

Journey of Knowledge Year 8 Unit 3 – Are there any good solutions to suffering?

Context and Introduction to Unit: This unit explores the concept of suffering, a universal human experience that raises important moral, philosophical, and religious questions. Students will examine different types of suffering and how they are interpreted across religious traditions, especially Christianity and Buddhism. The unit encourages critical thinking about the problem of evil, the existence of God, and whether there can be meaningful responses to human suffering. Through philosophical inquiry, religious narratives, and ethical discussions, students will develop an understanding of how suffering impacts belief systems, individual lives, and social action.

Prior knowledge (KS2/KS3): Christianity: Students should recall beliefs about God's omnipotence, omnibenevolence, and omniscience; they may also be familiar with Biblical stories like Adam and Eve and Jesus' crucifixion as responses to human sin and suffering. **Religion, Law & Justice:** Understanding how moral and natural laws are applied and interpreted in different religious traditions and their connection to justice, punishment, and mercy. **Philosophy:** Students should understand basic ethical concepts such as free will, moral responsibility, and the problem of evil. **Sikhism:** Basic knowledge of Sikh teachings on karma, sewa (selfless service), and equality can help students relate to themes of suffering and moral duty. **Afterlife:** Students should be aware of different religious beliefs about what happens after death (e.g., heaven, reincarnation, nirvana) and how these beliefs influence views on suffering and life purpose.

The bigger picture:

*Personal development opportunities.
Career links Education, theologian,
philosophical studies, social work,
community support worker
RSE- Respect and tolerance*

CORE KNOWLEDGE

- Suffering can be categorized into physical pain, emotional distress, social hardship, and existential or spiritual struggles. Humans respond to suffering in varied ways, including seeking comfort, problem-solving, or reflecting on meaning. Understanding the type of suffering helps in providing support and developing coping strategies.
- Pandora, in Greek mythology, opened a jar (later called a box) releasing evils and hardships into the world. The story explains why suffering and misfortune exist from a cultural perspective. Hope remained in the box, suggesting that even in suffering, humans can find resilience and optimism.
- Job's story illustrates that suffering can happen to anyone, regardless of their moral behaviour. The narrative encourages faith, patience, and trust in God's larger plan. Christians interpret Job's experience as a way to understand the mystery of suffering and the importance of perseverance.
- The Problem of Evil questions how an all-powerful, all-good God can allow suffering. This can create doubt, frustration, or deep reflection among believers. Many religious followers respond by seeking meaning, practicing faith, or engaging in acts of compassion.
- The Four Noble Truths explain that suffering (dukkha) exists, has causes, and can be overcome. Suffering is linked to desire, attachment, and ignorance. Buddhist practices such as meditation and ethical living help reduce suffering and achieve spiritual insight.
- Individuals and communities take action to alleviate suffering through support, empathy, and care. Medical, social, and psychological approaches address physical and emotional pain. Efforts to reduce suffering can also include addressing systemic causes, like poverty or injustice.

RS Journey of Knowledge Year 8 Unit 1: How do Christians represent God?

Context and Introduction to Unit: In this unit, pupils will explore key beliefs, teachings, and practices within Christianity. They will learn about the origins of Christianity, the life and teachings of Jesus, Christian views about God, and the significance of major festivals and rituals. Pupils will also consider how Christians use the Bible, how the church functions as a community, and what Christians believe about the afterlife. This unit helps pupils understand how faith influences the lives of believers and the role Christianity plays in the modern world.

Prior knowledge (KS2/KS3) *Pupils will be aware of some of the main religions in the world and some religious figures associated with these religions. Pupils will understand that Christians believe in one God and follow the teachings of Jesus. Most pupils will be aware of key Biblical stories such as the birth of Jesus and the Easter story, and therefore Christmas and Easter as key Christian festivals. Most pupils will know that a church is a Christian place of worship.*

The bigger picture:

Personal development opportunities.

Career links- Education, theologian, philosophical studies, social work, community support worker

RSE- Respect and tolerance-

The importance of religion in the community and around the world

CORE KNOWLEDGE

1. Christianity began over 2,000 years ago in the Middle East, rooted in the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. It quickly spread through the Roman Empire and beyond, forming one of the world's major religions. Early followers of Jesus were known as disciples and apostles, and they spread his message after his death and reported resurrection. Despite facing persecution, Christianity continued to grow, eventually gaining legal status in the Roman Empire under Emperor Constantine. Over time, it developed into many different denominations, each interpreting Jesus' teachings in their own way.
2. The Bible is considered a sacred text and a central source of wisdom and authority for Christians. It contains teachings, laws, stories, and guidance believed to be inspired by God. The Bible is divided into two main parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. Christians use the Bible to guide moral decisions, understand God's will, and strengthen their faith. It is often read in worship, studied in groups, and quoted in both personal and public settings.
3. Christians believe in one God who exists in three persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. God is seen as all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present, and loving. This belief is known as the Trinity, and it helps Christians understand the different ways God interacts with the world. God is also described as holy, just, and merciful, showing both love and judgment. These attributes influence how Christians live, worship, and relate to others.
4. Jesus' early life included his miraculous birth to Mary, his upbringing in Nazareth, and his dedication to God's work from a young age. His baptism by John the Baptist marked the beginning of his public ministry. The Bible describes Jesus as being wise and spiritually aware even as a child, once teaching in the Temple at age twelve. His life was shaped by Jewish traditions and teachings, which influenced his later ministry. Christians believe his early life shows both his humanity and his divine purpose.
5. Jesus' final days included important events such as the Last Supper, his arrest in Gethsemane, and his trial before the authorities. These events show themes of sacrifice, forgiveness, and loyalty versus betrayal (e.g. Judas' actions). Christians believe Jesus' suffering and crucifixion were central to God's plan of salvation, leading to hope through the resurrection.
6. Christians believe that life continues after death, with the promise of heaven for those who have faith in God. They believe in judgment and resurrection, with the afterlife influenced by one's relationship with God. Heaven is often described as a place of peace and closeness to God, while some traditions also believe in hell or separation from God for those who reject Him. The afterlife encourages Christians to live good lives, follow Jesus' teachings, and treat others with compassion. Belief in eternal life gives hope and comfort in times of grief.
7. Church buildings are places where Christians gather to worship God, pray, and learn. Their design often reflects important symbols of the faith, like the cross and stained-glass depictions of Bible stories. Many churches include features such as an altar, pulpit, font, and pews to support different aspects of worship. Some church buildings are designed in the shape of a cross or point upward to symbolize reaching toward heaven. The atmosphere inside is often calm and reverent, encouraging reflection and prayer.
8. The Christian Church is more than a building; it is a community of believers who support each other in faith. Worship, prayer, service, and fellowship are central to church life. Church communities often come together to celebrate sacraments, volunteer, and care for those in need. They provide a sense of belonging and encouragement in living out Christian values. The Church also plays a role in teaching, guiding, and helping people grow spiritually.
9. Christian festivals are celebrated with a mix of religious rituals and cultural traditions. They often involve special services, songs, prayers, and symbolic actions that reflect Christian beliefs. Festivals like Easter and Christmas are important to Christians as they commemorate key events in Jesus' life, such as his birth and resurrection. These celebrations are times of worship, reflection, and community. Other festivals like Pentecost and Lent also help Christians prepare spiritually and remember important parts of their faith story.
10. Christians represent God through their community, stewardship, and belief in the Sanctity of Life. These representations help express beliefs about God's nature and presence in the world. Acts of kindness, justice, and love are seen as ways of reflecting God's character. Art, music, symbols like the cross, and stories from the Bible are also used to represent God. Christians are encouraged to live in a way that shows God's love and light to others.

Journey of Knowledge Year 8 Unit 2: 'How can we become more selfless?' A study of Sikhism.

Context and introduction to the unit: This unit explores the key beliefs of Sikhism, focusing mainly on the concept of sewa. This follows on from a unit exploring how we study religion through theological, sociological and philosophical lenses. This unit allows pupils to gain an understanding of the belief in Waheguru (theology), the actions of the gurus and how sewa affects a person's actions in daily life (sociology).

Prior knowledge (KS2 and 3): Pupils are unlikely to have explored Sikhism in

The bigger picture:

Citizenship – The unit “How can we become more selfless? A study of Sikhism” explores how Sikh beliefs and practices encourage individuals to put others before themselves. Students learn about core Sikh teachings such as Sewa (selfless service), the importance of equality, and devotion to one God. They also discover how these values are lived out in practical ways, including the Langar, Khalsa Aid, and daily life in the Gurdwara. By examining Sikh history, scripture, and traditions, learners reflect on how faith inspires selflessness and how these ideas might influence their own lives

Careers links – Education, theologian, philosophical studies, social work, community support worker

CORE KNOWLEDGE

- Sikhism was founded in the late 15th century by Guru Nanak in the Punjab region, and his teachings emphasized equality, devotion to one God, and rejection of caste divisions, later developed by nine more Gurus into a distinct religion.
- Sikhs believe in one God, Ik Onkar, who is timeless and formless, present within all creation, and they connect with God through meditation, prayer, and repeating God's name in daily life.
- The Khalsa was created by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 during Vaisakhi, when the Panj Pyare volunteered to show devotion and became the first initiates, symbolizing courage, equality, and disciplined Sikh living.
- The Guru Granth Sahib, containing hymns and teachings of Sikh Gurus and other spiritual leaders, is treated as the eternal Guru and ultimate authority, read with reverence in Gurdwaras where it is placed on a raised throne.
- A Gurdwara is a Sikh place of worship open to all, where people gather to pray, listen to readings and hymns, and also share free meals in the Langar as a way of living out equality and service.
- Sewa, meaning selfless service, is a core Sikh practice that can take the form of physical, mental, or spiritual acts, and through it Sikhs live out humility, equality, and devotion to God by helping others.
- Khalsa Aid is a Sikh humanitarian organization that provides food, water, shelter, and medical care in disasters and conflicts worldwide, helping people of all backgrounds and putting Sikh values of compassion into action.
- The Langar is a free community kitchen found in every Gurdwara, where volunteers cook and serve food as an act of Sewa, symbolizing humility and equality because everyone eats together regardless of status.
- The Golden Temple, or Harmandir Sahib, is the holiest Sikh shrine, built with four entrances to welcome people from all backgrounds, and it serves as both a place of pilgrimage and a symbol of Sikh devotion, equality, and resilience.