



Ealing Agreed Syllabus: guidance for teachers

KS2.12.: Seeds of unity (1)

Overall aim: to introduce the concept of stewardship and to look at how the human dependence on plants is reflected in belief and ritual.

<i>The awesome seed</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	learn that seeds have been used as symbols in several traditions; understand that seeds can symbolise their own potential.
Aim: Pupils know that seeds are objects in the natural world that can represent spiritual and creative potential.	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Starter: Remind class that people often use symbols to convey important beliefs. And that during the course of this lesson they will be considering why people would use seeds as symbols of their faith, their deeds and their creativity or other talent or potential. Ask pupils what are some uses of seeds that they know from their daily experience. What is the smallest seed they know? What is the largest? (Coco de mer) Have they ever seen a seed sprout, or planted a seed and watched it grow?</p>		<p>A resource sheet with pictures of a range of seeds can be found here on the BGCI website.</p> <p>A list of links to pictures can be found in the background information.</p>
<p>Activity 1: Show class a handful of mustard seeds, letting them take a few so that they can see how small they are. In your own words tell the parable of the mustard seed. (Mark 4: 30-32 “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”) Explain that Jesus was talking about how faith can grow into something as large as a tree.</p> <p><i>Ask:</i> why do you think a tiny seed can be a symbol of the power of faith or belief in something?</p>		Pack of mustard seeds.
<p>Activity 2: Read the following quote from the <i>Bhagavad Gita</i> (child friendly version): “There is a tree...an everlasting Banyan tree. Its roots are above in heaven and its branches are here below. Its leaves are the sacred songs, and the one who knows them knows the sacred Hindu texts.” Show class some pictures of banyan trees. Ask the following: Do you know how big this tree grows? Google for a picture with a person in it for size comparison. Show them a dried fig and ask if anyone knows what it is? Have they ever eaten a fig? Have they ever eaten a sweet made with figs? If appropriate, invite pupils to taste a small piece of fig. Ask them to guess how big the seed of a banyan tree is. Then tell them to make a small dot on a piece of white paper using a sharp pencil. Compare the hugeness of the tree to the smallness of the seed.</p>		Dried figs

Activity 3: Lead class in the exercise which illustrates one way that Hindus describe the nature of the creation of the universe, i.e. by comparing it to an upside-down tree. Ask one of the pupils to stand near the corner of the room. Explain that this person symbolises the seed/root of this upside down tree. Then ask the pupil to extend their hands. Two other pupils each take one of the first pupil's hands and so on, until the whole class has formed the shape of a tree that is topsy-turvy, branching from a single root, which Hindus believe is God. You can show them an image of a *kalasam* on the top of a mandir, which is symbolic of this idea (see background information).

Activity 4: Point out that the Muslim holy book, the Qur'an, also uses the mustard seed as a symbol of the belief that God is aware of the tiniest things people do, whether good or bad. Ask: Look again at your mustard seeds. Do you think the Qur'an is suggesting that even acts we consider small and unimportant can be significant? How does your feeling towards someone change when they do something small like unexpectedly giving you a compliment or sharing something with you? Read quotes from the Qur'an (see background information) and tell class a bit about what the Prophet Muhammad had to say about the power of kindness and generosity of spirit.

Perhaps invite the class to act out a situation in which a person enters into a situation where there are other people already present. Try acting out different scenarios, e.g. in which the new person is not warmly greeted and nobody smiles. How does it make that person feel? Then act out the situation again, this time getting the others to greet the new person warmly. How does this influence what happens next?

Activity 5: Summarise that seeds have been symbols of our tiniest deeds and our faith. Ask children to consider that ideas can also be pictured as seeds, for instance ideas for a drawing, or a dance. They can also be used to picture our talents, for instance musical potential that might someday grow and blossom into the ability to sing or play an instrument.

Return to the mustard seed and point out how carefully we have to look after something so small. In this final activity pupils draw or make a collage representing a container or bank for seeds that represent their own potential. They can, if they like, label the seeds in varying stages of germination or development. Encourage them to use their imagination to picture both seeds and container, reminding them that in this lesson we are looking at seeds as symbols.

At the end of the activity ask the pupils if any want to present their drawings/collages to the class. You can tell them about international seed banks (see background info). That just as they (i.e. the pupils) are symbolically protecting their individual potential in their drawings, international seed banks strive to preserve something precious for all humankind.

Materials for drawing and/or making a collage.

Plenary: Summarise the lesson with discussion questions such as: What are some uses of seeds that you know from your daily experience? What is similar about a seed that you can hold in your hand and the seed of an idea? Why do you think a tiny seed can be a symbol of the power of faith or belief in something? Give some examples of how something small – e.g. seed, idea, movement, musical note – becomes something much larger.

<i>Food for thought</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	understand that for believers there can be a difference between the same food eaten in a ritual or a day-to-day context; they will be able to discuss how sharing food or drink with friends or family can make them feel like they belong to a group.
<i>Aim:</i> to study the difference between food consumed in an ordinary way and the same food shared and consumed during a ritual or in a special context.	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Starter: Remind the class about any previous lessons they have done on special days and/or special food. Show a picture of a vegetable or fruit dish that has special meaning for you, and that you can share with the class (e.g. “This is a blackberry tart, which my mother taught me to make. Now, when I make it, it reminds me of time I spent with her in the kitchen.”) Get the class to talk about foods that, when they taste them, remind them of something. For instance, a dish one of their relatives makes that is so special it always reminds them of that person when they eat it or even when they see it.</p>		Personal images of food dishes or special family meals
<p>Activity 1: Show the class some pictures of ordinary cakes and then some birthday cakes and wedding cakes, perhaps including personal photographs of a family birthday or celebration, or, if you are married, pictures of you and your spouse cutting your wedding cake. Ask the class to discuss what the difference is between these types of cake? What are the occasions on which the special cakes are eaten?</p>		Pictures of an ordinary cake, a birthday cake and a wedding cake.
<p>Activity 2: If there are any Hindu children in the class—or if the class has paid a visit to a Hindu temple (mandir) and received prasad—ask if anyone knows what prasad is (see background information)? Explain how Hindus bring offerings of food and flowers to the mandir to have them blessed. In return, as they leave, they receive a gift of prasad as a blessing.</p> <p>In a similar way, Christians believe they experience a blessing from Christ when they partake in the ritual of communion. Ask if any of the children in the class are Christian. What have they seen in church when the priest is praying over the bread and the wine? How do believers behave when they are receiving communion? How is it different from eating a sandwich? Reiterate the difference between eating something in a day-to-day context and eating it in a special or religious context.</p>		

Activity 3: Ask: do the pupils ever meet with their friends in a special place to talk and share ideas? Have they ever built a den or tree-house and stocked it with snacks? Tell the class what is known about the origins of coffee, that it came from either Arabia or Ethiopia and that the first coffee houses were in the Middle East (see background information). Explain that the British Royal Society had its origin in a coffee club, and how members of the French Enlightenment used to meet and discuss their ideas in a Paris coffee house. Discuss how sharing food or drink and ideas in this way can create a sense of community/ belonging and stimulate new ideas. Do members of the class belong to any clubs or on-line groups of people who share a similar hobby or interest? Do they learn new things by exchanging ideas in such a group? Break into groups and have a discussion point. Then, give each group something like a satsuma or other fruit to share, and another discussion point. Is there a difference in the discussion if you offer your neighbour a piece of fruit?

Activity 4: Break class into four groups. Give each group a set of cards and ask them to link the quotes to the relevant belief/plant, the food produced by the plant as used in a ritual or special context and the food in a day-to-day context.

Ask pupils to choose a plant related to a specific ritual and to answer the following questions:

- How could the ritual be redesigned if that particular plant became extinct?
- What food/plant could be used as a substitute?
- How do you think religious people would feel if this happened?

A pdf with images that can be printed out on card can be found on the BGCi website: http://www.bgci.org/files/Worldwide/Education/Seeds_of_Unity/ACTIVITIES_PDFS/foodthoughtgame5.pdf

Plenary: Summarise what has been learned so far. Questions you can ask include:

- What is the difference for a Christian between sharing a bread roll at dinner and eating bread during communion?
- What is the difference for a Muslim between casually eating a date and eating one to break the fast during Ramadan?
- What is the difference for a Hindu between eating a chickpea snack such as papri chaat and a laddu (chickpea sweet) that has been blessed (prasad)?
- What is the difference for a person drinking their morning coffee at breakfast, and for a person drinking coffee with others at a conference or meeting held to share new ideas or brainstorm a project?

<i>The green ark</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	reflect on values of giving and the importance of understanding the needs of the other creatures that share our planet; they will think about positive and negative human impacts on the environment.
<i>Aim:</i> to consider the value of giving and the importance of balancing human needs and the needs of other animals and plants.	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Note: Prior to this lesson, show the class some images of green arks (examples can be found on the Seeds of Unity Resources website). Ask the children to look on their way home for green arks in their local area, i.e. places where plants and animals are living. This could be a park, garden, tree, area of wasteland, rooftop garden, hedge, window box or verge. They need to make a record of where each green ark is and what they think is living there.</p>		
<p>Starter: As a class watch or read the story <i>Alejandro's Gift</i> by Richard E Albert. This is a story about a man who lives on the edge of a desert. He wants to do something good for the wildlife community around him, but the results of his 'good deed' are not what he expected. How does he put it right?</p> <p>Ask: what does this story mean? Explain that from a humanist perspective Alejandro has made an ethical decision based on reason, empathy and a concern for other living things. Explain that humanists are people who do not have a religion but who nonetheless treasure the value of giving, which is also important for most religions.</p> <p>Some discussion questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What was important in the way that Alejandro gave his gift to the animals? Making a gift is not about giving what we think others (including plants and animals) want, but is about understanding their needs. ▪ What do animals need to survive in the desert? <p>Conclude by saying that although the desert is a harsh environment, the plants and animals that live there are perfectly adapted to the conditions: for them the desert is their 'green ark'.</p>		<p>Albert, R.E. (1994), Alejandro's Gift, Chronicle Books, San Francisco, U.S. ISBN 0-8118-1342-8 (available from Amazon.co.uk)</p> <p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2o7Xwq5_cfU</p> <p>The above link takes you to an episode of the Reading Rainbow TV series for children. The story starts at 02:39 and it finishes at 07:55.</p>
<p>Activity 1: Make a Green Ark map of your community by adding all the 'green arks' discovered by the pupils to a large scale map of the area around the school. Look at the results. Ask the children whether they think that the community needs more green arks, fewer green arks or is it just right?</p>		<p>Materials required: A large scale map of the area, labels and pens or pencils.</p>

Activity 2: Read the following quote from the Prophet Muhammad “*The Earth is green and beautiful and God has made you His stewards over it. He sees how you acquit yourselves.*” What do you think he is asking his fellow Muslims to do? Could he be suggesting that we need to behave responsibly towards the planet and to look after all the plants and animals within it?

Ask the children to think about their school by answering the following questions:

- Is the school one of the green arks on the map?
- If not what can be done to make it one (think back to what makes an area a good place for plants and animals to survive).
- If the school already is a green ark, can it be improved?
- What animals visit the school’s green ark?

Ask the children to imagine they were one of these creatures living in their school grounds or local green ark. Working in pairs ask them to interview each other to find out what their creature would need to entice it to make a home at the school or how the school green ark is a great place to live.

Activity 3: Consider the various forms that green arks can take. For instance sometimes plants and animals are looked after in their natural environments, e.g. within national parks which are large areas created to protect wildlife and plants. Some plants and animals are taken from their natural environment and looked after elsewhere, e.g. botanic gardens will grow and protect plants from all over the world and seed banks store thousands of different types of plants in the form of seeds.

The protected grounds of religious buildings can also be green arks. Traditionally the gardens surrounding Hindu temples are filled with beautiful plants. Fruits and flowers that are used in the daily offerings are also grown within these green arks, some of which will also have medicinal uses.

Within the *Living Churchyards* project more than 6,000 British churchyards are being managed as sanctuaries for wild flowers, birds, bats, reptiles and insects. These green arks are looked after by their local Christian communities. To encourage wildlife they don’t use any pesticides and some even grow fruit and vegetables for the community. (Living churchyards project: <http://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/index.php/national-info/churchyard-projects-from-around-the-country>)

An unusual example of a green ark is found at Kingston Mosque in London. To help support dwindling bee populations the mosque has beehives on its roof. Local beekeeper Munir Ravalia says “during the time of the prophet, the mosque was like a community centre – it provided everything. I want mosques to become centres of learning for Muslims about all types of issues affecting our lives including the environment and supporting the bee population.” (Beehive project at Kingston Mosque <http://www.greenprophet.com/2012/05/london-mosques-beekeeping/>)

Ask the children why they think bee numbers are dwindling and what they can do to help support them in their school’s green ark. Alternatively ask the class to find out where the nearest National Park, botanic garden, seed bank or ‘Living Churchyard’ is. Can you arrange a family or a class visit? Are there opportunities to become stewards for these green arks, e.g. through volunteering or by taking part in a community event?

Activity 4: Popular green arks such as the Peak District National Park in Derbyshire can suffer from too much attention from visitors (see background information), the pressure of such large numbers visiting creating problems for the landscape (e.g. erosion of paths).

Ask the children to look back at the green ark map and imagine if every weekend everyone in their town or city visited it. Working in teams, see if they can think of up to six things that could happen. Write each idea on a separate card, and ask the children to put them in the order of biggest to smallest impact on the green space.

Ask the children to move around the room and have a look at what the other groups have listed to see if there are similarities or differences in their choices. Can the class suggest ways of reducing the impact of visitors to their school green ark during school extra-curricular activities such as school fairs?

Plenary: Ask the pupils to develop the programme for a day event in their community (run by their school) that will showcase the local Green Arks. Ask them to include in the programme a short introduction on the importance of Green Arks and then create a list of the proposed activities including title, short description of the activity and aim of the activity.

This plenary is a whole class activity during which the teacher is the facilitator, collecting and putting together pupils' ideas on the community event to be run by the school.

<i>Cultivating peace</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	consider the importance of communication and co-operation for cultivating peace; learn how plants are used in the Hindu and Christian traditions as expressions of peace and welcome.
<i>Aim:</i> to explore pupils' concept of an ideal environment.	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Note: In preparation for this lesson, ask pupils to find or take a picture of a view that they value, love or like (this can be from magazines, cards, newspapers, their own digital image or from the internet).</p>		
<p>Starter: Show a selection of images of 'views from a window' (green, industrial, urban, countryside, park, and coast). Ask the class how these views make them feel. Which is their favourite view and why.</p>		
<p>Activity 1: Children are asked to share their chosen picture with their partner/group/class and say why they value this view. Ask the children to come up and randomly stick their picture somewhere onto a large blank wall display. Explain that they are going to cultivate a 'Window of Wonders'. The views on the wall will be varied and their task is to link each individual view to the next.</p> <p>They do this by drawing the view beyond their picture so that it blends with the next picture to make a complete 'Window of Wonders'. To do this successfully they will need to cooperate and work with the child/children whose view is nearest to theirs, so that they share the drawing activity to make sure their connected images come together as one. This may result in children working together who may not choose to normally, or are outside of their friendship group.</p> <p>Once the 'Window of Wonders' drawings are completed ask the pairs/groups to think about what was easy and what was difficult about this process. In Christianity a dove with an olive branch in its beak is often used to symbolise peace. If you 'extend an olive branch' to someone it means to try to find a solution to conflict. Did they need to extend an olive branch during this activity? Was this a good activity for bringing people together to work cooperatively and share their differing views and ideas?</p>		<p>Large blank piece of paper, pencils, coloured pencils or crayons</p>
<p>Activity 2: The 'Window of Wonders' is a type of paradise of all the things the class would love to see and which would make them happy and bring them together with others. Ask the children what the idea of 'paradise' means to them. Look at some images of paradise within Christianity. What are the similarities between them (e.g. gardens, water, plants, animals, people)? Does the class 'Window of Wonders' include any of these elements?</p>		

Activity 3: Having created the 'Window of Wonders' the children may wish to invite people to see it and share it. To welcome their visitors, create a *rangoli*. Ask if anyone in the class knows what a *rangoli* is? If not, explain that these are decorative designs made on the floors of living rooms and courtyards during Hindu festivals. These sacred welcoming areas are made using natural material such as coloured rice and flour, flower petals, leaves, charcoal, soil and sawdust. The designs can be simple geometric shapes or natural shapes such as flowers, plants and trees.

On the IWB show some examples of *rangolis* and then ask the class to work in groups to come up with their own design. The class should then work in groups to create a *rangoli* using the materials available. These could be on boards or fabric on the tables in the classroom, or on the floor outside in the playground. Invite other groups of students or staff to come and see the class *rangoli* and 'Window of Wonders'.

Activity 4: Ask the children to think of the plants they have used in their *rangoli*. Do they know the names of these plants? Do they know if these plants have any other names (e.g. scientific names)?

Show the children photographs of a bluebell, hare bell and the peace lily, looking at the common and scientific names of each. Ask the children if they think the common name may cause a problem when communicating with people from different places. Common names can be very different, but the scientific name for each plant is the same the world over. This allows people who may speak different languages to communicate clearly and understand which plant they are talking about.

Can the class think of how the peace lily got its name? (The white part is a modified leaf called a spathe and looks like the white flag calling for truce in battles).

Plenary: Remind the children of the activities they have done and ask them to think of words or phrases to describe what they have learned e.g. make new friends, cooperate, peace, paradise, and/or examples of scientific language. Use these words or phrases to create a border around their 'Window of Wonders'. To finish ask the class what flower they would choose as their flower of peace and why.

Natural material such as coloured rice and flour, flower petals, leaves, charcoal, soil and sawdust.

Images of *rangoli* and the named flowers can be found on the BGCi resource sheet: http://www.bgci.org/files/Worldwide/Education/Seeds_of_Unity/cultipeaceless2resource.pdf

<i>Healing body and soul</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	explore how beautiful surroundings and plants can evoke a feeling of well-being; find out about the symbolism of flowers and the tradition of herbal remedies.
<i>Aim:</i> to understand how preservation of green spaces and plant life is crucial for health.	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Starter: Read together the poem 'Leisure' by W H Davies (see background information). Ask the children what makes them happy when they are outdoors.</p>		
<p>Activity 1: Explore a variety of National Trust properties and gardens on the IWB. Tell class about Octavia Hill, a Victorian social reformer who believed that urban workers who lived in cities should have access to beautiful countryside and gardens to promote good health and wellbeing. Octavia was one of the founders of the National Trust, an organisation which since 1885 has acquired many houses, gardens and land for the nation to enjoy.</p> <p>Share ideas of what kind of things the children might enjoy doing in these spaces e.g. flying a kite, playing hide and seek or enjoying a peaceful view. Group their responses into the categories of physical (doing something) and emotional (feeling something). Ask the children to think of their own favourite place to visit during weekends or holidays. What do they like doing while they are there? Add these activities to the physical or emotional categories list. Are the class nominations places which evoke a more physical, or a more emotional response or do they evoke a mix?</p>		
<p>Activity 2: Ask the children if any of them have read a book by Michael Morpurgo or seen the film <i>War Horse</i> (if appropriate, show the trailer or an extract from the film on YouTube). Michael and his wife set up the charity called <i>Farms for City Children</i>. Ask the children why they think city children might need farms (e.g. because they may not have access to green spaces at home). Point out that children staying on the farms can experience the connection between what they eat and where it comes from.</p> <p>Gardens are also great places for healing body and soul. Hospitals, hospices and nursing homes often have gardens where the patients can enjoy green and tranquil surroundings. There is evidence that patients in hospital recover more quickly if they can see a window with trees or green space outside. Some gardens can also provide therapeutic space for people to learn new skills, gain confidence and feel better physically and emotionally who may not have access to green spaces in their daily lives. Humanists believe we can give meaning and happiness to our lives by helping others and thinking responsibly about the environment and the people around us.</p> <p>Google for photographs of healing gardens and ask whether children think that this kind of environment would make them feel better.</p>		<p>http://michaelmorpurgo.com/books</p> <p><i>Farms for City Children</i> was founded in 1976 by Michael Morpurgo and his wife with the aim of giving children from towns and cities the chance to learn first-hand where their food comes from, how to care for and look after animals and land, and how to work co-operatively as a team.</p> <p>http://www.farmsforcitychildren.co.uk/index.htm</p>

Activity 3: Remind the class of the meaning of symbol and metaphor. Show children pictures of holly, red roses and tulsi/holy basil. What (if anything) comes to mind when they see these? These plants have special meanings for customs and religions:

- Holly may represent Christmas for Christians and many non-religious people as well;
- Red roses may represent love especially on Valentine's day;
- In Islam the rose is the Prophet Muhammed's favourite flower;
- Tulsi or holy basil is a sacred plant for Hindus as it symbolises harmony, happiness and good health and is often grown in pots in front of or near the home.

Explain that the class is going to create a posy of flowers to give to someone who is recovering from an illness. Ask them to have a look at the symbolic meaning of different flowers and choose some to put into their posy. Which have they chosen and why (e.g. they look or smell beautiful or they have symbolic meaning)?

Class could draw their flowers, find pictures to cut out to make a collage or perhaps make a 3D posy with pipe cleaners and tissue paper. The flowers could then be labelled with their meaning.

Cardboard, paper, tissue paper, pipe cleaners, pencils, coloured pencils, paint, paint brushes, glue

Printable resource with pictures and the symbolic meaning of flowers:

http://www.bgci.org/files/Worldwide/Education/Seeds_of_Unity/healbodyres2flowers.pdf

Activity 4: Explain to class that in the past knowledge of plant remedies were either passed down from one generation to another, or people visited a healer or pharmacist often associated with their religion to make them better. In medieval times Christian monks and nuns ran hospitals from their monasteries and grew many of the healing plants in the gardens. Being an *as-saydanani* (pharmacist) was recognised as a profession in Islamic countries as far back as the eighth century. Today plant based remedies are popular in herbal medicines and many modern day medicines have synthetic chemicals in them which have been copied from those found in plants, e.g. the decongestant and asthma treatment pseudoephedrine is a version of ephedrine which came from plants. Point out that in the related ks3 unit, students will look at modern medicines that have been derived from plants.

Hand out copies of the BGCi resource (see link at right). Ask children to choose one and to make a container by either re-using a jar, bottle or tin, or folding card to make a box or packet. Create a label for the container displaying information about the plant and its supposed healing properties. Include a drawing or find an image of the plant to pop into the container. Make a class pharmacopeia.

http://www.bgci.org/files/Worldwide/Education/Seeds_of_Unity/healbodyres2medicinalplants.pdf

Containers (jar, bottle or tin) card, paper, coloured pencils or crayons, glue, sellotape.

Plenary Bring in a mint plant, some lemons and sugar. Pick some mint leaves and let them steep in hot water to make a pot of fresh mint tea, or alternatively squeeze some lemon into a pot of hot water and add sugar to taste. Sitting down to drink tea is a good way to share stories, laughter, worries and problems in a relaxed setting. Share the tea among the class and discuss with them what they have learned doing these activities and, in particular, how they think plants can change the way we feel.

<i>The roots of ritual</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	Learn about some rituals involving plants; consider the meaning and purpose of marking major life events and religious observances with plants.
<i>Aim:</i> To explore the role that plants play in commemorations, celebrations, and other rituals.	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Starter: Highlight the definition of the word ‘ritual’, i.e. “a set of actions, performed mainly for their symbolic value.” Point out that these actions may be defined by a religion or by the traditions of a community; that it may be performed on specific occasions or in everyday life, by a group of people or by individuals. Clarify that rituals do not need to be religious and that we all have our own rituals, e.g. having a cup of coffee or tea in the morning while reading the newspaper, listening to the weather report. Ask class to share personal or family rituals that bring a certain amount of comfort and a sense of stability. If suitable, ask pupils to say what their ritual means to them.</p>		<p>Printable resources for this lesson can be found on the BGCi Seeds of Unity website: http://www.bgci.org/files/Worldwide/Education/Seeds_of_Unity/ACTIVITIES_PDFS/rootsritlp_resource.pdf</p>
<p>Activity 1: Explain that flowers—and plants in general—play an important role in worship and celebration for many Christians, and that they also appear extensively in Christian art, where they are often used symbolically. Show the pupils images from different Christian rituals. Ask them how flowers are used in each ritual and what they think the flowers may symbolise. Then give the pupils the descriptions of each ritual and ask them to match them with the images.</p> <p>Explain to the pupils that although plants are extensively used in some Christian rituals they are absent in others. For example, during Christmas churches are often festooned with plants, whereas during the period of Lent, which is traditionally a time of abstinence and restraint, churches do not display flowers.</p>		<p>Images and description of Christian rituals can be found at the above link.</p> <p>You can read the descriptions or print them on cards and ask pupils to match them with the images in small groups</p>
<p><i>Note:</i> The following activity can be combined with a visit to a parish church; pupils will need notepads, pencils, colour pens and cameras to record their observations and their interviews from the visit to the church.</p>		
<p>Activity 2: When visiting a local church, encourage the pupils to observe and take notes/drawings of how flowers are used around the church (e.g. to simply decorate or to highlight particularly important places within the building, such as the altar or statue of Mary). Do not forget to take the children outside into the graveyard (if there is one there) to look at the floral tributes left on graves or where ashes have been buried. Some trees and plants may also have been marked with commemorative plaques to recall loved ones who have died.</p>		

Activity 2 (cont.): If possible arrange an interview between the pupils and the priest or minister, or perhaps a couple of members of the congregation or even someone who represents the flower arranging team. Set up the interview questions with the pupils before the visit to the church. The interviews may include questions about the symbolism of the plants used in paintings and sculptures and the use of plants in some key events during the year, such as palms on Palm Sunday, wheat at harvest time, poppies on Remembrance Day, evergreens at Christmas or rosemary for remembrance at funerals. The pupils' interviews of the church staff may also focus on the types of plants used in and outside the church, with reference to where they are grown locally or overseas, their cost and whether or not they are Fairtrade.

A follow up activity in school may include the pupils presenting their findings from the visit in a display in the school hall or other communal space in the building. The display could include drawings, collages, paintings, photographs, textiles and screen prints.

Activity 3: Explain to the pupils that they will now play a 'Mystery activity'. Put the pupils in groups of four or five and give each group a set of cards. Give the pupils the following instructions:

1. Look carefully at the question you have been given: "Jane was a Christian. How should she be remembered with flowers and plants?"
2. In your small group, look at the information you have been given on the different cards.
3. Sort out the cards in whatever way you like and use them to construct an answer to the question.
4. Be ready to present your answer to the rest of the class and to explain the reasons why you think it is a good answer.

After the groups have finished their discussions bring them together to present and justify their answer to the original question and their justification. At the end, point out that choosing the plants and rituals to commemorate someone who has passed away is a combination of personal preference and religious belief.

The cards for this activity can be found on the BGCi website (Resource 2):
http://www.bgci.org/files/Worldwide/Education/Seeds_of_Unity/ACTIVITIES_PDFS/rootsritlp_resource.pdf

Activity 4 Introduce pupils to the way in which flowers are used in various works of art to convey religious beliefs and ideas in symbolic form, for example, images of the Annunciation depicting the moment when many Christians believe the Angel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary to declare that she had been chosen to be the mother of Jesus. Ask the children to see if they can notice any plants in the pictures and invite them to describe the flowers and say their name if they recognise them. If possible, bring some examples of lilies into the classroom or take the children to a place where they are growing. Explain to the pupils that because these lilies (*Lilium candidum*) have been associated with the Annunciation two of their common names are Madonna lily and Annunciation lily. Ask pupils 'Why have the artists chosen lilies for this particular scene and what might lilies symbolise about this moment in Mary's life and about Mary herself?'

After pupils express their thoughts, point out that lilies symbolise Mary's beauty, grace, purity and simplicity and that lilies also symbolise the sacred nature of the scene. Ask pupils to describe the shape of the flower. Ask them to say if the shape reminds them of anything. After pupils express their thoughts explain that the funnel shaped flowers also remind viewers of the importance of the message which the Angel is proclaiming, as if from a trumpet.

Activity 5: Explain that flowers and plants in general play an important role in other religious and non-religious rituals. If possible, invite a Hindu parent or visitor to demonstrate to the children the ritual of puja and its meaning. Point out that puja is a Hindu ritual which involves an offering to various deities, distinguished persons, or special guests. Puja is based on the idea of giving a gift or offering to a deity or important person and receiving their blessing, and can be performed in many occasions and different places such as in the home, during temple ceremonies and large festivals or to begin a new venture. Ask pupils if they have ever seen an actor, singer or dancer given a bouquet of flowers after a performance.

Show the pupils images of puja (see background information) and ask them to describe the plants that they think are used in the ritual. Explain that Hindus believe that a flower should first be offered to God before humans can enjoy its beauty and fragrance. Flowers can be used to symbolise a person's behaviour and actions, providing fragrance and beauty to all living beings without discrimination, hence the suggestion that people should live their lives like flowers.

Plenary: Ask the pupils: What do you think living your life like a flower means? Remind pupils of the first lesson on the symbolism of seeds, i.e. how seeds can represent our potential. Ask: how do you think we can help others to 'blossom'? What do you think you need to encourage your own potential to blossom? Give pupils pieces of paper in the shape of petals and use them to write or draw the ways in which they (or someone else) could bring beauty and fragrance to the world through their deeds and actions. Form the petal pieces into a large display (shaped in the form of a lotus flower, one of the most important flowers in Hinduism, symbolising eternity, purity and good fortune) explaining the meaning of puja.

Key words

Seed potential, symbolism, *prasad*, *puja*, stewardship, ritual, *rangoli*

Sample assessment activities

Ask pupils to identify a plant that is used in a ritual or on an occasion that is important to them and/or their family, and answer the following:

- What does this plant signify or symbolise?
- If it is a food plant, does tasting this food remind you of the occasion?
- Describe the emotions and sensations you experience tasting this food or seeing this particular plant.

Pupils may be able to:

1. Talk about a plant that is important to them and/or their family or religion.
2. Describe the occasion that features this plant/food and how it differs from other times when they eat this food/see this plant.
3. Talk about how this ritual makes them feel part of a group, e.g. family, friends, religious community.
4. Make links between this plant and their beliefs or the beliefs of their family.
5. Compare the way they use this plant on a special occasion with other rituals involving plants.

Note: Many thanks to Lesley Prior and Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) for permission to adapt the “Seeds of Unity” materials for the Ealing syllabus.

Background information



[Coco de Mer seed](#)

Links to pictures of various seeds

Coco de Mer (*Lodoicea maldivica*) http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/be/Coco_de_mer_-_BOT.2007.26.21.jpg

Sunflower seeds (*Helianthus annuus*) <http://www.flickr.com/photos/richardthomas78/144085146>

Cocoa seeds (*Theobroma cacao*) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cocoa_beans_P1410151.JPG

Coffee beans (*Coffea arabica*/*Coffea robusta*)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Coffee_Beans_Photoographed_in_Macro.jpg

Coffee beans hanging on the tree (*Coffea arabica*) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Coffee_beans_on_tree.jpg

Edamame Beans (*Glycine max*) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Edamame_by_Zesmerelda_in_Chicago.jpg

Kidney Beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris* var. *mexicanus*) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kidney_beans.jpg

Broad Beans (*Vicia faba*) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tuinboon_zaden_in_peul.jpg

Baked beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:BakedBeansAndEggOnToast.jpg>

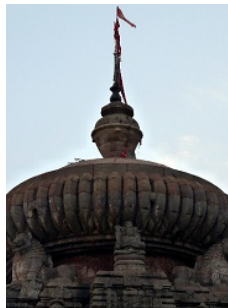
Black Mustard Seed (*Brassica nigra*)

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/fotoosvanrobin/5896917743/sizes/m/in/photostream/>

Banyan tree (*Ficus benghalensis*) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Big_Banyan_Tree_at_Bangalore.jpg

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/caribbeanphotoarchive/3590079033/>

Seeds in the fruit of the Banyan tree <http://www.flickr.com/photos/plant-trees/4476655086/>



“The kalasam [symbolic spire on top of a mandir] can be thought of as the roots of an inverted tree, whose trunk runs along the cosmic axis of the temple and whose branches reach down toward Earth. The representation of the Hindu temple as an upside-down tree encourages devotees to invert themselves and find their true roots, thus becoming a temple themselves. By transforming himself or herself into a temple, the devotee invites God to take up residence within.” (<http://www.indiadinve.org/showthread.php/476589-Temple-and-Human-Body>)

Left: Kalasam, Lingara Temple, Bhubaneswar [wikimedia](#)



Persian Prayer Rug
www.art.net.au

O my son, know that even something as tiny as a mustard seed, deep inside a rock, be it in the heavens or the earth, GOD will bring it to light. GOD is sublime, all-knowing. Qur'an 31: 16

Have you not considered how Allah presents an example, [making] a good word like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and its branches [high] in the sky? Qur'an 14: 24

Muslims believe that in the above verse Allah is comparing a good word to a good tree because both bear fruit that are beneficial to people. The branches bare the fruits of a tree and the good deeds of a believer. If a tree has strong roots, it will be strong and extend its branches out further into the sky; similarly having a strong faith will lead a person to have good manners, noble character and high moral standards which will benefit everyone that the person comes into contact with.

A smile for your brother is charity Hadith of the prophet Muhammad, Fiqh-us-Sunnah, 3: 98

Here the Prophet is stating that to smile at another person—i.e. to come into contact with them and greet them in a positive way—is a beautiful characteristic. The Prophet always greeted people warmly, generating a welcoming and loving environment, and didn't lose his temper even when others treated him badly. It is said that he greeted his companions (the Sahaba) so warmly that each thought that he was the most beloved.



The Kew Millennium Seed Bank
Wakehurst, A.McRobb ©RBG Kew

The Kew Millennium Seed Bank project is a global partnership of botanic gardens, tree seed centres, government gene banks, universities, and NGOs whose common aim is to collect and conserve seeds, particularly of plants and habitats that are under threat. Partner organisations share information, skills and expertise. The seeds that are collected are kept in seed banks in the country of origin; at the same time duplicate samples are sent to Kew's Millennium Seed Bank at Wakehurst Place for testing and long term storage.

You can find more information and pictures on MSB on:
<http://www.kew.org/science-conservation/save-seed-prosper/millennium-seed-bank/index.htm>.



Prasadam offered on banana leaves
[wikipedia](#)

Prasada ('mercy') refers to anything that has been sanctified through offering to God (e.g. flowers), although it most often refers to food. In Hinduism food plays an important role in worship. Food offerings (*prasadam*) that have been on the altar are believed to be especially sacred, and are handed out to worshippers, either by the priest at the shrine or as worshippers leave the mandir (temple). *Prasad* is also served in the form of a full meal, especially on festival days. Many Hindus have an altar at home and offer their food before eating so that it can be blessed, similar to the way another person might say 'grace' before a meal. By offering food in this manner the believer brings their food from the day-to-day world into the realm of the sacred.



Roman Catholic unleavened Host
[wikipedia](#)

Communion bread – sometimes called the communion wafer, altar bread, the host or sacramental bread – is the bread used in the Christian ritual of the Eucharist. The Eastern Orthodox Church uses leavened bread for the Eucharist, symbolising the risen Christ. Known as *prosphorá* (from *prósphoron*, 'offering'), this bread is made from four ingredients: fine (white) wheat flour, purified water, yeast and salt. Occasionally holy water will be sprinkled into the dough or on the kneading trough at the beginning of the process.

A host is a portion of bread used for Holy Communion in many Christian churches. In Western Christianity the host is often a thin, round unleavened wafer.

In the varying Protestant denominations, there are a wide variety of practices concerning the sacramental bread. Some use ordinary leavened loaves; others, such as Lutherans, continue to use unleavened wafers like the Roman Catholics and many Anglicans. Still others use matzo. Even among those who use the unleavened wafers, there is a great deal of variation: some are square or triangular rather than round, and are made from whole wheat – rather than white – flour.



Story teller in an Ottoman coffee house

[wikipedia](#)



Early English coffeehouse

[wikipedia](#)

O Coffee! Thou dost dispel all care, thou are the object of desire to the scholar. This is the beverage of the friends of God... (Arabic poem In Praise of Coffee).

The origin of the word coffee is from the Arabic *qahwah*. It is believed that ancestors of the Oromo people in Ethiopia were the first to discover and recognize the energizing effect of the coffee bean plant, and that from there coffee spread to Egypt and Yemen. However, the earliest credible evidence of either coffee drinking or knowledge of the plant appears in the middle of the fifteenth century, in the Sufi monasteries of Yemen. Roasting and brewing coffee in a manner similar to that used today was first done in Arabia, and by the 16th century, coffee had reached the rest of the Middle East, Persia, Turkey, and northern Africa. It then spread to Italy, and to the rest of Europe, to Indonesia, and to the Americas.

The first person recorded in history to brew coffee in England—in May 1637— was a student from Crete named Nathaniel Conopios, who was studying at Balliol College, Oxford. A Lebanese Jew named Jacob opened the first coffeehouse there in 1650.

Even though Jacob moved to London a few years later to open another coffee house, he had started a trend. The most significant of the new establishments in Oxford was the one opened by Arthur Tillyard in 1655. Tillyard's coffeehouse became a meeting point for a group who were known as the Oxford Coffee Club. This group was made up of Oxford's leading scientists and their students, who would meet to discuss their theories and research and share ideas. It is from the Oxford Coffee Club that the Royal Society, one of the leading scientific societies in the world, evolved.

Another coffee house in the UK played an important role in naming plants and advancing horticulture. In 1720s the Society of Gardeners, a small group of the London's leading nurserymen met every month at the Newhall's Coffee House in Chelsea to discuss horticulture. In particular the meetings in the Newhall Coffee House focused on discussing and naming of the plants that were imported from the New World in Britain at that time. These meetings resulted in the publication of *The Gardeners and Florists Dictionary* written by Philip Miller in 1724.

In Europe the Café Procope, which opened in Paris in 1686, was an important meeting place for members of the French Enlightenment; it was also arguably the birthplace of the Encyclopédie, the first modern encyclopaedia.



Footpath erosion
Thornthwaite Beacon, Lake District
By Tom Richardson

[wikimedia](#)



National Park car park
Snowdonia National Park
By Jonathan Wilkins

[wikimedia](#)



Litter
Brecon Beacons National Park
By Alan Bowring

[wikimedia](#)

Leisure

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.

No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.

No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.

No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.

A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

W H Davies (1911)



Lakshmi puja: the statue of Lakshmi is decorated with garlands of flowers including the Lotus flower, which is considered as Lakshmi's most representative flower.

[wikipedia](#)

Durga puja: A domestic Durga puja with offerings of cooked food, fruits, flowers, leaves of medicinal and edible plants, sandalwood paste, and vermillion.



[L N Roychoudry](#)



Domestic puja: Puja to begin living in a new apartment.

[Graham Hills](#)



Dashain festival puja: During the Dashain festival puja drivers conduct the ritual to ensure that their vehicles will run well and meet no accidents in the coming year. Flowers, incense, vermillion, raw egg and coconut milk are just some of the ingredients for this puja.

[Eileen Delhi](#)