ABOUT THIS UNIT:

In this unit children will investigate some of the possible or intended meanings of a range of signs and symbols. Children can investigate a variety of religious symbols and their meaning for those who use them, within the contexts of Christianity and Hinduism. Children are encouraged to explore examples of symbolic language and to deepen their understanding of some common religious concepts.

Estimated time for this unit:
One term

Focused Religions:
Christianity and Hinduism

Where this unit fits in:
This unit builds on prior learning in Christianity and Hinduism, particularly Symbols from KS1 summer term.

KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES (from the programmes of study)

AT 1
- consider the meaning of a range of forms of religious expression, understand why they are important in religion, and note links between them.
- use specialist vocabulary in communicating their knowledge and understanding.

AT2
- reflect on what it means to belong to a faith community, communicating their own and others’ responses thoughtfully.
- respond to the challenges of commitment both in their own lives and within religious traditions, recognising how commitment to a religion is shown in a variety of ways.

KEY STRANDS ADDRESSED BY THIS UNIT

AT1   Forms of Expression

AT2   Values and commitments

LINKS TO THE EVERY CHILD MATTERS AGENDA

Being Healthy – consider teachings from religious and other belief systems about food and drink.

Enjoyment and Achievement – providing lively, challenging learning activities, including story, music, drama, ICT, group and class discussion, which stimulate pupils’ mental and emotional development.

Enjoyment and Achievement – encountering visits and visitors from a range of faiths and beliefs.

Enjoyment and Achievement – promoting pupils’ own ideas, and providing opportunities to explore and reflect on key questions and values.

Achieving Economic well-being – considering how religious and other beliefs lead to particular actions and concerns.
CONTRIBUTIONS TO PUPILS SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

**Spiritual development** – learning about and reflecting upon important concepts, experiences and beliefs which are at the heart of religious and other traditions and practices.

**Social development** – considering how religious and other beliefs lead to particular actions.

**Cultural development** – considering the relationship between religion and cultures and how religious beliefs contribute to cultural identity and practices.

**KEY SKILLS**

Reflection, Enquiry, Empathy, Interpretation

**KEY ATTITUDES**

Respect for all and Open mindedness
Prior learning
It is helpful if children have:

- some understanding of the meaning of everyday signs and symbols.

(Builds on KS1 Unit 6 Year 2 Summer Term - Symbols)

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

- Signs and symbols
  - Hinduism: puja, aum, offering, shrine, prasad
  - Christianity: holy, sacred

Resources
- Articles of Faith (www.articlesoffaith.co.uk) has an excellent range of artefacts and other support materials
- www.reonline.org.uk sites to with virtual visits
- www.topmarks.co.uk Hinduism/Christianity sites
- www.request.org.uk pictures of Christian symbols
- Symbols photopack
  - puja tray, Hindu gods, library topic loan
- ‘Teaching Christianity in the Primary School’
- ‘Teaching Hinduism in the Primary School’
- See exploring artefacts through the senses in Primary Handbook.

EXPECTATIONS at the end of this unit:

Nearly all can: (at level 1)

AT 1 c
- use some religious words and phrases to recognise and name features of religious life and practice
- recall religious stories and recognise symbols, and other verbal and visual forms of religious expression.

AT 2 f
- talk about their own experiences and feelings, what they find interesting or puzzling and what is of value and concern to themselves and to others.

Pupil friendly level descriptions: I can ........

- recognise religious art, symbols and words, and talk about them e.g. say that is a Christian cross when I am shown a picture

- talk about what is important to me and other people e.g. talk about how I felt when I gave a present to my friend and how I think that made my friend feel
Many can:  (at level 2)

AT 1 c
• use religious words and phrases to identify some features of religion and its importance for some people
• begin to show awareness of similarities in religions
• retell religious stories and suggest meanings for religious actions and symbols
• identify how religion is expressed in different ways.

AT 2 f
• ask, and respond sensitively to, questions about their own and others’ experiences and feelings
• recognise that some questions cause people to wonder and are difficult to answer
• recognise their own values and those of others in relation to matters of right and wrong.
• talk about what is important to me and to others with respect for their feelings
e.g. I agree with the rule about not stealing as stealing is not fair

Some will have progressed further and can:  (at level 3)

Pupil friendly level descriptions: I can ……

• say what some Christian and Hindu symbols stand for and say what some of the art is about
e.g. I can say that the cross reminds Christians that Jesus died on a cross

AT 1 c
• use a developing religious vocabulary to describe some key features of religions, recognising similarities and differences
• make links between beliefs and sources, including religious stories and sacred texts
• begin to identify the impact religion has on believers’ lives
• describe some forms of religious expression

AT 2 f
• identify what influences them, making links between aspects of their own and others’ experiences
• ask important questions about religion and beliefs, making links between their own and others’ responses
• make links between values and commitments, and their own attitudes and behaviour

Pupil friendly level descriptions: I can ……

• use religious words to describe some of the different ways in which people show their beliefs e.g. I can identify special clothes Christians and Hindus might wear

• link things that are important to me and other people with the way I think and behave
e.g. talk about how listening to a story about generosity might make me behave when I hear about people who are suffering
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| What do these everyday signs and symbols mean? | • about the meaning of everyday signs and symbols.  
• how memories are linked to particular objects. | • Show children drawings or pictures of some signs and symbols that they might see around them in school or in the local community.  
• Use symbols photopack or symbols activity on www.request.org.uk  
• Discuss what the signs and symbols mean. Explain the difference between a sign and a symbol.  
• Look at symbols used in washing labels on clothes, on food packages or in sport to introduce the idea that sometimes one needs to be ‘in the know’ to understand certain symbols. Other examples – Pudsey Bear (Children in Need), the school badge.  
• Ask the children what do they mean or make them think about? Everyday object as a symbol of a person.  
• Ask the children to think of a symbol that they might choose to describe them e.g. a musical instrument for a musician.  
• Can other children in class work out who is being described and what they might be interested in by looking at their symbol only? Which symbols work best? Why? | Speaking and Listening – linking back to previous work on Symbols Y2, children understand what a symbol is and can give an example. | It is useful in this context to explore the difference between signs (which usually have one clear meaning) and symbols (which can have many meanings, and therefore open to interpretation). |
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<td>What do these Christian symbols mean?</td>
<td>to understand the meaning of some Christian symbols.</td>
<td>Ask children to think about objects which they own which hold special memories or meanings for them. If possible ask children to bring them in to create a ‘special’ display. Model ways of talking about these, e.g. ‘I’ve got something special- it’s a … and it reminds me of…’</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.topmarks.co.uk">www.topmarks.co.uk</a> link to Christian symbols <a href="http://www.stjames.upton.torbay.sch.uk">www.stjames.upton.torbay.sch.uk</a> Pictures and explanation of some Christian symbols. <a href="http://www.request.org.uk">www.request.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.educhurch.org.uk">www.educhurch.org.uk</a></td>
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<td>How are religious symbols used in places of worship?</td>
<td>how memories are linked to particular objects.</td>
<td>Ask the children which symbols might we find in a place of worship? Look at pictures of some Christian symbols such as a cross, a dove, fish, alpha and omega. Can children explain meanings of these symbols?</td>
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<td>about some key symbols within a place of worship.</td>
<td>Look at some pictures of churches and find examples of symbols. Where did the children notice the symbols and can they suggest possible meanings? A local church visit could also be arranged. Take digital photos to use in class. Speaking and Listening- Children can recognise some Christian symbols and explain their meaning.</td>
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<td>How are religious symbols used in places of worship?</td>
<td>• how symbols in religion convey important beliefs and meanings&lt;br&gt; • how religious actions have symbolic meanings</td>
<td>• Remind children of Easter story and the Last Supper.&lt;br&gt; • Can children remember any events and what they mean?&lt;br&gt; • What did Jesus do at the Last Supper?&lt;br&gt; • What do these actions represent for Christians in receiving Holy Communion? Look at pictures (Christianity photopack/ <a href="http://www.request.org.uk">www.request.org.uk</a>) and handle relevant artefacts. Listen to music that might be used in church.&lt;br&gt; • Talk to children about symbolism of colours used in church throughout Christian year. Discuss symbolism of Holy spirit, fire, wind, and water.&lt;br&gt; • Ask children to think about why bread and wine might be special symbols for Christians.</td>
<td>Possible assessment tasks: Children could design an altar frontal or a stained glass window using symbols and colours, and explain meaning.&lt;br&gt; OR&lt;br&gt; Children could become architects for a new local church building. Children need to create plans of what should be in the church and explain why.</td>
<td>Artefacts for Holy communion. A visit from a local minister if possible or visit to church.&lt;br&gt; <a href="http://www.request.org.uk">www.request.org.uk</a>&lt;br&gt; Pictures/artefacts for Holy Communion&lt;br&gt; Holy Communion – Jesus shared a final meal with his disciples (Mark 14:12-26, Luke 22:7-28, Matthew 26:17-30). During the meal he referred to the bread and wine as his body and blood. He told the disciples that he would be betrayed and that his blood would be spilt for many people. Most Christians today remember this meal through a service which has several names: Holy Communion, Mass, The Lord’s Supper and Eucharist. For many Christians it is the most important act of worship. The service varies between Christian denominations, but it serves to remind all Christians of how Jesus died to atone for their sins and to enable them to come to God. By taking part in the service, Christians think of themselves as part of one body, one community.&lt;br&gt; DVD: The Champion (Scripture Union) contains a song about communion.</td>
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| What do these examples of non literal language mean? | • that words can have literal and non-literal meaning.  
• how metaphors can convey religious meanings.  
• how to interpret religious metaphors. | • Introduce pupils to three of four examples of non-literal sayings (idioms), e.g. ‘You’re driving me up the wall’; ‘It’s raining cats and dogs’; ‘Sorry I must fly’. Discuss the literal and non literal meanings.  
• Introduce one of the following religious metaphors from the Bible: God is my rock (Psalm 18:2), Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12), The Lord is my shepherd (Psalm 23).  
• Discuss with children any words they connect with the relevant image (i.e. rock, light, shepherd from their suggestions, choose those which may explain why a religious believer might use such metaphors.  
• Show children how believers might actually use these metaphors e.g. in religious books, songs, artefacts.  
• Choose a metaphor and ask children to illustrate it using words and pictures for a class display.  
• Using some prompts such as ‘If God was a …’ ask children to think about and write some of their own ideas about God into metaphors e.g. ‘If God was a food it would be bread because it’s good for you.’ ‘If God was an animal it would be a rhino because it’s strong’, ‘If God was a building it would be a castle because it keeps you safe’. | Speaking and Listening – in talk pairs children can discuss some examples of literal and non-literal meanings. They can talk about how metaphors can be used to describe beliefs. | Give children objects such as a cuddly toy lamb, candle, rock, bread to aid discussions.  
www.request.org.uk  
See Appendix 1 |
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| What do Hindus teach their children about their beliefs about God? | • the meaning of the aum symbol and its significance for Hindus.  
• about some aspects of Hindu beliefs in Brahman. | • Talk about some of the things that parents/carers think are important to teach their children e.g. manners, value of money … Children to talk about it with parents/carers at home prior to this session – set as homework task.  
• Show children an aum symbol and discuss what it means. Explain that in many Hindu families, children are taught about one supreme God who is in everything.  
• Show children a glass of water and tell the following story: Svetaketu always came proudly home after school each day. One day his father asked him about God, but Svetaketu didn’t know anything. His father sent for a glass of water and asked Svetaketu to put some salt in it. The next day, he asked where the salt was. Svetaketu could not see the salt, but he could taste it in the water in the glass. ‘That’s a bit like God in the world’ said his father. ‘God is invisible, but is there in everything. | | An aum symbol is a special sign for God, often seen in Hindu homes or places of worship. Hindu families are varied. They may favour many different representations of God and practise their faith in a variety of ways.  
It is sensible to talk about ‘some Hindus’, rather than all Hindus, or to look at the practice of an individual family and acknowledge that others may be different. |
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<td>How do Hindus represent Brahman?</td>
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<td>• to reflect on the different aspects of their own character.</td>
<td>• Ask the children to reflect on this story and discuss their responses to this Hindu belief.</td>
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<td>• to recognise that any one individual has a number of different identities- pupil, brother/sister, mother/father, teacher.</td>
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<td>What is a shrine and why is it important in a Hindu home?</td>
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<td>• that shrines are special places in Hindu homes.</td>
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<td>• about some of the ways that Hindus show devotion to God</td>
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<td>• Think about all the different identities that each person has.</td>
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<td>• Show and discuss some shrine figures: focus on Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva. Use photos as a PowerPoint and artefacts. What do you notice about the murti? What is each murti holding? What do you think the character of each god is? What words could you use to describe the kind of god you think that the god is.</td>
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<td>• Ask children to write down what they notice and what they think that it might mean?</td>
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<td>• What do you think that these might be saying about Hindu beliefs about God? This could be annotated around a picture of a deity or a piece of art work could be produced.</td>
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<td>Possible assessment task. Provide some structured questions to lead childrens’ thinking, especially for AT2. For example, Brahma has 4 heads – what belief does this hold for a Hindu?</td>
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<td>In Hinduism, Brahman is worshipped in diverse forms and is believed to be formless. Dance and Drama are important ways to ‘tell’ the story of each god. Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu are, for many Hindus, the most important gods and together they are known as the Trimurti. Murti is the word for an image or deity used as a focus of Hindu worship. ‘Idol’ should not be used, and ‘statue’ may also cause offence. Hindus believe in One God who manifests in many different ways.</td>
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|               | • Talk about special places at home and where children go if they want to be quiet or to think. | • Discuss what preparations might happen for the visit of a special guest. How do we try to make people feel welcome?  
• Explain that Hindus treat the images of the gods and goddesses like extra special guests: they’re respected, cared for, talked to, offered food and kept clean. Why do you think this might be?  
• Show pictures of shrines. What do children notice? What do they think it might mean for a Hindu?  
• Use CD/ DVD or talk to a Hindu visitor about why a shrine is important to them and how it is used. | Possible AT2 assessment piece.  
*Children to create their own shrine in a shoebox. What would they have in their shrine? Why? Children to use collage materials and add labels. This would make a good display which could also have images of a Hindu shrine.* | The word ‘shrine’ is used here to denote a place of worship in the home. The term ‘mandir’ may also be used, but in textbooks it is more often used to describe a Hindu temple or place of worship outside the home. A shrine must be in a clean area of the house. It is often found in the kitchen or in a bedroom. Take care to consider any asthmatics in the class if incense sticks are lit. |
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| What are the main activities in an act of worship in the home? | • what ‘puja’ means  
• that actions in worship often have symbolic meanings  
• that some of the activities in worship have parallels in their own lives. | • Ask the children to work in pairs to practise miming the following: being pleased to see someone, saying thank you for something, being sorry, giving a present, receiving a present, meeting someone important.  
• Explain that they will see some of these ideas and actions in Hindu worship.  
• Look at pictures and DVD of a Hindu family doing puja at home. Children can talk about what they have seen. What questions do they have? What might it mean for a Hindu?  
• Look at and handle artefacts on a puja tray. Explain how the different artefacts are used. Think about elements of puja, such as ringing the bell, make offerings, touching/bowing to the image, using incense, receiving prasad, caring for the image. Include arti.  
• Describe how Hindus show devotion to God. Explain the meaning and practice of puja for Hindus. | | Light, fire, water symbolism important.  
Do not involve the children in an act of worship. Make it clear you are ‘finding out’ about Hindu worship, not worshipping.  
Puja is worship, a way of showing devotion and love for God. |
Symbolic words – making metaphors for God with older primary pupils

For the teacher
This strategy focuses on providing pupils with a chance to develop metaphors for God. This is a crucial skill in the area of symbol and religious expression. Here’s a simple way to approach the topic which never fails to be interesting, and relates pupils’ learning about any particular religion to their own responses effectively. It is a piece of ‘real RE’ using higher order thinking skills in a ‘deep thinking, low writing’ structure.

If God was a...
- flower...
- colour...
- plant...
- tree...
- mineral...
- food...
- toy...
- building...
- light...
- animal...
- drink...
- item of clothing...
- character from the movies...

it would be...
because...

Activity for pupils: Theological metaphorical work with 8-year-olds(!)
The following activity is a great way to get 180 theological thoughts out of a class of pupils in about 20 minutes! Try it: you’ll be pleased with the results.

- Put the statements ‘If God was a...’ up round the walls on large sheets of paper. Give each pupil six sticky Post-it notes to write on.
- Ask pupils to choose six of the prompts and write their own ideas about God into some metaphors. Use some of the examples given on the following page to stimulate good thinking and clarify the form for the pupils.
- Get pupils in twos and threes to look at one sheet, and summarise for the rest of the class what the metaphors say about God. They could do this on an OHP slide or interactive whiteboard.

Follow-up discussion
Some probing questions to ask:
- What is God like?
- Why do some people believe, but not others?
- Why is it hard to describe God?
- Where do our ideas about God come from?
- What are the best symbols for God?

Two homework questions
- What did you do in RE today?
- What did you learn from doing this?
(RE too rarely fits in to primary school homework timetables, which are dominated by ‘core subjects’.)

Note
These areas of RE connect closely to literacy skills and can be linked to literacy work on figurative, metaphorical and symbolic uses of language in poetry and other text-level work.
Symbols and Religious Expression

Symbols are important because


An important symbol is


It represents


An important Hindu belief is


Christian symbols I can recall include


Christian might describe God as like


Symbols might be important in religion because


If I were describing my ideas about a symbol for God I would say

………
………
………
………

My favourite symbol is

………

because

………
………
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………

People show they belong to their religion by

………
………
………
………

Worship is important in religion because

………
………
………

Important Hindu symbols include

………
………
………

Worship is important for many Hindus because

………
………

Some Christians find symbols helpful because

………
………
………

The most important things I have learnt from this unit include

………
………
………

The most important things I have learnt from this unit include