

World Religions Artefact Collection (RE00177)

This collection contains a variety of artefacts for teaching and learning about religious festivals, worship, art and faith. Using the artefacts can help bring religion to life and promote discussions.



Questions you could ask children about the artefacts

Initial Discussion

- What is this object?
- Does it resemble anything the children have seen?
- What do you think the item is used for and by whom?
- Which religious belief is it used by?
- Does anyone know what it is called? Learn how to pronounce the name.
- What does it represent?
- How might it be used?

Collect any other questions the children might have about the artefacts and display them as you try to find the answers through your learning sessions.

- **What do the objects tell us about the faith?** *This last question can be returned to at the end of the investigation.*

All About the Jewish Artefacts

Contents: -

1. Hanukkiah
2. Mezuzah Case
3. Sedar Plate
4. Miniature Torah Scroll
5. Rosh Hashanah Cards

Please note contents may vary.



1. Hanukkiah

Most famous symbol of Hanukkah (Jewish festival of lights). Nine-branched candelabra lit each night of Hanukkah. Often seen in house windows. The ninth candle placed in the centre is used to light the other candles. It is known as the 'Shammash' or 'helper' candle. The candles are lit one at a time across the eight nights of Hanukkah. The first candle is the one furthest right.

Talk about the importance of light. Enjoy hearing stories about Hanukkah and make Hanukkah cards.

2. Mezuzah Case

A small decorative case often placed on the doorposts of Jewish homes. It serves as a reminder of the Jewish people's covenant with God and their faith. Many Jewish people touch or kiss the mezuzah as they enter or leave the room. It is a useful artefact to explore Jewish homes, traditions and celebrations.

Use to prompt creative writing about a family placing a mezuzah on the door of their new home.

3. Sedar Plate

Special plate used during Passover (celebration of the story of Exodus). The Sedar plate would be used items such as:

Karpas- green vegetable like parsley to symbolise the spring harvest, dipped in salt water to represent tears.

Charoset- sweet mixture of fruit and nuts representing the mortar used for building bricks when the Israelites were slaves in Egypt.

Chazeret- bitter herbs such as romaine lettuce and endive to represent the bitterness of slavery.

Beitza- hardboiled egg to remember the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. A symbol of mourning and also to show the Jew's determination to keep their faith.

Maror- bitter herbs like horseradish to symbolise the suffering of the Israelites when they were slaves in Egypt.

Zeroa- a lamb bone representing the lamb sacrificed and brought to the temple the night before the Israelites left Egypt.

Also, on the table there would be Matzah (flat bread). This symbolises the haste with which the Israelites left Egypt, not having time for the bread to rise.

Use a template of a Sedar plate and draw or cut and stick symbolic food, along with names and meanings, to the plate.

4. Torah Scroll

Torah is the sacred text in Judaism. It is central to Jewish teachings and practices. The Torah guides Jewish people in their lives. The scripts from the Torah are handwritten onto scrolls. The scrolls are very precious.

Make own scrolls writing special messages or prayers on them.

5. Rosh Hashanah

Rosh Hashanah means 'head of the year' and is a special festival that celebrates the Jewish new year. The dates for the festival come from the Hebrew calendar, so the Jewish new year begins in the autumn. During Rosh Hashanah people ask themselves- what is the most important thing in my life? What have I achieved last year? What do I hope to achieve over the coming year?

Find out more about Rosh Hashanah and make own greeting cards. A common greeting on Rosh Hashanah cards is 'Shanah Tovah' which means 'a good year'.

All About the Buddhist Artefacts

Contents: -

1. Buddha
2. Puja Bowls
3. Incense Sticks
4. Prayer Beads
5. Buddhist Prayer Flags



Please note contents may vary.

1. Buddha

Siddhartha Gautama was born to a privileged family over 2,500 years ago. For most of the early years of his life his father shielded him from the sights and stories of the poverty and suffering that went on outside the palace. Aged 29, Siddhartha left his life of luxury and comfort and went to find spiritual awareness. After six years of searching Siddhartha meditated under the Bodhi tree and thought about why suffering happened and how it could be overcome. After meditating for six days and nights he opened his eyes and realized he understood the nature of suffering. He became enlightened and from then on was known as Buddha, which means 'awakened one'.

Buddhists believe that Buddha is the wisest and most kind-hearted person in this world. Buddhists do not worship the Buddha statue, rather it is seen as a symbol that can be helpful in creating devotion, uplifting the mind, focussing attention and as a reminder of Buddha's teachings.

Look further into the story of Siddhartha Gautama. Research the different postures of Buddha statues. What are the Four Noble Truths? Introduce simple mindfulness exercises like focusing on breath and listening to sounds.

2. Puja Bowls

As part of their worship or meditation ritual, Buddhists may place offerings in small bowls which they then place in front of a shrine. The offerings may include water, flowers, fruit, money and rice. Rice and water represent the basic necessities of life. Water is also associated with cleaning and the flowers are representative of the transient nature of life. Flowers also contain the seed of new life within them.

Puja bowls are used to focus worshippers' spiritual awareness. They are used to contain offerings such as food (hard and soft) water (2 types – to wash and to drink) incense, flowers and lights.

Buddhist worship is called 'puja' and offerings of water are amongst the most common forms of offering at Buddhist shrines. Puja bowls are used on a shrine and each bowl stands for a different part of the ritual:

1 – Prostrating to Buddha 2 – Offerings to Buddha 3 – Confessing wrongs 4 – Rejoicing the good qualities of oneself and others 5 – Requesting Buddha's guidance 6 – Asking Buddha to remain with you 7 – Dedication

It is important that the bowls are displayed in a straight line and an equal distance apart, preferably the length of one grain of rice or barley. Empty bowls should not be placed on the shrine, and the first full bowl should fill the following six. During worship people chant to show their love for Buddha and to give thanks for his teachings.

Make own puja bowls with clay or junk materials and decorate them. Discuss the meaning of the bowls and the importance of offerings in Buddhism. Look at images of Buddhist shrines.

3. Incense Sticks

This incense is made from various aromatic herbs found in the high-altitude regions of Tibet and Nepal. This incense is widely used by Buddhists and many others for the purposes of meditation, relaxation, purification and offerings. Tibetan incense is different from other styles because it is not composed of a mixture of essential oils but from woods mixed with other natural ingredients found in the Himalayan region. It is handmade according to the ancient monastic tradition and without a stick inside which gives the incense a deep, rich, earthy aroma.

The burning of an incense stick, resulting in fragrant smoke, is a good way to show respect, to symbolically purify your space, to soothe your mind and to aid your meditation practice.

Explore Further – In Buddhism, using incense is seen as a sacred offering; what else may be offered at a shrine?

4. Prayer Beads

Also known as – Mallah, Mala, Malla

Mala means necklace or garland. This is a set of beads which are used during devotional practices or meditation. Usually there will be 108 beads, which help to keep count of the number of mantras that are being said. 'Mantra' means 'instrument of thought' and this can be a verse, syllable or series of syllables. Buddhists believe that each manta represents a different aspect or quality of enlightenment – mainly being those of love, compassion, fearlessness or energy. Buddhists believe that mantras can develop these qualities.

The number 108 can be interpreted in many ways, but a popular interpretation is that the 1 represents the one true path, the 0 represents the circle of life and the 8 represents the infinity loop.

Thread beads or make own beads and decorate them and then use them in mindfulness activities.

5. Buddhist prayer Flags

Prayer flags have been used for centuries in Tibetan Buddhist cultures to promote peace, compassion and positive energy. These brightly coloured flags, typically adorned with sacred symbols and mantras (*including Om Mani Padme Hum*), are believed to bring good fortune to those who display them. The practice of hanging prayer flags goes back thousands of years and pre-dates Buddhism. When Buddhism was introduced to Tibet, the practice of using prayer flags was incorporated into the religion.

Each colour of the prayer flags holds a different meaning and represents a different element:

- Blue symbolises the sky and represents the space element
- White symbolises the air and represents the wind element
- Red symbolises fire and represents the fire element
- Green symbolises water and represents the water element
- Yellow symbolises earth and represents the earth element

When these elements are in balance it is said that internally, health can be achieved for the mind and body, and externally, by bringing harmony to the environment. In addition to the colours, the symbols and mantras on the flags also hold deep significance. For example, Lung-Ta, the "Wind Horse", is pictured on many prayer flags representing good fortune and the ability to rise above obstacles. It is believed that when the Lung-Ta prayer flag blows in the wind, the spiritual powers of the sacred images benefit all of those around.

Prayer flags are deliberately not hemmed and after some time will naturally fade and fray, symbolising the passing nature of all things. When that happens, the flags are traditionally burned to carry their blessings to the heavens and then replaced by new flags that contain renewed wishes. Alternatively, people may simply put new ones over the old ones.

Prayer flags can be hung both inside to increase harmony and spiritual awareness, or outside (the higher the better) to benefit the environment and all beings touched by the wind. In Tibetan culture, prayer flags are often strung along mountain trails or placed at the top of mountains, where they can spread their positive energy as far as possible. It is important to remember that prayer flags should be treated with respect as they contain sacred text and symbols. When hanging the flags, it is also important to have the correct intentions: “May all beings benefit” rather than something self-motivated such as “I will benefit.” It is traditional for new flags to be hung up during the Tibetan New Year, Losar.

Use the prayer flags as inspiration to create own set of flags, include images and personalised mantras or messages.

Read stories such as:

The Monkey King Storybook

Depicting a traditional tale from the Buddhist religion, this story follows how the king of the monkeys helps a human king learn about putting other people first. It examines the themes of greed, heroism, selflessness and change.

The Lion and the Jackal Storybook

This consists of a traditional Buddhist tale which features a community of jackals and lions that learn that friendship is built on trust and generosity.

All About the Hindu Artefacts



Contents: -

1. Puja Thali
2. Story Book
3. Money Envelope
4. Greeting Cards
5. Mythological Picture
6. Rangoli Diya candles
7. Hindu patterned bag
8. Hindu figure
9. Henna impressions

Please note contents may vary.

1. Puja Thali

For Hindus worship is primarily an individual act as it involves making a personal offering to the deity. However, Hindus may attend a temple or worship at home with their family. Hindu worship, known as puja, involves images (*murtis*), prayers (*mantras*) and diagrams of the universe (*yantras*). A puja (pooja) thali acts as focal point for ceremonies and represents the devotee's reverence, devotion and gratitude towards the deities. The components in a puja thali include powders such as turmeric, flowers, incense sticks, nuts and leaves of the betel plant, rice grains and sacred thread.

Use online resources to look at examples of different puja thali. Use a template of a puja thali and draw or cut and stick symbolic food, along with names and meanings, to the plate.

2. Hindu Stories

Stories of Lord Krishna. Krishna (a popular deity in Hinduism) features in several Hindu stories. Explore the stories and learn why Krishna is special.

How is Krishna represented in the stories? What can you learn about Krishna from the stories?

3. Money Envelope

Diwali is a popular time for gifts to be shared, and money is often gifted in beautifully decorated envelopes. They are also traditionally used at Indian weddings, as money is the preferred gift, rather than presents.

Design and make money envelopes. Create a fact file about Diwali.

Explore further – Why is one additional coin added to the money envelope?

4. Hindu greeting Cards

Diwali is the most popular occasion for card giving. Diwali Cards often depict scenes from the story of Rama and Sita and are sent to family and friends as greetings cards during the festival of Diwali. Diwali is known as the festival of lights. It is celebrated each year between mid-October and mid-November. It lasts for five days.

Design and make own greeting cards and think about why people send cards and what they mean.

5. Mythological picture

Explore various gods and goddesses from Hindu scriptures. For Hindus, Brahman is God or the Supreme Being and they believe that this is beyond human understanding.

There is not one representation of God, but an understanding that it is multiple concepts at the same time. For this reason, Hindus worship many different deities (gods and goddesses). Shiva, also known as 'The Destroyer of Evil', is often shown with a third eye to represent his wisdom. Hindus believe that Shiva destroys the evil within the universe so that it can be recreated.

Lakshmi is one of the most popular goddesses of Hindu mythology and is known as the goddess of wealth and purity. Hindus believe that Lakshmi bestows good fortune and success upon those who work hard and seek help sincerely.

Explore further – Who are the three principal gods worshipped by Hindus?

6. Rangoli Diya Candles

The word Diwali means 'rows of lighted lamps.' In the story of Rama and Sita lamps were lit to guide them home and welcome them back. During the Diwali celebrations people light their homes and outside areas with clay diya lamps. The lighting of a diya is a symbolic action in itself; Hindus believe that by lighting a diya, you are removing the darkness and bringing in light, removing the negative energies that could be present in a space and bringing in positivity.

*Explore further what happens on each of the 5 days of the festival of Diwali.
Design and make own diya lamps out of clay.*

7. Hindu Patterns

Rangoli is a decorative folk art from India that is created on the ground during celebrations, and especially Diwali. Hindus believe that rangoli brings good luck and welcomes gods and goddesses. The details in rangoli decorations can include lotus flowers, mango leaves and geometric shapes. The elaborate designs can be made with rice, coloured sand, chalk and flower petals.

Explore further – Use online resources to show videos of rangoli patterns being created. Create rangoli patterns using chalks, coloured sand and flowers. Print own patterns onto t-shirts, bags, cloth and explore different colours and designs.

8. Hindu Figure

Ganesh is considered as the God of Intellect, Remover of Obstacles and Lord of Beginnings. Hindus pray to Ganesh when embarking on something for the first time, as they believe he bestows wisdom and good fortune. Hindus traditionally worship Ganesh and Lakshmi together at Diwali as it is believed that to have good fortune one must also acquire knowledge.

Explore further – Why is Ganesh depicted with one broken and one unbroken tusk? Can you find other stories relating to Ganesh?

Lakshmi is Goddess of Wealth and Beauty. Hindus believe that Sita is an incarnation of Lakshmi. Particularly worshipped during the festival of Diwali, Hindus believe that worshipping Lakshmi sincerely and not in greed, will bring fortune and success. It is believed that Lakshmi resides in places of hard work, virtue and bravery, but leaves when these qualities are no longer present.

Explore further – On which day of Diwali are candles lit to guide Lakshmi to Hindu's homes?

9. Henna Impressions

The booklet consists of examples of henna patterns and designs that can be copied. Henna designs are called mehndi patterns, and they are created using a paste, which is applied to the hands and feet. It is a tradition to paint bride's hands and feet in mehndi for the wedding ceremony and it is also used to celebrate Hindu festivals such as Diwali. Patterns and images can include circles, diamonds, squares, triangles and mandalas.

*Explore further – Use online resources to show videos of henna being applied.
Design own mehndi patterns.*

All About the Christian Artefacts



Contents: -

1. Crucifix
2. Icons
3. Rosary Beads
4. Wooden Crosses
5. 3x Certificates
6. St. Damien's Cross
7. Chalice and Paten
8. KS2 Lesson Openers

Please note contents may vary.

1. Crucifix

An important symbol in Christianity representing Jesus on the cross. It is a visual reminder of Jesus' sacrifice.

Discuss its symbolism and learn about the story of Easter.

2. Icons

An icon is a painting or mosaic of Jesus, Mary, a saint or a church feast. Used as an aid to devotion (prayer and worship) usually in the Christian Orthodox church. The artefacts are ideal for exploring Christian art and culture.

Learn about key symbols in Christianity and match the Christian symbol names and descriptions to the correct pictures.

3. Rosary Beads

Rosary beads are used by some Christians, particularly Catholics, as an aid for prayer. They help keep track of the prayers and remind Catholics of what prayer to say. The beads focus the mind during prayer.

Thread beads or make own beads and decorate them and then use them in mindfulness activities.

4. Wooden Crosses

Reminder of the three wooden crosses at Calvary where Jesus was crucified. Some Christians also connect the three crosses with the concept of the Trinity (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit)

Tell the story of Jesus. His love, sacrifice and hope for salvation.

5. Certificates

Learn about Christenings, baptism, weddings. Explore the meaning of symbols such as water (cleansing), white robes (new life), candles (light of God) and discuss the promises made and the meaning of the certificates.

Reenact Christenings, baptisms and weddings and create own certificates.

6. St. Damien's Cross

Also known as the San Damiano Cross or Cross of St Francis.

A symbol of renewal and rebuilding.

Read the story of Saint Francis and how he listened to God's call.

7. Chalice and Paten

Used during the Eucharist (Holy Communion) to hold the wine and bread, symbolising the blood and body of Christ.

Read and discuss the Last Supper and create a stained-glass window design or other piece of art to show this.

All About the Sikh Artefacts

Contents: -

1. Khanda
2. Kachera
3. Kesh
4. Kara
5. Kanga
6. Kirpan
7. Chauri
8. Prayer Beads

Please note contents may vary.



1. Khanda

Main symbol of Sikhism. Often found on Sikh flags and is a recognisable symbol of the Sikh faith. It consists of a double-edged sword in a circle (Chakkar) that represents God's eternity and unity. Two kirpan swords cross each side representing spiritual authority and political power.

Learn about Sikhism and the teachings of Guru Nanak.

2. Kachera

One of the five Ks. Kachera is a pair of shorts worn as an undergarment. The goal is to be modest and show cleanliness at all times.

3. Kesh

One of the five Ks. Kesh is the uncut hair of the Sikh. Hair is seen as a gift from God. Sikhs made a promise to not cut their hair but to let it grow as a symbol of faith. Sikh men often cover their uncut hair with a turban. The turban is a way of keeping it tidy.

4. Kara

One of the five Ks. Kara is a steel bracelet worn by Sikhs to represent the continuous bond with God and others. It reminds Sikhs that God has no end and no beginning and that we are all connected to God and equal in his eyes.

5. Kanga

One of the five Ks. Kanga is a comb, often worn in the hair. It symbolises cleanliness and order and reminds Sikhs to keep their lives tidy and disciplined.

6. Kirpan

One of the five Ks. Kirpan is a sword worn as a symbol of self-respect. It reminds Sikh's to stand up for what is right. Kirpan means act of kindness.

Learn about the 5 Ks and their importance to Sikh's values, beliefs and way of life.

Draw each item and match it to the correct name and description to create a poster to show what the 5 Ks represent.

7. Chauri

A type of whisk or fan used to wave over the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy book) to show respect to the sacred text. Traditionally made from yak or horse tail hair. Other symbols of respect to the Guru Granth sahib include bowing the head in the presence of it, covering your head, removing shoes and providing a room and bed for the Guru Granth Sahib to rest.

If possible, visit a Gurdwara (Sikh place of worship) and see the artefacts being used.

8. Prayer Beads

Sikh worshippers may use prayer beads (mala) while reciting verses from the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy book).

All About the Muslim Artefacts

Contents: -

1. Prayer Mat and Compass
2. Eid Cards
3. Miniature Qur'an Rack
4. Stories from the life of Muhammad

Please note contents may vary.



1. Prayer Mat and Compass

Muslims pray five times a day - dawn, midday, afternoon, after sunset and at night, so it is not always possible to do so in a mosque. Prayers are said facing towards Mecca, and if in a new or different location, the direction may be found using a compass (nowadays there are online apps too).

According to Islamic tradition, no people or animals are depicted on prayer mats. They will often have geometric patterns, flowers, pictures of a mosque or Arabic writing as part of the design.

2. Eid Cards

There are two Eid celebrations in the Muslim faith, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. Eid al-Fitr is a joyful celebration that marks the end of Ramadan. People wish each other happy Eid saying either, "Eid Mubarak" or "Eid Said". Eid al-Adha is the festival of the sacrifice and is considered the holier of the two. It is celebrated at the end of the Hajj period. Both festivals are celebrated by prayer, changing gifts and cards and sharing meals with family and friends.

3. Qur'an Rack

The Qur'an is the holy book of Islam. The Qur'an is a sacred text and should be handled with care and respect. When not in use it should be closed. It should not be placed on a floor or have anything placed on top of it. Muslims believe that people reading the Qur'an must make sure they have washed, as one of the verses says:

'...none shall touch but those who are clean...'

The book stand is known as a Rehal and is used to hold the holy book whilst reading or reciting from it. A Rehal is usually foldable and made of wood.

4. Muhammad

Explore the values of Islam and the teachings of compassion, kindness and the importance of respecting all living things. Muslims believe God sent Muhammad to teach people how to live. God revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel. Two popular stories are 'The Prophet and the Ants' and 'The Crying Camel'. These stories highlight Muhammad's compassion and teachings about caring for animals and all of creation.

5. Subha Beads

Subha beads (also known as Tasbeih) are usually made from wood, glass, plastic or gemstones. There are 99 beads in total, often with a larger bead at one end and a tassel. The subha is used in prayer to count recitations and to help concentration. Recitations are words or phrases repeated from memory. Muslims often recite the **'99 names of Allah'** touching each bead as they do so. Some examples are:

- Al-Khaaliq – The Creator
- Al-'Aleem – The All-Knowing
- Al-Baseer – The All-Seeing
- Al-Wadood – The Loving

Prayer beads are often given as gifts. They may also be carried as a comforter or to relieve stress.

Thread beads or make own beads and decorate them and then use them in mindfulness activities.

Useful Tips

- Be sensitive using religious and cultural artefacts and understand any special requirements in handling them.
- Avoid creating stereotypes and understand that not all people from the same culture may use the artefact in the same way.
- Use the appropriate language to talk about the artefacts.
- Teach the children to handle and store the artefacts with respect and sensitivity.