

Baked Alaska

Resources for school RE for students aged 13-18 about climate change inspired by the Riding Lights Theatre Company show which asks...

Can we save the planet?

This is one of seven files of teaching and learning ideas, useful in RE and RME, where issues about ethics, theology and climate change are explored with young people. Each file of lesson ideas is accompanied by a PowerPoint sequence for teachers to use as they introduce the complex ethics of climate change to their students.

The work draws upon ideas from Christianity and other religions and worldviews but the key focus is on human and humane values. Each of the seven units relates to a film clip from the stage show.

Unit 4: Blind Truth

Uncomfortable Travels

In this unit, the film explores why rich people might feel guilty about the impact of climate change on the poor. 'The risk of meeting orphan children...' What would that be? A risk of realising that our riches might be one reason for poverty.

British Values

Schools promote the values of tolerance, respect, individual liberty, democracy and the rule of law. This work contributes to exploring these values by encouraging pupils to think about how respect for people living in, for example, Bangladesh, might have an impact on our values and behaviour.

Curriculum connections

The learning objectives in this work connect to GCSE, Scottish RME and RE outcomes for 14-year-olds, including enabling learners to:

- Explain connections between religion and belief and environmental ethics;
- Give reasons for their views about climate change and its impacts on humanity;
- Consider arguments for climate justice;
- Develop their analysis of the challenges faced by this generation on Earth about the future of the planet.

GCSE RS requires the study of:

- The value of the world and the duty of human beings to protect it, including religious teaching about stewardship, dominion, responsibility, awe and wonder.
- The use and abuse of the environment, including the use of natural resources and pollution.
- The concepts of sanctity of life and the quality of life.

In Scotland, this work connects to the intention that the RME Curriculum enables students to:

- Apply developing understanding of morality to consider a range of moral dilemmas in order to find ways which could promote a more just and compassionate society.

[RME 4-02b]

Summary of the theatrical clip Blind Truth (Approximate length 11:10)

The film imagines 'Emotional Health Insurance' for people going to Bangladesh. Seeing poverty and climate injustice in reality might upset people!

'There's only one response to the righteous anger you feel: love. Use every scrap of your strength to change the world.'

Through a narrative that announces the spoiling of the Niger Delta over 50 years, for oil and gas, the challenge to change behaviour is sharpened. Young demonstrators for the Earth were shot.

But the demonstrators won. Their land has been slowly healing for two decades. The telling of the story is an exact parallel to Jesus's story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10, which GCSE RS pupils study.

Learning Activity 1: Uncomfortable travellers

Watch the drama video clip with the class.

Discuss these questions:

- What makes 'Westerners' like us want to ignore the situation in Bangladesh or the Niger Delta? Is it to do with feeling uncomfortable or guilty? Is it the challenge that we might need to change our lives?
- Why does the 'Prophet's story' of the Niger Delta matter? Is it about hope or despair?
- What does it mean to argue: 'Rich westerners on gap years, tourists, golf course builders, are the new colonialists, with the added danger of climate change. Reducing air travel should be an environmentalist's priority.' Do students agree?

Learning Activity 2: Good Samaritan

- The story on the film clip is very closely modelled on Luke's Gospel chapter 10, Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan. Following the film clip, read the parable and identify at least 6 connections. Ask students to do this in 4 minutes, in pairs. Make it snappy.
- Invite students to consider, argumentatively, this idea: 'The neighbour Christians should love today probably lives over 6000 miles from here, and is threatened with dangers like poverty and climate change. The way Christians should love their neighbour today is by solidarity and life-changing voluntary poverty.' ('Other viewpoints are available' – encourage them!)
- Ask students to say what they think it means to 'love your neighbour' in the contemporary global world.

Learning Activity 3: And Man Said...

- This activity uses a seven-piece narrative which is a kind of pastiche of the story of Genesis 1, but about the end of the Earth. Get two students, good readers, to read it dramatically to the class. They might read days 1/3/5/7 and 2/4/6 in turn, or swap voices wherever the phrase 'And Man Said...' occurs.
- Ask the students to tackle the discussion and writing activities on page 4, sharing their ideas in class conversation.
- When the task is complete, ask students in pairs to consider what they have learned, and note it down.

Learning Activity 4: What can religious communities do for climate justice?

- Use the resources on pages 4, 5 and 6. Students in threes explore the contributions described and the concepts used by Christians, Hindus and Muslims in their own contributions to greener religion.
- Which of the activities they have found out about do the students think are impressive? Some are rather 'small beer' – but is it true that 'changing the world requires not one big change, but a million little changes'?
- Ask students to consider their own contribution, religious or non-religious. Are there actions they ought to take for climate justice?

And Man Said...

This is a story about humankind's treatment of the Earth since the industrial revolution. It is adapted from an unknown source. Pupils can compare it with the story of God creating the world in Genesis 1. It includes some Jewish insights into human responsibility. It is good to have it read aloud by two voices, the second always taking the part of a paragraph that begins '... and man said'.

7	On the seventh day before the end of the Earth , man created all kinds of machines, which meant that one person could do what hundreds of people were needed to do before, and as well as that, they could do it much faster than before. And man said: "Now we can really start to improve this pathetic creation that God has given us."
6	On the sixth day before the end of the Earth , man discovered oil, and made petrol, diesel and jet engines, and rushed about all over the Earth for holidays and business trips, and poured thousands of tonnes of pollution into the air, slowly warming the planet. And man said: "Everybody has the right to travel wherever they like, as often as they like, and as fast as they like - except those people who can't afford it - and even if it overheats the Earth, we'll find a better way of running the engines before the pollution gets too bad. Probably."
5	On the fifth day before the end of the Earth , man decided that the way nature had done things ever since the beginning of creation wasn't good enough, and the land needed soaking with chemical fertilisers, and the crops spraying regularly with pesticides to stop weeds growing. And man said: "From now on these crops will be bigger and better, and they will all be ours to eat, and to sell. We won't share the crops with the birds and the wild animals, and if some wildlife disappears for ever it won't matter because God made far too many types of wildlife in the first place. We can make some money here. God never made any money, you know."
4	On the fourth day before the end of the Earth , man invented nuclear power stations to make energy and nuclear weapons to kill people. And man said: "Now that we can destroy the whole of the Earth with nuclear weapons by pressing just one button, we will have peace. Now that we can make so much power from a little bit of uranium we will be able to do so many more things. By the time we have to work out what to do with all the nuclear waste we leave behind, it will be our grandchildren's problem, or maybe we'll have thought of something by then."
3	On the third day before the end of the Earth , man invented biological weapons that made people's enemies get sick and die. And man said: "It's terrible that we should even have to think of hurting people in this way, but we have to invent them because if we don't do it, some of our enemies are bound to invent them, and we can't allow them to use the weapons against us. Of course, they will never get used on purpose, and we hope there will never be an accident which makes the germ weapons get out. Um, we will try and keep them safe."
2	On the second day before the end of the Earth , man began to notice that the ice caps were melting and the seas were rising, to flood lower land, so man called politicians together, and they talked and talked, but did nothing much as the sea levels rose and the planet got hotter. And man said: "This is a bit troubling, but we won't start the changes because not everyone else will join in, and maybe it won't happen, and some people are still in denial."
1	On the last day before the end of the Earth , man finally realised that he had completely destroyed the way plants, animals and people could live on the Earth and the planet would surely overheat, flooding the lands, and it was too late to do much about it except maybe move to the mountains. And man had no idea how he was going to get himself out of the fix he was in. And man said: "Oh God!"
	And God said...

Questions for discussion and writing

1. Do you think 'man' in the story includes women? Why or why not?
2. What did the men in the story invent (list 8+ items)?
3. Does everything that humans invent spoil the world? What inventions do you think are good, and why? In what ways do you think each of the things that humans invented in the story helps or spoils the world?
4. Is the pattern that men get excited by new inventions, so miss the consequences in the long term? Can we help ourselves here?
5. This story is similar and different to the creation story shared by Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Bible: it is a pastiche really. Read Genesis chapter 1 together and compare. Make two lists: all the similarities and all the differences.
6. God is the lead character in the Bible story of Genesis 1, but only comes in at the end of 'And Man Said...' Why? What difference would it make if God was in the second story? What would God 'think' or 'say' at the end of each of the last seven days? Work out seven sentences for this.
7. Do you think the story gives the right impression of what humanity is doing to the world?
8. What are the main messages of this story?
9. Why do you think the world has problems with the environment? How do you think they are caused? Use the example from the film clip about the Niger Delta.
10. What do you think you can do to stop some things spoiling the Earth? The case of the Niger Delta is instructive!
11. Is God to blame for the way the world is? What would Jewish and Christian people say about this and what do you think?

Brainstorm as a class: all the things which are a threat to the world, which might lead to 'the end of the world as we know it'. Start with pollution, climate change and war.

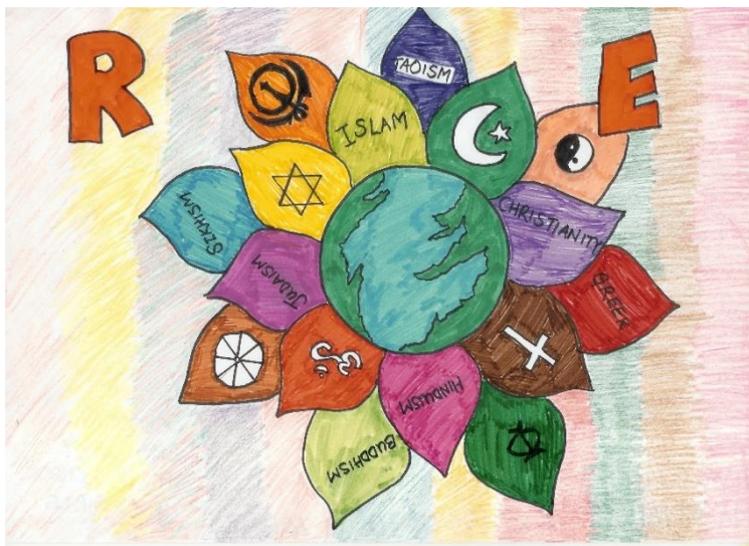
Creative writing: Write a 'countdown to the end of the world' story, poem or comic strip of your own. Alternatively create an image sequence to go with the narrative above using PowerPoint or Prezzi. Include the 'voice of God' to comment on what happens in your story.

What are Christians doing for climate justice?

This site offers excellent examples of projects for the environment of the Roman Catholic churches.

<https://catholicecology.net/blog/2016-top-ten-catholic-eco-stories>

Small groups of students can read and summarise one project each and share what they learned with the rest of the class.



Mariya, 12, created this logo for RE.

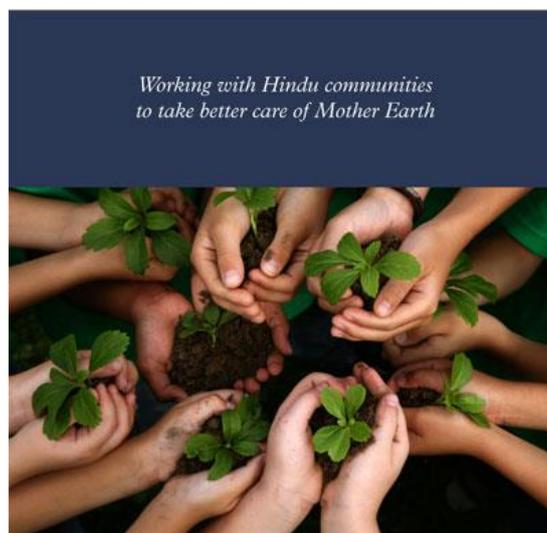
Her title is 'Let the Whole Earth bloom', inspired by her learning about climate justice.



A Hindu contribution to saving the Earth: The Bhumi Project: Mother Earth and Hindu Community Life

The Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies launched a ‘Mother Earth’ Project back in 2009, to challenge Hindus to think and act for a greener future. Its aims and programme are summarised in this seven point plan.

- 1. Make our assets greener:** We will look into current assets owned by temples and organisations and consider how best to manage them in an environmentally friendly way.
- 2. Learn about the need for green futures.** We will include environmental questions and issues alongside education on Hindu beliefs and practices. We will start environmental projects in Hindu schools for young people and encourage them to become actively involved in environmental issues.
- 3. Pastoral care:** We will help to make environmentally friendly living a part of the daily lives of Hindus.
- 4. Lifestyles:** We will look at how the Hindu faith as a whole can make environmentally friendly choices, for example, bulk buying bio-degradable cutlery for temples and carbon-offsetting pilgrimages to India.
- 5. Media and advocacy:** We will reach out to government and to other faiths, explaining what the Hindu faith is doing and asking them to support us. We will promote environmental issues in Hindu media.
- 6. Partnerships and eco-twinning:** We will link with other groups who are working on similar plans.
- 7. Celebration:** We will consciously recognise the role of nature in Hindu festivals and raise awareness through a renewed appreciation in the natural beauty of the world.



The website of the Hindu organisation Bhumi (Earth) is useful for examples of projects and blogs by environmentalist volunteers: www.bhumi.org.in/think-green/. The work is centred in Chennai.

4 Concepts in Hindu tradition: how can these ideas help Hindus today in saving the Earth?	
<p>Ahimsa / Harmlessness. This is a central idea in Hindu ethics. The word means ‘No Harm’ or ‘No Violence’ and is applied to thoughts, words and deeds. Hindu environmentalists use the concept of Ahimsa, harmlessness, as a starting point, and try to work out: how should we live to do no harm to the Earth?</p>	<p>Vegetarianism. Eating meat involves killing, so if you want to live without harm, then you must be vegetarian. India, the world’s biggest Hindu population by far, is the ‘most vegetarian’ country on Earth. About 40% never eat meat, and many more eat meat only occasionally. Of course, if meat is not eaten, there is no need for butchers to slaughter animals, and much more land is free for growing crops.</p>
<p>Bhumi Devi: Mother Earth is one form of the goddess in Hindu theologies. Her murti (statue) is often represented as a woman with four hands who carries a pomegranate, a bowl of water, a dish of healing herbs and some vegetables. These items symbolise our interdependence with the natural world. Bhumi Puja is an act of worship devoted to Bhumi Devi, often performed when a building is started as a way of asking Mother Earth’s forgiveness for digging into her. She is pictured seated on a square platform, supported by four elephants.</p>	<p>Cow protection Devotees of the god Krishna picture the god with a cow. Milk, butter and other products from the living cow make life possible in vegetarian Hindu communities. There are homes for retired cows in many Indian states (there is one in the UK – guess who runs it. Correct. Hindus). The cow symbolises our dependence on the natural world, but many Hindu people refuse all meat, do not wear leather, and plant trees more than they cut wood! Much more information at the International Society for Cow Protection: http://iscowp.org/what-is-cow-protection/</p>

A Muslim contribution to saving the planet:

The Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences

IFEES is a UK charity started by Fazlun Khalid in 1990. Fazlun came to Britain in the 1950s and served in the RAF for ten years, then worked for the Commission for Racial Equality. He came to believe that Islam needed a fresh focus on issues to do with the global environment and resigned from his job. He set up the charity IFEES to work globally and in the UK, from a Muslim point of view, on green issues. In the following 25 years, IFEES has done a lot. Here are 6 examples of their achievements. Which do you think matter most?

<p>Green Sermons on Fridays IFEES provides Imams, the leaders at mosques, with examples of things they might say when they preach the Khutbah at Friday Prayer, suggesting how to get the messages of 'Green Islam' across to the community. http://www.ifees.org.uk/activities/ is a good place to start.</p>	<p>Saving Sumatran Rain Forests Indonesia has the biggest Muslim population on Earth: about 250m. And it also has the biggest rainforests, in Sumatra. IFEES has supported a project to teach Sumatrans about Islamic conservation. Whole villages have committed to ending deforestation, in the name of Allah, seeing it as the Muslim duty because Allah has made us guardians of God's creation.</p>	<p>Trees for the Earth Ethiopian and Ugandan mosques are engaged in massive tree planting initiatives, which will lead to over 4 million trees, many of them fruit trees, being planted around mosques. This cuts CO₂, improves the land, and is beautiful. IFEES has supported these innovative projects.</p>
<p>Paradise Gardens The Qur'an describes the next life as like a garden. Muslims have always given this as a reason for making beautiful gardens: like a taste of heaven on Earth. IFEES offers suggestions and ideas to British Muslims and mosques about developing 'green spaces' or 'Paradise Gardens' as a contribution to a more beautiful local environment.</p>	<p>Water rights for all Islamic Shariah law gives people the right to drink clean water and to water their lands. For nearly 1500 years Muslim communities have guarded these rights. In the last century, the whole world has come to agree that water must be free for all humanity, and IFEES reminds Muslims and all humanity of the history here. Too often people's right to clean water is denied.</p>	<p>Climate Change Politics IFEES was a leading partner in the 2015 Paris climate change talks arranged by the UN for all governments. The Islamic declaration to the Paris conference stated what Muslims believe, that God created the Earth in perfect equilibrium, and by His immense mercy we have been given fertile land, fresh air, clean water and all the good things on Earth, but the present climate change catastrophe is a result of the human disruption of this balance. http://www.ifees.org.uk/declaration/#about</p>
<p>4 Key Concepts in Muslim tradition: pointing towards 'green faith'</p>		
<p>Allah: Creator of the Earth and its beauty If God made the world beautiful, diverse, self-sustaining and fruitful, then these are good things. Every species and every clean stream is part of Allah's creation. This idea of making something beautiful is reflected in Mosque architecture. An unusual and stimulating resource on European mosques can be found here: http://ilmfeed.com/a-photographic-journey-of-europes-mosques/</p>	<p>Humanity: Khalifah of the creation A Khalif is a guardian. The Qur'an says 'It is Allah who has appointed you Guardians in the Earth' (6:135). Green Muslims in the present day think about the meaning of being a guardian: it certainly rules out actions that spoil the Earth, which Allah made good. And it suggests a role for Muslims to tackle the negative impacts of climate change on the lives of poor people and the lives of animals.</p>	
<p>Corruption The Qur'an teaches that corruption has appeared in the land and sea because of what the hands of people have done. So Allah may let humanity taste a part of the consequences of what they have done. Then perhaps they will return to righteousness [Qur'an, 30:42, slightly simplified English for pupils]. This means that God wants us to notice how we have polluted the good Earth, and do something about it ourselves!</p>	<p>Respect all that lives Prophet Muhammad [PBUH] was full of respect for living creatures and for the Earth. Among many hadith, stories of the Prophet, Muslims remember how he cared for ants, cats, camels and all that lives. He also told his followers: 'Do not waste water, even though you have the resources of a whole river.' Following his example in the modern world means that many Muslims see it as part of their religion to care about biodiversity, work against pollution and contribute to a green future.</p>	