



R.E. Ideas

Summer Term 2008

Price £1.00

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Religious Art

Interpret Layers of Meaning

Key stages 2/3

With the emphasis on developing skills in Religious Education and across the curriculum at the moment, exploring religious beliefs, teachings and practices gives pupils the opportunity to recognise and begin to interpret the layers of meaning found in different religious mediums. Engaging with fundamental questions and expressing personal responses can be difficult for young pupils to understand, and using art as guidance and inspiration is one way of helping them to do this.

It is an opportunity for them to express their feelings, emotions and intentions; and discover how art is used within religious context to express faith. Over the centuries, Christians have used art to interpret the life, death, resurrection of Christ and his teachings. It has been one way of expressing complicated ideas without using words.

One way of starting to explore this is by asking how do we show our feelings. Discuss the different ways of expressing feelings using our bodies, our faces and voices. Artists and sculptors are able to express their feelings to others through their work.

Using colours to present religious ideas and feelings

Looking at colours at different times during the ecclesiastical year. During a visit to the local church, the vicar will be able to explain the relevance of the vestments, altar linen and banners in the building. Why are they changed during the year? What is the meaning of the symbols found on them?

For example, during the Summer Term, look at the colours surrounding the Pentecost. What is the significance of the colour red?

What symbols are used to represent the Pentecost?

Further information regarding religious art and symbolism during Pentecost, and other times of the year is available on www.reonline.org.uk and www.refueol.org.uk



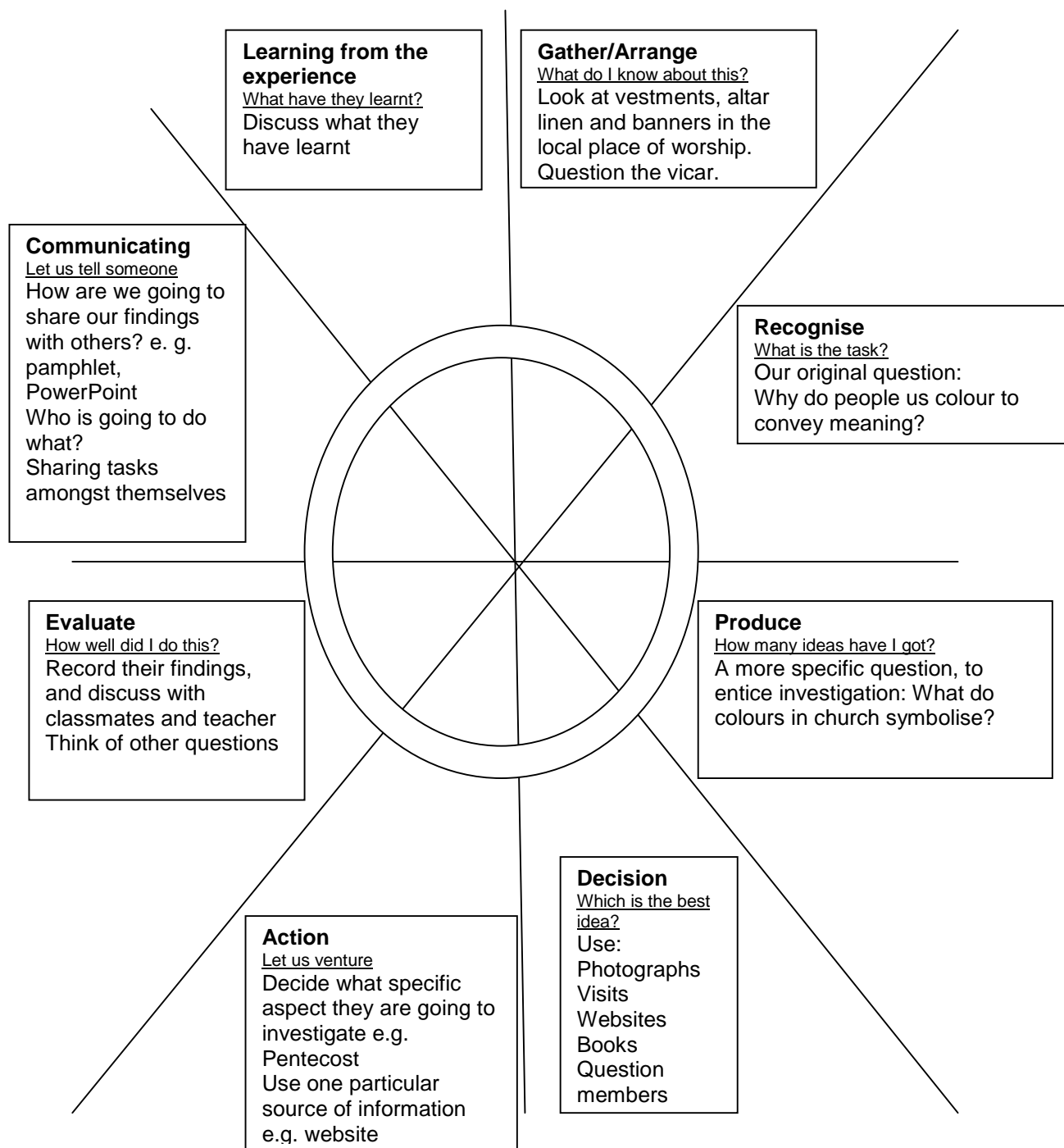
'Why does the church use colours to express meaning?

Starting point

The pupils have been looking at different aspects of the church.

The vicar asked them:

What do colours in the church symbolise?



Why do artists use pictures to find and interpret meaning?

See www.nationalgallery.org.uk for historical pictures by world famous artists

e. g. Supper at Emmaus by Caravaggio. Biblical reference: Luke 24

Ask a series of questions, to get the children to discuss the influence of Jesus Christ on his disciples.

How has the artist been able to portray the relationship between them?

What does body language and facial expression tell us?

By looking very closely at the picture, are the children able to imagine they are there?

The National Museum of Wales has a comprehensive collection of pictures, relevant to the Curriculum Cymreig. See the 'Rhagor' section on www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/rhagor for on-line art collections

Look for the following two:

Jesus Mocked, by David Jones, 1922-23

Biblical Reference - mocking and beating Jesus, Luke 22, Mathew 26,

What is special about the period when the artist painted the picture?

By looking carefully at the picture, describe what is happening in the picture.

Concentrate on Jesus, and then on each man individually, then look at it again as a whole.

Entombed - Jesus in the midst by Nick Evans, 1974

Some questions to ask about the picture, remembering that there are no right/wrong answers. What adjectives would you use to describe the picture? Is it a light or dark picture? Is it a happy or sad picture? What can you say about the people in the picture? How do you think they are feeling? Is there hope here? How do you feel when looking at the picture? Let the pupils ask their own questions.

Other collections relevant to Wales are:

'Gathering the Jewels' www.tlysau.org.uk Religion and belief

www.imagingthebible.org/wales/index.html religious images in places of worship

www.dysgle.llgc.org.uk 'Treasures'

www.landeilofawr.org.uk St. Teilo gospels

Nothing compares, of course, with taking the children to local places of worship, to see pictures and symbols for themselves. It is an excellent opportunity responses and for them to express their personal responses and evaluate them.

While looking at the magnificence of some of the pictures in churches and other places of worship, it is important to stress that some believers prefer to worship in simple surroundings e.g. Quakers

The Natural Word and Living Things

Photography is another powerful visual medium. A strong influence on many photographers is the beauty of nature around them. Many will recognise the importance of their religious faith on their work. e.g. David Newbould, who portrays the beauty of Snowdonia through his 'Gwreiddiau' (Roots) collection www.davenewbould.co.uk/intro. Central to his life is his faith, and he is eager to communicate the work of God's hand to a wider audience.

For other collections, to enhance discussions about the natural world with pupils, see www.sciencephoto.com; and relevant to Wales, the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales www.cprw.org.uk. This can lead to looking at how religions show concern and responsibility for the natural world and living things. By looking at photographs of pollution and damage they can make the connections between cause and effect, and give reasons for their findings.

After having the opportunity to ask relevant questions to the context and planning their method of working, the children can produce their own imaginative ideas. This does not have to happen in the classroom. It is possible to create pictures in the open air, on the beach or in the forest, using natural materials such as shells, seaweed, leaves and flowers. Then they can describe what has been learnt, and make links with similar situations.

With the Urdd's Message of Goodwill in May, why not investigate religious art in other parts of the world? For images of Jesus in African countries, see www.jesusmafa.com

Every religion interprets the non-material/spiritual in different ways, to assist them to understand human living status. Pupils can gather relevant information on www.re-xs.ucsm.ac.uk/re/art.html

The pupils' responses through their own artwork.

Following all the experiences of looking at examples of religious art by others, it will be children's own work that will lead them to begin seeing the effect of religion on people's lives and to meditate on the spiritual side of life. What ideas have been conveyed in their work? Why have they used that particular method of working? How have the ideas collected by them during visits and studies of other artists' work influenced their pictures? How well can they communicate their own ideas through their pictures? For examples of pupils' art visit: www.pcfre.org.uk/spiritedarts

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RESOURCES from REMW (Religious Education Movement Wales)

Resources Catalogue, Publications and past copies of 'R.E. Ideas' available

Primary Publications – Pobl Arbennig – mewn ffydd a gweithred;

Adegau Arbennig;

Y Nadolig – o flwyddyn i flwyddyn; Iesu - Ei bwysigrwydd i gredinwyr;

Mannau Arbennig – Eu harwyddocad i gredinwyr

Secondary Publications – What the Welsh Churches say on moral and social issues;

Barn yr Eglwysi ar faterion moesol a chyndeithasol.

General: More than Just RE (CEMW Annual Lectures)

Discounts available to schools in contributing Authorities and all students

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