



Holland Park School | Year 8 RE

Topic 1 | Islam



Overview	Big Question: What does it mean to be a Muslim This unit of work analyses the religion of Islam, from its origins to an analysis of what it means to be Muslim in today's world. It also covers key events within the Islamic belief and history and analyses these events in depth. Students begin by looking at the historical, geographical, political and religious status of pre-Islamic Arabia and then learn how Prophet Muhammad changed this landscape. Students will also have chance to engage with key teachings and practices within Islam such as the five pillars, as well as an analysis of the concept of Jihad. By the end of this unit students will have a rich understanding of key events, concepts and beliefs within the religion of Islam and understand its development across time.	
Assessment	Skills Focus: Explain Questions Students will engage with a number of explain questions throughout this unit. They will be exposed to model answers, success criteria and scaffolds for each question. This will allow students to develop the skill of explaining different concepts and ideas using the PEE structure (Point, Evidence, Explain). This will culminate with an end of unit assessment, where students will be asked a series of knowledge questions and explain questions.	
Glossary Links	Page 28-31	
Key words	• Islam- The religion of the Muslims, a monotheistic faith regarded as revealed through Muhammad as the Prophet of Allah. • Allah- The God in Arabic • Tawhid- The belief in the oneness of God • Revelation- A message from God to human beings • Prophet Muhammad- An Arab religious, social, and political leader and the founder of Islam • Qur'an- The central religious text of Islam, believed by Muslims to be the final revelation from God. • Mecca- Holy City for Muslims established by Ibrahim and Ishmael. • Hijrah- The migration of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina • Ummah- The worldwide Muslim community • Hadith – The sayings of the Prophet Muhammad	
	• Sunnah- The traditions and practices of the Prophet Muhammad • Sunni- The branch of Islam with the majority of followers, Sunni meaning followers of the Sunnah • Shia- The branch of Islam with the minority of followers, Shi'a meaning 'House of Ali' • Sunni/ Shia Split- A division in Islam which occurred after the death of the Prophet Muhammad on who should lead the Ummah • Caliphate- An area ruled by a Muslim leader • The Five Pillars- The basic acts in Islam, considered mandatory by believers, and are the foundation of Muslim life • Hajj- The Hajj is an annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, the holiest city for Muslims • Greater Jihad- The spiritual struggle within oneself against sin. • Lesser Jihad- Defending Islam from threat but must meet a range of strict conditions to be declared • Islamophobia- Dislike of or prejudice against Islam or Muslims	

Topics	Key content
Pre- Islamic Arabia	- The social context of Arabia before the birth of Islam - The tribal structure of society and the dominance of polytheistic religious beliefs - The regular violence that occurred over resources.
Prophet Muhammad: The Qur'an	- The background of Prophet Muhammad as someone who was orphaned at an early age, became a trader with a good reputation, who married a wealthy woman named Khadija. - The revelation of the Qur'an and how this was met with great objection as its message conflicted religious traditions and ethical teachings that were dominant at the time.
Prophet Muhammad: The Hijrah and the Conquest of Mecca	- How the message of the Qur'an was received - The migration of Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina - The establishment of the first Ummah
Prophet Muhammad: The Final Sermon	- The teachings of the final sermon - The key messages of Islam imparted to the Ummah before Prophet Muhammad's death - The difficulty with recording the final sermon and competing validity of Hadith's
The Sunni/Shia Split	- The problems experienced by Muslims after the death of Muhammad and the debate around leadership of the Ummah. - The competition between Abu Bakr and Ali as leaders of the Muslims and the division this causes within Islam which last this day between Sunni and Shia.
Islamic Caliphates	- The growth and development of Islam - Rashidun, the Umayyad and the Abbasid caliphates
The Five Pillars	- The meaning and significance of each of the five pillars - How these pillars are expressed in the life of Muslims in the modern world
Hajj	- The Hajj pilgrimage and the steps taken in Hajj - Hajj in modern Saudi Arabia
Jihad	- Islamic teachings of Jihad and the distinctions between lesser jihad and greater Jihad. - The very strict conditions for declaring jihad, which is essentially impossible in the modern world.
Islam Today	The state of Islam today as a religion which is growing rather than declining and one that had to deal with persecution and prejudice.

Topic 2 | *Philosophy of Religion*



Overview	This unit of work introduces students to the Philosophy of Religion by examining key arguments around the existence of the God of Classical Theism. This unit is the first exposure students will have to the Philosophy of Religion and using the lens of philosophy will help them to understand religion in a different light as opposed to where they have looked at theology, history, sociology etc. in previous units. Here students are exposed to a range of different arguments for the existence of God, followed by critiques of those arguments. By the end of the unit, students should have an appreciation for the key arguments scholars have put forward across time to support the existence of God, but also, how those arguments have been critiqued.	
Assessment	Skills Focus: Explain Questions Students will engage with a number of explain questions throughout this unit. They will be exposed to model answers, success criteria and scaffolds for each question. This will allow students to develop the skill of explaining different concepts and ideas using the PEE structure (Point, Evidence, Explain). This will culminate with an end of unit assessment, where students will be asked a series of knowledge questions and explain questions.	
Glossary Links	Page 28-31	

Key words	• Omnipotent- The belief that God is all- powerful • Omniscient- The belief that God is all- knowing • Omnibenevolent- The belief that God is all- loving • Omnipresent- The belief that God is present everywhere at once. • Transcendent- The belief that God is outside of the universe • Theism- The belief in God. • Atheism- Disbelief or lack of belief in the existence of God or gods. • Agnosticism- The belief that nothing can be known about the nature or existence of God. • Design Argument- The argument for the existence of God based on evidence of design in the world.	
	• William Paley- Thinker who argued for the design argument. • Analogy- A comparison between things that have similar features, often used to help explain a principle or idea. • Cosmological Argument- The argument for the existence of God which argues that God is the cause of the universe. • Thomas Aquinas- Thinker argued for the cosmological argument. • Causation- The relationship between cause and effect. • Problem of Evil- The argument that the existence of evil undermines belief in an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God. • Epicurus- Thinker who came up with the problem of evil. • Theodicy- An argument which defends God against the problem of evil. • Religious Experience- An experience which has a religious meaning for the person who experienced it. • Empirical Evidence- Evidence for something based on observation or experience.	

Topics	Key content
Who is God?	- The nature of the God of classical theism as an omnibenevolent, omnipotent and omniscient being. - Why God is understood in this way by many religious believers according to examples from scripture which express these traits.
Theism, Atheism and Agnosticism	- The position of theists, atheists and agnostics and the reasons different people hold such positions. - The difference between empiricism and faith as a basis for making knowledge claims about the metaphysical.
The Design Argument	- The argument that God existence because there is evidence of design in the world. - William Paley's watch analogy- how it is used as evidence for the existence of God.
Criticisms of the Design Argument	The criticisms of the design argument i.e. even if the universe was designed it doesn't follow that the God who designed it was the God of Christian theism, the existence of evil in the world shows an imperfect designer, the universe could have occurred by chance etc.
The Cosmological Argument	The Cosmological Argument according to Aquinas- the main focus being on cause and effect. Everything in the universe is caused by something else and if we trace this back we must get to a point where we have an uncaused cause, this being God.
Criticisms of the Cosmological Argument	The criticisms of the Cosmological Argument i.e. the fallacy of composition- that you can argue from every event in the universe has a cause, therefore the universe has a cause and the idea that the existence of the universe if just a 'brute fact' etc.
The Problem of Evil	- The problem of evil as posed by Epicurus. The challenge this poses to the God of classical theism. - The distinction between natural and moral evil and how the existence of evil cancels out at least one of God's attributes i.e. the inconsistent triad.
Theodicies	- How theists answer the problem of evil through theodicies. - The free will defence, the idea that humans are responsible for evil through their actions, and the soul- making theodicy, that allows human beings the opportunity to do good and through their response, grow towards God. - To what extent these defences are a successful response to the problem of evil posed by Epicurus.
Religious Experience	- Religious experiences as a form of evidence for the existence of God. - Testimonies of religious experience e.g. Bernadette at Lourdes and reasons for why it may be a credible source of knowledge for the existence of God. - To understand why some religious believers would credit religious experience as a proof for God's existence and therefore why they are valued so much by those experiencing them.
Criticisms of Religious Experience	- The various challenges to religious experiences from the scientific perspective. - To understand challenges such as temporal lobe epilepsy, the principle of credulity and testimony, the fact that many religious experiences are contradictory etc. - To what extent are these criticisms successful in discrediting religious experience as a form of evidence for the existence of God.

Topic 3 | *Hindu Dharma*



Overview	This mini unit of work introduces students to some of the foundational ideas within Hindu Dharma. This is the first exposure that students have to the Dharmic faiths. By examining the Caste System, the Vedic Period and the concept of the Atman, students are laying the foundation for understanding the context from which Buddhism emerged.
Assessment	Skills Focus: Explain Questions Students will engage with a number of explain questions throughout this unit. They will be exposed to model answers, success criteria and scaffolds for each question. This will allow students to develop the skill of explaining different concepts and ideas using the PEE structure (Point, Evidence, Explain).
Glossary Links	Page 28-31

Key words	• Indus Valley- An area in modern day Pakistan and Northwest India • Sanatana Dharma- Eternal Teaching • Veda- Any of the four collections forming the earliest body of Indian scripture • The Caste System- A method of dividing up society into a hierarchy according to the professions and traders • Brahman- A member of the highest Hindu caste; originally that of the Priesthood • Kshatriyas- The second highest of the Hindu caste; warriors and rulers • Vaishyas- The Third highest of the Hindu caste; farmers, traders and merchants. • Shudras- Fourth highest of the Hindu caste; known as labourers • Dalits- Lowest in the Hindu caste; street/ toilet cleaners • Atman- Eternal soul
------------------	---

Topics	Key content
The Search for Origins	• The origin stories of Hindu Dharma
The Caste System	• The Varna system and how it developed
The Vedic Period	• What the Vedas are and their significance
Understanding the Self	• Different Hindu understandings of Atman

