

The Magic Plane

An adaptation of "The Island" role play used in secondary schools to introduce children to the basic ingredients of religion, designed for use with Key Stage One.

Sue Phillips

with Gemma Cook and Jennifer Phillips

A Theatre of learning production

Making RE Make Sense

£5 from the sale of this book will be donated to the Nick Webber Trust for Malawi supporting the care and education of street children

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Phillips began developing Theatre of Learning in 1996 after a disastrous set of Mock results. A member of the class told her that this was because RE was so boring and nothing to do with them or anything that they knew.

Since then she has written numerous books and articles, presented widely across the UK and toured Australia in 2006 finishing with a presentation in New Zealand. After retiring from full time teaching in 2010 she devotes herself to supporting teachers and trainees in RE.

She has still not recovered from the shock of daughter, Jennifer's decision to teach RE. They wrote "The Island handbook" for Secondary schools together. Jennifer keeps Sue in touch with the development of RE in the secondary classroom.

Jennifer Phillips has a particular interest in behaviour and learning. She was educated in a challenging school, where she was taught RE by her mother, in the early days of Theatre of Learning. She was taught the Island during her GCSE years and devised the outline of “The Castle in the Clouds “(Teaching Christianity pub SfE 2003) when she was 17.

After studying A level philosophy and critical thinking with her father and RE with her mother, among other subjects, she went on to read Psychology at the University of Bangor and gained an MSc in Applied Behaviour Analysis before taking a PGCE in RE at the University of Chichester. Although excited about the island and seeing the huge value of starting the pupils with a religion neutral introduction, she found it difficult to turn this into engaging and Ofsted friendly lessons that ticks the many boxes.” The Island a skills and enquiry based handbook for Secondary Schools “ some of which has been adapted for this book , is the result of her reflection on what an NQT needs as support to do that, alongside all the other pressures of being an NQT. In “The Magic Plane” she spells out how to justify what you are doing in terms of **SMSC, showing progress and cross curricular links, differentiation, pedagogy, use of levels, meeting teaching standards and how it will support pupils in their future RE.** Her role in keeping Sue in touch with the rapid changes in the classroom and the drive for progress and challenge are invaluable.

Gemma Cook is RE coordinator at a Church of England Primary School in West Sussex where, following her graduation in history and a primary PGCE, from the University of Chichester she taught early years and key stage one for some time and now teaches RE across all years.

An ex pupil of Sue's, Gemma was taught by her for GCSE and A level RE in the early years of Theatre of Learning.

She got in touch with Sue in the summer of 2012 to ask her to introduce experiential RE to the staff at her school. With strong memories of being taught the Island herself she became an ideal person to help Sue adapt the story for Key stage one.

Gemma has been key in working on the levels and activities, making sure that like "The Island handbook" for Secondary schools that this really works!

This book is dedicated to the memory of Dr. W. Owen Cole who I was privileged to have as my friend and mentor for over 30 years.

Meeting him when I was a young teacher in 1978, when he joined the staff at the University of Chichester and became a member of the Chichester project, alongside myself, was a turning point in my life.

It was Owen who introduced me to the editor of Longman who subsequently published my two series of plays on the Bible and it was Owen who came along to watch my first ever public presentation on Theatre of Learning, at the First International Conference on Children's Spirituality in year 2000 where I had been invited by Clive Erricker, to bring my pupils along for a demonstration. Owen sneaked in and stood at the back of the hall, with his daughter Sian and subsequently gave it his blessing.

It was Owen, along, with Clive Erricker, another friend to whom I owe a great deal, who nominated me for the Shap award in 2004. Not only did this provide an endorsement of my work on experiential RE, but also it provided a cash prize which helped to fund my trip to Introduce Theatre of Learning to teachers in Australia.

Owen edited my resource file on Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Sikhism and was a constant source of advice, support and encouragement. His very strong views on RE and how it should be taught, have influenced me throughout the writing of this book, in particular his belief that it should be used to erode the roots of racism, that it should neither commend nor condemn, nor teach young children things they have to unlearn later.

RE has grown up a great deal since those early days of moving away from the idea of “Comparative religions”, Ninian Smart and phenomenology and establishing the teaching of world religions in Britain’s schools. Today it is much more critical and encouraging of enquiry. I hope this book manages to combine the best of both.

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Summary

Links and examples from religious traditions can be chosen to fit in with your locally agreed syllabus and the background of the children in your classes. They do not need to be the ones mentioned here. This programme of study can easily be adapted for faith schools. A full detailed summary of each lesson and the assessment objectives appears at the beginning of each episode.

Introduction for the teacher (pages 18-73)

- How to use “The Magic Plane” story as a **framework for RE, PSHE, Citizenship, values and humanities** taught over a term to a year.
- How to use it to teach the **skills of enquiry, talking, listening, thinking, discussion, levels and assessment.**
- What you need to create your storytelling set with artefacts and music.

Episode One: Could the world be perfect? (pages 74-89)

- **Big Questions:** What would make our world perfect? What makes us happy? What things are most important to us?
- **Key Concepts:** Values. Oral tradition.
- **Storyline:** The children imagine and discuss what a perfect world might be like and what we would need to create one.

Episode Two: Journey to our perfect world (pages 90-96)

- **Big Questions:** Who do we need to help our perfect world stay perfect? What kind of people do we need in our world? What makes a good person?
- **Key Concepts:** Community Citizenship.
- **Storyline:** The children take an imaginary journey on a magic plane to the perfect world that they had imagined.

Episode Three: The birth of a baby (pages 97-103)

- **Big Questions:** Why are celebrations and presents important? What is the best way to show a person that we care about them? What is the best way to help a person feel included?
- **Key Concepts:** Celebrations. Symbols. Community.
- **Storyline:** A couple on the plane are expecting a baby. The children devise a **celebration** to welcome it to the **community**.

Episode Four: Welcoming babies in our world (pages 104-107)

- **Big Questions:** How might we celebrate a **birth** in our world? Why is it important to celebrate a birth?
- **Key Concepts:** Belonging. Initiation. Rites of Passage.
- **Storyline:** The children learn about how the birth of a baby is celebrated in our world. They re-enact a **Christian Christening**, either in class or on a **visit** to a **church** and look at other rites of passage that are important to members of their class.

Episode Five: Rules and leaders (pages 108-117)

- **Big Questions:** What is a team? What makes a good team member? Why are rules important? What might it be like if we did not have any rules?
- **Key concepts:** Rules. Consequences. Free will. Conscience. Forgiveness. Atonement.
- **Storyline:** The children discover that a present made for the baby has gone missing .As they discuss this problem, they recognise the need for rules and a leader.

Episode Six: Special people and founders (pages 118-137)

- **Big questions:** Why are leaders important? What kind of leaders do we know about? What makes a good leader?
- **Key concepts:** Leadership. Responsibility.
- **Storyline:** The children learn about two leaders, **Moses** and **Jesus**, and other leaders as appropriate, and their “rules”. The first commandment provides a way in to begin to learn about **God** and the **difference between beliefs and facts**.

Episode Seven: The special book (pages 138-154)

- **Big questions:** What do we mean when we say something is true? What do we mean when we say we believe something? Do some stories have a meaning? Can stories teach us things?
- **Key concepts:** Truth. Myth, Belief, Revelation.
- **Storyline:** The community decides to stay. The children think about anything precious that they have left behind. They think about the difference between wants and needs and take part in a religion neutral exercise on **Prayer**. The children decide to preserve their precious memories, how they might do this and discuss what issues they might face in doing this.

Episode Eight: The special place (pages 155-179)

- **Big questions:** Do we have a place that is special to us? Why is it special? How does our special place make us feel? What special places do we know about? What makes them special? Why do people visit special places? How does it make them feel?
- **Key concepts:** Pilgrimage. Sacred. Holy.
- **Storyline:** The children decide they need a special place to keep the special book and for meetings and celebrations. They learn about other special books and special places, how believers feel about them and the need they feel to visit them. They create a **church** in the classroom and learn about what happens there through religion neutral activities to help them understand **the Eucharist** and **different forms of Christian worship**.

Episode Nine: Special celebrations (pages 180-183)

- **Big Questions:** What celebrations do we have every year? What happens at these celebrations? Why are these important to us? How are these celebrations passed on? What happens if we change them?
- **Key concepts:** Remembering, tradition, festivals.
- **Storyline:** It is the anniversary of the plane landing and the children plan how to celebrate. The plane, the special book and telling the story of their arrival all play a part along with the special place. They look at **Passover, Christmas** and other festivals important to members of the class.

Episode Ten: 500 years on; changing beliefs (pages 184-195)

- **Big Questions:** Does everyone in the same community always have the same rules and beliefs? Do beliefs and customs always stay the same? Why do people have different beliefs? Are special places like churches important to people even if they do not believe in God?
- **Key concepts:** Remembering. Authority. Interpretation. Denominations and sects.
- **Assessment: AT2:** I can talk about what is important to me and why.
- **2C** identify what matters to them and others and others communicate responses.
- **Storyline: 500 years on.** The children think about how the community has changed. Now that there are towns and villages spread all over their special place - **do they all have the same beliefs and celebrations?** They think about the story in the special book and wonder if everyone believes the stories about the old world and how they arrived here. They think about the special place where the plane and the book are kept and discuss whether whatever a person's beliefs are whether people might still want to visit it.

Adaptation of “The Island” for Key Stage One

“The Magic Plane”

Introduction

I have become very aware as I work with primary teachers, how much a version of the Island story for younger children is necessary.

I found myself asking “If it creates such a solid foundation of understanding and enjoyment for the whole of the RE curriculum at Secondary level, which it clearly does, then how much more is that foundation necessary for year one and two children?”

I also discovered on training days, that so many of the **issues raised by non-specialist teachers** would be answered by using the Island role play with the children from the start of their RE journey – and also, to my surprise that when I began sharing the story with primary teachers that suddenly **they began to make sense of RE for themselves** and became excited about teaching it – sometimes for the first time.

So what is the problem?

When I became aware of how widely the Island was being used in secondary schools - it was suggested in the Hampshire handbook, for example, that all year seven pupils spent the first term on it - and as I travel around the country speaking to PGCE students at Universities all over the UK, I discovered that there are always those who have seen it in action in schools, so I stopped sharing it at primary level, for fear that it would undermine the efforts of teachers at secondary level as they found a whole term's carefully prepared induction to RE was greeted by cries of "We've done this!"

However, I think I may have found a solution by writing a story that will achieve the same outcome, but in a slightly different, and more appropriate way for very young children. I hope I am right!

Secondary Island

I am going to explain how the secondary Island works in order for the translation to make sense and because I may not have got my adaptation right. I am not a Primary specialist. I used the Island in Secondary schools for thirty years - long before I developed the Theatre of Learning, however, I have never taught younger children. If Primary teachers understand what it is intended to do at Secondary level they will be able to appropriately adjust my fumbling attempts to adapt it to year one and two! Happily Gemma has been there to keep my feet on the ground and help me turn this into something that will work with little ones.

I think it really needs to be done at Key stage one, rather than Key stage two, in order for children to receive the full benefit of the platform it provides from which all the rest of their RE will make sense.

I think it is also important that there is an appropriate difference and distance in time between the primary and secondary Island, which can be studied at a much deeper conceptual level.

The Shipwreck

The Secondary Island is based on a dramatic shipwreck which takes place in the middle of a ball. The 80 people on board are on a luxury cruise. There are no children. The people on the ship find themselves trapped on an island that does not exist. They realise that they will never be able to go home.

The story is designed to generate emotions which are not necessarily pleasant - fear, anxiety, the need to survive - similar perhaps to the emotions which may have led to the development of religion.

It is important in the secondary Island that the children feel that they have to stay. They now have to approach the problems they face, as they are, which is as themselves, who are products of the twenty first century, but without technology to help them.

The first problem they face is that the bride, who was on her honeymoon when the ship crashed onto the rocky outcrop of the Island, finds she is pregnant. Instead of the joy we would expect, she is very distressed. Eventually the class realise that her distress is because she knows that here, away from modern medicine, she is facing her death – like so many women before her when the mortality rate was 50% and like so many women on our planet today, in the developing world.

The children's relief when she is safely delivered of a healthy baby leads them to celebrate, **and the RE begins - without *them realising it*** - as with structured guidance from the teacher, they create a Rite of Passage for the child. The point is that they did so **instinctively**. *It seemed a natural thing to do.*

Today, when we describe ceremonies from religious traditions, hundreds, possibly thousands of years after their symbols were devised; it can be a struggle to convey the meaning of them to believers. For children outside the tradition **it can be quite literally nonsense**. The activities, in which the children engage, using their imagination, in the Island story, create a concrete **platform from which they can understand all the aspects of religions** they later study, **rites of passage**, the need for **rules, festivals, holy books, special places, pilgrimage** and **sects**. **Nothing they later learn about seems strange anymore** because they can see the parallels with how they reacted themselves in a similar situation on the Island.

This leads to them acting in a similar way to the way early humans may have behaved, throughout the story, as they construct the several spiritual solutions to the situations that arise in a **religion neutral** way. God does not necessarily appear in the Secondary Island, although in faith schools there is no reason why not.

Their Journey

During the course of the story they:

- **Devise a welcome ceremony for a new baby**, which later helps them understand why we have **Rites of Passage** (rituals and ceremonies which mark our journey through life) and **why they are so important to us**.
- **Create rules**.
- **Make a permanent, unchanging record of the story and the old life**, which later helps them understand the **importance of Holy books**.
- **They explore whether the shipwreck really happened, or whether it is a myth** and if it did happen, was it a punishment or a reward, **marking them out as a special people?**
- They set up **special place** for the ball gowns and important items from the ship, which later helps them understand the importance of **places of worship and pilgrimage**.

The story finishes 500 years on with **an initiation ceremony** involving the wearing of the gowns and reading the story of the shipwreck which has been written on a rock at the special place. **Some children refuse to wear the gowns because they have no meaning anymore and say they cannot read the old language that the story is written in. This provides a starting point from which to look at different sects and diversity**. It helps Orthodox and Reform Judaism make sense, Catholic and Protestant Christianity and even the Reformation.

It is not so much the story, as it goes along, that makes sense of Religion, but what you are able to do with it *afterwards*.

Everything that follows can be referred back to that story, which the class made up together, and the things that they decided to do, naturally, from their own instincts when they were in that situation. It has quite literally, as the theme of my teacher resource files say, “Made RE Make Sense”.

In this version, designed for older children, **an explicit connection with religion may *not* be made during the story**, but is a powerful enabler for making sense of all the ritual, liturgy, ceremony and tradition they encounter during the rest of their RE.

It provides a foundation for developing religious literacy, i.e. understanding beliefs and worldviews and thinking about their own and others’.

Some schools have extended the project over a year, incorporating cross curricular links, and/or, building in the specific study of religion as they go.

“The Magic Plane”

“The Magic Plane” is different to the Secondary Island. The primary version needs to serve a similar purpose but in a different way, and most importantly without generating the fear and anxiety of the original story. It needs to develop in an appropriate way for Key Stage One children.

In this version the story is the thread but is much less prominent than “The Island”. The story provides the inspiration and starting point for much more activity for the younger children.

To be worthwhile, it needs to be more effective as a way into RE than the usual route of describing elements of discrete traditions. However, given the developmental stage of young children the links with specific RE probably needs to be made as they go along.

The Primary version keeps the children feeling safe and secure at all times, through being set within a comforting fantasy of creating a perfect world.

The children create this through a visualisation of a perfect world and then discover that this is the world they are going to visit with their family on a wonderful holiday which they will arrive at on a magic plane.

Using the story to look at ultimate questions

Throughout the story there are opportunities to provide a foundation not only for understanding **belief and practice, as described in the “The Island”, but also ultimate questions**. All the way through “**The Magic Plane**”, text in brackets, addressed to the teacher, suggests where you can make these links, now or later, when the children are ready.

“Never teach children things they have to unlearn later” *Owen Cole*

Religion is complex. I think John Rankin, Principal lecturer in Religious studies at what is now the University of Chichester, summed it up for me over thirty years ago when he was leading the Chichester Project, a writing group set up at the university to produce new material on Christianity. We were wrestling with trying to express an aspect of Christianity accurately. He said “The trouble is that when you are talking about Christianity the only thing you can say that *all* Christians will agree on is... *Jesus*.”

There is a danger, then, that with very young children we will present religion too simply in our efforts to make it make sense. Often we then, unwittingly, create barriers to their appreciation, particularly of Christianity and especially Christmas, by presenting a literal view of the Bible only. Many do not get to the end of primary school before dismissing it all as fairy stories.

Our goal is certainly not to promote belief, but it is to enable children to **appreciate the value of belief and practice to others**.

I think the number of primary trainees who admit to not looking forward to their RE sessions with me are testimony to the legacy of an oversimplified, descriptive approach to RE, or its absence altogether. Many of them clearly did not enjoy the subject themselves at school, probably as a result of having non specialists in secondary school with a gap to be filled on their timetable. Where they were well taught their enthusiasm is evident. But with just a handful of hours in University to learn about it, it is not surprising that new teachers are still ducking it for fear, as they tell me, of getting it wrong, causing offence, or **because they do not want to teach things that they do not themselves believe to be true.**

The answer, I think, is to approach it through **metaphor** and **symbolism**, asking not “is a story true” or “did it happen?” but “**what does it mean?**” I have said more about this further and also built ways of conveying this to children into the story.

Teaching complexity

Most people expected to teach RE in primary school are not specialists and so this book is addressed to them. The following is a huge simplification but in the interests of clarity and pragmatism, I offer the following summary - If you are a specialist you will wince – sorry...

Each religious tradition contains an underlying theme, concerned if you like with salvation, either as an individual, or as a whole community, or both.

Each portrays a vision of an earth transformed, where people choose to live in the right way as ordained by God, or, as in the case of Buddhism, by a great teacher. (In a sense, this is what the perfect place or world that the children are going to is intended to parallel.)

This vision has been passed on for centuries, originally by word of mouth (oral tradition) and later written down. These books are a source of authority for belief and practice. They are interpreted in different ways by believers, leading to different groups within the tradition. There is usually a conservative wing concerned to preserve the tradition in as pure a form as possible. This they believe is the way to keep the tradition alive.

There is also usually a progressive, reforming wing who believe in interpreting the text in order to move with the times. They also believe this is the way to keep the tradition alive.

Today there are different shades of belief about the written words in Holy Books resulting in many sects' movements and denominations. So to say "Jews believe, Christians believe" is problematic.

Some people believe their holy books contain direct revelation from God and that the words must be obeyed as carefully as possible and in a way that is as faithful to the original text as possible. Other people believe that their holy books are the result of pre scientific human being's attempts to make sense of the world around them and that they can and should be interpreted, inspired by God, to fit in with modern times. Those of the latter view have no problem accepting same sex marriage, for example, others believe it contravenes the teachings of their holy books.

A student teacher, having his first session on primary RE came up after the session to talk to me. He was very puzzled by my demonstration of the use of Tallit and Tefillin and my re-enactment of a Sabbath meal. He was Jewish. Brought up within the reform tradition and now describing himself as a liberal Jew, he did not recognise the picture of his tradition that I was conveying. He asked me why I was teaching these things that not all Jews now practice.

"In my Synagogue" he said "We say truth before tradition".

It was a timely reminder to me to make sure that even with only 45 minutes to introduce a whole tradition to primary PGCE students that I must be sure to point out, as I always did in school, how rich and varied traditions are and that this was just one aspect of practicing prayer and celebrating Shabbat.

Five year olds can be Theologians

I do not believe that there is anything too difficult to teach – the challenge is finding a way to make it simple enough to grasp.

Using the story of **“The Magic Plane”** with very young children **creates a foundation for unpacking all this complexity and variety of belief and practice** - maybe not at the time - but do not underestimate the depth of the questions you may be asked - as many of you will know!

After teaching **“The Magic Plane”** you will be able to say:

- *“Do you remember when in our story, in the ‘Perfect Place’ we decided...?”*
- *“Do you remember that not everyone agreed?”*
- *“Can you remember why they disagreed?”*
- *“Can you remember why we decided to do what we did?”*
- *“What these people believe or are doing is a little bit like that”*

For example, you may not think it appropriate to discuss the problem of evil and suffering with children aged five to seven but the “perfect world” they create, provides a platform from which they can understand this, the story of the Garden of Eden and how stories can contain literal and symbolic truth - when they are ready. I have peppered the story with examples from the world’s traditions .If you are teaching this to year one you might not go into them. You may find the Traffic Lights discussions too abstract for them. You can however use this book as a spiral and follow its thread through in later years, referring back to it and then going

into fresh examples in greater depth, building on the understanding they gained from the original story. Speaking of which...

Back to the story

In both stories, “The Island “and “The Magic Plane” at any key stage, or when it is used in training adults, **anxiety about survival needs to be removed** so that the listener can concentrate on the purpose of the story, instead of worrying, for example, about how they will eat.

The Magic Plane, the children will eventually discover, has a **magic door**. From behind the door can be found anything that they need for their survival when they have reached their destination.

The magic door takes the place of the cruise liner in the original story which is, of course, stocked with all sorts of things which help the community survive in the early days.

The children decide **who will go with them and where it will be. There is no isolation from loved ones. No fear and anxiety appears in the story.** An important element will be that **the children are not trapped, but decide to stay there of their own free will, because it is so pleasant.** If their physical and emotional needs are met – which the magic plane will ensure, there will be no need for them to return.

The **birth of the baby** can simply be announced without all the anxiety and fear surrounding the birth of the baby in the secondary version.

This will fulfil the function of the KS3 Island in that the children are taken away from all the technology and presuppositions of modern life and back to a world where they will react instinctively.

The opportunity to develop cross curricular links with literacy, numeracy and citizenship, especially in looking at government,

leaders, rules, the environment and PSHE is there, but is not essential.

Throughout the story suggestions are made as to where, when and how to fit in explicit RE so that the children can make sense of religious belief and practice from the beginning.

Gemma has suggested that the story could begin with looking at travel, journeys, maps, airports, people who work at airports and passports etc.

This is an opportunity to look at a **world map**. Later on when the children are looking at **leaders and founders, and Moses and Jesus in particular**, they can find out about the **six major traditions**, their founders and what their holy book and place of worship is called. At this point in the story this activity will have a context, a purpose, rather than simply be some information, like learning the names of the continents and the major rivers - and will therefore make sense.

Big Questions and Key Concepts

Big questions and key concepts at the beginning of every episode guide the non-specialist teacher toward the links and connections they *could* make to RE and the wider curriculum, particularly to SMSC and values. *They do not necessarily have to be shared with the children.* These questions and concepts are designed to build upon one another. In using this story you are going on a journey - within the journey.

The big questions and the key concepts provide the map - only *you* have to know where you are going. Providing you understand how it all fits together yourself, rather than be faced with a random, bewildering and often frankly nonsensical pile of information which is what RE can appear to be to the non-specialist, then it will all make sense to the children.

Creating a class diary, especially with Key stage one children which can be read at the beginning of each lesson will help to reinforce the teaching of values that can be supported through this story and help the children to make links with the story that they are creating in the classroom and the belief, practice and Holy books in the explicit RE which it is helping them to understand.

I have written resource files on each tradition (pub SfE/ Tribal). Lessons from these can be adapted for use in Primary school to provide active, experiential material for the work on specific RE. For example, creating a Gurdwara and Building a church in the classroom. I refer to lessons from these throughout the story. They are available from the publisher through a link on my website www.theatreoflearning.org. Where necessary I have provided a summary so that you can use the idea if you wish, but they are by no means essential.

Questioning and thinking

It is Important that there is lots of questioning and thinking and concept building during the discussion points. Primary teachers often ask me how they can answer the children's questions about religion. Opportunities to raise and answer these have been planned in so that the teacher is not caught on the hop. Gemma has helped to differentiate the activities so that the pre readers and or those whose abstract thinking is has not really begun developing yet are able to progress alongside those who will be asking more challenging questions.

On training days, teachers have expressed their concern to me about dealing with matters of belief. They have been concerned about answering children's questions about whether God exists, for example, or whether there is a heaven, or a life after death.

Teachers have also expressed concern about how they present Jesus, the incarnation, miracles and resurrection.

The anxieties about answering these metaphysical questions are twofold:

- "What do I say?" and "How do I answer?"
- And very importantly – "How do I answer honestly? "

Teachers acknowledge readily how important belief is to some families, but also how concerned that other families are, that their children should not be told things that they do not themselves believe are true.

Returning to Owen's mantra "*never to teach children things that they will have to unlearn later*", in other words to present the content of RE as if it is beyond doubt and a matter for universal belief is not helpful. I have built in opportunities for young children to explore these questions as they arise, naturally, in the story and in the examples of explicit RE, suggested, as they in turn, arise.

I have suggested ways of using well known children's stories, probably already used in class, to raise these issues with the children and to give them an opportunity to examine the difference between fact and belief and also look at symbolic truth and literal truth in stories and other writing.

I have then applied them to looking at the incarnation. I have not suggested that you present this as a fact, but as a belief held by some and disputed by others. Looking at what it means, rather than asking "is it true?" will help everyone of whatever background to engage in teaching and learning about it, honestly.

The secret, I think, to enabling small children to understand these aspects of abstract thought is to introduce them at the right point in their journey into and, through RE. This is a planned journey – both literally and metaphorically! -rather than a random choice of what is taught when, or an extra tacked on to another topic because it fits in, in a cross curricular way.

My favourite example of this also came from Owen. A teacher doing a topic on flight with her class could not think how to include RE so she opted for the story of the flight to Egypt!

I think there is a lot to be said for teaching the RE separately as happens in Gemma's faith school. All the children come to her once a week for a planned and rigorous curriculum that makes sense.

So, introduced like this, an understanding of belief and fact, literal and metaphorical truth will make sense to them - *besides it already does* - it forms the fundamental basis of all the stories they enjoy. I am not aware of any five year old throwing down a book in disgust or complaining because elephants do not really talk - neither do I think they stomp off at the Zoo because they do not! They just need to be guided in their thinking logically and carefully through making these links with a form of thought they are already familiar with. "The Magic Plane" helps them do that.

Preparing your class to be a community

Talk

If you use “The Magic Plane” as a cross curricular project at the start of the year it creates an ideal opportunity to teach the children how to talk and listen respectfully to each other. The **process** of learning will become interwoven with **what** they are learning. You will be able to create a **safe place** in which to hold religiously literate, **respectful** discussions where a variety of opinions can be listened to, shared, debated and evaluated using higher order thinking and **independent learning**.

There is an enormous difference between a year one and a year six pupil and so it will depend on the year group you are using it with as to what levels and vocabulary and skills you will use” The Magic Plane” to develop.

This can become a powerful vehicle to develop and reflect on values in the classroom as well as in the place the magic plane takes the children to.

Children's confidence **to speak out in class** without fear of ridicule is important, especially, in a time when many do not learn these skills at the table during family meals. Waiting to speak, without interruption, describing and discussing with older siblings and parents and listening to them at table teaches children courtesy and manners. In today's busy families they may not have many opportunities to do this. Furthermore, all pupils need to be **engaged** and to **participate** for lessons to be graded outstanding by Ofsted. Learning how to talk and listen in a circle helps them to do this.

If you have attended one of my courses you may have heard me relate this to **Maslow's theory of motivation** and his **hierarchy of needs**. He argues that people in the **four deficiency states** cannot learn well. Most importantly he says that people in the deficiency states **can only take on knowledge that helps them to survive**. Hence the comments from older pupils:

"Do I need to know this for the exam?"

"How will this help me in my life?"

"I am not going to be a vicar!"

The deficiency needs Maslow describes are - **physiological**, (food, sleep) **safety, love and belonging** and **esteem**.

How are your new classes feeling as they enter school? **Using "The Magic Plane" to build your "RE family", as my GCSE classes described themselves, meets these needs**. Once these basic needs are met, Maslow says that people are able, and wanting to seek edifying knowledge - wisdom, knowledge **that they now perceive as useful and interesting for its own sake**.

Maslow argues that once you have **met the deficiency needs** - in this case by enabling your classes, to feel safe, appreciated and valued in the group, praised for their oral contribution, even if they find writing difficult, they will be able to progress through the **growth needs, cognitive, aesthetic, self-actualisation and self-transcendence** - where they put the needs of the group (society) above their own.

Using “The Magic Plane” project to teach skills

– of writing, assessment and being able to demonstrate progress

This is a simplified version of levels for teachers and children. Having a unified version allows pupils to have a more accurate knowledge of the **success criteria**, allowing them to make progress.

Levels

As I write, in April 2014, the use of levels has been called into question, however the teaching professions seems to find them a valuable tool for measuring progress and so in the absence of a replacement I will continue to use them.

I cannot remember if it was Jen, or our son David, whose RE assessment for key stage one - in the absence of anything else to report - declared our child to have shown kindness in looking after the class hamster. I think we can do better than that!

What follows is an account of how Jen used the Island story to teach her year seven classes to take charge of their own learning through becoming familiar with the level descriptors, where they were (working at grade) where they were headed (target grade) and how to improve.

It may be helpful to adapt some of these ideas for younger pupils helping them to reflect on their progress through “I can” statements, for example the level descriptors used at the beginning of each episode will help you to assess your pupils’ progress in RE.

RE has two attainment targets. Attainment Target one is *Learning about*. This is concerned with facts and information about religion. Many teachers concentrate on providing their pupils with information. On its own it can quite literally be meaningless.

For example a description of Hindu images and the process of puja (worship) might be fascinating, but what do children make of it? As they grow older they may simply come to think that religion is a very strange and rather pointless activity. A great deal of time is spent on Christmas in primary schools, but what do children *understand* about it? What are they learning? And what value have these studies to children outside the tradition you are learning about?

This is where AT2 comes in. AT2 is learning *from*. Ask yourself what universal life lessons and values there are in what you are learning about. What life lessons has this story or topic got to offer the children? If you plan to focus your lesson on that and use the learning about to illustrate that then the lesson will make sense.

Let us look at an example.

If you have been to one of my presentations you will have seen me show an image of **Ganesh** with his elephant's head and his arms holding various objects.

Many teachers tell the story of how he got his head.

He was born with a human head, however, his father, **Shiva**, cut his head off in a fit of rage because his son, Ganesh, would not let him in to the bathroom where his mother, the Goddess, **Parvarti**, was enjoying some peace and quiet.

Filled with remorse Shiva rushed out and killed the first creature he saw, an elephant, cut off its head and gave it to his son.

No doubt the children will enjoy the story **but how helpful is it? And what have they learned?** Told baldly, with no context, it may actually do more harm than good, laying a basis for children to regard religion as 'nonsense'. However, looking at the *symbolic meaning of the image brings it to life with a message for everyone whatever their religious back ground.*

When I described the symbolism of the image of Ganesha to my classes, I also related it to themselves.

Ganesh has big ears to remind Hindus to listen to the scriptures which they believe will help them to live caring and happier lives - *who should you be listening to in your life to help you to be good and caring and keep safe?*

In one of his hands he has an axe to cut away selfishness and greed. It reminds Hindus when they look at him to try not to be selfish and greedy. *What things are you selfish and greedy about in your life?*

At his feet is a rat surrounded with piles of food, more than he can possibly eat himself – he is like those humans who are constantly searching after more things and more money, more than they need and so are never content.

In his hand Ganesh holds a bowl of rice which represents the spiritual food that nourishes our souls, things which make us truly content - *what things would be good to aim for and work on improving in your lives?*

Paying attention to the opportunities to learn from religion, and finding the universal values, alongside the specific meanings that the believers may have, makes religion make sense and provide value to everyone in the class.

Look at the level descriptors that apply to Key stage one and think about how they can helpfully be used to bring stories from religion alive and bring out their universal values and wisdom. They are adapted from those available on *Top Marks*.

Attainment target one provides the material - stories, objects, symbols and words.

Attainment target two provides the opportunity for reflection, questioning, making sense and making links.

Set within the story structure of the Magic Plane that sets children off on a quest to create a perfect place, a special world that is the best it can be will help you to meet these targets in a way that helps religion *as a whole* make sense to you and to the children you teach.

Level One

Level Two

Level Three

Your classes may be able to discuss the levels. You could share with them the level the lesson is pitched at in terms of “I can” statements. They could understand what their “working at” level is and also what their target level is and how they are going to get there. Keeping a class diary of the story of the Magic Plane as you create it together (see below) can help with this.

Display them in the classroom in this or your own simplified version. Refer to them each lesson.

Here is Jen's experience of teaching levels and skills in assessment to her year seven classes during theirs, and her, first term as together they took part in "The Island". Obviously this is pitched at Key Stage Three and is based around the need for written evidence of progress; however she has quite a bit to say about providing oral evidence, both for herself and for observers.

"This does sound tedious, but they need to be able to do this for observations.

*It really does help them make **progress** and they have a much better understanding of the **success criteria**.*

*If you **praise them** when they **understand levels** and emphasise that it will help them **make progress** they don't find it tedious, in fact they find it rewarding.*

*You can make this fun; Mine "**Wiggle if they know their WAG**" (**Working At Grade**). They ask do to this every lesson, it makes them giggle. This constant reinforcement means that they are enjoying discussing levels (and it is a nice, lively and productive start to the lesson). They need to know their **target grade**, their **WAG** and what they **need to do to achieve their target grade**. I only ask a few to share (I ask the wiggliest) so it does not take long but It means that they all know all of that information and they are secure in discussing their levels (so will be equally secure in front of an observer). Obviously invent your own game, e.g., clap if you know your current level, etc.*

*Ideally they need to **peer assess** to show understanding of levels, and this will also show **independent learning**. You can do this **verbally** as well as with **written work**.*

If they can discuss it with each other they can discuss it with an Ofsted inspector.

*When they do **peer assessments** that make sure that the children are then given enough time to make **improvements** based on the feedback.*

Model levelled answers yourself, and then move onto **facilitating** the class modelling the levels to each other as a whole class, so that they are learning **independently** and **justifying** why they would give that response a certain level.

*E.g., “Can anyone give me a level 3 response” Ask the class to explain what makes it a level three, and then ask the class to turn it into a level four, and so on. Many pupils will **verbally work at a much higher level**, here you can emphasise that this needs to be transferred into written work.*

Use the key words from the level descriptors in your lesson objective. Put each level in a different colour and ask the class what level the lesson is pitched at every lesson.

*Check they do understand the level words: e.g., you can use the word “**evaluation**” in the LO. They will all say the lesson is a level five, and they need to be evaluating. **However this does not mean that they know how to evaluate.***

Questioning needs to facilitate them learning from each other. The more answers they give, rather than you telling them information the better. This also means that the language being used in the class is at an appropriate level, and in a language that they understand.”

The following example that Jen gives is based on the task of giving the first baby born on the Island a gift. The children had to say not just *what* they gave but their reasons. It was designed to help them develop their understanding of symbolism and meaning. At Key Stage One it hits the “I can” statements for AT 2 (learning from) at level two and three. You can see how the complexity of the answer takes the children up the levels ladder.

Some people worry if an inspection coincides with revision or with a planned assessment. Demonstrating to an observer that the children know their levels, both WAG and target, and that they know how to improve, can provide evidence of outstanding teaching and learning. If children can tell you their WAG and target and can then model their understanding of the levels orally and demonstrate how they can improve those levels, observers are likely to be pleased.

Make it part of your practice every lesson.

Good relationships are vital for good progress

How can you use the Island project to build your RE family?

“You have to be in the right emotional state to learn.”

Katherine Weare

(Developing the emotionally intelligent school. PCP 2004)

Everyone acknowledges the importance of **good relationships** to learning but few teachers take the time to **consciously build them** through **teaching and learning good communication skills**. Usually they are left to chance and arise because there is a “nice” teacher and few saboteurs.

Many children in school are not given the opportunity to build relationships with each other. They need to feel secure, and they need to be **learning from** each other and **challenging each other**, **not relying just on the teacher**. This will not be possible if they do not have a good class relationship and ethos. For example to **learn the names of the other children in their class**. In what other social situation would a group not be introduced to each other? Spending time helping them relax with each other, as they learn **active listening skills** and by **absolutely banning put downs - including from you** - will pay huge dividends both to their learning and how they will talk in front of observers.

This happens naturally in the primary classroom where teacher and pupils get to know each other very well, however the children may still need to develop confidence in talking and listening to each other when they do.

This takes time. There are specific skills to learn. Detailed guidance is given for this in **“Making RE Make Sense”** my “how to do it” introduction to Theatre of Learning pub SfE in 2001. There is also detailed guidance available in the “freestuff” section on my website **theatreoflearning.org** in a document called **“Becoming a PSE facilitator for the first time”**. I wrote this for my team to help them introduce circle work to their classes. I have summarised some of the main points in this book.

Talking with the staff at Gemma’s school where we were doing some work on values together, it became clear that circle time had fallen by the wayside, squeezed out by all the other things that need to be fitted in. One teacher remembered what a difference it made to the whole day when they did begin with circle time and children were able to be calm after the rush to get to school, share how they were feeling and hence settle and concentrate.

After working through some of these exercises, one teacher on an “Island” course with me realised for the first time how the year sevens in her tutor group must feel on their first day in secondary school when it began with cognitive ability tests. She left planning to raise the issue with the leadership team.

As we have said, starting at the beginning of the year at Key stage one with “The Magic Plane” provides an opportunity to build good relationships.

You can do this by **consciously** teaching communication skills, how to **work in circles** and **how to listen actively**.

Sit the children in a circle and ask...

- How is it different from talking to each other from behind desks?
- How does it feel?
- What is it for?
- Talking and listening
- We need rules to do this

Ask the class “Has anyone ever been told off for not listening and they were?” – This will be everybody! This next exercise will show you why.

Try this active listening exercise

Do this with the whole class or two volunteers while everyone else watches.

Ask everyone to sit in pairs facing each other. Person A talks (decide on a topic such as what you did at the weekend) Person B listens.

Stand behind person A so that they cannot see you. Hold up a sign that person B can see but Person A cannot.

It says “**look away**”.

As person B withdraws eye contact. Person A will be unable to continue speaking and may protest. Whatever happens, the exercise will be disrupted.

Ask person A and B to swap over.

This time as Person B speaks, stand behind Person A and hold up a sign which says “**Look bored**”. Wait and see what happens!

This will enable you to establish with the class the importance of positive body language, that is, sitting up and looking as though you are interested.

Now as Person A talks and person B listens hold up a sign that tells person B to “**Interrupt**”.

The final sign held up to the listener will say “**Take over the conversation**”.

Once your classes see how it feels to have someone look away, look bored, interrupt or just talk over them they get the point.

They see the importance of positive body language.

Guide your classes towards deciding the class ground rules

Aim to arrive at something like the poster below:

Now they need to gain confidence in speaking in the circle

Practice “rounds” and “passing” to build confidence.

Many children rarely speak in class, especially where there are dominant individuals. This means everyone has an opportunity to speak. Insist they actually say “Pass” and get used to hearing themselves speak out loud.

Help them to practice speaking clearly so everyone can hear.

You can do this with games such as “My name is Sally and I like Sausages. My name is Tom and I like Tomatoes.” Or “My Granny went to China and she took an apple, my granny went to China and she took an apple and a brush”. Continue around the class as each person tries to remember the list which gets bigger every turn.

Make up a nonsense story - I start off with something silly such as “One day I opened my front door to find three bananas sitting in my car. One was revving the engine. ‘Hurry up!’ he said ...” Each person has to carry on with the story making sure they never stop at a point where the next person cannot continue.

Games build confidence about speaking in front of the class. It means you have to think quickly. It builds teamwork as other children help the person whose turn it is to speak.

Use the discussion skills for great AFL and plenaries.

Use traffic lights discussions, using the communications skills you have taught them, for plenaries and AFL after each episode of the story.

See the summary on the following page and also **'Using Experiential learning to ensure that every child matters'** *RE Today 2006*. Where I describe how to use them effectively for enabling everyone in the class to take part in thinking and discussing.

Traffic lights discussion circles

Using these enables you to check the children's learning, especially if they are not yet able to write confidently. These will enable you to record the children's progress against the level descriptors as they show evidence of their reflection and questioning and the links they are making between their world view and the world view of others. **(Level Three AT2)**

Give every pupil a set of **red, green and amber cards**. After a lesson, as well as the subject knowledge, bring out the citizenship dimension or SMSC for example, by reading a series of **statements**, (not questions) **you** have prepared about the issue, as controversial as you can make them, one by one. Allow each to be voted on. **Green, "I agree", amber, "I am not sure", red, "I do not agree"**.

This is also the opportunity for making **challenging statements** about the issues you have been looking at on the Island. For example *"You need to belong to a religion to take part in a rite of passage."* Time between the statements can be spent probing at greater depth and modelling levelled responses.

Here are some Citizenship examples - perhaps not ideal for little ones, but they illustrate how it works.

“Caring for the rain forest is the responsibility of the government on whose land it is.”

“Caring for the rain forest is everyone’s responsibility”

“What we do with our own bodies is entirely up to us.”

“What we do with our own bodies affects everyone else.”

Give everyone a moment to think about the issue.

(Ofsted says we do not give children time to think in lesson going always for the instant response)

Then say “*vote*”. This is a terrific way of involving every pupil, and assessing the learning of each child. This gives a sense of the values developing, creating positive peer pressure and giving **every pupil a voice**. It is important to stress that there are no right and wrong answers. Everyone gets to see how everyone else has voted. The thinking takes place when you invite people to **explain** why they have voted as they have. Real excitement occurs when a pupil speaks and others change their cards as a result!

A simpler version you can use to test subject knowledge is **true/ false** where you read out a series of factual statements to test recall and understanding. Pupils vote with a red or green card to indicate whether the statement is true or false. **These are great as a quick starter or plenary.**

What traffic lights also do is prepare pupils for the *evaluation* dimension of their work or examination if they are encouraged to be able to **justify** their opinions each time they vote.

After taking some responses, and before moving on, it is good to see if anyone wishes to make a point that has not been raised. That way **everyone has a chance to speak**, the noisy ones who always hog the floor take their turn and the **quiet, shy thinkers can blossom**.

You are establishing positive behaviour management and climate for learning which will last throughout their time in school.

Finally...

HMI Alan Brine, national lead for RE, tells us that primary teachers struggle to provide evidence of progress in RE. Teachers, he says, say it is because so much of RE takes place through discussion. He suggests teachers have a TA write it down. Recording a traffic light discussion where you have planned some thoughtful and challenging statements, involved every child in the class in the discussion and probed their responses will provide evidence of learning and progress. Consider capturing some of these responses to put on the wall and in the class diary. Here, they provide evidence of the challenge and value of RE to everyone - staff, parents and governors.

“The only behaviour I had to manage in the classroom was my own.” *Sue Phillips*

(Making RE Make Sense. Pub SfE/Tribal 2001)

Now...

- You have created that safe space in which to hold religiously literate conversations.
- You have met the deficiency needs for safety, love & belonging and esteem which Maslow describes.
- You have created the right conditions for learning to take place - the story will do the rest!

Preparation

It would be good to **build an island – or rather the perfect place it is going to take them to!** - in the classroom from fabric and artefacts which can be added to by the children as the storytelling progresses.

My “Island” June 2000

Built in my classroom for the first ever Theatre of Learning course for teachers.

The Edge Hill University “Island” July 2012

At a workshop for mentors.

The “Island” at Edge Hill was presented as I used it with my pupils in my classroom. Pupils came into ambient music, with subdued lighting, fairy lights and a mist fountain (search online for mist, sky or fog fountain to purchase one for your classroom, or buy a reptifogger (search for “foggers”) on Amazon very cheaply and supply your own bowl. It works simply with water.)

Teachers in a special school **built theirs on to a board** which was brought in for each lesson and removed at the end.

One secondary teacher on the move packed her island into an old battered leather suitcase **which she took around with her from**

classroom to classroom, the children eagerly setting it up in the circle while registration and the starter took place.

My thanks to Michelle Stokes for the photograph of her island suitcase on the following page.

The "Island" Suitcase

Michelle Stokes.

What you will need to build your Island/perfect place

The list on the following page is not a prescriptive list - make it fit your story, for example you may not be on an Island or have a shipwreck – use your imagination, and the local charity shops!

- Boxes to make a lumpy surface.
- Fabric for grass, sand and sea, coloured muslin is ideal - brown for rocks, green for grass, yellow for sand, blue for sea. Old curtains and remnants will be fine. Muslin has the advantage of being light and easy to store.
- Net for a waterfall.
- Ball gowns and dinner jackets (for Secondary Island where a shipwreck takes place during the captain's ball for which we also include champagne bottles glasses etc.) you might like to have a toy plane, a Captains hat for the pilot etc.
- Wedding dress, veil and bouquet.
- Champagne bottles and glasses.
- Candle stick and fairy lights.
- Shells, starfish, pebbles, seaweed, fishing nets and plants.
- Mist fountain if you can get one (search for '*reptifogger*' at Amazon. You can get a good one for about £15. Just place in your own bowl of water.)
- Clock set at the time the plane lands, lifebelt, rope, driftwood.
- Buckets, spades and sunglasses.
- A suitcase.
- CD player and an ocean CD.
- An attractive and impressive book that will form the class diary.

You might like, at an appropriate point in the story, to put the chairs out so that they represent the Magic Plane which is going to take them on their journey. Gemma thought it would be a great opportunity to teach about planes, airports, passports etc.

It would be very helpful to **provide music as background** during the storytelling which can change to ocean sounds once they arrive at their destination.

Religious music and art included in your lessons will help your classes reach Level three.

A note about the text

Each episode deals with a topic which may last several lessons depending on the extent of the activities you plan and how many cross curricular links you make and how many examples from explicit RE you use.

The text is set out in *Comic Sans* for the parts where the teacher speaks directly to the children – it can act as a script which you use in class or as a guide for preparing your own lessons. It is bullet pointed so that it is easy to read from in class and keep your place when pausing for discussion.

There is no need to follow my version. If it simply serves to provide inspiration and a "*map*" to help you "*Make RE Make Sense*", then it will have done its job. The journey will be your own.

Episode One: Could the world be perfect?

Lesson Summary

During the course of this episode the children will be encouraged to think about their own idea of a perfect world. **Progress** will take place as they explore this idea, moving away from the physical environment to the way it **feels** in the perfect world and ultimately to the realisation that this depends on the way people **behave** in the perfect world. **Evidence of progress** will be shown by all of them in their talk and by some in their writing. **Progress can be assessed** by measuring the progress against **“I can” statements**.

The teacher introduces the lesson.

Imagining a perfect world to prepare the children and stimulate the imagination.

The children could come into a circle set around a set that represents a holiday place, a beach perhaps with shells, buckets and spades.

There may well be pictures of holiday places, the countryside, mountains, rivers for example to stimulate their imaginations. Ambient music could set the scene, peaceful and calming.

“I wonder what the world would be like if it was perfect

- the best it could be?”

Take responses.

Explore what we mean by perfect. Relate it to what they aim for in school “The best you can be”.

Show pictures of a range of places, foreign and in the UK, outside and in. These may already form part of the display.

Conduct a visualisation (see below):

“In pairs talk, using the senses to describe what you might see, hear, smell and taste. *How might you feel?*”

Conduct a **round sharing what the class imagined** what the world would be like if it was perfect.

What did they have in common?

You might like to **record their conclusions as individuals, group or whole class written work.**

It will be important that the class begins to build a sense of this world as a group as they also take on an identity as the community that will inhabit the world they are constructing.

Second round: Invite the children to imagine that they are going to be given a **Magic Moment**. During this magic moment they would be granted one special wish. They can wish one single thing for the world that would make it perfect. What would it be? Share in the circle.

Visualisation

Ask the children to close their eyes, or find somewhere to look at on the floor where they won't be distracted.

Invite them to imagine what their world would be like if it was perfect.

After letting them think about their perfect world for a moment ask them to imagine themselves waking up this morning getting dressed having breakfast etc. - **they do not know it but this *is* their perfect world. As they journey to school they begin to realise that things have changed. What would be different on their journey to school (this has been set outside the home because some children have disrupted home lives and it may be inappropriate to invite them to reflect on having a perfect *life* (this exercise has been adapted for younger children from the Sikhism Resource file).**

Discussion with the children on what their perfect world was like. For example they might say everyone was smiling, polite, helpful and happy.

"Do you think we might be able to make this perfect world?"

Children respond. Some will think we can, some not, just like the teachers I do this with!) During this discussion they will be exploring values and some will be linking this with behaviour and consequences. Progress will be shown as some children make the link between the visualisation and a perfect world. Evidence of progress can be recorded if a TA is able to record comments from the discussion which could form

part of a growing display on a wall and or part of a class diary which will be set up during the lesson.

Traffic Lights discussion

Children vote as each statement is read out using **red** cards for “***I disagree***”, **green** for “***I agree***”, **yellow** for “***I am not sure***”. Children can be invited to give reasons for their answer.

“The world was perfect before human beings came along.”

“Human beings have a choice about doing right or wrong.”

“Human beings know what is right and wrong.”

“Could the world ever be perfect?”

"We are not sure if it would be possible to create a perfect world or not, but let's pretend and use our imaginations and see if we can try!

Making a perfect world would take quite a bit of time so we will work on making our perfect world over several weeks.

We are going to take part in a story that we will make up together as we go along.

Every lesson something will happen and we will decide what we are going to do about it.

The world we will be making is made up but it will **help us to understand what happens in the real world we live in, how it works and what we can do to make it better.**

Now, do you think we might want to **tell other people about our story?**

Who do you think we might want to tell?"

(parents, head teacher, governors, other children)

"I think this might be our first problem! Do you think we will *all* remember it in *exactly the same way?*

Do you think we all remember *every detail* about what we did?

So how are we going to make sure we don't forget the story and share it with others?"

Children respond. They are likely to decide to write it down. Discussion can centre around how - individually, as a class, where etc.

At the heart of all the major world religions is a **holy book** which contains a record of **customs, traditions and teachings**. These were often **passed down by word of mouth** before being written down (**oral tradition**) and as in the case of the **Bible**, different streams of memories were preserved by different communities.

What the children discuss and decide to create **will enable** them to **understand Holy books and why they are special**. At a deeper level, by the time they are in years five and six they will be able, for example, to study the **birth narratives in the gospel** that form the **Christmas story** that they are familiar with.

They will be able to understand the **different beliefs and interpretations** that Christians and Jews, for example, have of the Bible. From the very beginning they will be aware of different views about how stories came to be should be **interpreted**. Remember Owen's mantra that children should never have to unlearn something they have been taught. These **themes will run throughout the story and will help children understand the different beliefs about holy books and their interpretation**.

"This will be a very special book so what do you think it should look like?

Where do you think we should keep it?

What sorts of things might we put in it?

At the moment the pages of our special book are blank - so let us begin the story...."

Put on appropriate music. Ambient music or ocean music. See the suggestions on the following page.

Setting the Scene

Use lively music e.g. "Holiday" by Madhouse, to mark the beginning of the storytelling.

"We have been thinking about a perfect world.

**Let us imagine that it really does exist somewhere and we are
going to visit it!**

We are going on a wonderful holiday to this perfect world with our
families.

Who would come with us to our perfect world?"

(Making sure the children feel safe and secure - pets? extended family?)

Children share and discuss in the circle.

"How are we going to get there?"

Children make suggestions - a plane is where we need to end up!

"On a plane."

Cross curricular links: Airports, Passports, and People who help at the airport and on the plane. Destinations. Maps. It could be helpful at this point to look at a world map to lay the foundation for identifying the six major world religions. The name of their founders, holy books and places of worship which is suggested in lesson six.

Possibly turn the classroom into a plane.

Visual stimuli: Pictures of a plane and of the inside of a plane on the whiteboard.

It would then be helpful to tell the story to soft ambient music, the ocean for example. (Search online for '*global journeys*' for ambient music including the ocean.)

The teacher begins the storytelling

"The Magic Plane"

"We are ready to set off - how are we feeling? How are we going to get to our perfect place? We are going in a magic plane. Here we are, climbing aboard, up the steps and into the cabin."

Children act out as a class.

"It is very large and comfortable. The seats are made of... what are they made of? ...velvet, soft and squishy.

They are all different colours, what colour is yours? Soft music is playing. Can you hear it?

We are served lovely food. What did you have?

There are films to watch, which one did you choose?

Look out of the window. See the beautiful clouds."

(Visual stimuli: Pictures of clouds taken from a plane on the whiteboard.)

"After a while you get up to wander around and that is when you discover that this is rather a special plane! At the end of it is a very large door. This is not what you usually see on a plane! The door is made of wood. It is beautifully carved. There is a face carved into the door, as you watch, it suddenly begins to smile! It is such a kind and friendly face."

(**Visual stimuli:** picture of a "magic door" on the whiteboard or pinned to the classroom wall and covered by fabric to be revealed at an appropriate point in the storytelling.)

Class discussion

- *What would you do?*
- *How would you feel?*
- *What do you think is on the other side of the door?*

The teacher continues the story

"Hello, you say, smiling back. The face looks very excited about what it is going to say. It opens its mouth and takes a very deep breath.

It is obviously something very important!

Just then a stewardess comes by, carrying some food for all the pets on the plane.

"I expect you are wondering what is in there?" she said, smiling. "You will find out in time, but for now, it is a secret."

The face on the door looked very disappointed. It turned down its mouth and looked crossly at the stewardess.

She smiled at the grumpy face. She put her fingers to her lips and winked.

Suddenly you hear a kitten mewling for its dinner; all its brothers and sisters have joined in! There was quite a noise! The stewardess hurries off to feed the hungry pets.

The face on the wooden door is still looking rather grumpy!

I think I had better go now. Goodbye door, you say to it, and wave.

The face on the door cheers up and smiles back.....a moment later it has closed its eyes and all at once it is looking just like a door again."

"Suddenly, there is a crackling sound. A voice comes over the speakers - it is the captain. 'We are nearly there! We are getting ready to land please can everybody return to their seats and fasten their safety belts?'

Quickly, you settle back into your velvet seat. Can you remember what colour it is? You look out of the window watching as we come into land. What can you see?"

Whisper..."Everyone is very quiet. Wondering where we have landed.

Listen to the wind blowing in the trees and the waves crashing on the shore. **This is our perfect place...**"

Pause so that the children can listen to the ocean music.

"You feel very happy."

Activity/Assessment/Literacy

Begin a diary/project book which will last the length of this scheme of work. This can be differentiated for the children at different stages of literacy development. (**Evidence of progress** could be demonstrated with each episode of the diary by devising a carefully thought out levelled learning outcome to structure the writing and reflection which can be matched to any cross curricular links that the teacher chooses to make.)

It could begin with a summary of events supplied by the teacher or written by the children, or a mixture of both. The children could add the names of, who and what, is coming with them. Children who are able can also keep individual diaries.

Having a class diary which contains a summary of the events supplied by the whole class as a plenary will make both a record to be reflected on and used as an introduction to the next part of the story, it could provide a means of helping the class see how they are progressing along the “I can” statements and also very importantly provide a special book whose value, importance and appearance which help the children to understand **the importance of holy books to believers**, why they may look the way they do, such as the big **Bibles** found on the lectern in Churches, The **Torah** in the Ark, The **Guru Granth Sahib** in the Gurdwara and the **Qur’an** on its stand and the way they are treated, read with a yad, (pointer) hands washed etc.

Episode Two: How do we keep our perfect place perfect?

Lesson summary

In this episode the children arrive in their perfect world. They think about who else needs to be there to help the perfect world stay perfect. They realise the importance of team work through the snowflake visualisation.

Progress will take place as they make the link between the snowflake visualisation and the need for everyone to play their part in creating and maintaining the Perfect Place. **More progress can be shown later** when the children can reflect back to this story when they look at the story of Adam and Eve. Children will get more from looking at the stories in Genesis and the bible generally after chapter six and seven.

Teacher introduces the lesson

Class discussion

"Today we are going to think about where the plane has taken us. Where are we? Where has it landed, and what would this place be like? It has to be somewhere that no one has ever been, because otherwise it would not be a perfect world.

Can you think why that would be?"

(Creating a foundation for understanding the problem of evil and suffering later on.)

"Also we need to think of a name for it. What shall we call it?"

(Naming the place will be important to differentiate the perfect place from the special place the children will create for meetings and celebrations later on. You may wish to have a name ready to save time!)

"Let us think about places we have been to which we really liked.

What was it like and who did you go with?"

Accept contributions and discussion from the children.

"Perhaps it will be warm - lovely weather - palm trees, sandy beaches
and blue sea."

(There is an opportunity here to reflect back to this story later on, when you tackle the story of **Creation in Genesis**. The Garden of Eden is a symbol of a perfect place. Adam, which means man and Eve which means mother, represent the human race. Humans choose to do what they know they should not.)

Paired talk: Where have you been in the world that you really enjoyed? It might be nearby or in another country far away. What was it like? Who did you go with, what did you like or not like?

Share in the circle, perhaps through lollipop selection.

Class discussion

"Who else is going to be in the perfect place, apart from people you know? Who else came here with you?"

Who might be useful in our perfect world? Doctors, policemen, teachers, people who design, make and mend things, farmers.

Everyone needs to get on with each other"

In pairs, groups or individually, use white boards to list who would be there and feedback.

Do the snowflake visualisation from the Sikhism file.

In this visualisation the children are invited to imagine looking out of the window at the snow falling.

Visualisation

“Close your eyes or find a place to look at a place on the floor where you won't be distracted. Imagine a beautiful, fragile, delicate snowflake falling gently down from the sky. Look at it floating, turning slowly as it falls. See how beautiful it is. It has landed on the window sill. You can see its pattern clearly for a minute, before it melts and trickles down to the window sill. Suddenly, the cat jumps on the window sill crushing all that remains of the delicate snowflake. It meows to be let in. You run to the door to open it. You shove and shove, it won't budge! The door is hard to push open because of all the snow piled against it. You push with all your might and the door opens just enough for the grateful cat to squeeze in. Think about this. - **A single snow flake is so delicate. But look what they can do when they join together.**

After the visualisation discuss what that showed us about what we need to create our perfect world - everyone to get on and help.”

Activity/Assessment/Literacy

Focus on people who help us in our world and getting on with each other. (PSHCE link)

Episode Three: A baby is born

Summary

During this part of the story a baby is born in the perfect place and the children devise a welcome ceremony for it. This lays the foundation for a later understanding of ritual, symbolism, festivals and rites of Passage and for learning about birth ceremonies such as Baptism and Christening in our world. **Progress is shown when** the children are able to **devise symbols** for the ceremony such as a gift and **ascribe a symbolic meaning** to it and other aspects of what happens, and are able to **recognise and discuss how the family and community are affected by the ceremony and why it is important to them.**

The teacher introduces the lesson

"A couple who have just got married are on the Island with us.

What are their names? What shall we call them?

How did they meet?

What did they do in their old life?"

Flesh them out with the children so that they become real characters in their minds.

You might want to explore weddings at that point - why did they get married? What are weddings for? What was the wedding like? What did people say? Why? Perhaps act one out. Once the characters are real introduce the next and most important part of the story.

"The bride is expecting a baby - how do we feel?"

Excited?

How many of you have had a new baby brother or sister in the family. How did you feel?

Explore this - what will it be like when the baby is born - what will it need?

What will she need from us? We will need to look after them. We will need to gather extra food and share it.

The time has come for the baby to be born. How do we feel?

What are we going to call it?"

In pairs choose a name for the baby. (Adult chooses 4 for the class to vote on, in order to save time?)

You might want to include a doll at this point and have two children be the parents

"Now that the baby has been born, we need to welcome it into our community. How shall we do that?"

Discuss their experiences of having a new baby at home/how they celebrate their birthday.

Themes are likely to be looking smart and tidy, presents, food, family and friends.

The children will suggest a party. It needs to be more than that - *how do we express our good wishes and hopes for the future? How do we welcome it into the community?*

Use this opportunity to explore *symbolism and ritual*.

"How are we going to welcome it?

What presents shall we make - why?

What good wishes will we give?

What will we eat and why?

What will we do? - a ceremony?"

Bring in a large box wrapped like a present.

Children draw a gift they would give and describe it or write a sentence on a slip of paper which is put into the present.

Bring in paper plates.

Children draw a food they would like to give to the mother and father and label it.

Create a huge banquet table in the classroom. Setting the paper plates on it.

"When the baby comes through the door what will we do? What will we do first? - and then? - and after that?"

Try and draw out their *reasons* for this. What do their actions show/express? This lays the foundation for their understanding of symbolism and the importance of ritual, celebration and festivals for *everyone* whatever their religious background.

Explore:

- What does it mean?
- How does this make them feel?
- How does it make everyone else feel?
- The community?
- The parents?
- The baby when it is grown up and learns about it?
- Use a doll to act out the ceremony.

Activity/Assessment/Literacy

Episode Four: How might we welcome babies in our world?

Lesson Summary

This is an opportunity to do some explicit RE. Look at what happens at a **Christian Christening**. Discuss with the children why it is important to some families to do this. Look at birth ceremonies for other traditions represented in your class. **Progress will be shown** when children make links between the ceremonies they devised for their imaginary world and what happens in the real world and use these links to describe what happens at a Christian Christening and say why this is important to Christians.

The teacher introduces the lesson

Recap previous lesson where the baby was welcomed into the family with a ceremony.

Explore with the children:

“What happens when babies are born in your families?” how do they
celebrate?

Introduce Baptism/Christening.

Show pictures of a Christian Christening.

Gather questions from the children regarding what they would like to find out about.

It is possible that they will attempt to draw conclusions about what is happening based on devising their own ceremonies, as well as personal experience.

Explain what happens at a Christening - why do you think the family has chosen to do this?

How do you think everyone feels?

You could visit a local church at this point. Ask the vicar to act out a baptism with a doll the children have brought with them.

If this is not possible ask the vicar to come to the school to role play a christening.

Or... Set up the classroom as a church and role play the baptism with a bowl of water and pupils in role as parents, godparents.

Before the event, whether it be a visit to the church, a visit from the vicar or a role play in class, role play preparing for a special day, getting smartly dressed, the family arriving, present giving.

The story and the activity should have enabled them to make important links and see the relevance of ceremonies with special words, actions, gifts, and food.

This is also an opportunity to look at a **different ceremony from a different tradition**, depending on the cultural background of the children in your class.

This could also be a good point to look at **other rites of passage** - what happens when the child gets older and can choose to be a member of tradition for him or herself - **initiation**. Link with the story of Guru Nanak in episode eight who at age 14 refused to wear the Sacred thread.

Activity/Assessment/Literacy

Episode Five: Rules and leaders

Summary

In this episode the children imagine how they would feel if one of the baby's gifts is stolen. This gives the children the opportunity to consider the importance of rules and leaders, the consequences of their actions and the choices they make (free will and conscience). Ideally, it would be best if the need for rules and leaders came from the children themselves. This is also an opportunity to consider the importance of being sorry for what you do wrong (confession and repentance) and putting things right, both in terms of feeling forgiven and at peace and forgiving others (atonement) **Progress will be shown** as they discuss **rules** and the **reasons for them** and by recognising the need for a **leader** and the qualities this person should have they will be thinking and questioning and arriving at conclusions.

The teacher introduces the lesson

"Today we are going to think about how to keep our special place
special?"

What sorts of things might happen to spoil our special place?"

Children share thoughts about this.

Litter, damage, stealing, being unkind to people and animals.

"Why do you think that these things happen?"

Children share ideas being selfish and greedy. Not sharing.

"How important is it, do you think, to pull together as a team?"

What would it be like if people did not pull together?"

The teacher reminds the class about the snowflake visualisation.

The teacher tells the class she/he has something she/he would like them to think about.

"This is supposed to be a perfect place where everyone pulls together like the snowflakes, but just suppose someone has done something rather naughty.

I would like us to think about how we would feel and what we would do about it.

Do you remember that at the ceremony we made to welcome the baby that it was given presents. Can you remember what we gave it?

Why did we give the baby presents?

Do you think they would be special to the baby when it grows up?

Why would the presents be special?

Did anyone here have anything special given to them when they were born?

Why is that present special?

Are presents always special because of how much they cost?"

Teacher produces the big box wrapped as a gift.

"Do you remember what this is?"

Just suppose that in our special place someone took one of the babies' presents - How would we feel about this?

Why do you think they might take it?

What shall we do about it?"

Enables children to discuss ideas about why it might have been taken, consequences for actions and punishment and forgiveness. *Ideally they will identify the need for rules themselves.*

"This shows us the need for rules - what sort of rules might we need?"

Children begin to share ideas in preparation for group work below. *It would be good if the children themselves realise the need for a leader and to work out themselves the processes that arise in the next part of the story.*

"Do we also need a leader?

Who should that be?

We need to choose some candidates. Who would be good? - The Captain and the Pilot, perhaps. Maybe the stewardess.

How shall we decide who it should be?

Hold a vote?

Why are we voting? Why doesn't someone just say they will be the leader?

What kind of leader should they be?"

Children discuss the qualities of a good leader. The candidates could present their cases before the vote. This section can be as brief or as detailed as you wish depending on how far you wish to link it with citizenship.

Link this with leaders in our world.

- Who are our leaders? Look at government in UK.
- The Queen and Prime minister, MPs.
- Parliament where rules are discussed and everyone votes as we did in our perfect place.
- The role of policemen and courts of law.

Activity/Assessment/Literacy

Episode Six: Special people and founders

In four parts: Moses, Beliefs, Jesus and Jesus' Teachings.

Summary

The children are now ready to learn about **Founders**. The way in is through a **special person circle**. This creates a setting and a link for them to learn about **Moses**. This has similarities to their own imaginary journey to and in the Perfect Place. **Looking at the first rule (commandment) about God enables the teacher to begin exploring what people believe about God** and to explore the difference between fact and belief. A suggested script is provided guiding the discussion. This leads on to learning about **Jesus**, what is meant by **God's son**. The children build 'kingdoms' in the classroom, explore the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount and unpack Jesus' words "the kingdom of heaven is inside you".

Part One: Introducing Moses

The Children sit in a circle. Remind them of circle time rules and the rules for their community.

Begin by reading and updating the diary together.

Teacher introduces the lesson

"We have been thinking and talking about leaders and who leads our world.

They are not people we know.

Who do we know that we listen to and respect?

I have someone who is very special to me."

(teacher/TA model by sharing their special person and why they are special/someone who they respect)

"Who is your special person?"

Why?

What qualities do they have?"

Paired talk

“Talk to your neighbour. Tell each other who your special person is and why they are special to you.”

You could do this fully as special person circle where after introducing leaders in the last lesson, the children could have been asked to think about whom their special person is in advance and come, having already given it some thought. In the Special circle every child has an opportunity to speak about who their special person is and why and what they admire about them, or pass.

Class discussion and sharing

“What qualities do our special people have?”

Are there lots of things in common?”

Mind map: Collect all the reasons why our special people are special on the board.

Introduce founders

"Some people are very special leaders because they are **founders** - they begin something that becomes very important to lots of people."

Gemma has suggested identifying the six major religions of the world, looking at a map of the world with the class and seeing where each of the religions have grown up. This would be a good point to do that.

Children can have a chart on which they stick pictures of each founder, the name of the place of worship and the holy book and what the followers are called.

"We are going to hear a story about one of them today."

Moses - tell the story of Moses using books or film.

Gemma recommends *Top Marks*.

You might wish to start with Joseph, especially if this story is familiar to the children already. The link being that Joseph became a great leader and his people came to find their special place in Egypt with him. After a while a wicked, selfish leader grew up who wanted to be rid of Joseph's people.

Link Moses to our story through him making a special community like ours which needed rules – 10 commandments. Share some of them with the children in language they can understand. How similar are they to the rules we made?

Activity/Assessment/Literacy

Part Two: Believing in God

The teacher introduces the lesson

"Moses gave the people ten commandments. Let us look carefully at the first one; which is about believing in God."

This is an opportunity to address this issue, enabling the children to think and discuss and for the teacher to have prepared for this, rather than feel worried and unprepared for answering questions about God and belief.

"What does the class think God might be like?"

Does everyone believe in God?

People have different beliefs."

Explore the word "believe".

Explore the difference between beliefs and facts.

"Facts are things we are sure about because we can see them and touch them.

Beliefs are important too - even though we cannot always see and touch things that are important to us."

Time for some homework!

"Who could find at home a nice clean glass jar preferably with a tight fitting lid so that what we are going to put in it cannot escape?

Right - now who believes that someone or something like a pet or special person loves them?

Excellent. Now, what I would like you to do for your homework is to put some of that love in the nice clean glass jar and bring it to show me."

Discuss with the children what point they think you were making.

This could be a helpful point to read *'The Whale's Song'* by Dyan Sheldon and Gary Blythe.

In this story Lily visits her grandparents who live by the sea. Lily's grandmother tells Lily that if she goes down to the beach at night and listens carefully she might hear the whales singing to her. Her uncle tells her not to listen to grandmother's nonsense, but Lily goes. She tosses a beautiful yellow flower on to the waves and watches it float out to sea and then she listens very carefully ...

You could also now appropriately and meaningfully introduce the children to the idea of **literal and metaphorical truth** by reading the story about the Elephant family, *The Large Family* in '**A little bit of peace and quiet**'.

The children will laugh at Mrs Larges' attempt to get ready for a night out in peace and quiet, disrupted by her naughty baby elephants. Finally she sails off down the road arm in arm with her husband in his top hat and tails - quite unaware that she has the imprint of a paint box on her bottom!

After the children have enjoyed the story you can discuss

Is this story true?

Not literally because elephants don't talk and live in houses! But it is true in that this is what it is like in most families; that was why we laughed and enjoyed it so much!

Part Three: Introducing Jesus

Another special person was **Jesus** - Listen to the story of the birth of Jesus. (Gemma recommends 'It's a boy' A DVD of the Nativity by Top Marks)

You could now at this stage meaningfully introduce the idea that Christians believe Jesus was God's son, exploring what people might mean when they say that.

"Some people believe that the stories about Jesus really happened,
just as they are described in the Bible.

Other people believe that perhaps they didn't quite happen *exactly*
as the Bible says.

Most people agree that they contain some **very important truths**.

This is rather like the way we thought about the Large family in the story we talked about last lesson. Although elephants *don't really talk* and the story about Mummy elephant getting ready for her night out *didn't really happen*, the story about the Large family made us laugh because in a way it *is so true!*

What do we mean when we say 'it was so true?'"

Children discuss.

Now let us see what happens we look at the stories about Jesus and the different beliefs people have about them.

"When the Bible says that Jesus is **God's son** what do you think Christians think this might mean?"

A tricky discussion to have with very young children but it is important to help them be comfortable with a variety of views from the beginning. It might be helpful to link this with the **Hindu belief in avatars**, that some human beings are so wonderful that they are believed to be **incarnations** (to become flesh – **reincarnation** – to become flesh again) in other words the idea of a human being the incarnation of God is not unique to Christianity.

This might be an appropriate point to tell a **parable** and unpack its meaning. Tell the story of the **Good Samaritan**.

Did the Good Samaritan really exist?

Perhaps it was based on a true story, perhaps not.

Does it matter?

Why doesn't it matter? Because the point is not whether he existed but what the story is teaching us about how we should treat others.

The story of the **Good Samaritan** fits in with the idea of **community** that the children have been exploring and the meaning of the snowflake visualisation.

Activity/Assessment/Literacy

Part Four: Exploring Jesus' rules

This following experiential activity is adapted from "Building the Kingdom" in the Christianity file.

Having looked at Moses and the Ten Commandments, this would be a good point to look at the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Here is a fun and engaging way to get the children thinking about this.

Have a pile of cloths/sheets/bedspreads in the middle of the room. Put the children in groups.

Tell the children that they are going in a moment to work in their groups to build themselves kingdoms. They can use the materials in the middle of the circle and the chairs and tables. *No one's personal property can be used.*

Once they have built their kingdom they need to get inside and **make five rules for their kingdom**. They only have five so they need to be as **useful as you can make them** to ensure that the Perfect Place stays perfect.

While they are doing this **watch each group carefully** and make notes about how they are doing this - **are they sharing and cooperating?** Are they stealing the scarce resources when others are not looking?

What kind of place did they create? Was it open and friendly or is it enclosed. (One year eight group of boys turned the chairs upside down on the group of tables that they had got underneath. I was just thinking that it looked rather like a machine gun nest when one of them crawled out picked up a chair and rat-a-tat-tatted it around the room like a

machine gun spraying fire. He then got back in his kingdom and carried on with the discussion!)

Once built and the children are inside discussing their rules you and or your TA can **go around and knock on each kingdom** and ask if you can come in. Note the response. If you are invited in, ask if you could tell them your rules for your kingdom and ask if they would like to hear them. Respond accordingly!

If given permission **share your rules** (below) which is a very simplified version of the Sermon on the Mount. If not, **leave and try the next group.**

- No anger
- No telling lies or cheating
- Forgive people who upset you
- Share your wealth

Ask the children if they would like to follow your rules. If any of them do, invite them to come with you and see if they can persuade any of the others to come with them. (*How the gospel message spread in the early church.*)

De-brief the activity in a circle.

This activity was about rules for the Perfect Place. Feedback on the way they built their kingdoms - did they share or did they grab and steal when no one was looking? What kind of kingdom did they build and how did they respond when you came around asking to come in?

Share their rules and discuss how helpful they would be towards creating a perfect world.

Remind the class of the ones that you took around which were a summary of Jesus' teaching. What do they think about these? Would they like to live in a world that had these rules?

"Now we need to look at a very important saying of Jesus:

'The kingdom of heaven is inside you'

What do you think he meant?"

Unpack the symbolism of this, exploring the phrase as a metaphor.

Explore with the children what he might mean by **kingdom** – linking with the Perfect Place.

What did he mean by **heaven**?

Help the children think about it more widely than just a place you go to when you die.

Invite the children to talk in pairs about what they think of when they think of heaven. Sometime they say "*That was heaven!*" what do they mean? – chocolate? a fun day out? cuddles?

Now come back to” **The kingdom of heaven is inside you**” what was Jesus message to people about how to be happy?

This would be a good point to look at the teachings of other religions as appropriate to the class.

Activity/Assessment/Literacy

Episode Seven: The special book

Part One: The magic door, Part Two: The special book

Summary

In this lesson the teacher explains that the adults have decided to stay and asks the children how they feel about this. They think about things they will miss and are taken aboard the Magic Plane where they meet Stephen, the magic door, once again and are given the things that they left behind. This enables the children to think about needs as opposed to wants. This will enable them to explore the meaning of **prayer** through a religion neutral exercise. The decision to stay prompts the need to write down memories of the world they left behind and provides a platform from which to begin to explore **sacred writings and holy books**.

Part One: The magic door

- and a religion neutral exercise on prayer

The teacher introduces the lesson

"It has been some time since we worked on the story. Let us remind ourselves about what has happened.

(Look back over the diary to remind children **where** we were.)

A baby has been born and welcomed in to the Perfect Place. **One of its presents has been stolen** which made us realise that we needed to do something about that. Can you remember what that was?

We realised we needed **rules and a leader** to make sure we kept them! That led us to look at some special leaders - called **founders** who began the religions of Judaism and Christianity. **We also learned about some of their rules for making the world a Perfect Place.**

Can you remember what they were? How similar or different are they to the rules we made our Perfect Place?

Now it is time to go back to the story!"

The Magic Door

"The grownups have been talking. They are thinking that it is so nice here and we are having such a wonderful time that they have been wondering about staying and making their home here. They say that they have everything that they need to live a happy life.

I wonder, how does everybody feel about that?"

Children share their reactions. They may well think about people, pets and belongings that they have left behind.

"Is there anything at home that you miss or think that you will need?"

Collect the children's suggestions.

The teacher continues the storytelling

"One of the children looked very sad. He told the group that he was very sad about not seeing his toys again. The other children began to look sad as they remembered other things they had left behind. *'I forgot all about my Nan'* said one of them *'she is at home looking after our dog. His name is Scruffy and he loves to jump in puddles - just like me. I like it here very much but I feel, very sad if I am going to stay here without them.'*

'I think I have a solution!' said a bright, cheerful voice. It was the stewardess who had fed the pets on the journey. She was smiling. She was smiling a very special smile as though she knew something that everyone else did not.

'I think it would be very helpful if we went back to visit the plane' she said.

'The door!' said the boy who had forgotten his Nan. *'What about the door?'*

Everyone looked very puzzled, because not everyone had noticed the big carved wooden door. You had, of course, but most people had stayed in their seats.

'Exactly!' said the Stewardess."

"The face on the door was just about to tell us something and you stopped him!" added the boy who had forgotten his Nan.

'Yes, I did and that is because it wasn't the right time. I wanted you to make up your mind yourselves that you would like to stay in our perfect world. After all it is your choice to keep it perfect. You have to choose to keep the rules you made. You have all been very good and done that and so it is time to open the magic door on the magic plane!'

'Magic!' said the children all at once.

A moment later everyone found themselves standing outside the big carved wooden door. The grownups were very surprised.

'How come we can all fit in this part of the plane?' asked one of the fathers. *'It seems much larger than it was when we flew here.'*

'It is a magic plane' said the stewardess, *'remember?'*

The face on the door opened its eyes. Everyone gasped.

It smiled a huge, friendly smile and opened its mouth to take a very deep breath. What it had to say was very important.

'No need, Stephen' said the Stewardess. *'They wouldn't understand.'*

'Stephen!' said the boy who had forgotten his Nan. *'How come a door is called Stephen?'*

"The face on the door looked very cross again. The Stewardess pressed a button on its nose. The face cheered up at once. The door swung *slowly* open. Beams of light streamed out. The children gasped. Out of the door stepped... Who do you think it was? - a Nan! - and she was carrying a computer and a pile of toys, but something was missing ...do you remember what it was?...all of a sudden out from behind the door bounded a very muddy dog! ...it was Scruffy! ...and after he had said hello to all the children *they were very muddy, too!*

'You see?' said the Stewardess *'Stephen, here, will provide you with anything you need, anything at all. There is one condition though. It must be what you **need** not just what you **want**. This is a perfect world. It is important not to be selfish and greedy.'* More and more things began to come through the magic door. The children came forward excitedly and collected their treasured possessions.

*'Now what do you **need**?' asked the stewardess."*

Ask the children in a circle if there is anything that they would need that they might not have taken with them.

Explicit RE

Try a Religion neutral exercise on **Christian Prayer** from the Christianity file.

Before using this exercise explain to the children that...

Religion neutral exercises are:

1. **Confidential** – no one has to tell anyone else what they thought about.
2. **Not worship** because they are not directed towards God.
3. **Not compulsory**. You do not have to take part, just think about something else.

Religion neutral exercise on prayer

Ask the children what they think a **prayer** is.

There will be lots of different answers. Keep going until you get ” **A conversation with God.**”

With eyes closed, or looking at a place on the floor where they will not be distracted, ask the children to **think about something they need** – not something they want but something they need. Pause and repeat. Pause for reflection.

Think about getting along with people you know, family and friends maybe. **Think about someone you know who you could try to get along better with.**

Life is not always perfect. Sometimes things happen that upset us and make us sad. Try if you can to think about **something to feel grateful for.**

Class discussion

"What you thought about is private. You will not be asked to tell anyone what you thought about.

Fingers on lips, because we are not going to speak while we do this next thing.

Raise your hand if you thought about something you needed, not what you wanted but something you need.

Fingers on lips. Raise your hand if you thought about someone you could try and get along better with.

Fingers on lips. Raise your hand if you thought about something you could feel grateful for

Many grownups and children when they try this exercise feel they get an answer to their question in their head. It is a kind of inner voice.

Some Christians might say that this is similar to the way they feel when they pray to God. The answer they get when they pray is rather like this."

Part Two: Special Books

The teacher continues the storytelling

"We have talked about what we need, but what will we miss from our old life? Perhaps there are things that we cannot take with us?"

The Special Book

"If we are going to stay here we need to think about our memories of the old life. All the people and things that were important to us. All the special occasions we had. How we lived our lives, where we went to school, what our houses were like. How do you think we can make sure we do not forget them?"

Take ideas from the children. It would be good if the idea of writing them down in a special book came from them.

What about a special book? What might we put in it?

Children choose a special memory that they would not want to forget to share in a circle - maybe make a class book of photos and memories. Could it be that the books they are making as part of the story - their diaries are included in the exploration of thoughts and feelings about the special book.

"How do we feel about the book? Where are we going to keep it? Who would look after it? When might we want to look at it? How do we feel when we do? How would we feel if it were damaged?"

Look at how some people in our world treat their special books.

Opportunity for Explicit RE

Invite the children to **bring in a book that is precious** to them. (Children who are unable to do this could choose their favourite book from the classroom.) This is likely to be a story book, perhaps a rag book from when they were very little. Share in the circle. **This book is precious to me because**

- Are these books worth very much money? How would we feel if someone damaged them?
- What about other books which are precious?
- What about books in the library?
- How should we treat them, why?
- What would happen if people borrowed books and then forgot to return them?

Make a library rules poster.

The Bible

Look at pictures of the **Bible** in various churches. Look at pictures of it in the Orthodox Church where it is very highly decorated and will be carried round the church before it is read.

Generate questions/ P4C picture enquiry.

What can the children tell you about it from the pictures?

It is important. How can we tell? It is very large, it is decorated. It is placed on a special stand (called a lectern). What can we tell about how people feel about it? It is very precious. How would they feel if it were damaged? Why do we think it so precious? This is where we find stories about Jesus and his “rules”. (Link with the special book on the island and their own special books from early childhood.)

Look at a big Victorian Bible if possible. Note that big Victorian family bibles also contained spaces for the family tree and photographs. (I was very fortunate to have found one in a jumble sale when I was a child. It contained a number of old photographs of the family in India during the Edwardian period. The children were fascinated. It also contained Bishop Usher’s dating of Biblical events going back to the creation which he decided was completed on *Sunday morning of October 29th in 4004 BCE!*)

The Torah

Look at pictures of the **Synagogue** with the **Torah Scrolls** in the **Ark**. You may have a miniature one in school (available from Articles of Faith). **This is where we would find the story of Moses and his “rules”.**

When a new one is made, it takes about a year for a special person called a **scribe** to copy it out exactly word for word. Why do you think it is so important not to make a mistake?

If when the scribe gets to the **end of the first five books** (have a Bible to show the children where that is - the end of the book of **Deuteronomy**, he finds that the book does not **end at the end of a line**, what do you think he realises? (He has missed a word out or copied something twice!)

So what do you think has to happen (He has to start again and the book is burned or buried in the ground which is what happens to old Torah scrolls. They are treated with respect like a person because they contain the name of god/It is a way of showing how much they respect God's word.)

The Quran

– lesson adapted from Islam file

Before the children come in, place a wrapped Qur'an on a stand on the highest shelf in the room. It must be above all other books

Have two containers of baby wipes and two containers for the used wipes. Small empty tissue boxes make attractive containers to pass around which can be put in the bin.

Show the children pictures of the pages of the Qur'an with its beautiful calligraphy. Talk about how Muslims feel about their holy Book. (This might be an appropriate time to read them the story of Mohammad.)

Ask them to look around to see if they can find it.

Why is it on a high shelf above the other books? (Because it is the most important of all books.)

Why is it wrapped up? (To keep it clean.)

Why is it on a stand? (So that it does not touch the ground.)

Ask the children if they would like to look at it.

It is very precious and must be treated with great respect. Before we bring it down we should wash our hands as all Muslims would do before they touched it.

Pass round baby wipes. Use two containers to save time followed by the two containers for the soiled cloths.

Bring the Qur'an down carefully on its stand and unwrap it. Pass it around for the children to see.

Note that it is read from right to left (**do not say back to front which implies it is wrong rather than different!**)

The copy you use in class should not be entirely in Arabic, which are the exact words of Mohammad as this is disrespectful. Non-Muslims should use a copy which contains a translation.

Finishing with thinking about holy books being kept in special places provides the link to the next episode - *special places* - our own and those of believers.

Activity/Assessment/Literacy

Episode Eight: Special place

In four parts: Special place, Gurdwara and Guru Nanak, Creating a church in the classroom and what Christians do in the church.

Summary

The children come into the classroom to find a pile of cloths and some food. They are invited to remove their shoes and cover the floor with cloths and sit down in a circle. They reflect on what they have created - a special place. The teacher talks about how important special places are to everyone and models an example, the children are invited to share theirs in a circle. The children share some food together while the teacher tells them the story of Guru Nabak, finishing with a picture of the Gurdwara, the special place of the Sikhs. The children recognise the similarities between their creation and the sharing of food with Langar. They return to the pictures of the church they looked at in the last episode, identify features of the church and create one in the classroom. They think about what happens in the Christians special place and how it makes them feel and take part in a **religion neutral Eucharist**. They look at different pictures of people **worshipping in a number of different ways** in different churches and **re-enact the different styles**.

This Episode will be explored over a number of lessons as you work in more depth and detail on explicit RE and use the earlier parts of the story to bring the exploration of the Christian Church, in particular, to life.

Beginning with the children's own special place and then linking it to the Gurdwara which is likely to be unfamiliar to most of the children will enable them to identify important features of special places, why they are important and how they make people feel.

From there they may well be able to understand the concept of holy or sacred, which means set apart for God and be able to look at the Christian Church with fresh eyes so that the features become full of meaning and relevance for them.

The children will be able to reflect back, possibly using the class diary, on earlier work about founders and leaders to the story of Jesus. They can return to the pictures of special (Holy) books in their special places and in particular to the Christians' special (Holy) book and where it is kept on a lectern, expressing its importance and from which it can be read for everyone to hear.

From the photographs they saw about the inside of a church or their visit to one, children can move on to learn more about the features of churches and why they are important and finally to learn more about what happens there through experiential religion neutral exercises on the Eucharist and various forms of worship.

Part One: Creating a special place in the classroom

– and learning about the Gurdwara

What you need to have ready for this lesson

It is important that the learning aim for this activity is not shared with the children and that there is no context so that they respond instinctively with no preconceived ideas. In essence they have no idea what is going on in this **religion neutral exercise**.

Class set out in a circle with plenty of space in the middle.

On the floor in the middle of the circle is **a pile of cloths**. White sheets or tablecloths (from a charity shop?) or pieces of white muslin which is inexpensive would be ideal. If you cannot provide these curtains, bedspreads, rugs or any other fabric that you can spread across the floor for the children to sit on would work, although white fabric would be ideal.

Food for the children to share, out of sight under a cloth. This could inexpensively and appropriately be Bombay mix, or some Naan bread, or for cross curricular links you could serve vegetarian Indian food such as dhal and chapattis or naan bread as part of work looking at India.

Invite the children to take off their shoes as they come in.

Teacher introduces the lesson

Special place circle

Remind children of the rules for circle time.

Adult begins with modelling special place:

"I have a place that is very special to me and I would like to tell you
about it.

These are the people I go with

When I go there I feel

Do any of you have a special place?

Let us go round the circle and anyone who wants to tell us about
their special place, where it is, who they go there with and how it
makes them feel.

Now it is time for us to make something .I would like you to do
this and when you have finished you can tell me what you think we
have made and why we have made it."

Ask them to take a piece of cloth, individually or in pairs or groups,
depending on the number and size of the cloth **and spread it carefully
on the floor** like a big carpet and **then sit on it in a circle**.

"Share the food, thinking about how we can do this nicely, fairly and politely, making sure everyone has some."

Once this is done, **ask the children to think about what they have done and what it might be that they have made.** You might want to remind them about **symbols** and reflect back to the **gift they gave to the baby.**

"Why have we made this special place?

What might it be for?

So what does what we have made represent?

What might it be?

Think about how we are sitting - in a circle what does that represent? Why do we sit in a circle in class? It represents being all together as a community. We can all see each other. It is easier to talk and listen."

Children's responses may include making a clean place (especially if white), reflecting on why they took off their shoes - so as not to spoil it, or make it dirty. Why might it need to be kept clean and unspoilt? It is special. Separate. Different. (You can use this later to introduce the concept of Holy or sacred - set apart for God).

“What about sharing the food? What did that represent? What about how we shared it, does that matter?”

(This can later create a link with food served at festivals, which often has a symbolic meaning such as at Christmas and Passover which will be looked at in the next episode and the Eucharist or Holy Communion as well as Langar, the sharing of food in the Gurdwara which will be explored as part of this episode)

“Now, a little while ago we were thinking about **founders and leaders, Can you remember what a founder is? Can you remember who any of them were?**

Today I am going to tell you about one of them.

His name is **Guru Nanak.”**

It is important to tell the following story sensitively so that you are not condemning modern Hindu practice of the Sacred thread ceremony.

"The story of Guru Nanak

"Nanak was born in India a long, long time ago (1469-1539). He was a Hindu. At the time when he was born there were many Muslims also living in India and the two communities did not always get on. There was often fighting between them.

This worried Nanak. He also noticed things in his own community that upset him, too. He noticed that his own community of Hindus did not always treat people equally and fairly, especially the people who were not as well off as themselves.

The people who did the dirtiest jobs were ignored by everyone. No one would touch them or eat with them, except other people who did similar jobs.

Because the important work of cleaning they did was not valued, they were not paid very much and were very poor.

A long time ago being rich was seen as a sign that a family were especially good and God was pleased with them. So... if you were not very well off they, what would they think?

But little Nanak did not think that was true even in those days!

Do we think that today?"

"No. Many rich people think it is very important to share their wealth to help others.

Nanak came from a rich family and he did not think it was right that some people were treated less fairly than others. A wealthy family like his would not mix with people of lower groups and they certainly would never sit in the same room and share food with them!

Well, time passed and Nanak saw all these things and thought about them very carefully.

Does he remind you of any other founders you have learned about who looked around them as they were growing up and thought that the way people were treated was not fair?

When he was fourteen, the time came for him to take part in a special ceremony. It is called **the sacred thread** ceremony. Does anyone know what happens in this ceremony?

Think back to the birth of the baby in our perfect place. You remember how we welcomed our baby into our community? And then we looked at how Christian babies are welcomed into the Christian community.

What do you remember about that?"

"Hindu babies have a special ceremony too. Most religions also have a ceremony for when boys and girls are growing up. Christian boys and girls have a ceremony called **confirmation** Jewish children have a ceremony called a **Bat Mitzvah** for girls or a **Bar Mitzvah** for boys. It means daughter or son of the commandment. It means that they are old enough to begin keeping the rules for themselves.

Does anyone know anyone who has been through a growing up ceremony?

It is called **initiation**. It means a beginning.

When Hindu boys are old enough and ready to begin learning about their religion for themselves most of them have a special ceremony.

It is called the **sacred thread ceremony**.

It is a very important family celebration and everyone gets very excited getting ready and looks forward to it very much, just as we did when we prepared to welcome our baby.

At that time only certain Hindus took part in this ceremony. Only the richest and most important families whose fathers did the right sorts of jobs wore the sacred thread. It marked the boy out as being special, born into a good family and he would wear it for the rest of his life. What do you think Nanak thought as he was prepared for the ceremony?"

"Finally the day came. Everyone gathered together for the ceremony. Suddenly, Nanak did something that shocked everyone.

Can you guess what it was?

He refused to wear the sacred thread!

He asked instead to wear the cotton of compassion - kindness and concern for others. He refused to wear something that said he was better than other people.

What do you think his family thought?

His parents were so cross that he was sent away to live with his sister.

Nanak's sister was called Nanki. He worked in her husband's shop for many years. One day they could not find him. He had disappeared. No one knew where he was. He was gone for three days. His family were very worried and thought perhaps he had drowned in the river.

Suddenly, Nanak appeared again but he was different, he was changed. He told the family that he had been with God and that from now on he was going to live his life differently.

He began to teach people that human beings are all equal. He said: *'There is no Hindu, There is no Muslim. There is one God who loves everyone.'*

"People came from far and wide to listen to him. They were hungry. He set up a soup kitchen and prepared food for them all. Everyone sat together on the ground, rich or poor, Hindu or Muslim and ate the food together.

Nanak became known as **Guru** Nanak, guru is a word for teacher - it means **leader into light**. What do you think that means? After a while so many so many people followed him that he became the founder of a whole new religion, the religion called **Sikhism**.

Sikh means disciple or pupil.

We have many Sikhs living in Britain today.

Here is a picture of their special place.

Can anyone tell me what it is called?

It is called a **Gurdwara**

What do you notice about it?"

Children respond, ideally making the link themselves between the special place they created in class and the Gurdwara in the picture.

"Everyone sits together on the floor. What do you think that shows?"

All visitors to a **Gurdwara** are always given food.

This special meal is called **Langar**.

If our class went to visit a **Gurdwara** we also would be given food to eat. Why do you think that might be?

How do you think people feel when they go there?

Children make the link using their experience of special places to help them understand."

The Guru Granth Sahib

The children will notice that a book is in a special place in the Gurdwara under a canopy. This is the Sikh Holy Book. It is called the Guru Granth Sahib.

What can you tell about the Holy book by looking at the picture?

Generate questions/ P4C enquiry.

"After Guru Nanak there were **nine more Gurus**. During that time, the Sikh religion grew gaining many more followers. Many words of wisdom were collected together over the years by the Sikh community. This collection became their holy book. Wise words were collected from people who were not just Sikhs, there were words from Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims, too. Finally the **tenth Guru** who was called **Guru Gobind Singh** said that there were to be no more Gurus. The Holy book was all they needed so the **Granth** became the **Guru Granth Sahib**. It sits in the Gurdwara on a bed of cushions under a canopy, treated with as much respect as a living person, a great leader.

Activity/Assessment/Literacy

Part Two: The Christians' special place

"What about the Special Place of Christians - where is that?"

What does it look like?"

Activity: Creating a Cathedral

– adapted from Christianity file

It is important to tell the children that what they are creating is not a church because the classroom is not holy. What they are making is a special place to help them remember and feel what it might be like for believers. Make sure that they will have the materials to work.

Children re-arrange the furniture in class to represent a church and talk about what they have made. They could work in groups in charge of creating a particular feature or area. Children can then talk about its features and what they are for.

Use a table covered with fabric to create an altar; place two candles on the altar. When the 'church' is ready invite the children to sit in it. Put on some quiet music. Ask the children how they feel? (Quiet? Thoughtful?)

Discuss why Christians like to go there, why it is their special place. What do Christians do in their special place? **Discuss.**

In Church Christians **pray**; they believe that God speaks to them in their prayers. Remind them of the religion neutral activity on prayer they did in an earlier lesson.

Christians think about things that are important to them. We are going to take a moment now to think about things that are important to us. This is not praying because we are not speaking to God and it would not be respectful to people in the class who are not Christians to pray. We will be thinking our own thoughts about what is important to us but if you want to pray that is fine.

What would you like to think about in this little bit of quiet time? (Maybe their special person, something to feel grateful for?)

Part Three: A religion neutral exercise

- **to help understand the Eucharist, or Holy Communion**

Set the room out in a circle and have a nice loaf of white bread on a plate and clear glass of water on a table in the centre.

Teacher introduces the lesson

Come into quiet, reflective music recalling the previous lesson.

"There is something else Christians do in their special place .They share food together just as we did in our own special place that we made in the classroom. And like the Sikhs do in the Gurdwara. It is called **Holy Communion** or the **Eucharist**. They do it to remind them of Jesus' last meal with his disciples."

Put a picture of a painting on the whiteboard. Da Vinci's or Dali's last supper would be good to engage the children's interest. You could use a whole variety of pictures.

Take questions/conduct P4C picture enquiry.

What follows is a very simplified version of what Jesus did with a *very* simple explanation of why he did it which avoids needing to explain

salvation or the doctrine of atonement to very young children, but which can be built on later.

"We are going to share some food together, but we are going to do it in a certain way. This is not Holy Communion and this is not a church but we are going to share this food and water in a way that may help us to understand the story in the Christian's special (Holy) book, the Bible.

Take a piece of the bread yourself and eat it. Pass the loaf to a child. Invite them to take a piece and eat it or pass if they wish. When the loaf has gone around the circle invite the children to say what it is they did."

Responses will be something like:

- Shared
- Ate food; "What does food do for us?"
- Gives us energy
- Makes us strong
- Fills us up
- Gives us vitamins
- Keeps us alive
- Keeps us healthy and strong

Now pass the glass of water around the class. It is important that it is not red coloured!

Invite the children to work out a way to connect the water with themselves rather than drinking it i.e. dipping in a finger and dabbing some on their hand. *Ask: "What does water do for us?"*

Responses will be something like:

- Keeps us clean (which is why it needs to be water not Ribena!)
- Quenches our thirst
- Keeps us alive

Sum up.

"So eating food makes us strong, healthy and energetic and keeps us alive. Water keeps us clean and refreshed and also keeps us alive!"

Remind the children of what Jesus said at the last supper, that the bread and wine were his body and blood.

"What do Christians believe is happening when they eat the bread and drink the wine in their special place?"

Children should make the link and give responses such as He is inside of them – making them strong healthy and clean.

"Why do they believe they need to feel like this?"

To have the strength and courage to always do the right thing and try to make the earth the perfect place that Jesus talked about."

Part Four: Understanding Christian worship

The teacher introduces the lesson

"What else do Christians do in church?"

They worship. It means worth ship what do we mean by something being worth something? It's about it being valuable, precious. They are showing God that that He is valuable and precious to them. They are grateful and saying 'thank you'."

Leave the children to ask what for and then invite them to suggest what that might be.

"Christians worship in all kinds of different ways."

Show different kinds of churches for e.g. friends meeting for worship, Pentecostal, Orthodox.

"Let us take part in an activity to help us understand how different it is and how Christians might feel."

Religion neutral activity

- **to help us understand different forms of worship**
- **adapted from “Understanding Spontaneous and Liturgical worship” in the Christianity file**

“First let us make our church shape that we made last lesson.”

Children put the chairs in two rows with an aisle and a table in front to represent an altar (pulpit and lectern are not necessary) this echoes a liturgical service in a traditional church.

Put on solemn music such as the Orthodox liturgy.

Ask children what they notice and how they feel.

Responses could helpfully include all sitting together facing the front. It feels very serious and important. Togetherness as a community; the service will happen in front of them like a play.

Fade the music.

Ask the children to form a circle with the chairs and place the table in the middle. This echoes a friends' meeting for worship.

Put on quiet music.

Read a poem to the children which they can take a moment or two to think about or perhaps mention an event or something said in assembly that they could reflect upon.

Fade the music and ask them how this feels.

Finally ask them to stand in their circle put on some lively gospel music, if that would feel too much like worship for some children or adults, choose a lively piece of secular music and invite them to clap, perhaps move around the circle to music until they get back to their seat.

Ask them how that felt.

"How do they think Christians feel when they worship in their special place?"

Which one is the right way to worship God?

None of them.

It is up to the individual."

Episode Nine: Special celebrations

Summary

It is the anniversary of the plane landing. The children discuss how they will celebrate. They all decide to go back to the plane. They tell stories about the old world and share food. A link is made with Passover and Christmas the children make a Seder plate and learn about the symbolic food. They listen to the story of the birth of Jesus and explore the meaning of the symbols in the story and how they are reflected in the food eaten at Christmas.

The teacher introduces the lesson

"Here we are in the special place we designed as our gathering place. We have all come together because we can see from the record we are keeping in our special book that we are coming up to the anniversary of the day we arrived - do you think that perhaps we should do something about that?

What should we do?"

Children respond coming up with idea similar to these listed below the activities generated provide the opportunity for their literacy and assessment.

Story telling? Special food? Read or look through the special book?

Visit our special place which might be near the plane or have special pieces of the plane there.

Children could write their version of the story to be read at the ceremony. Their differences and similarities can be a learning point. What things does everyone mention? What does that tell us (links can be made later on with the birth narratives (Christmas story) in the four gospels. Mark does not mention it at all Matthew and Luke have very different accounts but they both indicate that Mary was a virgin and that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, David's town, where the Messiah was expected to be born). John has a very elaborate piece of symbolic theology.)

Explicit RE

Look at a festival; – Passover which links with earlier links with Moses and the new community he created.

Children can take paper plates and make Seder plates, learning that each of the foods on the plate is a reminder of aspects of the story.

Re-enact a Passover meal in class.

You can include role playing clearing the house of leaven first, the youngest child asking four questions, the search for chametz and tasting each of the special foods.

Christmas remembers the birth of Jesus; look at the story, what happens in church? Advent, Christingle, symbols used in the home, the meaning of the symbolic foods eaten at Christmas, spices as a reminder of the wise men and that Jesus is for everyone, mince pies used to be oval as a reminder of the manger. Link with the anniversary celebrations in the special place to bring out the meaning of the festival of Christmas.

Use these links to look at other festivals in the Christian year; Lent and Easter can be explained much more meaningfully by reflecting back to the Magic Plane.

Episode Ten: 500 years on; changing beliefs

Storyline: 500 years on

The children think about how the community has changed. Now that there are towns and villages spread all over their special place - **do they all have the same beliefs and celebrations?** They think about the story in the special book and wonder if everyone believes the stories about the old world and how they arrived here. They think about the special place where the plane and the book are kept and discuss whether whatever a person's beliefs are whether people might still want to visit it. **The Project finishes with the children preparing a special celebration** for the five hundred year anniversary at which the special book is read in the special place. This provides an opportunity to draw all the learning together as they reflect on their journey together.

The teacher introduces the lesson

"We have been here a long, long time. There have been lots of changes. What do you think they were?"

Children respond.

"Lots of people have been born and spread all over our special place.
We have towns and villages now.

Does everyone do everything the same as each other in each village and town, do you think?"

Take responses.

"Do you remember when we made the rules for our place and chose our leader? Does everyone have the same beliefs about the kind of leader we should have and what rules we should follow?"

Take responses.

"Do you remember the story of how we came to be here? How we imagined a perfect world and climbed aboard the Magic Plane and arrived here?"

Do you think everybody has the same beliefs about the **story of how we came to be here** - do you think everyone believes the plane was magic and the life in the old world where our people used to live?"

Take responses.

This lays the foundation for later links with the Reformation and understanding Catholic and Protestant views about the Bible. Catholics believe in the *Apostolic succession*, that authority was passed from God to Jesus, to Peter, down through the Popes who on certain occasions speak as God's representatives on earth. They believe the Bible means what it says.

Protestants, emerging over several centuries, came to believe in the *Priesthood of all believers*, that is, that a priest or other intermediary is not necessary. Each Christian can communicate with God through the Holy Spirit and that the Message of the Bible can be interpreted through the Holy Spirit to address modern problems (understanding church Leaders, an active lesson from the Christianity file will help you convey this to older children).

"Even if people do not believe the plane was Magic and do not believe the old world existed, do you think they might still want to visit the special place where the plane is and where celebrations are held?"

This would be an appropriate point to make a link with pilgrimage. Children could think about special places in school and perhaps visit them for reflection time.

Link with prayer spaces in school.

"Do you think they would still want to celebrate the anniversary of the plane landing?"

Link with how important it is for people to celebrate Christmas and Easter and to welcome their babies and to marry even if they are not members of a tradition.

"It is time for us to have a special celebration being here for such a very long time. Some things we celebrate every year.

What kinds of things do we celebrate every year? Why do you think we do that?"

"What things happen when we celebrate anniversaries?"

- Birthdays
- Wedding anniversaries
- Christmas, Easter and other festivals
- We get together with friends and family
- We remember things
- We tell stories and share memories about the past
- We pass on stories and memories and customs in the family and the group we belong to

What things do you pass on in your families?

How is this like the religions we have looked at during our project - how has this story helped us to understand the stories and customs of the different people we have been learning about?"

Activity/Assessment/Literacy

Celebrating 500 years on the Island

This would provide a means of drawing all the learning together and enabling the children to make the links between the story of The Magic Plane and modern society, both to help them make sense of religion but also any cross curricular links you have made.

I suggest that you work with the children to design the celebration at which the story/diary is read, the text taking the form of a summary of what happened and what it all meant. It would be particularly effective to do this in front of an invited audience who could see the children's work but also participate in some of the activities, led by the children.

This is an opportunity to explain the purpose of Magic Plane project and how it was designed to help them understand the importance of being good citizens and looking after our world the beliefs and values of different groups of people who have tried to do that - this can have a particular focus in a faith school.

During this time of reflection about the whole project the links can be firmly established and considerable evidence of progress and SMSC can be shown through records of their thinking and questioning, If you have been able to record some of the children's responses during the discussions throughout, which can be included, that will be even better.

My suggestions are simply there to provide ideas. What you produce will be up to you and the children - and will of course fit your particular story.

Examples of sentence stems to form the summary/diary

- We thought about whether the world could ever be perfect. We decided that.....
- We decided to visit a perfect place in our imaginations. We went on a Magic Plane.....
- Our world named.....was perfect because.....
- We decided we needed people to help us. These were.....
- We thought about what we needed to keep the world perfect. We realised..... (snowflake visualisation)
- A baby was born on the Island. We voted for a name and named him/her.....
- We designed a celebration to welcome the baby. This is what happened. We did this because.....
- Next we looked at how babies are welcomed in our world. This is what we did and this is what we found out. Babies are welcomed like this because.....
- We gave the baby a special gift. We found out that someone had stolen it. We were very upset. We realised we needed rules for our perfect place. These are the ones we chose.....
- We thought we needed a leader so we thought about the kind of leader we wanted. We looked at leaders in our world. We voted for the person just as we do in elections in Britain.

- We learned that religions have special leaders and rules. We learned about Moses. We looked at his rules called the Ten Commandments. We looked at the first one and talked about different beliefs about God. This is what some people thought.....
- We talked about the difference between belief and facts. The Bible is full of stories. They were written a long time ago. Some people think they really happened. Some people think they did not but they have special truths that we can all learn from.
- This is like the stories we read in school and at bedtime. Example.....
- Next we looked at stories about Jesus. We learned about the Christmas story and what it means to Christians. Some people believe he is God's son. Some people think it is a symbol for him being super good.
- We decided we needed a special place because..... This is what we designed.....and this is what we needed it for..... We are in our special place today.
- We decided we needed to preserve our memories of the old world as well as all the things we are doing in our special place. We decided to make a big book. Here it is.
- We keep it here to show how important it is and we would be very upset if it was damaged. We learned that this is like the Bible, The Torah, The Qur'an and the Guru Granth Sahib. We looked at them in their special places.

- We looked at the Christians' special place, the church and we learned about what they did there. Celebrations.....
- Finally we imagined our perfect place many, many, years on. We wondered how it would have changed. We wondered if everyone would keep the rules and the traditions and customs exactly the same way.
- We wondered if everyone believed the story of the Magic plane. We wondered if everyone believed the old world existed We talked about whether people would still want to visit the special place and listen to the stories from the special book, even if they no longer believed.