Simply Collective Worship

Religious Festivals

- 10 Religious Festivals
- 50 **assemblies** and thoughts for the day

By Phil Lord

Wesak
Christmas
Easter
Holi
Diwali
Ramadan
Hajj
Passover
Hanukkah
Vaisakhi



Themes

Copyright information

Each theme consists of an assembly followed by four shorter thoughts for the day exploring the theme in more detail.

Buddhism

1. **Buddha Day - Wesak** *(Taken from Cycle 3)* **5**

Christianity

2. **Christmas Traditions** *(Taken from Cycle 1)* **11**
3. **To Forgive — Easter** *(Taken from Cycle 1)* **17**

Hinduism

4. **Spring Festivals – Holi** *(Taken from Cycle 4)* **23**
5. **Diwali** *(Taken from Cycle 4)* **29**

Islam

6. **Beliefs And Actions – Ramadan** *(Taken from Cycle 1)* **35**
7. **Hajj** *(Taken from Cycle 2)* **41**

Judaism

8. **Passover** *(Taken from Cycle 2)* **47**
9. **Hanukkah** *(Taken from Cycle 4)* **53**

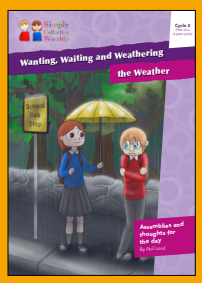
Sikhism

10. **Vaisakhi** *(Taken from Cycle 4)* **59**

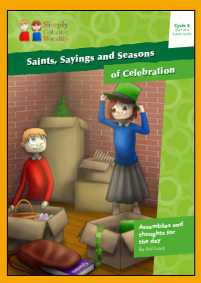
All the assemblies and thoughts for the day are from Simply Collective Worship's four year resource.



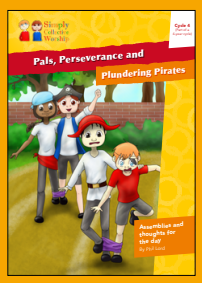
Cycle 1
'Titanic, Talents and Taming the Tongue'



Cycle 2
'Wanting, Waiting and Weathering the Weather'



Cycle 3
'Saints, Sayings and Seasons of Celebration'



Cycle 4
'Pals, Perseverance and Plundering Pirates'

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Theme	.1 Main assembly/theme .2-5 Thought for the day	Key Dates	Values	Spiritual	Moral	Social	Cultural
1	**.1 Buddha Day – Wesak** .2 Heaven and hell .3 Buddhist proverbs – words .4 Buddhist proverbs – happiness and anger .5 Buddhist proverbs – learning	Spring/Summer Festival April/May/June	Respect Fairness		✓	✓	✓
2	**.1 Christmas traditions** .2 Carols .3 The Christmas tree .4 Christmas cards .5 Christmas presents	25th December	Community/ tradition			✓	✓
3	**.1 To forgive – Easter** .2 Saying sorry .3 Forgiveness .4 Tom and Jack .5 Scales	Spring Festival – Mar/April	Forgiveness Community Justice	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	**.1 Spring Festivals – Holi** .2 Las Fallas .3 Spring Equinox .4 Spring Clean .5 Image Of Spring	Spring Festival - March	Being positive Respect	✓			✓
5	**.1 Diwali** .2 Lakshmi .3 Churning The Milky Ocean .4 Sikh Diwali .5 Feast For The senses	Winter Festival - Oct/Nov	Respect Community	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	**.1 Ramadan** .2 Summer or winter? .3 Practise what you preach .4 The tip of the iceberg .5 Ending the fast	Changes each year – 10-12 days earlier on the Gregorian calendar	Respect Community Beliefs	✓		✓	✓
7	**.1 Hajj** .2 Ibrahim .3 Ibrahim and Ismail .4 Stoning the devil .5 Eid-ul-Adha	Changes each year – 10-12 days earlier on the Gregorian calendar	Tradition Respect Community Forgiveness	✓		✓	✓
8	**.1 Passover** .2 The fast of the firstborn .3 The Seder meal .4 Matzo .5 Four questions	Spring Festival – Mar/April	Perseverance Resilience Tradition			✓	✓
9	**.1 Hanukkah** .2 Hanukkah Menorah .3 The Dreidel Game .4 Latkes .5 Restoring Oil	Harvest Festival - Sept/Oct	Respect Community	✓			✓
10	**.1 Vaisakhi (14th April)** .2 Guru Granth Sahib .3 Celebrating Vaisakhi .4 Sikhism In The UK .5 Intercultural Education	14th April	Respect and tolerance Courage Liberty	✓	✓	✓	✓

1.1 Buddha Day

Spring/Summer Festival
April/May/June

Each year, in May or early June, millions of people around the world celebrate the festival of Wesak. Wesak is also known as 'Buddha Day' because it celebrates the birth, enlightenment and death of a man called Siddhartha Gautama who came to be known as the Buddha.

Siddhartha was born to King Suddhodana and Queen Maya in a place called Lumbini in modern day Nepal over 2500 years ago. Before the prince was born, Queen Maya had a dream that a white elephant entered her side. Hindu holy men also told the king and queen that they would have a son and that he would either become a great ruler or a great religious leader. The king wanted his son to become a great ruler so he made sure that Siddhartha had everything he wanted. The king made sure that Siddhartha never left the palace. The king protected his son by not allowing sick people, old people or religious monks into the palace. He employed many young servants to distract Siddhartha. When Siddhartha was 16, his father arranged Siddhartha's marriage to the beautiful young princess Yasodhara. Siddhartha and Yasodhara had a son called Rahula and they lived and raised their son within the palace walls. Siddhartha wasn't satisfied with his life of luxury, throughout his life he wondered what the world was like outside the palace.

Before his 30th birthday, Siddhartha asked the palace servant, Channa, to show him life outside the palace. Channa prepared a chariot and Siddhartha left the palace for the first time. Not far from the palace, Siddhartha saw on old man. Siddhartha had never seen an old person before. The lack of hair, the wrinkles and the walking stick all surprised Siddhartha. He asked Channa



about what he had seen, Channa told Siddhartha that he had just witnessed old age. "We must all grow old" said Channa. At this Siddhartha ordered the chariot to return to the palace.

It wasn't long before Siddhartha wanted to see life outside the palace again. Channa prepared the chariot and Siddhartha left the palace for the second time. They hadn't been travelling long when Siddhartha saw a man lying and groaning on the road. Siddhartha asked Channa about what he had just seen. Channa told Siddhartha that he had just witnessed sickness. "We can all become ill" said Channa. Siddhartha didn't know that people could suffer in this way. He ordered the chariot to return to the palace.

Siddhartha didn't like old age and sickness, but he wanted to see outside the palace again. Channa prepared the chariot and Siddhartha left the palace for the third time. On this visit, Siddhartha saw some people carrying a dead body in a funeral procession. He asked Channa about what he had just seen. "We must all die" said

Channa. Struggling to understand what he had just seen, Siddhartha ordered the chariot to return to the palace.

Siddhartha thought a lot about what he had seen and about why there was so much suffering in the world. He had to see outside the palace once more. Channa prepared the chariot and Siddhartha left the palace for the fourth time. Siddhartha saw a religious monk. The monk's head was shaved, the monk didn't have many clothes and he carried a bowl. The monk seemed to be very poor, yet he looked very happy. Siddhartha couldn't understand how someone could be so happy with so much suffering around. He asked Channa about what he had just seen. Channa told Siddhartha that the monk was a holy man. "What he carries is all that he owns," said Channa.

Siddhartha struggled to understand the four things he had seen. He decided to become a holy man and search for the answers. Siddhartha and Channa came to a river by the edge of his father's kingdom. The prince took off his beautiful robes and his jewellery and gave them to Channa. Siddhartha cut off his hair and began the next stage of his life. As a prince, Siddhartha had everything he ever wanted. To find the answers to the problem of suffering he decided to try and live with as little as possible. He ate so little food that he nearly starved to death.

Siddhartha spent a lot of time focusing his thoughts in meditation. Sometimes he would meditate trying to find answers to the problem of suffering, other times he would meditate and not think of anything at all. One morning, Siddhartha awoke from his meditation. He had answers to all of the questions that he had been thinking about, everything made sense. He had become the Buddha, the Enlightened one. He understood that suffering was a part of life, both luxury and poverty cause suffering. Siddhartha was about 35 when he reached what is called 'enlightenment'. The Buddha spent the next 45 years teaching others and spreading the message of Buddhism. Wesak commemorates Siddhartha's birth, enlightenment and death.

Time to reflect

- Why was Siddhartha so affected by the four sights he had seen outside of his palace?
- How did Siddhartha try and find the answers to the problem of suffering after leaving the palace?
- Are there any events in your life that have a big impact on you?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that help us to remember the past. Help us to understand that many of the traditions, actions and beliefs that we have are linked to people, stories and events in history. *(Amen)*



1.2 Heaven and Hell

Can anyone recount the story of Siddhartha Gautama that we heard yesterday? What is Siddhartha also known as? He lived the first 29 years of his life without seeing or experiencing any suffering. The visions he saw with his charioteer Channa changed his life and he started to meditate on some of the most difficult questions humans try to answer. Can anyone remember the four things that he saw that changed his life? There are many Buddhist stories and sayings that help to explain why people suffer and what people can do to reduce or stop suffering.

Once upon a time there was a nun. She wanted to understand the difference between the place of extreme bliss (sometimes called heaven) and the place of extreme suffering (sometimes called hell). "Before I die" she said "I want to visit both". Her wish was granted and she arrived at a great dining hall at lunch time. The dining hall was packed with people and the tables were piled high with delicious food and drink. As the nun looked carefully she noticed that all the people were thin and starving. Each person was holding a pair of chopsticks the length of a tall man. Although they were hungry they greedily tried to pick up the food but couldn't get the food from the plates to their mouths. 'I understand where I am' she told one of the diners, 'I want to see heaven'. Immediately she was transported to another dining hall with the same tables piled high with the same delicious food and drink. Happy people who looked well fed had the same giant chopsticks, but they were using them to feed each other so no one went hungry.

This is an old Buddhist parable that helps to explain how human selfishness can lead to suffering. In the first dining hall, the people only thought about feeding themselves. Everybody in the hall suffered because they didn't want to help each other. In the second dining hall the people were well fed. The situation was exactly the same but they worked together to help make sure that everybody was able to eat.

Time to reflect

- What was the difference between heaven and hell in the story?
- What made hell a place of suffering?
- What made heaven a place of bliss?
- What do we do at school to make things:

  a) better for ourselves and others?
  b) bad for ourselves and others?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for stories and parables that remind us of the values that we should live by. This Buddhist parable reminds us that some of the suffering in the world is created by our own actions. The parable also teaches us that the opposite is true, our actions, including helping others, can create a bit of heaven on earth. *(Amen)*



1.3 Buddhist Proverbs - Words

Wisdom is the ability to use the experiences we have had and the experiences others have told us about to make the right choices. We also need the wisdom to remember that we all make mistakes so that we can be fair to everyone around us. There are many wise Buddhist sayings and proverbs that can inspire people to make choices that will help them and the communities in which they live. We are going to think about the advice that we can gain from just a few of these sayings about the words we say.

Time to reflect

For each of these sayings, discuss what you think they mean. What advice are they trying to give? Can you make up similar sayings of your own?

"Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle and the life of the candle will not be shortened."

A kind word costs us nothing but it can brighten someone else's day and inspire them to say a kind word to someone else.

"Better than a thousand useless words is one useful word, hearing which one attains peace."

We might want to spend time telling someone how to do something using hundreds of words, whilst "let me show you" might be more useful.

"A dog is not considered a good dog because he is a good barker. A man is not considered a good man because he is a good talker."

Good actions demonstrate if a person is good or not, not their words. A person may use kind words but hurt people with their actions.

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for people in our lives who want the best for us. We know that others may know things that we don't because of their wisdom, their experience and their understanding. Help us today to make the right judgements based on the advice of others. *(Amen)*



1.4 Buddhist Proverbs - Happiness and Anger

Wisdom is the ability to use the experiences we have had and the experiences others have told us about to make the right choices. We also need the wisdom to remember that we all make mistakes so that we can be fair to everyone around us. There are many wise Buddhist sayings and proverbs that can inspire people to make choices that will help them and the communities in which they live. We are going to think about the advice that we can gain from just a few of these sayings about happiness and anger.

Time to reflect

For each of these sayings, discuss what you think they mean. What advice are they trying to give? Can you make up similar sayings of your own?

"Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned."

Anger and unforgiveness hurts the person who is angry far more than it does the person who they are angry with.

"Whoever doesn't flare up at someone who's angry wins a battle hard to win."

It is hard not to become angry with some one who is angry at you, but it will only make the situation worse. It is better to try and stay calm however hard it may be.

"Happiness is not something ready-made. It comes from your own actions."

We probably all want to be happy, but how many of us want things that are out of our control to make us happy? "I'll be happy if the sun comes out today". Happiness is something that we get from our own actions.

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for people in our lives who want the best for us. We know that others may know things that we don't because of their wisdom, their experience and their understanding. Help us today to make the right judgements based on the advice of others. *(Amen)*



1.5 Buddhist Proverbs - Learning

Wisdom is the ability to use the experiences we have had and the experiences others have told us about to make the right choices. We also need the wisdom to remember that we all make mistakes so that we can be fair to everyone around us. There are many wise Buddhist sayings and proverbs that can inspire people to make choices that will help them and the communities in which they live. We are going to think about the advice that we can gain from just a few of these sayings about our attitude to learning.

Time to reflect

For each of these sayings, discuss what you think they mean. What advice are they trying to give? Can you make up similar sayings of your own?

"He is able who thinks he is able."

If you think that you can do it, you will overcome the mistakes and the disappointments. If you think you can't you'll use the mistakes and disappointments as reasons to give up.

"No matter how hard the past, you can always begin again."

Mistakes are inevitable – it's the reason they put little rubbers on the end of pencils.

"It is better to travel well than to arrive."

Try and enjoy the process of learning, researching and practising rather than wanting to complete the learning, researching and practising.

"If you have a problem that can be fixed, then there is no use in worrying. If you have a problem that cannot be fixed, then there is no use in worrying."

Don't worry!

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for people in our lives that want the best for us. We know that others may know things that we don't because of their wisdom, their experience and their understanding. Help us today to make the right judgements based on the advice of others. *(Amen)*



2.1 Christmas Traditions

Winter Festival
25th December

Preparation

Download and print the 4 x A4 sheets containing 24 words connected with Christmas. Cut them up, so each word is on an individual strip of paper. Also have blank strips of paper and a marker pen available.

Search and display the Rockefeller Christmas tree in New York or the 1848 Illustrated London News 'Christmas Tree at Windsor Castle'.



I have a list of 24 Christmas Traditions written down. I want to see if you can guess which traditions are on my list. I also want to see if you can you come up with Christmas traditions that are not on my list. **If a pupil says a word that is on the list, ask them to come out and hold up the word. If a pupil comes up with a word that is not on the list, write it on a blank strip of paper and give it to the pupil to hold up.**

Traditions come in all shapes and sizes. Some of them are celebrated by the whole community, some of them by individual families and some become traditions that we just do on our own. Where do they come from? For example, who started sending cards to other people? Have they always been cards that fold in the middle? Have they always had snowmen and a fat man in red on the front? Religious festivals all over the world involve the giving of cards (but not with Christmas written on the front). Does anyone know why people decorate trees and place them in their houses at Christmas time? When did the tradition begin and who started it? Why do we give gifts at Christmas? Have the traditions that we celebrate always been around and does everyone celebrate them in the same way?

Someone was telling me the other day **('someone' being the writer of Simply Collective Worship)** that they used to do something on Christmas Eve that they thought was a Christmas tradition that everybody did. He said that every Christmas Eve his mum would cook a joint of pork and a bowl of stuffing, and they would invite friends around to eat a pork, stuffing and apple sauce batch! *(Midlands talk for a bread roll, bun, barmcake, etc.)* He used to look forward to this tradition, spending Christmas Eve with family and friends. He remembers that his dad liked the bread heated in the oven, so it went crispy, but he liked it warmed in the microwave so that his was soft. He didn't realise that it wasn't a national tradition until he got married. On their first Christmas as a married couple, they undertook the mammoth task of a Christmas shop. He explained to his wife that they needed a joint of pork for the 'Christmas Eve tradition', but his wife had only had them on Christmas Eve when

visiting his parents. He got quite upset and insisted that this tradition was celebrated the world over and that her family must have simply 'overlooked' this long and noble tradition. It turns out his wife was correct and what he thought of as a widely celebrated tradition turned out to be one that was just celebrated by his family. He's now got a family of his own and the 'pork and stuffing batch' tradition, once celebrated by him and his parents, has developed into a pulled pork and stuffing 'batch' (with BBQ sauce), that still takes place on Christmas Eve, just after his family has waved Father Christmas off in the local town. It's nice to think that his new tradition will probably continue for a number of years to come.

Over the course of our thoughts for this week, we are going to learn about the beginnings of some of the Christmas traditions and where they may have started. Some of these traditions are very old, the wise men are said to have given their gifts to the baby Jesus over two thousand years ago. Other traditions are relatively recent with many of the Christmas traditions celebrated today having their beginnings in the Victorian era, which means they are less than two hundred years old. Traditions are a way of connecting people today with communities from the past and a way of ensuring that we remember and celebrate the same values.

Time to reflect

- What traditions do you like to remember?
- Are there traditions that your family celebrate that no one else does?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We thank you for important times when communities come together to celebrate and remember important occasions. We think about traditions and how they make us feel. May we remember that traditions often begin with values of togetherness and remembrance, and therefore let us remember the roots of Christmas this year together in our community. *(Amen)*

1. *Tree*
2. *Decorations*
3. *Christmas Dinner*
4. *Sprouts*
5. *Presents*
6. *Carols*
7. *Advent Calendar*
8. *Advent Candles*
9. *Turkey*
10. *Stuffing*
11. *Cranberry sauce*
12. *Going to midnight Mass*
13. *Queens speech*
14. *Cards*
15. *Father Christmas*
16. *Angel/fairy/star on the tree*
17. *Giving Santa a biscuit and his reindeer a carrot*
18. *Stockings on the fireplace*
19. *Letter to Father Christmas*
20. *Mistletoe*
21. *Wrapping presents*
22. *Treats and sweets*
23. *Elves*
24. *Nativities*



2.2 Carols

Ask for two volunteers but don't explain the task yet. Ask one to leave the room or wear headphones, they shouldn't be able to hear what's going on. Time the first pupil to name 5 Christmas Carols. Only accept ones that have to do with the 'religious side' of Christmas (i.e. Jesus and the Nativity story). Write down the time. Ask the second volunteer to do the same and see who has the quickest time.

When we think of 'Carols' today we think of hymns and songs that explain something of the Christian Christmas story. 'Away in a Manger', 'We Three Kings' and 'While Shepherds watch their Flocks by Night' are hymns that tell the various parts of the Nativity story. 'Away in a Manger' and 'We Three Kings' were written in the Victorian period, around the mid-1800's, 'While Shepherds Watched...' is over 300 years old. Hymns help people to remember important Christian teachings, a bit like using songs to learn times tables. One of the earliest Christmas songs, 'Jesus refulsit omnium', written in Latin, dates back over 1600 years and was written by St. Hilary Poitiers, it is still sung today.

The word 'Carol' is much older dating back thousands of years. It used to refer to dancing round in a circle, often with singing. There are lots of stone circles in Britain, like the ones at Stonehenge that people would have met at and danced around. There are the remains of over an estimated one thousand stone circles in Britain.

We often think of the non-religious Christmas songs as having been written more recently than traditional Christmas Carols. Whilst many are, Jingle bells was written in America, by James Lord Pierpont in 1857. There are plenty of songs at Christmas that capture both the history of the Christmas story and the special time it represents today.

Time to reflect

- Which is your favourite Christmas Carol or song?
- Why do you like it?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for the gift of song and singing. Singing is important the world over, all people and cultures throughout time have sung about things that are important to all of us. Music has the ability to make us smile and connect with each other. May we take the opportunity to enjoy singing in our communities this Christmas. *(Amen)*



2.3 The Christmas Tree

How old is the Christmas tree tradition? The evergreen fir tree has been used to celebrate winter festivals for thousands of years. Before Christianity people living in Western Europe decorated their homes with the branches and the Romans used fir trees to decorate their Temples. But does anyone know why bringing a tree into a house and decorating it is popular at Christmas? There are so many stories that relate to the Christmas tree that you could do a research project about the Christmas tree all on its own. The first Christmas trees came to Britain in the mid-1800's. Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, is famous for setting up a Christmas tree in Windsor Castle, a drawing of this tree can be found on the Internet. ***(search: '1848 Illustrated London News Christmas Tree at Windsor Castle.')*** Prince Albert was German, many of the Christmas Tree stories begin in Germany or other Western European countries. One such legend took place around 1200 year ago. St Boniface, born in Devon, regularly went to Germany to spread the message of Christianity and build churches. On one trip around the time of the Winter Solstice, the shortest day, it is said that he came across a group of people who were worshipping an old oak tree. St Boniface was so offended, believing that only God should be worshipped, that he cut down the tree. It is said that a fir tree immediately sprang up in the oak tree's place, Boniface and his followers' lit candles and placed them in the tree so that he could teach the people the Christian message throughout the night.

Time to reflect

- Do you know any stories about Christmas traditions?
- How do you feel when parents, family or teachers read you stories?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

Many traditions and things we do have their roots in events long past, many of which we are completely unaware. As we celebrate our various traditions this year, may we not forget that we are linking with and reliving history, may we pass these to those in the future. *(Amen)*



2.4 Christmas Cards

Ask the pupils how many Christmas cards will postmen deliver this year? (in 2011 Royal Mail estimated that they delivered around 750 million cards, that's nearly 8 cards for every single person living in the UK. Before the creation of E-cards it was 3 times that amount.) There is a long history of sending greetings on scrolls or paper. The early Egyptians would send messages of goodwill on papyrus scrolls. The ancient Chinese celebrated New Year by exchanging cards. Hand-made paper valentines were sent over 500 years ago. But the first Christmas card is believed to have been designed and printed in London in 1843 by painter John Callcott Horsley. His friend Sir Henry Cole suggested that they could print a greeting card to send to friends at Christmas. (Images of the card can be found on the Internet.) 1000 cards were printed, and it is thought that 18 of them still exist today. One was auctioned at Sotheby's in London in 2010 and sold for around £4400. It's amazing to think that the humble Christmas card began as an idea 160 or so years ago and has turned into a tradition. Right now billions of them are being sent all over the world.

Time to reflect

- Do you think Sir Henry Cole thought his idea would become so popular?
- Sir Henry Cole's idea can inspire us to continue with our ideas.

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are mindful that many of the things that we do and receive at Christmas began with an idea. The first Christmas celebrates you, God, having the idea to send Jesus in the first place. May we be inspired by the story of Sir Henry Cole and understand just how powerful ideas can be. *(Amen)*



2.5 Christmas Presents

Why do we give presents at Christmas?
One of the main reasons that presents are given and received at Christmas goes back to events of the first Christmas when Jesus was born. The Bible explains that wise men from the East travelled a great distance, following a star, to visit and worship the young Jesus. They presented Jesus with 3 gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh. These three gifts had significance as to who Jesus was and what he was going to do during his life. Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus as being a gift from God to humanity. Presents are an important part of the celebration of Christmas today, for some it has become the *most* important part of Christmas. It is important to remember that although this is a long-held tradition, for hundreds of years gifts were 'sweets or small toys', ***my grandad received an orange and toy soldier in a stocking hanging over the fireplace.***
It is relatively recently that the types of presents that we receive today have been available. TV's and games consoles are now commonly included in Christmas lists. Whilst present giving was a way of remembering the wise men during the nativity, for some it has become the most important part of Christmas.

Time to reflect

- Is it possible that wanting presents becomes more important than spending time with our families and community?
- Decide to focus on what is important this Christmas.
- Think about the saying 'it is better to give than receive'.

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for the opportunity to celebrate as part of our community. May we be grateful for what we have this Christmas. *(Amen)*



3.1 To Forgive - Easter

Spring Festival
March/April

Preparation

Search and display an image of an Easter Egg.



Easter is the most important Christian festival in the year. Christmas remembers Jesus' birth, but Easter celebrates the central theme of Christianity which is forgiveness and hope. To forgive someone means to stop feeling angry towards someone for something they have done wrong to you, it may mean that you no longer want to punish the person for their wrongdoing. Many Christians believe that God forgives humans because Jesus was prepared to take their punishment and was put on the cross, the event remembered on Good Friday. It is called 'Good' Friday, for the very reason that it is good news for Christians. It was through Jesus' death that they can find forgiveness for the wrong things they have done in their life.

Who will be eating hot cross buns during the Easter holiday? You can buy hot cross buns in most bakeries and supermarkets nearly all year round. For many Christians the hot cross bun symbolises Jesus' death on a cross and is eaten two days before Easter on Good Friday. It wasn't long ago that the sweetly spiced bun with a cross on the top could only be bought during Easter time. At the end of the 16th century, just over 400 years ago, Queen Elizabeth I declared that hot cross buns could only be made and eaten on Good Friday, Christmas Day and for peoples' funerals. If anyone was caught making or selling hot cross buns at any other time, they would be required to give all the buns to the poor.

Easter Sunday is important as it celebrates Jesus resurrection two days later. The theme of resurrection and new life is remembered in many of the traditions associated with Easter. Lamb is traditionally eaten, and lambs are a sign of spring. Eggs and chicks are also a sign of new life. Many religions celebrate the coming of spring as it is a time of re-birth. For example, new leaves and flowers appear after the long winter. The days start to get longer and warmer. Many animals give birth to their young in spring including sheep. This allows the offspring to grow over the summer months and be strong enough to survive the following winter.

Even the date of Easter was chosen to highlight the new life of spring. Confusingly, Easter day is always the first Sunday after the first full moon after the first day of spring. Does anyone know what a Baptism or Christening is? Before Jesus started healing and teaching people, the Bible describes that he met his cousin John the Baptist by the river Jordan. John baptised Jesus, which means he probably dunked him in the river to symbolise a fresh start and the beginning of something new. Many years ago, new Christians would be baptised into

the church community on Easter morning as the sun rose and shone through the east window of the church. The east window is traditionally above the altar. The newly baptised Christians would then take their first communion, (bread and wine) from the altar beneath the east window.

Eggs have become an important part of the celebrations regarding Easter. The traditions relating to eggs vary greatly, but they have their beginnings in the traditions surrounding lent. Lent is the name given to the forty days leading up to Easter. Many of us may mark the beginning of lent by eating pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, also known as pancake day and many people nowadays give up eating chocolate during lent. Lent remembers Jesus praying and fasting (going without food) for forty days after he was baptised. Many years ago Christians would give up more than just chocolate, they gave up food made with milk, eggs and flour. The day before lent Christians would use up their eggs, flour and milk by making pancakes. During the forty days of lent a lot of eggs would be collected, some of these eggs were painted red on Easter day to remember Jesus' death and resurrection.

Easter reminds Christians of the forgiveness that is represented by Jesus' death and the hope of a better life that comes from Jesus' resurrection. Spring is a time that reminds us all that there is hope. The Bible encourages Christians to forgive each other as they have been forgiven. Over this week we are going to explore the power forgiveness can have on our own communities and the hope that it can lead to a better future for all of us.

Time to reflect

- What do you like most about Easter/ spring time?
- What traditions do you celebrate around this time?

– Shrove Tuesday
– Giving up something for lent
– Easter Eggs
– Holi – Hindu Spring Festival
– Purim – Jewish Festival
– Baisakhi or Vaisakhi – Sikh Festival

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for spring time, for the beginning of warmer weather and for the life that is returning to our countryside. May spring remind us of new beginnings and a fresh start, help us to celebrate new beginnings and fresh starts this Easter. *(Amen)*



3.2 Saying Sorry

Have you ever done something wrong and immediately regretted it? The word guilt is the word we use to describe the uncomfortable feelings we have when we know we have done wrong. In life, we all make mistakes, and we all do things wrong. I'm not talking about misspelling words or getting a maths sum incorrect, I mean saying something nasty or stealing another person's belongings.

Guilt is an important feeling, and it should remind us that it is time to say sorry for the wrong thing that we did and that we probably shouldn't do it again. Some people try to hide their guilt by pretending that someone else did it or saying that it was an accident when they knew it wasn't. The best way of making things right is by quickly owning up, saying sorry and meaning it. It will help to make things better with the person that you wronged and also solve your feelings of guilt.

Time to reflect

- Can you think of a time when you felt guilty about something you did?
- Did saying sorry make the situation better or worse?
- Did you feel better for saying sorry?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We think of times when we have wronged others and they have forgiven us and for times when others have wronged us and we have forgiven them. This Easter may we remember and celebrate new beginnings and fresh starts. Let us continue to say sorry and forgive others for the benefit of our own community. *(Amen)*



3.3 Forgiveness

Yesterday we talked about the feelings of guilt that follow the things we say and do that we know are wrong and that possibly hurt others. When we are wronged, that is, when someone does something nasty or hurtful to us, we may feel angry or upset. This is a natural feeling that we have, but what can we do with those feelings. In Monday's assembly, we learned that the word 'forgive' means to stop feeling angry towards someone for something they have done wrong to you. Guilt and anger are natural feelings, but they are not what we want to focus on in our school community **(what is your school motto, talk about how guilt and anger may get in the way of those values).** Saying sorry and forgiving others when they have wronged us are a good way of dealing with those uncomfortable feelings and will stop them from growing and causing bigger problems. Easter is a time of hope and new beginnings, it is a good time to remind us that we have a new beginning when people forgive us and that we should do the same and forgive others.

Time to reflect

- Have you had a good friend that has done something nasty to you, but when they said sorry, and you forgave them you were able to have fun again?
- Remember, guilt is a reminder to say sorry quickly, and forgiveness is not holding onto feelings of anger.

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We think of times when we have wronged others and they have forgiven us and for times when others have wronged us and we have forgiven them. This Easter may we remember and celebrate new beginnings and fresh starts. Let us continue to say sorry and forgive others for the benefit of our own community. *(Amen)*



3.4 Tom and Jack

Tom and Jack have been best friends since they started primary school, they spend most of their spare time together, round each other's houses. If it weren't for the fact that they have separate parents, you could mistake them for brothers. One day they are around Jack's house, they're in Jacks room playing on the Xbox. Jack's mum calls Jack to ask him something about the weekend. Tom sees in Jack's jacket pocket a £20 note. Tom's parents don't let him have an Xbox, or any other games console, he very rarely gets any pocket money, it's one reason why he spends so much time around Jack's. It wouldn't buy an Xbox, but it would be nice to have a little money. If he took the money, when Jack starts looking for it, he could just say that it must have fallen out of his pocket, no one will know. Tom grabs the £20 just as Jack re-enters the room and spots him with the money. What would you do if you were Jack? It is a difficult question when it's your best friend involved. On one hand he's your best friend, of course you can forgive him. But what about inviting him around again, can you trust him in your room alone? If you don't forgive him, will you have wasted all those years of friendship?

Time to reflect

- What should Tom do?
- What should Jack do?
- Have people trusted you when they knew you had done something wrong?
- Does forgiveness help to mend friendships?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We think of times when we have wronged others and they have forgiven us, and for times when others have wronged us, and we have forgiven them. This Easter may we remember and celebrate new beginnings and fresh starts. Let us continue to say sorry and forgive others for the benefit of our own friendships. *(Amen)*



3.5 Scales

Imagine a balanced set of scales, both sides are equal. What happens if you were to put something heavy on one side of the scales? Are they still balanced? What would you need to do to balance the scales again? Some people have suggested that doing wrong, saying sorry and being forgiven are similar to a set of balance scales. If you do something wrong, it is like putting a weight on one side of the scales, they are no longer balanced.

Whilst the scales are out of balance it can affect our feelings of guilt, it can ruin feelings of trust, joy and happiness. To be able to restore and make those feelings better we need to rebalance the scales. Repentance (an old fashioned word for saying sorry) and forgiveness are tools that we have to be able to reset the scales when we or someone else has done something wrong.

Time to reflect

- What emotions and feelings can be affected by the scales being unbalanced?
- When you have said sorry or forgiven people, has it made the situation better?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We think of times when we have wronged others and they have forgiven us, and for times when others have wronged us, and we have forgiven them. This Easter may we remember and celebrate new beginnings and fresh starts. Let us continue to say sorry and forgive others for the benefit of our own families, friendships and communities. *(Amen)*



4.1 Spring Festivals - Holi

Spring Festival
March

Today, we are going to start with a challenge. I need a volunteer to come and help explain the theme of this assembly, but there will be words that you are not allowed to use in your description. Describe the season of spring without using the words 'spring', 'warm', 'flowers', 'green' or 'colourful'. If I gave you the same challenge to describe the other three seasons of the year, which five words would you not be allowed to use for Winter? Summer? Autumn?



Which is your favourite season of the year? Why is it your favourite time of year? Some people like the cold freshness of winter huddled around an open fire keeping warm. Some people like the Autumn colours like the leaves turning red and orange. Some people like the heat of Summer. Spring is often a favourite time of year as the trees start to regain their leaves and the flowers begin to grow again. After the cold, dark short days of winter many people look forward to the extra light and warmth that comes with spring. This week we are going to discover how some people celebrate the coming of spring. Spring is often thought of as a time of new life and a fresh start and there are many different festivals that celebrate the season.

The Hindu festival of Holi is a celebration that takes place on the day and night of a full moon in early spring. The date of the full moon changes each year, so the celebration can take place at any time throughout the month of March. Holi is a popular festival in India, but it is celebrated all over the world. Sikhs, Jains and people with no religious beliefs take part in the Holi celebrations. The festival and the stories that surround it started in India hundreds of years ago, some think that the festival was celebrated before the birth of Jesus Christ (over 2000 years ago). There are a few stories that include the Hindu gods that help to explain some of the practices and traditions that take place during Holi.

There was once a prince of an evil king. The prince was called Prahalad and he loved the Lord Vishnu. The king was called Hiranyakashipu and he had been a given a promise (or boon) by Lord Brahma. Lord Brahma promised that he would not be killed by man or animal, during the day or night, inside or outside, on land, in water or air, with arrows or swords. The boon (or promise) made King Hiranyakashipu very proud, he began to love himself too much, he ordered that everyone worship him.

The king knew of Prahalad's devotion to Vishnu. The king was jealous and his jealousy turned to rage. "I am the king", the king told himself, "Prahalad should worship me, not Vishnu". In his anger the king tried to kill his son. He arranged for his son, Prahalad to be thrown off a cliff, he even tried to

have Prahalad trampled by elephants and bitten by snakes. But none of them worked and Prahalad survived all of his father's evil schemes.

The king had a sister called Holika, she had a cloak that protected her from fire. The king asked Holika to sit in the middle of a bonfire wearing her cloak with Prahalad sitting on her lap. A fire was started and Holika sat in her cloak safe from the flames. As the fire began to roar, the cloak flew from Holika and covered Prahalad. Holika died in the flames whilst Prahalad was saved.

Lord Vishnu was angry with king Hiranyakashipu and in the form of a creature that was half man and half lion (neither man or animal) Lord Vishnu killed the king, at dusk (neither at day or night) on a door step (neither inside or outside), on his lap (neither on land, in water or air), with claws (neither arrows or sword). Prahalad became the next king and ruled with wisdom.

The first night of Holi is known as Holika Dahan and often includes a bonfire to celebrate the victory of good over evil. Many people think about how they can help good over the bad. The bonfire represents new beginnings, new life and a fresh start. The following day is called Ranwali Holi. People throw different coloured powder called 'gulal' over each other as part of the celebrations. The throwing of powders comes from another Hindu story about the gods. Lord Krishna loved Radha but thought she would never love him in return because Krishna was embarrassed about the colour of his dark blue skin. His mother suggested that Krishna colour Radha's face any colour he wanted. Krishna did what his mother suggested and began a wonderful love story.

The Holi festival is often called the 'festival of colour', or the 'festival of love'. For some people the colour of the powder represents important themes of the festival. Red represents love, blue is the colour of Krishna, yellow represents the sun, good luck and good fortune. Green represents the spring and new beginnings.

Time to reflect

- What is your favourite season? Why?
- Why are the following traditions practiced at Holi?
  - Bonfire?
  - Throwing of coloured powders?
- How is spring represented in the stories or practices?
  - Bonfire represents a fresh start and new life.
  - The green coloured powder represents springtime and new life.
  - The yellow represents the sun.
- Is there anything that you only do in spring? (Give and receive chocolate eggs?)

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for the seasons in the year, for their differences and the way they make us feel. May we be thankful for the season of spring with its new life, warmth and sunlight. May this spring time remind us of what we can do that is good, may it bring goodness and new life to our friendships, our families and our community. *(Amen)*



4.2 Las Fallas

Preparation

Image search: "Las Fallas Ninots" & "Ofenda de Flores Valencia". (As with all images and videos, please preview them before showing the pupils.)

In the Spanish city of Valencia there is a festival that takes place during March called Las Fallas. The festival is thought to have started in the middle ages when craftsmen, like carpenters and furniture makers, would welcome the coming of spring by burning waste wood left over from the previous year. The craftsmen would use the wood and rags to create human shaped figures, often with a hat for a head. They would display these figures called in front of their shops before burning them. The human figures became known as ninots or fallas. Las Fallas has grown into a monthlong festival with the fallas themselves being designed and created throughout the months before the festival.

Each area of the city tries to employ the finest designers, artists and craftsmen to create incredible sculptures made from cardboard and paper-mâché **(show images of the Fallas)**. On the night of the 15th March the Fallas are displayed in the centre of the city. Prizes are awarded to the best Fallas in various categories, including children's and very large ninots (see images). The Fallas are then burnt on the evening of 19th March, the last night of the festival. Those visiting the festival can vote to save one Falla from being burnt, it will then be displayed in the Fallas Museum in Valencia.

During the festival, on the 17th and 18th March, 'Ofenda de Flores' or the 'offering of flowers' takes place. People parade from all over Valencia to an area outside the Basilica (church) with bunches of flowers. These flowers are then used to create a 15-metre-high tapestry of flowers in the shape of a cloak for 'Our Lady', the mother of Jesus **(show images, search "Ofenda de Flores, Valencia")**.

Time to reflect

Look at the images of the Las Fallas' ninots.

- What talents and skills would you need to create the Fallas today?
- Look at the images of the flower offering to Our Lady.
- How is spring represented in the traditions practiced at Las Fallas?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for the seasons in the year, for their differences and the way they make us feel. May we be thankful for the season of spring with its new life, warmth and sunlight. May this spring time remind us of what we can do that is good, may it bring goodness and new life to our friendships, our families and our community. *(Amen)*



4.3 Spring Equinox

Depending on who you ask will depend on what answer you get to this very important question. When does spring begin? If you study the temperature of the earth, measure the rainfall and try to predict the weather, then you may say that spring begins on the 1st March.

If you watch the stars and are interested in the rotation of the earth and the position of the sun and stars in the sky then you may say that spring begins on the day of the spring equinox. Does anyone know what the spring equinox is? An equinox comes from an old Latin word that means 'equal night'. The amount of time the sun is in the sky changes throughout the year. Every day, the sunset and sunrise will be at slightly different times.

During winter the sun rises later in the morning and sets earlier in the evening. Throughout spring the sun sets later in the evening and rises earlier in the morning. The sun is in the sky longer during summer than it is in winter. An equinox is the day in the year when the sun is in the sky for 12 hours and hidden for 12 hours, 12 hours of daylight and 12 hours of darkness.

Depending on where you are in the world the spring equinox will happen between the 19th – 21st March. A meteorological spring starts on the 1st March and ends on the 31 May. An astronomical summer starts on the spring equinox and ends on the summer solstice. The summer solstice is the day in the year when the sun is in the sky for the longest 20th – 22nd June.

Time to reflect

- When do you think spring begins? 1st March or 19th – 21st March?
- Will there ever be a right answer?
- What happens during spring that doesn't happen at any other time during the year?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for the seasons in the year, for their differences and the way they make us feel. May we be thankful for the season of spring with its new life, warmth and sunlight. May this spring time remind us of what we can do that is good, may it bring goodness and new life to our friendships, our families and our community. *(Amen)*



4.4 Spring Clean

Have you heard of the term 'spring clean'? Spring clean is a phrase that refers to someone giving their house a thorough clean after the winter months have passed. Before the invention of central heating, radiators and gas boiler, most, if not all the homes in the UK were heated with coal or wood fires. This way of heating our homes would create a lot of soot and dust. Have you ever stood around a bonfire and then smelled the smoke on your clothes? Houses would smell smoky and stuffy after a long winter. During the winter, windows were kept closed to keep out the cold and keep in the heat. Spring was an opportunity for the windows to be opened and allow the fresh air to freshen up the house without the need for the fires to heat the house. The soot that had collected on curtains and furniture could be cleaned off ready for the warmer months.

Nowadays, with central heating, vacuum cleaners and chemical cleaning products, many people keep their house clean throughout the year without the need for a spring clean. Other people still use the spring as an opportunity to clean the parts of the house that are not cleaned very often, like behind the fridge or under the sink. A spring clean may provide the motivation to clean out drawers or cupboards that have become messy, you might sort out that stuff that you no longer want and take it to a recycling centre.

Time to reflect

- Do you think a spring clean is a good idea?
- Does a spring clean take place at your home?
- Discuss the meaning of the word freshness? What other words could you use to describe 'freshness'?
- Can you 'freshen' up friendships? Your learning? Your skills and talents? How?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for the seasons in the year, for their differences and the way they make us feel. May we be thankful for the season of spring with its new life, warmth and sunlight. May this spring time remind us of what we can do that is good, may it bring goodness and new life to our friendships, our families and our community. *(Amen)*



4.5 Image Of Spring

This week we have been thinking about the season of spring. We have heard about a festival of colours. Can anyone remember what it was called? Holi. We have also explored the Spanish city of Valencia's festival of Las Fallas. We have discussed the two different dates that mark the beginning of spring and yesterday we learned that people once welcomed the freshness of spring by cleaning their houses after a long winter.

We started this week's theme with a challenge. A volunteer explained the theme for this week, but they were not allowed to use five specific words in their description. Can I have a volunteer to have another go? Describe the season of spring without using the words 'spring', 'warm', 'flowers', 'green' or 'colourful'.

Time to reflect

- If we typed spring into an image search on the internet what do you think the most popular images would be?
- If you had to create a picture about spring, what three images would you include?
- If you had to create a spring poem, what three adjectives (describing words) would you use to describe how spring might make people feel?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for the seasons in the year, for their differences and the way they make us feel. May we be thankful for the season of spring with its new life, warmth and sunlight. May this spring time remind us of what we can do that is good, may it bring goodness and new life to our friendships, our families and our community. *(Amen)*



5.1 Diwali

Winter Festival
October/November

Preparation

Show images of Diya lamps (Diva lamps), Diwali celebrations, the Ramayana – *There are images on the British Library's website of the Ramayana from a seventeenth century manuscript.*

Diwali is a festival that is celebrated by many Hindus, Sikhs and Jains (and others) in October or November each year. Diwali is a very diverse festival, there are different stories that are told and different practices that are celebrated depending on where people live and the traditions that have been passed down from one generation to another.

The festival usually lasts about five days with the main celebrations taking place on the third day, the day of a new moon. A new moon cannot be seen, as it is hidden in the Earth's shadow, so part of Diwali takes place during the darkest nights of the month. Does anyone know what Diwali means? Diwali simply means 'row of lights', and diva lamps are lit and arranged in rows during the celebrations. Diwali is often called a festival of light along with Christmas and the Jewish festival of Hanukkah. A popular story that is retold during Diwali, often using shadow puppets, is the epic story of Rama and Sita called the Ramayana.

In India a long time ago, there was a king called Dasharatha. Dasharatha had grown old and he was preparing to pass the crown over to Rama, his eldest son. Rama was brave and everyone loved him. The people wanted Rama and his wife Sita, to be the next king and queen.

King Dasharatha had three wives, he told Kaikeyi, his youngest and dearest wife, of his plans to make Rama the next king. Her mind had been cursed by a wicked sorceress and she was filled with jealousy. Kaikeyi wanted her son, Bharata, to be the next king. Many years before, Kaikeyi had saved Dasharatha's life. Dasharatha was so grateful that he granted Kaikeyi two wishes. Now Kaikeyi wanted her wishes granted. Her first was that Dasharatha make Bharata king instead of Rama. Her second wish was to banish Rama and his wife Sita to the forest for 14 years.

King Dasharatha was an honourable husband and king and kept his promise. Rama was an obedient son so Rama and Sita moved to the forest with Lakshmana, Rama's half-brother. Dasharatha died heartbroken and Bharata, not wanting to be king, pleaded with Rama to return, but Rama could not go back on his promise. Bharata placed Rama's slippers on the throne and governed the kingdom waiting for Rama's return.

Rama, Sita and Lakshmana settled into their new life in the forest. Ravana, the ten headed king of the demons, fell in love with beautiful Sita. He planned to kidnap Sita and take her to his island kingdom of Lanka. Ravana knew that Rama and Lakshmana loved to go hunting, so Ravana's servant Maricha disguised himself as a golden deer and tempted Rama and Lakshmana away from their home. Before Rama and Lakshmana left, Lakshmana drew a circle in the dust around Sita to protect her, Lakshmana told Sita not to step out of the circle.

Whilst Rama and Lakshmana were off hunting the golden deer, Ravana, disguised

as an old beggar asked Sita for some food and a drink. Sita, feeling sorry for the old man, stepped out of the circle. Immediately the old man turned back into Ravana. Catching Sita with his twenty arms, Ravana carried her to his flying chariot. Jatayu, a large bird and friend of Rama, tried to rescue Sita but Ravana cut of his wings and returned to his island of Lanka. Before they left, Sita managed to throw her necklace to the ground in the hope that Rama would know she had been kidnapped.

When Rama and Lakshmana returned, they found the circle empty apart from Sita's necklace. Rama called on the animals of the forest to help him find and rescue his beloved Sita. The monkeys discovered that Sita had been taken to Ravana's kingdom on the island of Lanka. It was decided that Hanuman would leap the ocean and look for Sita. Landing on the island, Hanuman searched and found Sita. Hanuman wanted to meet Ravana, so allowed himself to be captured. Demons bound him and wrapped his tail in oily rags and set them alight. Hanuman escaped, but he accidently set fire to much of the city. Hanuman told Sita that he would return with Rama to rescue her and then Hanuman returned to the main land.

Rama knowing the location of Sita, led the large monkey army on a mission to rescue Sita. First, they needed to cross the vast sea that separated them from the island of Lanka. The monkeys began throwing rocks and stone into the ocean creating a road that led them to Lanka. On the Island, Rama, Lakshmana and the monkey army battled against Ravana and his demon forces. The battle was long and hard, but eventually Rama defeated Ravana and returned to his kingdom with Sita.

The fourteen years were over and Bharata welcomed Rama and Sita back to the city, he crowned them king and queen. There was a large celebration. The people of the city welcomed Rama and Sita back by filling their houses with diva (diya) lamps as a sign of Rama and Sita's victory over the dark forces of evil. A year after their return, Rama organised a celebration with lights, fireworks, food and music. Possibly the first Diwali festival.

There are other stories and accounts that are told during Diwali like the Mahabharata or the birth and marriage of goddess Lakshmi to Lord Vishnu or the defeat of the evil demon king Narakasura. Many of the accounts celebrate the forces of good overcoming the forces of evil, like light overcoming darkness. We will continue to think about what happens during Diwali during our thoughts for this week.

Time to reflect

- What do you know about the festival of Diwali? (Think of one fact)
- What traditions do you think still continue as a result of the Ramayana? (retelling of the story, shadow puppets, special foods, lighting of the diya lamps (diva lamps).
- Why is it called a festival of light?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that remind us to do good in our world. May all the lights that are displayed during this winter season help and encourage us to spread the light of goodness and lighten up the lives of those in our communities. *(Amen)*



5.2 Lakshmi

Can anyone remember the name of the story that we heard yesterday? Who were the main characters? Can anyone freeze frame a part of the Ramayana, we will try and guess which bit it was? Can you remember how many days Diwali celebrations can last for? (five) What is the name of the moon that will 'not' appear in the middle of the celebrations? (New Moon)

Two days before the Diwali new moon, on the first day of the five-day celebrations, many Hindus will welcome the goddess Lakshmi into their homes. The day is called Dhantares. Dhan means wealth and Lakshmi is the goddess of wealth. Sita is said to have represented Lakshmi in human form and is one of the reasons why the Ramayana is told during Diwali. Many temples will have statues of Lakshmi that Hindus will decorate and worship. Some people create a shrine to Lakshmi in their homes and perform a worship ceremony called Puja in her honour. Some even put pictures of homes and cars on the altar in the hope that Lakshmi will bless them with a new house or car in the coming year. Diya lamps (diva lamps) are lit to help Lakshmi find her way to peoples' houses and the doors and windows are often left open so that Lakshmi can come and go as she pleases, blessing the houses that she enters.

People in India start the new business year at Diwali. Dhantares is a good time to set up a new business as people hope that Lakshmi will bless and help the business to be successful. People buy gold or silver storing wealth for their future and many Hindus play card games and gamble believing that Lakshmi will improve their chances of winning.

Time to reflect

- How would you sum up the actions and beliefs that are connected to Dhantares?
- How do the beliefs connected to Dhantares affect the actions of some people? What do they do because of what they believe?
- What actions do you or people you know do because of what you or they believe?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that remind us to do good in our world. May all the lights that are displayed during this winter season help and encourage us to spread the light of goodness and lighten up the lives of those in our communities. *(Amen)*



5.3 Churning The Milky Ocean

Many ancient Hindu stories involve the gods battling against the forces of darkness and evil. The Ramayana is one such account and includes Sita, the human form of the goddess Lakshmi. Can anyone remember why many Hindus will worship the goddess Lakshmi during Diwali? There are many other stories about Lakshmi, one that includes the churning of the Milky Sea.

It was the responsibility of the warrior god Indra, to protect the world against the demons and the forces of evil. He was confident, but his confidence turned into arrogance. What is confidence? (Believing you can do something.) What is arrogance? (Thinking you're better than others or being too confident.) A wise man placed a garland of flowers around Indra's shoulders as a sign of respect. Indra's arrogance got the better or him and he threw the flowers to the floor. Upset about Indra's actions, Lakshmi left the world of the gods and entered into the Milky Ocean. Lakshmi was the goddess of success, without Lakshmi the gods began to lose their power and the forces of evil began to grow stronger.

People became greedy and darkness began to spread throughout the world. Worship to the gods stopped and the gods continued to become weaker. Indra, desperate to regain his power and fight the forces of darkness, asked Lord Vishnu how they could regain their power. Vishnu was one of the most important gods and Lakshmi's husband.

Vishnu told Indra that the gods would need to churn the Milky Sea. (Churning is a word similar to stirring, but rather than mixing things together, churning separates, for example, butter is made by stirring and churning cream separating the butter from the butter milk.) Vishnu said that churning the Milky Sea would release special powers for the gods and that Lakshmi and her blessings would return. The gods would again be strong enough to defeat the forces of evil.

The forces of evil wanted the special powers for themselves. For a thousand years the gods and the demons both churned the Milky Sea. Eventually Lakshmi rose from the ocean standing on a lotus flower. Other treasures began to rise including the elixir of eternal life that returned power to the gods. The gods regained the upper hand over the forces of darkness and evil.

Time to reflect

- What are the lessons that can be learned from this account?
- What does it teach Hindus about Lakshmi?
- What does it teach about arrogance?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that remind us to do good in our world. May all the lights that are displayed during this winter season help and encourage us to spread the light of goodness and lighten up the lives of those in our communities. *(Amen)*



5.4 Sikh Diwali

Preparation

Show an image of the The Golden Temple – Amritsar

Diwali is a very diverse festival. There are different stories that are told and different practices that are celebrated depending on where people live and the traditions that have been passed down from one generation to another. Diwali is a festival that is celebrated by many Hindus, Sikhs and Jains (and others). Today we are going to explore why Diwali is important to Sikhs.

Sikhs remember a number of important events during their Diwali celebrations. An important Sikh called Guru Hargobind was released from prison in 1619AD/CE. According to Sikh tradition an Emperor called Jahangir had placed Guru Hargobind and 52 Hindu princes in prison. On the release of Guru Hargobind, the guru pleaded with the emperor to release the princes also. The emperor said that only those who could hold onto the edge of the guru's cloak would be released. Guru Hargobind had a cloak made with 52 pieces of string hanging from its edge. Guru Hargobind left the prison with the 52 princes holding on to his cloak. Sikhs celebrated the return of Guru Hargobind by placing lights around the Golden Temple. The Golden Temple in Punjabi city of Amritsar has been decorated with lots of lights to this day.

Time to reflect

- How did Guru Hargobind outsmart Emperor Jahangir?
- What do you think Sikhs visiting the Golden Temple during Diwali would see?
- What would it be like to be a Sikh visiting the Golden Temple during Diwali?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that remind us to do good in our world. May all the lights that are displayed during this winter season help and encourage us to spread the light of goodness and lighten up the lives of those in our communities. *(Amen)*



5.5 Feast For The Senses

Have you ever heard the phrase, a feast for the senses? What do you think it means? How many senses do we have? Can you name them? Like a feast refers to lots of food, a feast for the senses usually refers to events that have lots of different things going on that will affect your various senses.

The Hindu worship ceremony, called puja, has something for all the senses. During Diwali, many Hindus will create a shrine to Lakshmi in their homes. They may perform a puja in honour of Lakshmi.

Sound – The ears will hear the sound of a small bell letting god know that worship has begun.

Sight – The eyes will see the fire of the diva lamp, a sign of god's presence.

Smell – The nose will smell the aroma of incense from joss sticks as they clean and purify the air.

Touch – Fingers will feel the red powder, used to mark the forehead of statues of gods as a sign of respect.

Taste – Have you ever been able to taste the air? During a puja the air may taste of turmeric and joss sticks. There will be lots of food to taste during the rest of the Diwali celebrations.

As well as the puja, many practices will impact on the senses. Special Diwali recipes, rows of diva lamps, the sound of fire crackers and fireworks, the smell of incense at home and in the temples are just a few of the many traditions and practices that will provide a Diwali feast for the senses.

Time to reflect

- Can you think of how festivals or celebrations that you take part in impact on the five senses? Sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that remind us to do good in our world. May all the lights that are displayed during this winter season help and encourage us to spread the light of goodness and lighten up the lives of those in our communities. *(Amen)*



6.1 Beliefs And Actions - Ramadan

Changes Each Year
10 to 12 days earlier on the Gregorian calendar

Preparation

Search and display an Islamic Hijri calendar.

You may want to check when Ramadan begins before using this assembly. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar; the Islamic calendar is based on the lunar cycle, unlike the Gregorian calendar that follows the cycle of the sun. Due to the different number of days in different calendars, Ramadan starts 10 to 12 days earlier each year.



This week millions of people living in different countries around the world, including the UK, will be thinking about and getting ready for Ramadan. Can anyone tell me what Ramadan is? Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. During Ramadan, most Muslims will fast during the daylight hours. So from the rising of the sun in the morning to the time it sets in the evening, many Muslims will go without food. Muhammad, the founder of Islam, is believed to have begun receiving the Holy book of Islam, the Qur'an, during the month of Ramadan. People from nearly every culture and religion have times in their history that they consider important and remember in different ways. Can anyone give me an example of something in history that is remembered nowadays? How is it remembered?

Fasting during Ramadan is one of five important actions that most Muslims complete, these are called the 'Five Pillars of Islam.' Pillars are used in building, they are strong posts that help to keep buildings up and something to hold up the roof. You can find pillars in many old buildings like parish churches. The Five Pillars of Islam aren't actually pillars, but things that Muslims do that will make their faith strong.

Some of them should be completed daily. The first pillar is Shahada. It is called the statement of faith which is a sentence that states two important Muslim beliefs. There is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is his messenger. The Shahada is often repeated daily. It is said by a father into the ear of his newborn baby. 'Salat' is the second of the Five Pillars of Islam. It includes daily Prayers that are performed at set times during the day or night. Salat prayers are often said along with a range of movements that include standing, kneeling and bowing.

Other actions are completed at specific times during the year, Sawm, or fasting, is the fourth pillar of Islam and is completed once a year during the month of Ramadan. The third pillar, called Zakat, is also often done during the month of Ramadan. Generally, for Zakat, a Muslim will work out how much they have earned in the year, they will give a proportion of their

savings to charity, but there are rules on how this money can be used. For the fifth pillar, it is generally expected that a Muslim should go on a special journey or pilgrimage to the city of Makkah in Saudi Arabia, at least once in their lifetime. This pilgrimage is called the Hajj.

The Five Pillars of Islam are a way for many people in this country and around the world to act on their beliefs. These beliefs will be seen in what many Muslims do and how they behave. For many, fasting during the month of Ramadan is an opportunity to practise what they believe. I need a volunteer to come and silently act out one of the 5 pillars that we have heard about today, the rest of us will try to guess which of the 5 pillars of Islam you are trying to act out. **Repeat with other volunteers**

What do you think is so important that it will affect what you do? Being kind to our community is something that many people say they believe, but what actions do you think they should practice proving they believe it? Many people believe that they are being kinder to the planet. What actions do you think we should all do to prove that we believe it? This week, during our times of reflection, we are going to learn more about Ramadan and also think about what beliefs we think are important.

Time to reflect

- Do you think what people believe should be seen in their actions?
- What actions do you do that prove one of your beliefs? For example, recycling, or not eating too much sugar?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

As we have thought about special occasions, we have also thought about how our actions show what we believe and how they demonstrate what we think is important. May we be respectful of the variety of beliefs within our own communities and wider society as people live out their belief in their actions. *(Amen)*



6.2 Summer Or Winter?

Can anyone remember what Ramadan is? Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Each year in the UK, Ramadan starts a little bit earlier. January to December are months in what is called the 'Gregorian Calendar.' Can anyone tell me why the Gregorian calendar has 365 or 366 days in it? (It takes the earth three hundred and sixty-five and a quarter days to go around the sun.) The Gregorian calendar is called a solar calendar because it is based on the cycle of the sun. Unlike the Gregorian calendar, the Islamic calendar is based on the cycle of the moon. It takes the moon just over 29 days to go from one full moon, through its different phases, to the next full moon. A month in the Islamic calendar lasts about as long as one of these cycles. The Islamic calendar is about 11 or 12 days shorter than the Gregorian calendar, so Ramadan starts 11 or 12 days earlier each year.

As Ramadan starts earlier and earlier each year, it gradually moves from taking place in the summer to the winter. What is the difference between fasting during the daylight hours in summer and fasting in daylight hours during winter? During winter, the sun may be in the sky for only 8 hours, in the height of summer it can be in the sky for as much as 16 hours.

Time to reflect

- Do you think it is harder to go without food during the daylight hours of the summer or the winter? Why?
- What do you do that is difficult, but you believe it is still important to do?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We know that often things that are worth doing require our time and effort and are not always easy to do. At difficult times may we find the strength and the perseverance to see things through to the end. *(Amen)*



6.3 Practise What You Preach

Can anyone remember any of the five pillars? Today we are going to think about the link between what we believe and what we do. Has anyone heard the question, 'do you practise what you preach?' Does anyone know what the phrase means? The phrase is used when someone says one thing with their mouth but does something completely different in their actions. For example, if a person goes around telling everyone off for dropping litter, but when they have had a snack they throw the wrapper on the floor, then this person isn't practicing what they preach. We all know that it is wrong to steal, but the Bible asks the question, what would you think of someone who teaches others not to steal but is then caught stealing? Generally, what we think is important can be seen in what we do. So if a person is dropping litter, although they say it is wrong, inside they don't really see anything wrong with it. Our actions are a way of letting others know what we believe. What we do is a sign for everyone else to know what we think is important or not. Yesterday we explored five actions that many Muslims will do, some daily, some yearly and one at least once in their life. The five pillars are an opportunity for many Muslims to practise what they believe.

Time to reflect

- Do you do what you tell others to do?
- What do you think of others that don't practise what they preach?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are aware that some things that we think are important are not always easy to do, and it is often easier to say we believe them than actually do them. May we be able to do what we believe to be true, from eating healthily to being kind to all those in our communities. *(Amen)*



6.4 The Tip Of The Iceberg

When it comes to what we believe and what we do, it can often be thought of as an iceberg. Have you ever heard the phrase, 'It's just the tip of the iceberg'? An iceberg is a big bit of ice floating in the sea, but only part of it can be seen sticking up above the surface of the water. A large part of it is hidden below the water line. Many of the things we do and how we behave are based on what we believe and what we think is important. Like the iceberg, we only see a person's actions on the surface, what they believe and what they think is important is hidden. Yesterday we said that we can know what a person believes because of the way they act. Sometimes we might want to change how we behave. Fasting during Ramadan, going on a diet, or even cutting out unhealthy sugary snacks is hard. It is hard because we are hungry, but it is also difficult because we are used to eating food at certain times during the day, and our bodies will keep reminding us. I'm sure at the end of the month of Ramadan some Muslims find it easier to go without food than at the beginning of the month. Changing the way we act for the better isn't always as simple as trying to 'behave better', our actions are only the tip of the iceberg.

Time to reflect

- What do you do that shows other people what you think is important?
- If our actions are connected to what we believe, and what we believe is bad for us (For example "I can eat as much sugar as I want") how do we go about changing it?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are aware that some things that we think are important are not always easy to do, and it is often easier to say we believe them than actually do them. May we be able to do what we believe to be true, from eating healthily to being kind to all those in our communities. *(Amen)*



6.5 Ending The Fast

Can anyone remember which of the Five Pillars of Islam Muslims will probably do every day? Which ones might be done once each year and which one might be only done once in a Muslim's lifetime? This week we focused on the Fourth Pillar of Islam that takes place during the month of Ramadan. All of the Five Pillars of Islam are important, even though some are done more often than others. Many Muslim children are not expected to complete the Five Pillars, but as they get older, they will probably start to pray regularly or fast a couple of times during the month of Ramadan. At the end of Ramadan, there is a festival called Eid ul Fitr to celebrate the end of the fast. The whole community will be involved whether they were old enough to fast or not. The celebrations include food, gifts and spending time with the family. Eid ul Fitr is a welcome time after the month-long fast.

Time to reflect

Take time to discuss the following questions:

- How often do you do the things that are important to you?
- Which of these are extra special?
- Which one(s) do you only do once or twice a year?
- Do you look forward to these times of the year? Why?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

This week we have thought about special occasions, and we have also thought about how our actions show what we believe and how they demonstrate what we think is important. May we be respectful of the variety of beliefs within our own communities and wider society as people live out their beliefs in their actions. *(Amen)*



7.1 Hajj

Changes Each Year
10 to 12 days earlier on the Gregorian calendar

Preparation

You will need an apple. You may also want to check when Hajj begins before using this assembly. Hajj is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar; the Islamic calendar is based on the lunar cycle, unlike the Gregorian calendar that follows the cycle of the sun. Due to the different number of days in different calendars, Hajj starts 10 to 12 days earlier each year.



People in the UK like to go abroad. According to the Office of National Statistics, in 2015, there were 65.7 million visits abroad. Which means that people left these shores to visit other countries 65.7 million times. The population in the UK in 2015 was 65.1 million people. That means in 2015 there were more visits abroad than the number of people living in the UK. The United Kingdom is an island, what are the possible ways that we can travel to visit other countries? Boat, aeroplane and train (channel tunnel).

Can you think of different reasons why we in the UK would go and visit another country? To go on holiday, to visit relatives, to go on a business trip or meeting and to study are all possible reasons. This week we are going to think about another reason that people would visit another country. Does anyone know what a 'pilgrimage' is? Pilgrimage is a word used to describe a special journey that is often taken for religious reasons.

I have an example to help us understand what a pilgrimage is. I need a volunteer to go to the back of the room/hall. The volunteer will need to come and collect this apple from the front of the room/hall. On their journey, the volunteer will need to make up a few different actions, that may involve stopping, sitting, hopping, crawling, our volunteer will decide. Once they have completed their journey, they may keep and eat the apple. ***Choose a volunteer and have them complete their journey.*** I now need a second volunteer. Our second volunteer we are going to call a pilgrim and they are going to go on a pilgrimage. Our second volunteer needs to copy all the actions and follow the route of our first volunteer. ***Choose a second volunteer and have them complete the pilgrimage.*** Of the two journeys that we have just seen the first was a journey by a very special person. The second was more like a pilgrimage. On a pilgrimage, a person may visit or recreate the actions to help them remember important events of the past.

A pilgrimage called Hajj is one of five important actions that most Muslims complete, these are called the 'Five Pillars of Islam.' Pillars are used in buildings, they are strong posts that help to keep buildings up

and something to hold up the roof. You can find pillars in many old buildings like parish churches. The Five Pillars of Islam aren't actually pillars, but things that Muslims do that will make their faith strong. They are a way that a Muslim will demonstrate their commitment to Allah. The five pillars require Muslims to commit their time, money and actions to the worship of Allah. Some pillars are done daily like the five daily prayers called Salat. Other pillars are done once a year like the fast during the month of Ramadan. Hajj is the fifth pillar of Islam and it is expected that a Muslim would go on Hajj at least once in their lifetime as long as they are healthy and can afford it.

Every year, about 3 million Muslims go on the pilgrimage of Hajj. It takes place between the 8th-13th in the ninth Islamic month of Dhul-Hijjah. The Islamic calendar is based on the lunar cycle, unlike the Gregorian calendar that follows the cycle of the sun. Due to the different number of days in the different calendars, Hajj starts 10 to 12 days earlier each year. The Hajj takes place in Saudi Arabia, in and around a city called Makkah. The founder of Islam, Muhammad was born in Makkah in 570AD/CE. After he had received the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, he began teaching others the message he had received from Allah. He moved to Madinah in 622AD/CE. This move is very important and the Islamic calendar begins from this year. While Muhammad was living in Madinah, there were battles with the people of Makkah. This was because Muhammad was trying to stop them doing the things that were wrong. At last, Muhammad and his followers won the battles, and the people of Makkah became Muslims. Muhammad returned to Makkah in triumph, Muhammad declared that from then on, only Muslims may enter the city of Makkah. This rule continues today and during the Hajj, only Muslims are allowed to enter the city of Makkah.

Whilst on Hajj, male pilgrims wear two sheets of white cotton called Ihram, the Ihram represents that those attending the Hajj are equal before Allah. Muslims should go bare foot or wear open toed sandals. Women don't have to wear any special clothes, but nobody should wear jewellery or perfume. Male Muslims who complete the Hajj are called Hajji and the women Hajjah. When a person completes the Hajj properly they may gain forgiveness for everything they have done wrong in their life.

This week we are going to think about the events that a Hajji and a Hajjah will have performed whilst on Hajj. There are many religious pilgrimages that take place all around the world. They are often completed so that a religious person can remember, visit or recreate the places and actions visited or done by important people within their religion. They may feel it will benefit them and their relationship with their God.

Time to reflect

- Have you ever felt, after a dark time, things getting brighter?
- What are you hopeful for today, for yourself?
- What are you hopeful for today, for the school community?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for the power of hope, that it can lighten our lives and the lives of others. May we try and focus on the good in our lives and help those around us to do the same. *(Amen)*



7.2 Ibrahim

Can anyone remember the name of the pilgrimage that we learned about yesterday? On a pilgrimage, a person may visit or recreate the actions to help them remember important events of the past. This week we are going to think about the important people that are remembered whilst on Hajj and the actions that the pilgrims may recreate. Ibrahim, (or Abraham) is the founder of Judaism and he is believed to be one of the first people who recognised and worshipped the one true God about four thousand years ago but he is also very important in Islam. Tradition says Ibrahim and his son Ismàil (or Ishmael) were asked by Allah to create the first place of worship, called the Ka'bah. The Ka'bah is in the city of Makkah. A large mosque, called 'The Great Mosque' has been built around the Ka'bah. On the Ka'bah is a black stone that is said to have been given by the Angel Gabriel to Adam when he left the garden of Eden. Pilgrims will try and touch the black stone. The pilgrimage starts and ends with pilgrims walking around the Ka'bah. The Ka'bah is so important, that during the five daily prayers, no matter where a Muslim is in the world, they will pray facing the Ka'bah. The Hajj is an opportunity for Muslims to visit the place that they are facing every day in prayer.

Time to reflect

- How do you think a Muslim would feel visiting the place they have spent their life facing when praying?
- Have you ever been excited to see something or someone you have been longing to see?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for important people and important places in our own history and the history of others. Help us to think about the significance of our own journeys as we learn about the important pilgrimage of Hajj. *(Amen)*



7.3 Ibrahim And Ismàil

During the Hajj, pilgrims remember an event that is described in Muslim tradition and the Qur'an. The Christian and Jewish holy books also describe a similar story. In the Islamic version, Ibrahim had a son with his wife Hajar and they called him Ismàil. Allah tested Ibrahim's obedience by instructing Ibrahim to leave Hajar and their son Ismàil in the desert without any food or water. Hajar travelled between two hills called Marwa and Safa, she ran back and forth searching for water to save her and her son. She sat down at a place called Zamzam, exhausted. As she sat waiting to die, Allah made a spring of water appear, so Hajar and Ismàil were saved. Today pilgrims run, or walk, between Marwa and Safa and drink water from the spring at Zamzam.

Time to reflect

Think about the famous phrase, 'I hear, I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand'. A pilgrim will have heard the story of Ibrahim and Hajar. How will recreating Hajar searching for water and finally drinking from the spring of Zamzam help a pilgrim to understand the story?

Have you ever visited places that you heard about previously in stories, Stonehenge etc… How did the visit help your understanding?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for important people and important places in our own history and the history of others. Help us to think about the significance of our own journeys as we learn about the important pilgrimage of Hajj. *(Amen)*



7.4 Stoning The Devil

During the Hajj, the pilgrims will travel to a place called Mina. Before arriving at Mina, the pilgrims will have collected lots of stones. There are three walls in Mina and pilgrims will throw their stones at the three pillars. The stone throwing helps the pilgrims to remember another event in the life of Ibrahim and Ismàil. Allah visited Ibrahim in two dreams and told him to sacrifice his son Ismàil. Ibrahim, knew that this was a test of his obedience to Allah. Ismàil agreed and they both went to a place called Mount Arafat. On their way, at a place called Mina, the devil tried to talk Ibrahim out of sacrificing Ismàil. Three times the devil approached Ibrahim and three times Abraham threw stones at the devil. Although Ismàil agreed to be sacrificed, Ibrahim still tied him up and so that Ibrahim wouldn't see Ismàil suffer, Ibrahim placed a blindfold on himself. Taking the knife, Ibrahim did what Allah asked him to do. Ibrahim removed the blindfold and in front of him, where Ismàil was supposed to be, was a dead ram. Ismàil was standing next to Ibrahim unharmed. Throwing the stones is a reminder that the pilgrims have their own times when they are tempted to do things that they know are wrong, stoning the pillars is a way of 'stoning the devil' and encouraging themselves to do what is right.

Time to reflect

- Why do the pilgrims throw stones at the three pillars?
- What can we do when we are tempted to do something that we know is wrong?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for important people and important places in our own history and the history of others. Help us to think about the significance of our own journeys as we learn about the important pilgrimage of Hajj. *(Amen)*



7.5 Eid-Ul-Adha

Eid-ul-Adha is an important festival that is celebrated by Muslims from all over the world. Can anyone recount the story from yesterday involving Ibrahim and Ismàil. The festival of Eid-ul-Adha is also called the Sacrifice Feast. In Muslim countries, Eid-ul-Adha is a public holiday. A sheep or goat is sacrificed as a reminder of Ibrahim doing what Allah had asked him to do. During the four day festival, many Muslims will give money to charity and help those that may not be able to afford it, to celebrate the festival.

For those that are on the Hajj, Eid-ul-Adha starts about half way through the pilgrimage. On the first day of Eid-ul-Adha, pilgrims throw stones at the three pillars as a reminder of Ibrahim, stoning the devil. Once the stones have been thrown at the three pillars, many male pilgrims have their heads shaved. A sheep or goat will then be sacrificed. Pilgrims will go back to The Great Mosque. On the second and third day of Eid-ul-Adha, pilgrims will stone the pillars at Mina. At the end of the pilgrimage, the pilgrims may go back to Makkah and walk around the Ka'bah. Water from the well at Zamzam may be collected and bought home.

The Hajj, along with many pilgrimages is an opportunity for the pilgrims to act out and experience events that happened in their religions or cultures history. On *Wednesday* we thought about the phrase 'I hear, I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand.' Pilgrimages allow people to 'do and understand.'

Time to reflect

- Do you think that the festival of Eid-ul-Adah is a reminder for those who have attended the Hajj in the past?
- How can experiencing a pilgrimage help a person live out their beliefs?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for important people and important places in our own history and the history of others. Help us to think about the significance of our own journeys as we learn about the important pilgrimage of Hajj. *(Amen)*



8.1 Passover

Spring Festival
March/April

Preparation

Download and print the following 11 events in Moses' life.

The story of Moses and the Israelites leaving Egypt is remembered by Jewish people all over the world. The Jewish festival of Pesach or Passover is a festival that takes place every year around March or April. ***Ask for volunteers to freezeframe or act out events from the story of Moses. Give volunteers one of the 11 events printed as part of the preparation for this assembly to act out. Make sure no one else can see what is written on the page. Can the audience guess which part of the story it is?***

1. Moses is born
2. Moses is rescued by the Pharaoh's daughter
3. Moses grows up in the Egyptian palace
4. Moses kills an Egyptian guard
5. Moses runs away
6. Moses marries Jethro's daughter, Zipporah
7. Moses finds a bush on fire, but not burning
8. Moses is asked by God to rescue the Israelites from Egypt
9. Moses returns to Egypt and is joined by Aaron
10. Moses tells Pharaoh to let the Israelites go
11. Pharaoh refuses to let the people go even after 9 different plagues

For many Jews the Passover is one of the most important festivals in the year. Not all Jews will celebrate the Passover in exactly the same way but we are going to look back at the story of the Passover and how it has influenced some Jewish traditions that take



place today. Can anyone tell me what the Jewish holy book is called? The Torah is the first part of the Jewish holy book called the Tanakh. The Torah contains five books that some Jews and Christians believe were written by Moses. They are often called the 'Books of Moses' and they are the first five books that make up the Jewish and Christian holy books. The story of the Passover is in the second book called Exodus.

Either read the paragraph below and/ or ask for 11 pupils to hold up the events printed as part of the preparation for this assembly, not in the correct order, and ask the audience to order the story correctly.

The book of Exodus starts with the birth of Moses and describes how Moses was rescued by the Pharaoh's daughter and grew up in the Egyptian palace. It explains that Moses killed an Egyptian guard trying to defend an Israelite slave. Moses ran away to Midian, where he met Jethro and Jethro's daughter, Zipporah. Moses and Zipporah married and they had two sons. Whilst tending Jethro's sheep, Moses found a bush that was on fire but not burning. God spoke to Moses from within the bush and told him that he would rescue the Israelites from Egypt. Moses made excuses as to why it shouldn't be him that God should use. Eventually Moses made his way

back to Egypt. He and his brother, Aaron, stood before Pharaoh and asked him to let the Israelites go. Pharaoh refused, Egypt received nine plagues, but after each, Pharaoh still refused to let the Israelites go.

All of this leads us onto the events of the Passover. Exodus explains that God gave instructions to Moses about a meal the Israelites had to prepare and eat on the night that the 10th plague killed all the first born sons of Egypt. Specially selected lambs were slaughtered for the meal and God commanded that some of the lambs' blood be painted onto the door posts so that the plague would 'pass over' the Israelite homes.

God commanded the Israelites to remember this event by celebrating the festival of Unleavened Bread. Unleavened bread is bread that is made without yeast. Unleavened bread doesn't need time to rise and so is quicker to make. The Israelites hadn't much time as the Pharaoh sent the Israelites away after the 10th plague. They were in a hurry to leave.

The book of Exodus includes the command God gave the Israelites to hold the festival, which is called Pesach or Passover. If I read the command, can you try and answer three questions: 1) How long is the festival? 2) What must be eaten? 3) What do you think happens to the yeast before the festival?

"Celebrate this Festival of Unleavened Bread, for it will remind you that I brought your forces out of the land of Egypt on this very day. This festival will be a permanent law for you; celebrate this day from generation to generation. The bread you eat must be made without yeast from the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month until the evening of the twenty-first day of that month. During those seven days, there must be no trace of yeast in your homes." Exodus 12:17-19a (NLT)

How long is the festival? What must be eaten? What do you think happens before the festival starts? Before the festival of Passover, many Jewish families will give their house a thorough clean and tidy. Can you guess what they may also be searching for? All traces of yeast or 'leaven' or 'chametz' is removed from the home. Some Jews may temporarily sell their chametz or even sell the utensils that they use to prepare food with chametz. Some websites allow you to sell your chametz before each Passover. During the festival of Passover special bread called Matzo is eaten. Matzo is a type of bread made without yeast.

We will explore the traditions of the Passover in this week's thoughts for the day. The story of Moses is one of resilience and can inspire us to bounce back after setbacks or tough times. The opening tradition before the festival, starts the unfolding of the story of the Passover. The festival of Passover is not only a reminder of the importance of individual resilience, but it is a reminder of how a whole nation can bounce back.

Time to reflect

- What actions are linked to the story of the Passover?
- Why do many Jewish families clean the house before Passover? Why?
- What traditions do you or your family have?
- Do you know why you do them?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that help us to remember the past. Help us to understand that many of the traditions, actions and beliefs that we have are linked to people, stories and events in history. *(Amen)*



8.2 The Fast Of The Firstborn

There are many activities that we all do that link us to stories in the past. In the story of the Passover, all the first-born males of Egypt including the animals died as a result of the tenth plague. The first-born sons of the Israelites were saved from the tenth plague because they painted lambs blood on the door posts of their houses. The plague passed over them. God gave a specific command to the Israelites leaving Egypt that would continually remind them that the first-born sons of the Israelites were saved.

Many first-born sons of Jewish families will go without food on the day before the first day of the festival. Fathers of baby boys who are too young to fast, may fast instead. This has become known as the 'fast of the firstborn'. It is a reminder that God rescued the first born Jewish males during the events of the first Passover.

Time to reflect

- Why do some first born male Jews fast on the day before the Passover starts?
- Who here is a first-born male in their family? A boy with an older sister wouldn't be expected to fast.
- What traditions do you think links you to the past?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that help us to remember the past. Help us to understand that many of the traditions, actions and beliefs that we have are linked to people, stories and events in history. *(Amen)*



8.3 The Seder Meal

In the book of Exodus, God tells Moses "Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants. When you enter the land that the Lord will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.'" Exodus 12:24-27

During the festival of Passover, many Jewish families share a special meal called the Seder meal. The meal re-enacts the events of Passover. The word Seder means 'order'. Rituals, words and foods are done, said or eaten in a certain order. The order helps the family to remember the story of the Passover? Many Jews follow the order of the Haggadah, which means 'telling' and is a book that breaks the Seder meal into fourteen steps guiding the family through the story and meaning of the Passover.

Time to reflect

- What festivals do you and your family celebrate?
- What foods are important in your celebrations?
- What actions are important in your celebrations?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that help us to remember the past. Help us to understand that many of the traditions, actions and beliefs that we have are linked to people, stories and events in history. *(Amen)*



8.4 Matzo

"In the first month you are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day." Exodus 12:17

Food is a very important part of the Passover celebrations. The Passover meal contains certain foods that are a direct a reminder of the Israelite slaves in Egypt, the 10th plague and God's rescue plan for the Jewish people.

Can you guess what these foods or items represent or why they are eaten?

Matzo or unleavened bread – a command to make bread without yeast to represent the Israelites hurrying to leave Egypt

A **bone of a lamb** – to represent lamb eaten on the first Passover meal.

An **egg** – the egg can represent new life and new beginnings. An egg may represent sacrifice. Lots of foods go soft when cooked but an egg hardens representing the Israelites' resilience under pressure.

Green vegetable (usually lettuce) – represents new life.

Salt water – represents a slave's tears.

Four cups of wine – God promised freedom to the Israelites four times.

Charoset (a paste made of apples, nuts, cinnamon and wine) – represents the cement used by the Israelites slaves.

Time to reflect

- Can you think of foods that are eaten on special occasions?
- Are there any other foods that you can think of that represent an event?
- Is the Seder meal the only meal that recreates events from history?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that help us to remember the past. Help us to understand that many of the traditions, actions and beliefs that we have are linked to people, stories and events in history. *(Amen)*



8.5 Four Questions

The Haggadah contains songs, prayers as well as four questions that are said during the Seder meal.

Question 1: Why is it that on all other nights during the year we eat either bread or matzo, but on this night, we eat only matzo?

Answer: Matzo is the name of bread made without yeast, made in a hurry by the Israelites leaving Egypt.

Question 2: Why is it that on all other nights we eat all kinds of herbs, but on this night we eat only bitter herbs?

Answer: The bitter herbs are a reminder of the bitter times of slavery.

Question 3: Why is it that on all other nights we do not dip our herbs even once, but on this night we dip them twice?

Answer: Potatoes, onions or other vegetables are dipped in salt water, a reminder of the tears. A paste made of nuts and paste is also used as a reminder of the cement used to make the bricks in Egypt.

Question 4: Why is it that on all other nights we eat either sitting or reclining, but on this night we eat in a reclining position?

Answer: Reclining and relaxing is a reminder of freedom and how royalty would have eaten their meals.

Many of the actions, rituals, foods and words that are done and said during the Passover and the Seder meal act as a practical reminder of an event that is very important in the history of the Jewish people. There is a Chinese proverb that goes: Tell me and I will forget, show me and I will remember. Involve me and I will understand. The Passover is one of many festivals that doesn't just retell the story it involves those who celebrate it.

Time to reflect

- How does the Passover involve those who celebrate it?
- How involved are you in the festivals or events that you celebrate?
- Are those involved in St David's Day or St George's Day parades and events much more likely to understand the history of those days compared to those who just hear about them in a school assembly?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that help us to remember the past. Help us to understand that many of the traditions, actions and beliefs that we have are linked to people, stories and events in history. *(Amen)*



9.1 Hanukkah

Harvest Festival
September/October

Preparation

Find and show a seven branch menorah and a Hanukkah menorah (9 branches).

Can anyone give me an example of something that has happened in the past that has had an effect on what people do now? We remember lots of events in the past with various celebrations today. I am going to describe a past event or story that is still celebrated today. Can anyone tell me what festival these words relate to?

1. Man
2. Cross
3. Nails
4. Disciples
5. Empty tomb.

What about the other way around? I'm going to give you five words that explain what happens today, and you will need to describe the original story.

1. Cards
2. Presents
3. Party
4. Cake with candles
5. Singing happy birthday.

Can you give me five words that relate to the past or present for any of the following festivals: **The following festivals are themes within the four-year resource:** *Remembrance Day, Christmas, Valentine's Day, Harvest, All Hallowmas, Lent, Bonfire Night, Purim, Passover, Sukkot, Shavuot, Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Adha, Hajj, Diwali, Holi, Buddha Day and Vaisakhi.*

It is a unique feature of humans that we remember and celebrate the past. All peoples, cultures and religions have special occasions in the year. We are going to explore one this week that is celebrated by Jews called Hanukkah.

Show the image of a seven branch menorah. Does anyone know what this image is? It is a menorah; it represents a special lampstand that Jews believe began being used in the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem over three thousand years ago. The lamps on the top of each of the seven branches would have used oil rather than candles. Jews believe that God commanded them to keep the light burning in the temple twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week to represent His presence with them. It was the priests' responsibility to ensure the light never went out.

Show the image of a Hanukkah menorah. Can anyone spot the difference between this menorah and the other one? This one has nine branches, two more than the temple menorah which has seven. The Hanukkah menorah or Hanukkiah reminds many Jews of a miracle, explained in an important Jewish book called the Talmud, that involved the temple menorah about 2200 years ago. We are going to hear from some of the people that were there at the time, Judah Maccabee and his brothers.

Hello, my name is Judah, my friends call me 'Maccabees'. My family and I used to live in Jerusalem in the country of Israel until a wicked Syrian king invaded. His name is Antiochus (pronounced An-tee-oc-us), he forced our people to abandon our worship of God and stop obeying the laws given to us by Moses. He commanded the Jewish

people to worship Greek gods, including a large statue of Antiochus himself. Antiochus banned us from reading the Torah or carrying out our birth ceremonies. If anyone disobeyed they were killed. Antiochus ruined the Temple in Jerusalem, putting out the light from the Menorah, the symbol of God's presence.

My family and I fled 30 kilometres west of Jerusalem to the town of Modein. It wasn't long before king Antiochus's officials came to Modein forcing the Jews to obey the king's rules. My father, Mattathias, a priest and well respected man in the community decided to fight back. We hid in caves in the hills around Modein and planned what we were going to do next. We began fighting back, attacking the king's followers in the nearby towns and villages. We were very successful. We knew the caves and hills so well that when the soldiers chased us, we could easily slip away and hide from them.

More and more Jews kept joining our small army. Soon we had grown large enough to be able to defeat the king's army and retake Jerusalem. We attacked and won a great battle. We entered the city of Jerusalem and headed straight for the temple. Antiochus had taken the altar and other things from the temple that we Jews used to worship God. They had been replaced with things used for the worship of Greek gods. We quickly removed them and returned the temple to the way it used to be. We had enough oil to light the temple menorah for one day, it was going to take eight days for us to get more oil. We decided to light the menorah anyway as a sign that God had returned to Jerusalem. One day passed and the menorah stayed alight, two days passed and the light continued to shine. Three days, four days, five days the light never went out. The flame continued on the sixth and seventh day. By the eighth day we had enough oil to make sure the temple menorah continued to shine on and on and on.

What do you think the miracle of Hanukkah refers to? Judah only had enough oil for the temple menorah to stay alight for one day, but the flame continued for eight days. The temple menorah was a sign that God was in the temple, looking after the Jewish people. The miracle was a reminder that God had returned to Jerusalem even after the bad things had happened. The festival of Hanukhah is a popular Jewish festival that remembers Judah Maccabee and the miracle at the temple. We are going to explore how some Jews celebrate Hanukkah in our thoughts for this week.

Time to reflect

- Do you have an object that reminds you of a good event or a person?
- How does that object make you feel?
- How do you think Judah felt after the menorah continued to shine for eight days?
- Can you think of a time when you have been pleased to see something good happen?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that remind us of diversity and the importance of community. May all the lights that are displayed during this winter season help and encourage us to spread the light of goodness and lighten up the lives of those in our communities. *(Amen)*



9.2 Hanukkah Menorah

Preparation

Find and show a seven branch menorah and a Hanukkah menorah (9 branches).

Can anyone freeze frame a part of the story we heard yesterday about Judah Maccabee? Can anyone recount the miracle of Hanukkah? The word Hanukkah means 'dedication'. Once Judah had retaken the city of Jerusalem from the Greek army, he headed straight for the temple. The word dedication means to give someone or something a purpose or a task. Judah rededicated the temple to the worship of God.

During Hanukkah, some Jews use a Hanukkah menorah to remember the eight-day miracle. Can anyone remember how many branches were on the temple menorah? *Seven.* How many are on a Hanukkah menorah or Hanukkiah? *Nine.* How many days did the temple menorah stay alight during the miracle? *Eight.* Eight branches of a Hanukkah menorah represent the eight-day miracle. The ninth branch is called the shammash. The shammash is usually lit first and is used to light the flames on the other branches. On a traditional Hanukkah menorah, the shammash is usually the middle stem and sticks up slightly higher than the other branches. At sunset on the first day of Hanukkah, the shammash will be lit. The shammash is then used to light one other candle. At sunset on the second day the shammash will be used to light the first and second candles. During sunset on the third day the shammash will be used to light the



first, second and third candles and so on throughout the eight days of Hanukkah.

Time to reflect

- Do you use lights or candles at this time of year? (for Diwali, Hanukkah or Christmas)
- Have you ever stared into the flame of a candle?
- Can you describe its movement?
- Imagine a room with one candle to light it, how does it make you feel?
- How does the Hanukkiah help Jews celebrate Hanukkah?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that remind us of diversity and the importance of community. May all the lights that are displayed during this winter season help and encourage us to spread the light of goodness and lighten up the lives of those in our communities. *(Amen)*

9.3 The Dreidel Game

Preparation

Find (image search) and show the following Hebrew characters – Nun נ, He ה, Shin ש and Gimmel ג

Dreidel is a game played during the festival of Hanukkah. The game is played with a four-sided spinning top, on each side is a Hebrew letter. The letters stand for: Nes Gadol Haya Sham or "A Great (or big) Miracle happened there."

1. Each player starts with 10 objects, sweets for counters.
2. Each player puts one object into 'the pot'.
3. Each player takes turns to spin the dreidel.
4. The letter facing upwards tells the player what to do.
    - נ Nun – Do nothing, next person spins
    - ה Hay – Take half of the objects in the pot
    - ש Shin – Put 2 objects into the pot
    - ג Gimmel – Take everything in the pot
5. When one or no objects are left in the pot, each player adds another 1.
6. When an odd number of objects are in the pot, the player rolling ה Hay takes half of the pot and one more.
7. When a player has won everything, the game is over.

Some people think the dreidel game is linked to an old game played in England and Germany called Teetotum that had similar rules. Other people think that the dreidel game was played by children during the time of king Antiochus as a way of learning Hebrew. If any soldiers saw them playing, it would look like they were playing a game.

Time to reflect

- What games do you play at special occasions?
- Are there any games that you play that help you to learn or improve any skills?
- How does this game link to the festival of Hanukkah?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that remind us of diversity and the importance of community. Help us to understand and respect the many traditions and festivals that are practiced around our world. May our understanding and knowledge build closer and stronger communities. *(Amen)*



9.4 Latkes

Can anyone tell me how someone may celebrate Hanukkah? How is the Hanukkah menorah used? Can you briefly describe the game of dreidel?

Oil is an important part of the Hanukkah celebrations. How is oil connected to the miracle of Hanukkah? Oil is used in some lamps although many Hanukkah menorahs use candles. Can you think of any other way oil is used?

- *To fragrance our homes, make them smell nice.*
- *To allow a car engine to run smoothly.*
- *To smooth and soften a person's skin.*
- *To restore a rusty part.*
- *To quiet a squeaky hinge.*
- *To cook with.*

Cooking with oil is a reminder during Hanukkah of the eight-day miracle. Certain foods fried in oil are eaten during Hanukkah:

- A Sufganiyot is a doughnut, deep fried in oil and filled with jam.
- Latkes or 'livivot' are potato pancakes made from grated potato, onion and eggs all mixed together with some salt, pepper and a bit of flour and then fried.

Time to reflect

- Are there foods that you only eat at special times during the year?
- Do you think only eating certain foods at certain times will make them special?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that remind us of diversity and the importance of community. Help us to understand and respect the many traditions and festivals that are practiced around our world. May our understanding and knowledge build closer and stronger communities. *(Amen)*



9.5 Restoring Oil

Can anyone act out or freeze frame any part of the story of the miracle of Hanukkah, the lighting of the Hanukkah menorah, the playing of the dreidel or the frying of special Hanukkah foods in oil? We will try and guess what you are doing.

Once Judah had rededicated the temple to God he only had enough oil to light the temple menorah for one day, but the temple menorah stayed alight for eight days. The Jewish people had been through a dark time. When Antiochus put out the light in the temple, the people may have felt that God had left them. Re-lighting the temple menorah may have felt like they were inviting God back, the miracle may have felt like God was letting them know that he had returned. How do you think Judah and his men felt during the miracle of that first Hanukkah?

Yesterday we thought about some of the ways in which we use oil today. Fresh oil in a car can make the engine run better, oil can restore and soften old rusty parts or quiet a squeaky hinge. Oil is a good symbol of hope. Oil in a lamp allows us to bring light to somewhere that was dark. Oil restores something that was broken or not working properly. Restoring means to fix or to return something to the way it used to be. Is there anything that you want restoring, a friendship, a skill that you used to use but haven't used for a while, an instrument that you used to be good at but now you're rusty.

Time to reflect

- Can you give an example of anything you have done to help restore something in your own life? (Teacher including)
- Is there anything that you want 'oiling' or restoring?
- What can you do to 'oil' it or help restore it?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for those festivals and important occasions that remind us of diversity and the importance of community. Help us to understand and respect the many traditions and festivals that are practiced around our world. May our understanding and knowledge build closer and stronger communities. *(Amen)*



10.1 Vaisakhi

Festival
14th April

This week we are going to be thinking about the religion of Sikhism. Sikhism is the youngest of the six main world religions (as identified by the Office of National Statistics). The Sikh religion was founded by Guru Nanak Dev. Nanak was born to a Hindu family in the Punjab region of Northern India on the 15th April 1469. As a child, Nanak was very interested in God, gods and religion. It is believed that when Nanak was in his thirties, he disappeared for three days. When he reappeared, he explained that he had met with God. He began teaching that people should show devotion to God. He preached that all people were equal, no matter what religion they were. His message spread throughout the region of the Punjab and his followers became known as Sikhs.

The village in which Guru Nanak was born was called Talwindi. The name of the village was changed to Nankana Sahib after he was born. The village has grown to become one of the main cities in its district of the Punjab. A special Sikh building called a Gurdwara was built to mark the birth place of Guru Nanak and many Sikhs visit the city and the Gurdwara on the anniversary of his birth.

There is an important spring festival that is celebrated by Sikhs which takes place on the 13th or 14th April each year. Vaisakhi is the Sikh new year festival, an ancient harvest festival and it also remembers a very important event that took place in 1699, a couple of hundred years after the beginning of the Sikh religion. This event has shaped the way many Sikhs have lived their lives ever since. Guru Gobind Singh was the tenth teacher and spiritual leader to lead the Sikh people. Fighting in India between different communities had resulted in Sikhs being



killed for their beliefs. Guru Gobind Singh's dad had been killed in the troubles. In 1699, during the time of the spring harvest festival, Guru Gobind Singh called a meeting of all Sikhs in the Indian city of Anandpur Sahib.

He asked the crowd to continue to believe the Sikh beliefs and practice the Sikh teachings during this difficult time. Guru Gobind Singh then lifted up his sword and asked the crowd, "Who is prepared to die for their faith?" One man stepped forward. Guru Gobind Singh took the man into a tent. Shortly afterwards, Guru Gobind Singh reappeared on his own with blood on his sword. Guru Gobind Singh asked again, "Who is prepared to die for their faith?" Another man stepped forward and again Guru Gobind Singh led him into the tent. Guru Gobind Singh reappeared on his own again with more blood on his sword. "Who is prepared to die for their faith?" the Guru repeated. After the fifth man had answered the call to die for the faith, Guru Gobind Singh came out of the tent with the five men all dressed in blue and wearing turbans on their heads.

Guru Gobind Singh sprinkled holy water on the five men, baptising them into the Khalsa. These men became known as the 'Panj Piare' or 'Beloved Five'. The word Khalsa refers to 'the community of the pure'. Sikhs that are prepared to obey the beliefs and teachings of the Sikh religion are still baptised into the Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh also introduced five symbols to help identify the members of the Khalsa. Has anyone heard of the 5 K's? Guru Gobind Singh said that members of the Khalsa should not cut their hair. Called Kesh, the long hair has often been a symbol of strength and holiness in many communities and cultures. Many Sikhs wear a metal bracelet made from steel called a Kara, it is often thought to symbolise an everlasting God because it has no beginning and no end. A Kanga or wooden comb is worn, often in the hair, as a reminder that Sikhs should keep a clean mind and body. Kachha is a special type of cotton underwear or shorts and a symbol of purity. A Kirpan, or sword is worn to symbolise the struggle of good over evil, defence of the weak and spirituality.

Vaisakhi is a very important Sikh festival as well as being a special spring harvest celebration. It marks the Sikh new year and the beginning of the Khalsa. This week we are going to find out more about what happens during the Vaisakhi festival and we will find out more about the Sikh religion.

Time to reflect

- What beliefs or traditions are really important to you or your family?
- Do you think the Panj Piare or Beloved Five were brave? Why?
- Have you seen the five Ks before?
- Do you or anyone you know wear the five Ks?
- What do you think they mean to a person wearing them?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for the variety of beliefs and traditions that exist in our communities. May we have the courage to act on and stand up for the things that we believe in whilst respecting the beliefs and actions of others. *(Amen)*



10.2 Guru Granth Sahib

Can anyone remember the name of the religious festival that we thought about yesterday? Vaisakhi is a very important Sikh festival. A Sikh is a follower of the religion called Sikhism. Vaisakhi is a spring harvest festival. Can any remember what else is celebrated during this festival? It is the Sikh new year and a time to remember the birth of the Khalsa, the community of the pure. Can anyone remember the account of Guru Gobind Singh and the Beloved Five?

The Guru Granth Sahib is the holy book of Sikhs. It contains many Hindu and Sikh hymns. Some of the writings in the Guru Granth Sahib are poems that were written by Guru Nanak. It was created by Guru Gobind Singh, the same Guru that created the Khalsa, before he died in 1708. 'Guru' means 'teacher' and the book is the 11th and final Guru (teacher) of the Sikh religion (Guru Gobind Singh was the 10th Guru). A building that contains a Guru Granth Sahib is called a Gurdwara. The book is treated with the same respect as a Guru would expect. Sikhs never turn their backs on it and it is never placed on the floor. Every evening a Guru Granth Sahib is 'put to bed', by covering it in silk cloth, and each morning there is a procession and it is placed on a special platform called a Manji Sahib.

Time to reflect

- What books do you think are really really important?
- Do you know the name of any other holy or religious books?
- Why do you think the Guru Granth Sahib is treated with respect?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for the variety of beliefs and traditions that exist in our communities. May we have the courage to act on and stand up for the things that we believe in whilst respecting the beliefs and actions of others. *(Amen)*



10.3 Celebrating Vaisakhi

Can anyone remember the name of the religious festival that we thought about on Monday? Vaisakhi is the Sikh new year and a time to remember the birth of the Khalsa, the community of the pure. Can anyone remember what the Sikh holy book is called? Guru Granth Sahib. Can anyone remember what a building that contains a Guru Granth Sahib is called?

During the celebrations, many Sikhs will visit the Gurdwara. The Gurdwara will be specially decorated. Many Sikhs will take part in Vaisakhi processions called nagar Kirtans. A nagar refers to a town or area of a city and Kirtan is the name of the hymns and readings from the Guru Granth Sahib. People parade the streets singing hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib and dancing. Some nagar Kirtans, especially those that take place in the Punjab area of India contain mock fighting displays from a Sikh martial art called Gutka. The Guru Granth Sahib is the 11th Guru (or teacher) of the Sikh religion. The Guru Granth Sahib will often be carried in a place of honour in the nagar Kirtan. The community will often eat a meal together in the Gurdwara.

Vaisakhi is a celebration of the birth of the Khalsa in 1699. Can anyone remember the account of Guru Gobind Singh and the Beloved Five? What does Khasla mean? The community of the pure. Many Sikhs are baptised into the Khalsa during the festival. The Khalsa was started in the city of Anandpur in the Punjab region of India. There are large celebrations in the city to mark the festival of Vaisakhi.

Time to reflect

- Do you think it would be special to become a member of the Khalsa on the 'birthday' of the Khalsa? Why?
- Have you seen or taken part in a nagar Kirtan?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for the variety of beliefs and traditions that exist in our communities. May we have the courage to act on and stand up for the things that we believe in whilst respecting the beliefs and actions of others. *(Amen)*



10.4 Sikhism In The UK

Sikhism is one of the six main world religions* that is practiced in the UK. Sikhism began in the Punjab region of Northern India over five hundred years ago by Sikhism's first Guru, Guru Nanak. In 1699, the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh began the Sikh Khalsa or the 'community of the pure' and brought together religious hymns and writings to create the eleventh Guru and the Sikhism's holy book called the Guru Granth Sahib.

It is thought that the first Sikh person to move to and live in the UK was someone who ruled the Punjab as a child. Duleep Singh became the ruler (Maharaja) of the Punjab at the age of five. In 1849, after the British had taken control of the Punjab area of India, Duleep Singh was sent to live in the UK. The first UK Gurdwara was opened in 1911 at Putney in London. Today there are Gurdwaras in many towns and cities across the UK.

After World War 2, the British government had been encouraging people from India to come to the UK and help rebuild the country. Most Sikhs that live in the UK either moved from the Punjab in the 1950's and 1960's or are children or grandchildren of Sikhs that moved to the UK. Many Sikhs settled in London, Birmingham and West Yorkshire working in factories and textile mills.

Sikhism has grown in the UK and is amongst the six most popular religions practiced in United Kingdom. Today Vaisakhi celebrations and nagar Kirtans (Vaisakhi processions) don't just take place in India, they are a common sight in many of the towns and cities in the UK.

Time to reflect

- Do you know how long your family has been in the UK?
- Do you know someone in your family that has moved to the UK, or moved away from the UK?
- Have you seen or taken part in a nagar Kirtan?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for the variety of beliefs and traditions that exist in our communities. May we have the courage to act on and stand up for the things that we believe in whilst respecting the beliefs and actions of others. *(Amen)*

**The six main world religions are those that are reported by the Office of National Statistics in Census data from 2001 and 2011.*



10.5 Intercultural Education

'Multiculturalism' is a society in which different cultures live alongside one another, but don't necessarily mix, apart from possibly the workplace. The Council for Europe uses the term 'Interculturalism' to highlight the need for people from different cultures to integrate and live lives together. We should celebrate the intercultural nature of our schools as pupils from different cultures mix, play and work together. If your setting doesn't have many pupils from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds, referencing the various cultural experiences like food and what is seen during trips and visits as well references on popular TV programmes will all support intercultural education.

Have you heard of the word 'multicultural'? Does anyone know what it means? It means that a number of cultures, or people from different ethnic groups live alongside one another. Can anyone give me examples of different cultures living together in the UK? Has anyone heard the term 'intercultural'? 'Intercultural' refers to different cultures mixing and working together, rather than 'multicultural' which means people just live alongside one another.

This week we have been thinking about the religion of Sikhism and specifically about the festival of Vaisakhi. Yesterday we heard that Sikhism is amongst the six most popular religions that are practiced in the UK. But there are many more religions and beliefs that affect the lives of people in our country. There are lots of benefits of cultures living together. Chinese restaurants started opening up in London at the end of the 1800's. Today, food from all around the world can be experienced by anyone in the UK. We are able to see very different cultures, their architecture and customs without having to travel to distant lands, we can see and experience them right on our doorstep. Our schools are excellent examples of children from different cultures mixing and working with each other.

Time to reflect

- Think about the difference between living alongside one other and actually mixing with each other.
- How have you experienced mixing with other cultures?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are thankful for all the nations, peoples and cultures of the world. We are thankful that we live in a nation where we have the opportunity to mix and experience other cultures daily. Help us and others to work together, to celebrate our differences, but more importantly, focus on what unites us. *(Amen)*



Online Calendar

Digital links to relevant videos can be found on our calendar page
https://simplycollectiveworship.co.uk/calendar/

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