, ice, and steam."; "The Father is the boss, and the Son and Spirit are lower."; "Jesus didn't exist until he was born."; "You can fully understand the Trinity".</p>	<p>There are many misconceptions (and heresies) around the concept of the Trinity. Ultimately, it is, by definition', a mystery. A useful way to teach the trinity is to tackle the misconceptions and poor analogies head-on, getting pupils to identify why they are wrong. A little bit of early Church history e.g. Arianism can also help. This Catholic article gives some discussion around the problems with analogies: <a href="#">Link</a></p>
<p>AD means 'after death'</p>	<p>AD stands for Anno Domini, a Latin phrase meaning "in the year of our Lord." It refers to the years after the traditional birth year of Jesus. Many people now prefer to use CE (Common Era) instead of AD, and BCE (Before Common Era) instead of BC, for a few reasons: CE/BCE is neutral and doesn't assume the reader is Christian. It works better in schools and global contexts, where people come from many different religions or none. The numbering of years stays exactly the same, so nothing changes except the wording</p>
<p>The Reformation is all about Henry the VIII and his wives</p>	<p>Henry VIII and his wives are only one small part of the Reformation. The Reformation was a huge religious movement across Europe that changed the way people understood the Church, the Bible, and God. It involved major thinkers like Martin Luther and big debates about faith, power, and corruption. Henry VIII's marriage problems helped start changes in England, but the Reformation as a whole was much bigger and far more important than just his personal life.</p>
<p>Jesus was white with blonde hair etc./ Christians are white and European/ Jesus was white</p>	<p>Jesus wasn't white with blonde hair and blue eyes. He was a Jewish man from the Middle East, so he would have had brown skin, dark hair, and features typical of that region. Some pictures show Jesus as white because artists painted him to look like the people in their own country, not because that's what he really looked like.</p> <p>Christianity is a global religion practiced by people of every race and culture, not just white or European people. So, saying 'Jesus was white' or 'Christians are white' isn't true and ignores the huge diversity within Christianity. Looking at data about Christianity in the world today will help pupils to see that the region with the largest total number of Christians in the world today is Sub-Saharan Africa. As of 2020 it surpassed Europe for the first time and now holds about 31% of all Christians globally. (Pew Research)</p>
<p>The immaculate conception is Mary conceiving Jesus while a virgin</p>	<p>The 'Immaculate Conception' doesn't mean Mary conceived Jesus while she was a virgin. It actually means that Mary herself was born without original sin, so she was pure and chosen to be Jesus' mother. The fact that Mary had Jesus while being a virgin is called the Virgin Birth, which is a different idea.</p>

## Islam

Misconception	Clarification
Muslims worship Muhammad.	Muslims revere Muhammad as the Prophet, and it is seen as sinful to equate him in anyway with God ( <i>shirk</i> ). Muhammad is seen as the perfect example of a human being and his <i>sunnah</i> (example) is followed based on the <i>Hadith</i> (records of the sayings and deeds of the prophet). To develop a more detailed understanding of Islamic beliefs, academic Dr Chris Hewer, provides some information appropriate to GCSE level on his website <a href="#">here</a> .
Allah is a different God from the Christian or Jewish God.	'Allah' means 'God' in Arabic; the same monotheistic deity as in the other Abrahamic traditions (Judaism and Christianity).
All Muslim women are required to wear a veil.	Not all Muslim women wear a veil. The Qur'an asks women to dress modestly (Qur'an 24:31), but it doesn't specifically say they must cover their face. Some women choose to wear a hijab, niqab, or other coverings for religious or cultural reasons, while many don't. Wearing a veil is often a personal choice, not something every Muslim woman has to do. However, in some parts of the world women are not given a choice by people claiming to uphold Islam.
Sunnis and Shia's are always in conflict	Sunnis and Shias are two groups within Islam, and while there have been conflicts between them in some places and times, they are not always in conflict. Many Sunnis and Shias live peacefully and share the same basic beliefs about God, the Qur'an, and the Prophet Muhammad. Some even marry! Differences exist mainly in leadership and certain practices, but being Sunni or Shia doesn't automatically lead to conflict. This dramatisation is a good summary of some key differences, but at the end it also considers some of the things they have in common: <a href="#">Link</a>
Jihad means 'holy war'.	Jihad doesn't just mean 'holy war.' It literally means 'struggle' or 'striving.' In Islam, there are two kinds of Jihad: the Greater Jihad, which is the personal struggle to be a better person and follow God's guidance, and the Lesser Jihad, which can include defending your community in a war with strict rules. Most Muslims focus on the Greater Jihad, the spiritual and moral effort.
Muslims believe that martyrs are rewarded with virgins in heaven	This refers to a section of the Qur'an and is often used when discussing extremism (the exact number often quoted is linked to Hadith of the prophet). There is considerable debate about the exact translation, meaning and application. Many would respond by saying that paradise is a place of peace, joy, and spiritual fulfillment for all believers, not just martyrs. Descriptions are symbolic and poetic, meant to express purity, beauty, and happiness, not to promote lust or violence. The core reward in

	Islam is nearness to God and eternal peace, not sexual gratification. rewarded with “virgins” in a purely sexual sense. This is extremely sensitive and requires careful consideration of textual analysis and diversity within traditions.
Muslims only give up food during Ramadan	Muslims don’t just give up food and liquids during the hours of daylight during Ramadan. They also try to avoid bad behaviour, like lying, arguing, or being mean. Ramadan is a time for self-control, helping others, praying more, and thinking about people who are less fortunate. So it’s about improving yourself and being kind, not only about refraining from eating.
The number of Muslims living in the UK	Pupils tend to hugely overestimate the Muslim population of the UK. Look at the Census data with them to explore this and check their knowledge, considering why it might be that estimates are often inaccurate.
Humans are made in God’s image	In Islam, this is not true. Muslims believe that God (Allah) has no physical form and nothing is like Him, so humans are not created in God’s image. Instead, Islam teaches that humans are created by God with honour, responsibility, and moral awareness, but God remains completely unique and unlike His creation
Shaytan is an angel	In Islamic belief, this is not true. Shaytan (Iblis) is a <i>jinn</i> , not an angel. Angels in Islam always obey God, while jinn have free will. Shaytan disobeyed God out of pride, which is why he fell from favor. See Chris Hewer video for more detail: <a href="#">Link</a>
Muslims do not believe in free will	A common misconception is that Islam teaches humans have no free will. In Islam, this is not true. Muslims believe that God knows everything and has ultimate control, but humans still have the freedom to choose their actions and are responsible for them. In short, Islam teaches both divine knowledge and human free will at the same time. See Chris Hewer video for more detail: <a href="#">Link</a>
Islam teaches that women are less important than men	Islam teaches that men and women are equal in spiritual worth, dignity, and accountability before God. Both are judged by their faith and actions. While Islam recognises different roles and responsibilities in some areas, this is not meant to imply lesser value or importance. There are many teachings about the rights of women and historical analysis of the roots of Islam and key female figures in early Islam could be useful areas to look at with pupils. Again, there is diversity and complexity, and we need to try to disentangle religious and cultural influences. This article gives a succinct summary of some of the key issues: <a href="#">Link</a>

## Hinduism

Misconception	Clarification
Hindus worship many gods	Many Hindus do believe in a single supreme being ( <i>Brahman</i> ), even though they may worship many gods or deities. According to a survey by Pew Research Center, about 61% of Hindus in India say they believe there is 'only one God with many manifestations'. Only a small portion, around 7%, say they believe there are many separate gods. (Pew Research Center <a href="#">Link</a> ). For many believers, the different gods or goddesses are different ways of understanding or connecting to the same ultimate God ( <i>Brahman</i> ). We might question the monotheism/ polytheism distinction as one framed by an Abrahamic worldview.
All Hindus are vegetarian/ don't eat Beef etc.	Dietary practices vary regionally and culturally – see this fascinating data from the Pew Research Centre: <a href="#">Link</a> The data shows that what you eat in India is a very strong indicator of religious identity, but that socio-economic and inter-religious sensitivities make this a very complex and sensitive issue.
Karma means 'what goes around comes around'.	Karma involves complex moral causation across lifetimes. Pupils will encounter this term in many ways and will need to be taught carefully about the distinct and varied understandings of concepts like Dharma, karma etc, in the Dharmic traditions.
Caste is rigid and is only about religion.	Caste is a complex and dividing topic, that needs to be handled with sensitivity. It is worth noting that the Hindu terms <i>varna</i> and <i>jati</i> are more accurate and specific for describing the ancient social classifications that are incorrectly generalized as "caste". The term "caste" is not of Indian origin but comes from the Portuguese word <i>casta</i> . There are many socio-economic factors related and a proper examination would require careful consideration of history and the current picture.

<p>Distinction between Brahman, Brahmin and Brahma</p>	<p>These are easily confused.</p> <p><i>Brahman</i>: the ultimate reality or supreme God in Hinduism. It's invisible, infinite, and everywhere. Think of it as the spiritual source of everything.</p> <p><i>Brahmin</i>: person, specifically a member of the priestly class in Hindu society. Brahmins often perform religious rituals and teach about Hindu scriptures.</p> <p><i>Brahma</i>: one of the three main gods in Hinduism (along with Vishnu and Shiva in the Trimurti:). Brahma is the creator god, responsible for creating the world, but he is not the same as Brahman, the ultimate reality.</p>
<p>Swastika (note this features in other Dharmic traditions as well)</p>	<p>The main misconception about the swastika is conflating its ancient, positive meanings (luck, well-being in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism) with its later, horrific misappropriation by the Nazis as a symbol of hate, violence, and antisemitism; the Nazi version (<a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/culture/article/20210816-the-ancient-symbol-that-was-hijacked-by-evil">Hakenkreuz</a> or "hooked cross") was a tilted, right-facing symbol, distinct from the traditional flat, varied-direction swastikas used for millennia in Asian cultures, but its appropriation caused immense confusion and harm, leading to self-censorship and fear in Western societies where the symbol's true meaning is lost. Read more here: <a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/culture/article/20210816-the-ancient-symbol-that-was-hijacked-by-evil">https://www.bbc.co.uk/culture/article/20210816-the-ancient-symbol-that-was-hijacked-by-evil</a></p>

## Buddhism

Misconception	Clarification
Buddhists worship the Buddha.	The Buddha is revered as a teacher, not a deity. However, some aspects of Buddhism do represent the Buddha as a divine figure (see his birth story for example). It is important that we explore this in our teaching and move pupils away from the lazy comparison of 'Buddha being the Jesus of Buddhism'.
Buddhism believes in God(s) or are atheist	<p>Most forms of Buddhism are non-theistic. It is a common perception that Buddhists are atheist, but whilst this may be true for some, it is certainly not an accurate representation of what many Buddhists believe. A helpful story to share with pupils is the parable of the poison arrow, in which the Buddha teaches that we cannot know the answers to many existential matters, and instead we should focus on how to end suffering in our lives.</p> <p>It is also important to note that Buddhism contains many teachings about spirits, ghosts and divine beings. This comes as a surprise to many people. Again, we need to think very carefully about the representations of traditions in our classrooms.</p>
Buddhism is not a religion	See above. Some claim that it is more a philosophy or a psychological practice. Again, we need to examine how Buddhism is (mis)represented with our pupils. There is increasing criticism from Buddhists about the misrepresentation/ appropriation of Buddhism in the West (see discussions around mindfulness etc.). The RE Podcast: S7 E12 The One About Decolonising Buddhism is strongly recommended to help with your subject knowledge here. This is a great opportunity to interrogate what it is that makes something 'a religion'
Nirvana is like heaven	In Buddhism, Nirvana is a state of being free from suffering, desire, and the cycle of rebirth. It's more about inner peace and understanding than a physical place you go to after you die. Heaven, on the other hand, is usually thought of as a special place of reward after life (see misconceptions about heaven too)
Buddhists are all pacifists	There are persistent stereotypes about different religious traditions that may be based in selective focus on particular teachings and a failure to recognise the complex interplay of different factors that influence worldviews. It would be wrong for us not to recognise that in some parts of the world, and at different times in history, Buddhism has been implicated in the use of violence. This article is particularly useful in exploring this issue: <a href="#">Link</a>

## Judaism

Misconception	Clarification
Jews don't believe in the same God as Christians	Jews and Christians both believe in the same God, the God of Abraham. The difference is that Christians believe Jesus is God's Son, while Jews do not. So it's the same God, but the religions understand him in different ways
All Jews are religious and follow the same laws	Not all Jews are religious, and not all follow the same laws. Judaism includes many different types of people. Some are very religious, some are more cultural, and some don't practice much at all. There are also different groups, like Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jews, and they follow the laws in different ways. Here is a fantastic podcast that unpicks many of the misconceptions surrounding Judaism: <a href="#">Link</a> You might also find this, <a href="#">'What is a Jew?'</a> Film useful.
Various abhorrent antisemitic tropes (which obviously we not going to repeat here)	You may find this <a href="#">teach for tomorrow lesson</a> useful. <a href="#">Jewish living online</a> also has resources exploring this.

## Sikhi

Misconception	Clarification
Sikhs are Hindus or Muslims.	Sikhs are not Hindus or Muslims. Sikhi is its own religion, started by Guru Nanak in the 15th century in India. Sikhi teaches that there is one God, that everyone is equal, and that people should live honestly, help others, and remember God. While Sikhi began in a region where Hinduism and Islam were common, it was influenced by ideas from both religions, like meditation and devotion from Hinduism, and the belief in one God from Islam. However, it is a separate religion with its own beliefs, practices, and holy book, the <i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> . This podcast gives a great introduction to teaching Sikhi: <a href="#">Link</a>
All Sikhs wear turbans/ 5Ks	It's wrong to say that all Sikhs wear turbans or follow the 5 Ks. Only some Sikhs are <i>Amritdhari</i> , which means they have undergone a special initiation ceremony and promised to follow the full Sikh code of conduct, including wearing the 5 Ks and, for many men, a turban. According to the British Sikh Report 2022, only about 11% of British Sikhs identify as <i>Amritdhari</i> . This means that most Sikhs do not wear all the 5 Ks or a turban. Sikh identity and faith look different for everyone; some follow the traditional symbols strictly, some partially, and some not at all. Wearing a turban or 5 Ks is a personal or religious choice, not something that applies to all Sikhs.
Sikhs worship a book	Sikhs do not worship a book. They respect their holy book, the <i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> , because it contains the teachings of the Sikh Gurus and helps guide them in how to live a good life. The book is treated very carefully, like a teacher or guide, but Sikhs worship God, not the book itself. Similarly, Sikhs do not worship the Gurus, but they are seen as enlightened beings who can act as guides to Sikhs today, so they are held in high regard and seen as excellent examples for Sikhs to emulate.

## Non-religious worldviews

Misconception	Clarification
All non-religious people are atheists	Not all non-religious people are atheists. Some might be agnostic, meaning they're not sure if God exists, or they might just not follow a religion without thinking about God at all. Atheism is one type of non-religious belief, but being non-religious doesn't automatically make someone an atheist. The Theos report on non-religious beliefs gives some very detailed analysis of different types of non-belief: <a href="#">Link</a>
All non-religious people are anti-religion	Not all non-religious people are against religion. Many non-religious people respect other people's beliefs and just choose not to follow a religion themselves. Being non-religious doesn't automatically mean someone is 'anti-religion'; it just means they don't practice or believe in a particular faith. The Theos report on non-religious beliefs gives some very detailed analysis of different types of non-belief: <a href="#">Link</a>
All non-religious people are Humanists	Not all non-religious people are Humanists. Some people don't follow any religion but don't identify with Humanism. Humanism is a belief system that focuses on living ethically, using reason, and helping others without relying on religion. So while all Humanists are non-religious, not all non-religious people are Humanists. To learn more about Humanism you can access free online courses found <a href="#">here</a> .
Atheism is not a belief	Atheism is a belief; it's the belief that there are no God or gods. Just like people have beliefs about religion, atheists have a belief about the world and what is real. So even though atheism is about not believing in a God, it's still a position or belief about life and the universe

## Ethics and Philosophy

Misconception	Clarification
Religious rules are just about right and wrong.	They also shape community, identity, and spirituality.
Science and religion always conflict.	They address different kinds of questions and truths. See sections above on literal reading of the Bible etc. This helpful animation is a good starting point for thinking about this – <a href="#">Worlds Apart</a> .
Pro-choice = pro abortion	Being pro-choice does not mean someone is 'pro-abortion.' Pro-choice means that a person believes women should have the right to make their own decision about their pregnancy, including whether to continue it or end it. Many pro-choice people don't want abortions to happen, but they think it should be the woman's choice, not the government or anyone else's. Here is a useful video that could be used with older children: <a href="#">What are the rights and wrongs of abortion? - BBC Teach</a>
Pro-life = anti women	People who are pro-life usually believe that unborn babies have a right to live, and they often care about supporting both women and children. While some debates about abortion can involve women's rights, many pro-life supporters focus on finding ways to help women through pregnancy rather than opposing women themselves. It's important to understand that people can care about both women and unborn children at the same time
All Christians/ Muslims are against abortion/ euthanasia etc.	Not all Christians or Muslims are against abortion, euthanasia, or other ethical issues. Different people interpret their religion in different ways. Some follow strict rules, while others focus on personal choice, compassion, or the situation. Religion can guide people, but it doesn't always mean everyone in that faith agrees on every issue.