

Key Theme: Religion and the Media/ Conflict and Collaboration in Religion

Year 9

Spring Term

ABOUT THIS UNIT:

This unit encourages pupil to consider the view(s) of religion put forward in the media and to reflect on whether these views are in contrast with the perspectives on religion offered by religious believers and the Religious Education curriculum.

Estimated time for this unit:

One term

Focused Religions:

This will depend on the resources selected but Christianity and Islam are likely to be key religions. In addition the non-religious philosophies of materialism and consumerism will be considered.

Where this unit fits in:

KS3 is the application key stage. This unit encourages pupils to apply their collective understanding of religion and religious believers to compare and contrast the insights gained from RE with perspectives on religion from the media.

This unit relates to other units where the theme of conflict is also included. For example, in the Science and Religion unit pupils are encouraged to think about whether a religious perspective is in conflict with views put forward by another authoritative community in society. In addition, the unit also relates to the Conflict and Collaboration unit as the news section is likely to include the discussion of clips or stories where religion and conflict are connected.

KEY STRANDS ADDRESSED BY THIS UNIT

The following strands from *Every Child Matters* are addressed by this unit:

AT1 Learning about religion:

- Interpret and evaluate a range of sources, texts and authorities, from a variety of contexts.
- Interpret a variety of forms of religious and spiritual expression.

AT2 Learning from religion:

Students should be taught to:-

- evaluate the challenges and tensions of belonging to a religion and the impact of religion in the contemporary world, expressing their own ideas
- express their own beliefs and ideas, using a variety of forms of expression.

Breadth of study

During the key stage pupils should be taught the knowledge, skills and understanding through the following religions, themes and experiences:-

- religion and the media: how religion is portrayed in the modern world by a variety of media.

Experiences and opportunities

- discussing, questioning and evaluating important issues in religion and philosophy, including ultimate questions and ethical issues
- reflecting upon and carefully evaluating their own beliefs and values and those of others in response to their learning in religious education, using reasoned, balanced arguments
- using a range of forms of expression (e.g. art, dance, drama and writing, ICT) to communicate their ideas and responses creatively and thoughtfully

KEY SKILLS

- Enquiry
- Empathy
- Interpretation
- Synthesis
- Communication

ATTITUDES FOCUS

- Self awareness
- Respect for all
- Open mindedness

Prior learning

It is helpful if pupils have:

Some understanding of different types of television programme and are able to use appropriate names.

Some background study of Christianity and Islam would also prove useful.

Vocabulary

In this unit, pupils will have an opportunity to use words and phrases related to:

Media
Worldview
Explicitly and implicitly religious programmes
Worship programme
Magazine programme
Religious documentary

Resources

- This unit will require pupils to watch a selection of media clips. To cover the whole of the unit the following will be needed:
- A film with a religious character/theme e.g. *Bruce* or *Evan Almighty*, *Kingdom of Heaven* etc.
- An episode of a comedy with a religious theme e.g. *The Simpsons* or *Vicar of Dibley*.
- A selection of news clips and/or headlines/stories.
- Selected relevant clips from a soap opera featuring a religious theme.
- A selection of adverts.
- Clips from explicitly religious programmes e.g. worship programmes (*Songs of Praise*), magazine programmes (*The Heaven and Earth Show*), or religious documentaries (*The Miracles of Jesus*).

Contributions to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Pupils will have the opportunity to explore powerful questions of meaning and truth, and reflect on what is of ultimate value.

EXPECTATIONS at the end of this unit:

Most pupils will:

Most pupils will be able to use appropriate vocabulary to compare and contrast the views of religion put forward through the media and that communicated through RE lessons and other sources. They will recognise that different types of programme present different types of challenge to religious believers.

Most pupils will raise and respond to their own questions about truth in the context of religion and the media.

Some pupils will not have made so much progress and will:

Some pupils will be able to use mostly appropriate simple vocabulary to compare and contrast the views of religion put forward through the media and that communicated through RE lessons and other sources

Some pupils will raise and respond to some of their own questions about truth in the context of religion and the media.

Some pupils will have progressed further and will:

Some pupils will be able to use highly appropriate and sophisticated vocabulary to compare and contrast the views of religion put forward through the media and that communicated through RE lessons and other sources. They will recognise that different types of programme present different types of challenge to religious believers. They will be able to analyse accurately the worldview and perspective of a number of different sources and account for the differences between them.

Some pupils will raise and respond to their own questions about truth in the context of religion and the media. They will be able to discuss different perspectives from their own view and explain why some people might believe them. Their discussion of views and perspectives will be backed up with analysis of, and evidence and examples from, relevant media clips.

Key questions	LEARNING OBJECTIVES Pupils should learn:	Possible Teaching Activities	Assessment Opportunities	Links / points to note
What is/are the worldview(s) of the media? How are the worldviews of the media in tension with religious perspectives?	• What a worldview is. • That the output of the media is not neutral but communicates worldviews the whole time. • That the worldviews of the media are generally in tension with religious perspectives.	• Complete the statement “I believe...” X 5 or play the belief game from CEM/RE Today Services. • Whole class discussion/explanation: a worldview is a set of beliefs that each individual holds. Everyone has one without exception. They may or may not be religious. In addition most communication between individuals demonstrates something of our worldview. The media communicates worldviews all of the time. • Watch 4-5 adverts. Pupils in groups to discuss one in detail. What is the message of each advert? Draw out the essential materialistic and consumerist message of each. • Spider diagram/mind map collectively: what are the types of programme seen on TV? • What message does each communicate? E.g. adverts – consumerism/materialism, game shows – the strongest win because they deserve to, news programmes – what we see around us is what is real. • How might a religious believer disagree with the worldview(s) of the media?	• Final summative written work: What is the worldview of the media? Give evidence and examples for your views. How might a religious believer disagree with the views put forward in the media? Make use of any religious tradition you know about or have studied.	• James W Sire, <i>The Universe Next Door</i>, contains a good explanation of world views. • The teacher needs to select about five adverts. Newspaper or magazine adverts could be used if media clips are not available. • John Goody's Farmington Report, <i>Religion and the Media: Consensus or Controversy</i> contains useful background information and ideas for each section of this scheme. This is available on the Farmington website www.farmington.ac.uk. In addition there is also a Powerpoint presentation which summarises key points. This is available on the Devon Education Services website www.deseducation.org

Key questions	LEARNING OBJECTIVES Pupils should learn:	Possible Teaching Activities	Assessment Opportunities	Links / points to note
Where can we learn about religion in the media?	- That information that relates to religion in the media is varied. - That there are specifically religious programmes (worship, magazine, documentaries), educational programmes (RE broadcasts) and other types of broadcasts which include a religious theme.	- Where do we encounter religion in the media? - Discuss/record ideas together. - Ask pupils to categorise into types. Distinguish explicitly religious and implicitly religious. Explicit religious programmes then subdivide into worship, religious magazine and religious documentary. Also include broadcasts produced explicitly for RE teaching. - Group work: hypothesise/speculate. How would we expect the information about religion from explicitly religious and implicitly religious programmes to be different?		A collection of programme guides would be useful here e.g. Radio Times. If unavailable a number of websites have comprehensive programme listings.
What do explicitly religious programmes teach us about religion?	- That there are different types of religious programme. - That programmes that have religion as their key theme can have vastly different agendas. - That there are some aspects of religion which are difficult to communicate on television and through the media.	Clips of each type of religious programme could be watched here and analysed in terms of key features/message or the teacher may decide to watch one type of religious programme in detail. Alternatively groups of pupils could be set a hw task to watch a type of programme and report back to the whole class on its features. Whichever approach is followed the key questions remain the same:		What can be tackled here and in the next four sections depends on the resources that the teacher has available but the approach is generally the same: preparation, viewing, analysis, reflection, summary.

Key questions	LEARNING OBJECTIVES Pupils should learn:	Possible Teaching Activities	Assessment Opportunities	Links / points to note
		1. Who was the intended audience of the programme? 2. How could you tell? 3. What view of religion did the programme put forward 4. Who might agree with the message? 5. Who might disagree with the message? Why? 6. Was the view of religion put forward different from what you knew already from RE lessons or your own prior knowledge? How? 7. Was the programme fair to religion or religious people? 8. If television is primarily about entertainment can you do religion on television? In addition there are specific questions that should be asked depending on the type of programme watched: Worship Is worship corrupted by being shown on television? Can it ever be entertainment? A spectator sport? Magazine Do magazine programmes imply that all religions and issues are equally valid and equally true? Is this correct? Documentary Documentary programmes always give the impression of being in depth and impartial. Is this always true?		

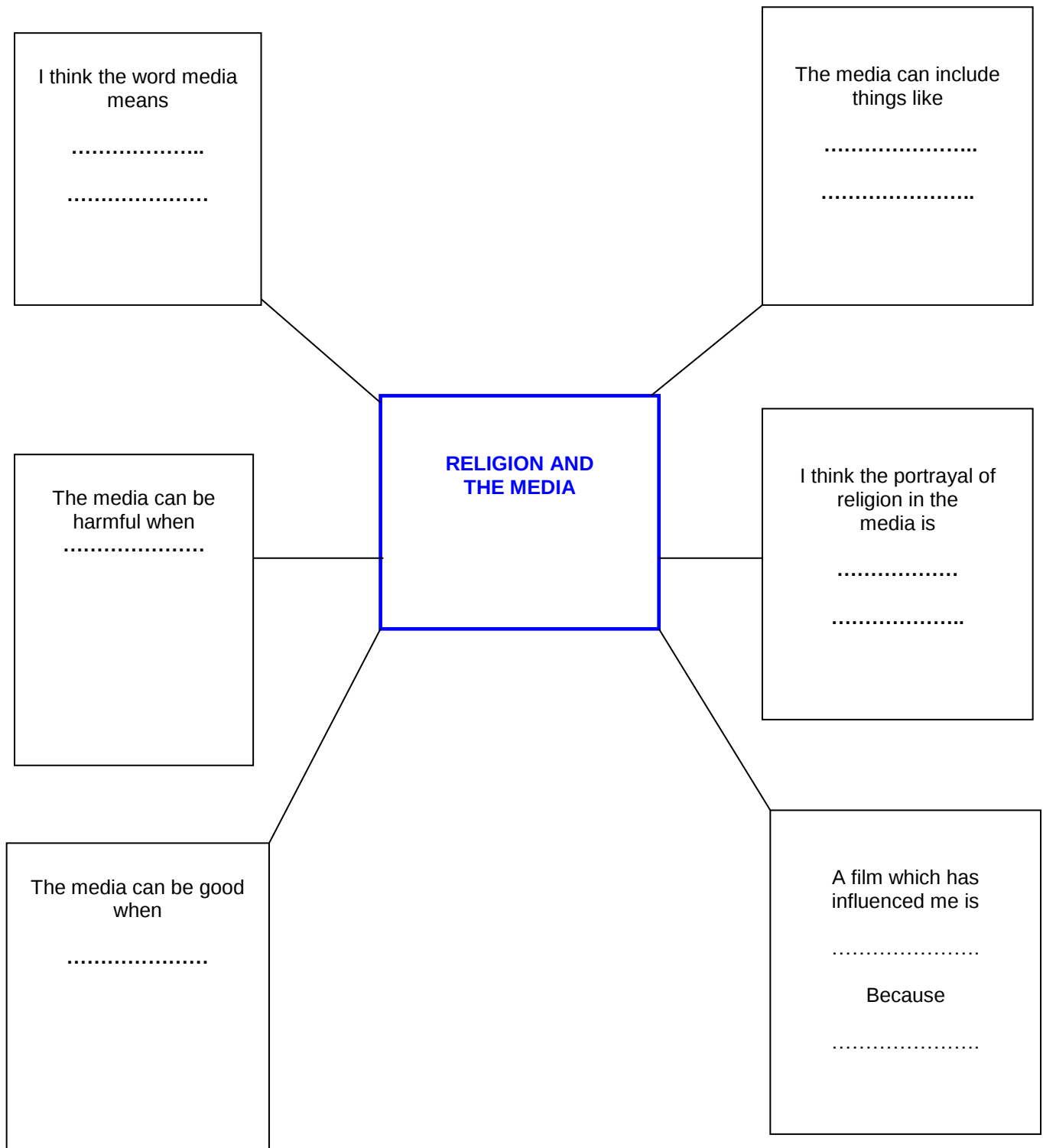
Key questions	LEARNING OBJECTIVES Pupils should learn:	Possible Teaching Activities	Assessment Opportunities	Links / points to note
What might a film teach us about religion?	- That films that have a religious element are often extremely influential. - That many films contain a religious theme/person. - That films can be persuasive but can often present a very different perspective on religion from that of a religious believer or community.	- Analysis of a film should follow along the same lines as outlined for religious programmes. - Identify topic/issue from film and prepare pupils for viewing through consideration of topic e.g. sacred text quotations, discussion of prior learning (where relevant). - View relevant clips. - Discuss/analyse through specific focussed questions (e.g. for <i>Bruce Almighty</i> on the depiction of God, issues of sovereignty/omnipotence, freewill etc). - Compare and contrast with a religious perspective e.g. through the interview of a visitor from the specific religion (who has already seen or has been primed to watch the film). - Overall assessment of the film and its treatment of religion.	- Imagine you are a writer for a religious magazine (the faith of which will be determined by the faith most relevant to the film watched). - Write a review of the film you have watched outlining its strengths and weaknesses in terms of teaching people about the faith that (you imagine) you belong to. How could the director have improved the way they communicated about your faith?	This section is likely to be successful if: - a film with a clear religious theme has been selected - specific relevant scenes within the film have been selected - a focussed means of identifying contrasts with religious views is utilised e.g. specific sacred text quotations, interview of a religious believer, use of reviews from religious perspectives.

Key questions	LEARNING OBJECTIVES Pupils should learn:	Possible Teaching Activities	Assessment Opportunities	Links / points to note
What might comedies teach us about religion?	- That comedies that have a religious element are numerous and often extremely influential. - That comedy can communicate a nuanced view of religion and religious people. - To consider whether making religion a subject of comedy encourages people to think negatively of it.	- Analysis of a comedy should follow along the same lines as outlined above. - Starter discussion: Are religions and religious people legitimate topics for comedies? - Sorting exercise: provide pupils with religious characters from comedies. Sort and rank according to how positive/negative a view they communicate about religion and religious people. - Discuss pupil responses. - Outline role play discussion task. In each group of 5: 1 chairperson, 2 religious believers, 2 atheists. One each of the religious believers and the atheists to argue that comedies represent religion fairly, the other two to argue that they do not. Pupils to be assigned roles in group before they view the comedy. - View the comedy. - Role play. Debrief discussion.	Role play: pupils to be placed into small groups to role play a chat show discussion (e.g. as might feature on the Heaven and Earth show) on the topic: Do comedies represent religions fairly?	- See the points above for a film. - The choice of a suitable comedy is key here. Possibilities include The Simpsons episode <i>Homer the Heretic</i> (on the Heaven and Hell classics DVD) and the Vicar of Dibley <i>Make Poverty History</i> episodes. - There are many, many other possibilities for suitable programmes. Tessa Taylor's excellent Farmington Report, <i>An Introduction to Philosophy: the Wit and Wisdom of Lisa Simpson</i> is a good guide to many Simpsons episodes.
What might soap operas teach us about religion?	- That soap operas occasionally feature religious characters and storylines. - To consider whether soaps generally encourage people to think positively or negatively about religion and religious people.	Either approach for films or comedies could be followed here.		This section and the next relies on the teacher being able to record suitable material from a soap opera and news clips. If this is not possible then pupils could be asked to conduct their own research by viewing one soap opera for a week. This obviously runs the risk that during a specific week there might be no religious material at all.

Key questions	LEARNING OBJECTIVES Pupils should learn:	Possible Teaching Activities	Assessment Opportunities	Links / points to note
What might the news teach us about the media?	- To consider what people might learn from news clips or stories in newspapers about religion. - To consider whether the format and philosophy of news programmes and newspapers makes it difficult to present a positive view of religion and religious people through the news.	- If video clips of news stories are used then pupils will need to view and analyse stories together. - If newspaper articles are used here then they can work on separate stories individually or small groups. - Specific discussion questions will depend on the actual news stories selected but the teacher should seek to draw out the following points: - There are many more negative stories about religion in the news than there are positive. Part of the reason for this is that the negative is often considered more newsworthy than the positive and that the instant is considered more newsworthy than the long-term. - Religious elements in stories are often emphasised in negative stories and underplayed in positive ones. - The worldview of news programmes is often in tension with a religious outlook i.e. the worldview of news programmes is that what is real and what matters can be seen, photographed and reported. Conversely, what isn't reported does not matter.		- See the first bullet point above. - If no video clips of news items are available then this section could be tackled using newspaper articles. - Some appropriate news headlines can be used from John Goody's Farmington powerpoint.

Key questions	LEARNING OBJECTIVES Pupils should learn:	Possible Teaching Activities	Assessment Opportunities	Links / points to note
Religion and the media: allies or enemies?	To develop and reach their own conclusions about whether the media, on balance, provides a positive or a negative view of religion.	- Discussion to draw together conclusions: - How is the view of religion in the media different from what you have learned from other sources (e.g. RE lessons, faith community etc)? - Do different types of programme treat religion differently? How? Why? - If the media distorts religion what is the best type of corrective? - Can we ever escape the media's influence? Should we want to? - Written work for pupils to express their final reflections.	- Pupils should produce a final piece of written work which could be formally assessed in terms of levels. - This might be a formal essay e.g. "The media never treat religion fairly." Do you agree? Give reasons, evidence and examples from different types of programmes. Explain who might disagree with you and why. - It could also be ICT produced e.g. a leaflet that a church or mosque might want to give to young people to educate them about the negative and positive aspects of religion in the media.	

FORMATIVE GRID

A formative grid diagram with a central box labeled "RELIGION AND THE MEDIA" in blue. Six lines radiate from this central box to six surrounding rectangular boxes, each containing a question or statement related to religion and media, followed by dotted lines for writing.

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graph TD; A[RELIGION AND THE MEDIA] --- B[I think the word media means  
.....  
.....]; A --- C[The media can include things like  
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.....]; A --- D[I think the portrayal of religion in the media is  
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.....]; A --- E[A film which has influenced me is  
.....  
Because  
.....]; A --- F[The media can be good when  
.....]; A --- G[The media can be harmful when  
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**RELIGION AND
THE MEDIA**

SUMMATIVE GRID

I would now describe the media as 	I think the portrayal of religion in the media is 	In soaps religion is portrayed as
The most challenging part of the unit was when 	RELIGION AND THE MEDIA	A film I analysed regarding religion was
The most memorable aspects of this unit for me were 		The coverage of religion in the news is

I would like to learn more about