

Words of Wisdom: What can we learn from reflecting on Sikh, Christian and Muslim wisdom?

YEAR GROUP 6

Telford & Wrekin Religious Education:
Support for Schools from SACRE



Jess, 12, made this 'Words of Wisdom' image

TITLE OF UNIT

Words of Wisdom:

What can we learn from reflecting on Sikh, Christian and Muslim wisdom?

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ABOUT THIS UNIT:

This unit uses examples of 'words of wisdom' from Sikhs, Christians and Muslims to enable pupils to think for themselves about sources of guidance or wisdom in their own lives. Stories and sayings from the religions are used, not for skills of recall and memory, but for the opportunity they provide to reflect upon the pupils' own values and experiences. The aims of the unit, and the pedagogy that supports the aims, are reflective.

The unit is a bit unusual because it uses 'experiential' methods for learning, methods of stilling, guided story and guided reflection to enable learning from religion that has the opportunity for spiritual development close to its heart. Teachers unfamiliar with these methods are particularly encouraged to try them out through this unit.

Estimated time for this unit (in hours) Usually 8-10 hours of teaching time. This can be broken up into some shorter and some longer sessions, or all taught during a single week!

Where this unit fits in:

This unit will help teachers to implement the Agreed Syllabus for RE by providing well structured opportunities for learners to deepen their understanding of, and learn from Christian, Muslim and Sikh scriptures, stories and sources of wisdom and authority.

Issues of continuity and progression

This unit enables pupils to make progress particularly by the units studied earlier about Christianity, Islam and Sikhism. The aims of this unit are to build up pupils' skills in making links between religious ideas and teachings and their own experiences and ideas.

KEY STRANDS ADDRESSED BY THIS UNIT

- knowledge and understanding of ways of expressing meaning in religion } AT1
- *skill of asking and responding to questions of experience* }AT2
- *skill of asking and responding to questions of meaning* }AT2

ATTITUDES FOCUS

This unit enables pupils to develop attitudes of:

- **Self-awareness** by becoming used to the value of stillness and silence for learning and reflection.
- **Appreciation and wonder** by spending time in a group looking for deeper meanings in experience.

Prior learning	Vocabulary	Resources
<p>It is helpful if pupils have some experience of stilling and guided story, but if not, then the teacher can introduce this in the unit.</p> <p>Sitting still, relaxing and preparing the body and mind to focus and reflect are skills which need to be learned.</p> <p>As much care and attention is needed here as for the lesson's main activity and follow up.</p>	<p>In this unit, pupils will have an opportunity to use words and phrases related to:</p> <p>Reflection Stillness Quietness Learning from silence The gift of peace</p> <p>There are some ways in which the materials from the religions need to be explained to pupils, but these will vary, depending on the stimulus that teachers choose to use.</p> <p>The examples given carry their own religious terminology, but many other examples would be as usable as these.</p>	<p>Texts</p> <p>There are a small number of key texts for teachers in this unit. These books introduce and offer many examples of experiential methods in RE and are all recommended.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflections, edited by Rosemary Rivett, RE Today ▪ Don't just do something, sit there, by Mary Stone, RMEP ▪ Stilling by Michael Beesley. Diocese of Salisbury ▪ New Methods in RE Teaching by David Hay, John Hammond et al, Oliver and Boyd (out of print, but in many RE libraries and resource centres) <p>Web</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ www.theresite.org.uk: a good place to look for examples ▪ NATRE's website has a good question about religious experience on its database of pupils' writing about religion and spirituality: www.natre.org.uk/db ▪ www.re-xs.uclm.ac.uk/schools/ provides interesting teacher resources ▪ A useful general site: http://www.devon.gov.uk/dcs/re/places/index.html ▪ The BBC's clip bank is a major source for short RE films that can be accessed online and shown free: http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips ▪ The BBC also offers lots of information and material on its main religion site: www.bbc.co.uk/religion ▪ The best gateway for RE sites is: www.reonline.org.uk/ks2 ▪ You can find and use searchable sacred texts from many religions at: www.ishwar.com ▪ Good quality information and learning ideas on Christianity: www.request.org.uk/infants/ ▪ There is some more TV material at: www.channel4.com/learning ▪ The site for Cumbria and Lancashire Education Online has many useful and well thought out resources for this unit of work: www.cleo.net.uk ▪ The websites of REToday and NATRE are useful places for pupils and teachers to see examples of work. www.retoday.org.uk & www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts <p>RE Today Services (www.retoday.org.uk) publish relevant items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Festivals 1 and 2 DVD (sequences from all three religions) ▪ Opening Up RE Series edited by Fiona Moss, RE Today Services
<p>Contributions to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The unit enables pupils to develop spiritually by increasing their capacity to use skills of empathic reflection, silence and inner thought. ▪ Moral, social and cultural development may also be facilitated, depending on the texts and topics teachers choose. 		

EXPECTATIONS	
At the end of this unit:	
Nearly all pupils will be able to work at level 3: I can...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Describe what I have learned about Sikhs, Muslims or Christians; ▪ Identify some things that have influenced my ideas about spiritual questions; ▪ Make a link between a spiritual or religious idea and an idea of my own; ▪ Ask important questions of my own about spiritual and religious ideas.
Many pupils will be able to work at level 4: I can...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use religious vocabulary to show my understanding of examples of Sikh, Muslim or Christian wisdom; ▪ Suggest varied answers to questions about meaning and purpose in the wisdom of the religions I've studied; ▪ Apply ideas of my own to understanding wisdom from different religions; ▪ Describe the wisdom that inspires me clearly.
Some pupils might be able to work at level 5: I can...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explain clearly some examples of similarities and differences in the wisdom of 3 religions; ▪ Relate my questions and answers about wisdom in life to the teachings of Sikhs, Muslims and Christians; ▪ Explain clearly how and why religious wisdom has inspired or influenced me; ▪ Express my own views on the wisdom and challenges of the religions I've been learning about.
ASSESSMENT SUGGESTION Provide for the pupils to show what they learned by setting the challenge to the class to create pages for their own 'holy book'. Explain that this will be very small scale compared to the words of Gurus, Prophets or Apostles from the sacred texts in the religions, but still potentially inspiring. The task: Can you write your own contribution to a 'holy' book? This task is designed to encourage a reflective response from every child, and to enable a class to collaborate in a project that all can be proud to complete. See a fuller description on the final page.	

Key questions	LEARNING OBJECTIVES What pupils should learn	TEACHING AND LEARNING Practical classroom suggestions	LEARNING OUTCOMES	POINTS TO NOTE
<p>How can stillness and silence help us to learn?</p>	<p>In this preliminary session, pupils will be taught both the value and the beginnings of practice for stilling.</p> <p>The aim of the session is to show the pupils as a group that shared stillness can help us to think deeply, use our imagination well, be creative and enjoy this kind of learning.</p>	<p>Stillness for learning: beginning to use the techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learning to sit still. Teachers should choose a good time of day and set this lesson up carefully. Use this script with the class, after explaining a bit about the unit of RE they are beginning. Speak slowly. Allow pauses to make room for imagination. Practice will improve your leadership of this kind of activity – it may be good to start with a small group of volunteers. ▪ Stilling script: “Place your chair so that it is facing me and not touching your table. Sit right back on your chair so that your back is right up against the back of the chair, and you feel comfortable. Put both of your feet flat on the floor. Place your hands in your lap or let them lie loosely on your knees or on the table in front of you. Give your shoulders a shrug to make sure you’re relaxed even though you’re sitting upright – do that again. Now you’re sitting in an alert relaxed position. We will spend a short time in this position. Just take the chance to be aware of what has happened to you today. Think over the whole day so far, from when you woke up until now... (Pause for 30-45 seconds) What was the best bit? What made you smile? (Pause for 30 – 40 seconds) ▪ When you’re ready, open your eyes again. ▪ Share your thoughts with your partner. <p>Variations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It may be possible for pupils to lie on the floor (preferably carpeted) for this exercise. ▪ You might use some music behind the voice. Choose music that is slow, simple and probably not well known to the class. See the NATRE ‘Spirited Music’ website for examples of mood music to use in this lesson and / or later ones. http://www.natre.org.uk/music 	<p>The aim is to use silence for a short time to deepen imagination. Pupils’ spoken feedback will help the teacher to know how far the aim was achieved.</p>	<p>This is unusual learning, but has the potential for deep and spiritual RE. While it is not easy to ‘measure’ the impact of the methods, pupils do give good feedback through speaking and listening activities.</p>

<p>How can breathing exercises help us to be calm?</p>	<p>In this session, pupils will be taught about how using breathing exercises can enable us to think deeply and use imaginative abilities.</p> <p>The aim of the session is to show the pupils as a group that breathing exercises can help us to use the imagination creatively.</p>	<p>A breathing exercise to find calmness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Follow the same routine as in the previous session to begin with. Then the teacher might use this: <p>Breathing Script:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “When you’re sitting in an alert + relaxed position, with your eyes closed, then breathe slowly and silently. Don’t change your natural breathing, but do notice it. Notice the way your breath enters and leaves your body ... ▪ As you breathe in, begin counting (in your mind). Each time you breath in, count slowly to four in your mind: In... two... three ... four. Each time you breath out, count slowly to four: Out... two... three... four... And then start again. If your mind wanders, bring it back gently. This is quite easy to do...” ▪ Pause for a short while, build up to perhaps a couple of minutes. <p>A variation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask pupils to breathe in good things like air, health, calmness, imagination, and to breathe out bad things, like tension, annoyance or anger, irritation, cross feelings, bad thoughts. <p>After the exercise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask pupils to make an image / drawing of their breathing. They might use clouds, or lungs as a framework. ▪ Ask them to choose words or symbols that express their experience in the exercise to draw into the framework. Did it feel relaxed? Calming? Peaceful? Did anything make them anxious? Did they want to giggle? Was it a good experience, to be quiet together and find stillness? ▪ Discuss the outcomes in circle time. 	<p>The aim is to use breathing exercises for a short time to deepen imagination.</p> <p>Pupils’ spoken feedback will help the teacher to know how far the aim was achieved.</p>	<p>Pupils with breathing – related problems such as asthma or hay fever may find this activity difficult.</p> <p>An opportunity to observe should be provided</p>
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<p>How can a tensing exercise lead to better imagination?</p>	<p>In this session, pupils will be taught about how tensing and focusing on parts of the body can help in using a relaxed mind for learning imaginatively</p> <p>The aim of the session is to show the pupils as a group that tensing exercises can help us to learn.</p>	<p>Tensing Use this variation on the exercise to enable pupils to be more confident in using stillness for learning. Use it in conjunction with one of the exercises above.</p> <p>The teacher might say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Now that you're sitting in an alert relaxed position, let your eyes close gently (or look at the floor if you prefer, so as not to distract others). I'm going to ask you to focus on your body. As I mention each part of your body ... feet ... hands ... face ... and so on ... I would like you to focus on that part. ▪ First of all I want you to focus on your feet ... how do they feel? ... flex your toes ... and then let them relax. Now do the same with the muscles in your legs – tighten the muscles ... hold that tension for a moment... and then let the muscles relax. <p>(Lead pupils, in the same way, to focus on other parts of their body ... their bottom ... stomach ... chest ... shoulders ...neck ... different parts of the face ... scalp.) (Pause for a short while, perhaps around a minute)</p> <p>Variation This is a good point in developing the class's ability to work in this reflective way to give them some imaginative freedom. Ask them to imagine their favourite quiet and beautiful place on earth, and picture themselves there, with two companions. What drinks would they like to be sharing? What music would they like to be listening to?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This kind of script may help: Look closely. ... What do you see? Notice the colours... shapes... textures. What can you hear? What is happening around you? How do you feel? What are you thinking? Spend a few moments enjoying your time in this special place. When you are ready ... slowly open your eyes... come back into this room ... stretch if you want to ... rejoin the group ... ▪ After time spent in this, ask them to create a simple 2 colour drawing of the scene. 	<p>The aim is to use tensing exercises for a short time to deepen concentration and imagination.</p> <p>Pupils' spoken feedback will help the teacher to know how far the aim was achieved.</p>	<p>Note: The exercise can be done simply as 'tensing', or pupils can be led on to focus on their breathing as outlined in exercise 2 above, 'Breathing to relax'. Or the exercise can be a prelude to one of the imaginative sessions below.</p>
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<p>What do Sikhs think about the value of money? What do I think?</p>	<p>Develop their understanding of Sikh teaching about the things that matter more than money, such as justice, service to other people and appreciating the Divine.</p> <p>Use a stilling technique and a contemplation activity to deepen understanding of values beyond mere 'cash value'</p> <p>Make sense of links between Sikh story, scripture and teaching and ideas of my own.</p>	<p>Learning from Sikh wisdom about what matters more than money.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sit the class in a circle in a room where the lighting is soft. Use a stilling activity from those practices above to get the mood of the class right. Tell them this is a harder activity than the earlier ones, but they may learn something! ▪ Use the first bowl: Place the first bowl with money in the centre of the group on a table where it is visible to everyone. Ask the group to look at it and to allow thoughts, ideas and imaginings to flow through the mind. Ask them to note their feelings and ideas. Ask pupils to imagine that the bowl of money had been won by them in a competition: what would they do? ▪ Use the second bowl: After a few minutes (2-3 is long enough) remove the first bowl and replace it with the second empty bowl and its label. Tell pupils again to allow thoughts and associations to flow through the mind and to note their feelings and ideas. Ask them to think about how they would complete the label, 'Living a rich life is ...' Again, after a few minutes, remove the bowl. Allow time for individuals to note down their ideas. ▪ Questions to discuss: What did the first bowl of money represent to you? Try and say why. What association(s) did it bring to mind? What did the second empty bowl represent to you? Try and say why. What association(s) did it bring to mind? What ideas did you have about using the money? How did you complete the sentence 'A rich life is ...'? ▪ Let pupils share their responses in twos or threes, and then follow this up by a general discussion of the interpretations, feelings and questions which the symbol raises. ▪ Read together a story of Guru Nanak in which his attitude to money is made clear, and / or some sayings from Sikh scripture about the limits of cash (there are many examples). ▪ Consider what can be learned from the Sikh's wisdom about money. Ask pupils to record their learning from Sikhism in an appropriate form. 	<p>I can use stillness and imagination to reflect on questions about values for myself (L3).</p> <p>I can make links between Sikh teaching and my own ideas (L3)</p> <p>I can understand and apply ideas about the things that matter more than money for myself, using Sikh teaching (L4)</p>	<p>Equipment: You'll need to create a bowl which appears to contain a great deal of money (newspaper cut to the size of £10 or £20 notes concealed under one or two real ones – or get some other pupils to 'colour in' some copies of notes do this well, especially if the lights are low). You'll also need a bowl which is empty but has a label saying 'Living a rich life is ...'.</p>
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<p>What do Muslims think about the beauty of nature? What do I think?</p>	<p>To explore and respond to ideas about creation from Islamic traditions</p>	<p>Muslims thank God for a beautiful creation. What do you think?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pupils hear and respond to Islamic teaching about the beauty of the world Allah created and link their own ideas about the beauty of the earth to Muslim ideas. ▪ Pupils read and hear a selection of ideas from the Qur’an about the beauty of the earth and the beauty and creation of Allah. ▪ Islamic saying about God: ‘When you walk towards God, then God runs towards you.’ Ask pupils to consider the Muslim teaching that humans can see signs of Allah’s mercy in the created world. <p>Beautiful Earth: Make a Calendar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask pupils in groups to select and organise twelve or thirteen images of the beauty of the earth, perhaps one for each month of the year, as a calendar (you could learn about why Muslims have 13 months). Ask them to select a Qur’anic saying or a traditional Hadith to go with each of the images they choose. Creating these calendars provides for pupils to learn about the Muslim calendar, and to express ideas of their own in the light of their learning. ▪ Share the images selected by the groups and consider these questions in conversation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why is it wise to think about and care for the natural world? ○ What do Muslims think about Allah as creator? ○ What reasons might Muslims give for caring for the earth? ○ Does the beauty of the earth show the mercy of God? ○ What ‘wise words’ did they like in this lesson? 	<p>I can describe what the Qur’an says about Allah’s creation (L3).</p> <p>I can make links between the beauty of nature and Muslim belief (L3)</p> <p>I can describe the most beautiful aspects of nature for me, and respond to ideas about creation</p>	<p>Sensitive handling of the Qur’an as a religious artefact is important: just as important is to enable pupils to access the words of the text for themselves, and appreciate its messages.</p>
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<p>What do Christians think about the meaning of love? What do I think?</p>	<p>To describe and understand the teaching Saint Paul in the Bible about love, and to broaden and deepen their own understanding</p>	<p>Christians believe God has given humanity the gift of love. What do you believe?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pupils begin by making lists in pairs of the characteristics of love. What is love like? What does love do? How does love feel? Talk about the different kinds of love here, and emphasise the love between members of the family. Recognise that this is a sensitive discussion, and respond sensitively. ▪ Ask pupils to do a stilling exercise, then sit with eyes closed and listen to and study and think about the words of Saint Paul from 1 Corinthians 13 on the topic of love. Explain that these words are often read at Christian weddings, and ask the pupils why this might be. They are also read at funerals sometimes. Why might this be? There are sung and spoken versions of great beauty on YouTube and recorded in other sources. ▪ Ask pupils to listen to a sung version of this chapter of the Bible if you can. They might create some movement or dance patterns to go with the song. YouTube is a good source! ▪ Ask pupils to think of other poetry or songs they know about love, and see if there are links between these songs and poems and the text from 1 Corinthians 13. ▪ Give each pupil a copy of the text, centred on a page. Ask them to write reflections, questions and thoughts of their own about love around the edges, and to make the text beautiful with calligraphy and decoration. 	<p>I can describe what makes a good relationship on 'both sides' I can make links between Christian teaching about love from the Bible and ideas of my own (L3) I can understand why the Bible is a source of wisdom for Christians (L4)</p>	<p>As with many RE topics, this is a sensitive area. Teachers develop their own ways of making sure the pupils' own experience is valued, and troubled children can find this work powerful.</p>
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<p>How can I express what I have learned about money, beauty and love?</p>	<p>Take the opportunity for creative and artistic expression of their understanding of 'wisdom'</p>	<p>Choose a topic and express through a work of art</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pupils choose one of the three topics and express their responses through a piece of creative work. ▪ This work may be musical or artistic ▪ For a very simple approach, give pupils the chance to make acrostic poems, or to include symbols of their choice on a large class collage, in three sections, for the different 'wisdom' topics they have covered. ▪ Pupils need time and space to develop ideas here, and the opportunity to talk and write about heir idea. ▪ After making the art work, then pupils might discuss or write about these prompts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What 'wisdom' is shown in your work? ○ What did you learn from the religions you studied in this unit? ○ Why do different people have different 'wisdom'? ○ Are there wise words in all religions? What examples do we know? ○ Are you proud of your work? Why? How can it be made even better? ▪ There are lots of really good examples at the Art in Heaven gallery: www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts 	<p>I can express my understanding of a key idea about wisdom from one of the religions I've studied (L4)</p>	<p>Links to the art or music curriculum are obvious here.</p>
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<p>What have we learned in this unit of RE?</p>	<p>To work collaboratively to create a shared selection of wise words</p> <p>To learn about questions to do with the nature of sacred writing and holy texts, recognising and starting to understand the influence of such texts on millions of people over thousands of years</p>	<p>Writing a class book of wise words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide for the pupils to show what they learned by setting the challenge to the class to create pages for their own 'holy book'. Explain that this will be very small scale compared to the words of Gurus, Prophets or Apostles from the sacred texts in the religions, but still potentially inspiring. <p>My own wise words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The task: Can you write your own contribution to a 'holy' book? Each pupil thinks about wise words and creates a page for the class's 'sacred book' with their own choice – or composition – of wise words included. To research this, pupils could be given homework to collect wise words from adults. They might ring their gran! ▪ Encourage pupils to spend time thinking about the words they choose, and presenting them with calligraphic skill, suitable imagery, or in some other special manner. Can you provide luxury paper for this? It gives dignity to the task! Songs, words chosen from other holy books, family wisdom or quotations websites are interesting starting points for this choice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make a link between a spiritual or religious idea and an idea of my own (L3); ▪ Describe the wisdom that inspires me clearly (L4). ▪ Express my own views on the wisdom and challenges of the religions I've been learning about (L5). 	<p>This task is designed to encourage a reflective response from every child, and to enable a class to collaborate in a project that all can be proud to complete. It can make powerful links between RE and literacy.</p>
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