

Key end points for this multifaith unit, Symbols, are:

- To know a symbol is usually an image or an icon form which you can take meaning from.
- To know symbols associated with Judaism, Christianity and Islam
- To know symbols associated with Hinduism

This year, five multifaith units will build on the Year 1 unit on Easter and symbols unit, the Year 2 unit on symbols and artefacts and the Year 3 unit on Hinduism. This unit will also revisit imagery referenced in Year 3, Jesus as an inspiration, and build on the idea of Jesus being represented in various forms in Christianity. If following the Primary Knowledge Curriculum, this unit will also link to Year 5 History of Baghdad, Year 5 Art and Design unit of Islamic Art and Architecture. This unit will also link to later Year 6 units linked to the rise of Hitler and World War II.

In this unit, children will revisit the concept of symbols used within religion as a form of religious expression. Children will have prior knowledge of some familiar symbols, such as the Star of David, the Cross and the Crescent moon and star. Children will look more closely at the historical context behind the importance or significance of these symbols. Children will also look more closely at the significance of the 'Om', a common symbol in Hinduism, to apply understanding of the subjectivity of religious expression.

This unit aims to build children's understanding of the variety of ways that religion can be expressed or identified. They will learn that a symbol is simply a mark or an image representing something else; in religion, it will often have a spiritual meaning or link to God/gods. Children will be familiar with symbols discussed in this unit but should be given time to explore imagery and identify the importance linked to symbols, e.g., this variation of the swastika cross was present in ancient Hinduism, before it was misused in modern history. It is used to represent honesty, truth, purity, and stability. Its four angles or points also symbolise the four directions or Vedas (large body of religious texts). Children should be able to identify the use of symbols in religion that often share similarities with others, e.g. Challah bread is a symbol of salvation in Judaism, similar to the Cross as a symbol of salvation in Judaism.

Reflections in this unit will focus on building the skill of expressing opinions and personal views of religious expression and exploring symbols to derive meaning from them or understand what religions may derive from them.

Key notes for teachers to be mindful of within this unit:

- The context of using the term Israel and Israelites. When referring to the land many Jews commonly reside in now, this will be referred to as modern-day Israel and Palestine to avoid any bias in relation to current political tension. These terms will only be used to describe the knowledge needed for RE. In this unit, the term 'Israelites' does not refer to someone currently from Israel but rather the ancient ancestors of the modern Jewish people.
- Spiritual figures or images of God are forbidden in Islam. This is considered disrespectful to God as He is considered to be above any human form of imagery that can be created to represent Him. This can also cause offence if this is attempted. Teachers should not find or use images of God or any other figures within Islam. Instead, teachers may use photographs of calligraphy used in places of worship or decorative pieces for homes to show religious expression in Islam.
- The Name of Allah (written in Arabic) is of great value in Islam. If printed or written anywhere, it can not be placed on the floor and has to be disposed of respectfully. To avoid this, if printing resources, please ensure the Arabic word or symbol is not printed, as using it inappropriately could be a sign of disrespect. Teachers can display the Arabic word or symbol for Allah but avoid printing them.
- The use of the Swastika in Hinduism is a sign of good luck and fortune, but it does not hold the same meaning as its use in World War II by the Nazi party. Teachers should avoid asking children to draw this symbol as it could be misinterpreted.

Misconceptions may include:

- It could be thought that the Mezuzah is present in every single Jewish household—people practise faith in different frequencies, and though many Jewish households may have a Mezuzah, this may not be the case for every family. As with other units, it is important to explain that not all religious people behave or believe in the same thing.
- It could be thought that the Swastika is only offensive and a racist image. Children should be taught that the intent behind using symbols contributes towards their meaning and (spiritual) significance. If children see the swastika used when exploring Hinduism, it is important that they understand this is a sign of good luck in this context.
- Children may assume that displaying images of spiritual figures and God in Islam is acceptable – this is not true. Representing God or spiritual figures is forbidden.

Lesson sequencing:

Lesson 1 will reintroduce the idea that a symbol is a mark or an image representing something else. Children will look more closely at how symbols used in religion are linked to religion or expression. Symbols such as 'Om' can also be used to show or represent the omnipotence of God/gods. A symbol connected to the Roman empire will be used to demonstrate the visual image of symbols can have complex meanings behind them.

Lesson 2 will directly build on the year 1 unit on Judaism and Y2 symbols and artefacts. Children will revisit the symbolism behind using the Mezuzah as a representation and reminder of God's existence everywhere in Judaism. This will revisit the story behind the use of the menorah in many Jewish homes, looking more closely at the symbolism of the candlelight. Children will also be given the opportunity to remember that the Challah bread has a symbolic meaning of salvation, which links to symbolism in Judaism.

Lesson 3 will follow on from lesson 2 as children will look at the many ways Bread has been used as a symbol in Christianity. Most well-known for the symbolism of Jesus and his body, Bread.

Lesson 4 will examine symbolism in Islam. Here, children will build on their knowledge of why images of spiritual figures, including God, are not allowed in Islam. They will also be introduced to calligraphy art as a visual symbol in Islam, which is used to decorate homes and mosques as a form of remembrance of God.

Lesson 5 will continue to develop children's understanding that many different symbols can be used in religion to show many different qualities (of God/gods). Children will learn that most popular Hindu symbols have a spiritual meaning based on Hindu philosophies, teachings, gods and goddesses, or related cultural traditions. Generally, Hindu symbols are divided into two categories: mudras or hand gestures and the positioning of the body, and murti or icons, statues, and drawings. Children will also be able to use their historical understanding of the empire to learn how the Ottoman Empire influenced the Crescent Moon and star.

In lesson 6, children will complete an assessment task. This will help consolidate the knowledge that symbols are a form of religious expression, though not all religions require symbols to express their region. Children should be able to demonstrate their own opinions drawn from reflections and the talk tasks in a knowledge showcase.

Key concepts: omnipotence, idol, sacrifice,

Key terms: menorah, mezuzah, Star of David, Challah, idols, Eucharist, lamb of God, calligraphy, Ottoman empire, Om, mezuzah