

# How does what you believe affect what you **CHOOSE TO EAT?**

## BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE FOR THE TEACHER

FOR  
YOUR  
EYES  
ONLY

- In several religious worldviews there are rules or principles that affect what and when people eat.
- Food laws for Jewish people are called 'kashrut'. The main laws are found in Leviticus 11:1-23, part of the Written Torah. The definition of the word 'kosher' is 'acceptable to Jewish law' and as such refers to more than just food. *Treif* is food that is not kosher. It should be noted that not all Jewish people observe all the laws of kashrut.

- Many Hindus believe that respecting all life is a principle they should follow. A key principle for Hindus is ahimsa, the law of non-violence or non-harming. This leads some Hindus to be vegetarian. The vast majority of practising Hindus do not eat beef, because the cow is considered to be sacred – the cow is revered as a symbol of all living things and of the Earth, providing milk, a giver of life. Many Hindus follow other dietary practices, such as not eating certain vegetables – onions, for example – that some consider to be impure.
- The word 'halal' refers to behaviour, and food and drink, that is permitted for Muslims. 'Haram' refers to behaviour, and food and drink, that is forbidden. In general, Muslims can eat or drink anything not prohibited by the Qur'an, which guides Islamic law in this area.

Further information on food in these three religious worldviews can be found in the imagined magazine article that pupils will use on pp. 17-19 and in the eResources. Notice that in the interviews many members of religious communities see being unable to eat certain things as a privilege rather than a problem.

This work uses a religious studies lens to explore festivals using information about food laws and practices and interviews with people who follow these religious worldviews. Pupils use reading strategies and show their knowledge through a series of writing activities to demonstrate what they know about how belief affects food choices.

This work links to RE Today units of work L2.9 What does it mean to be a Hindu in Britain today?, L2.10 How do family life and festivals show what matters to Jewish people?, U2.6 What does it mean to be a Muslim in Britain today? and U2.8 What difference does it make to believe in ahimsa?

## ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE FOR THE PUPIL

**By the end of this unit pupils should know:**

- that what many Hindus, Muslims and Jewish people eat is affected by their beliefs
- that different Hindus, Muslims and Jewish people may make different decisions about what they should or should not eat
- how many Hindus, Muslims and Jewish people make decisions about what they should or should not eat
- some foods not eaten by many Hindus, Muslims or Jewish people, and their reasons for not eating them

### Key vocabulary:

kosher, *treif*, Torah, kashrut, ahimsa, vegetarian, sacred, *goshalla*, halal, haram, Qur'an, Khalifah

## PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

In order to access the learning in this unit, pupils should have learnt about:

- some basic aspects of Islam, Judaism and the Hindu dharma
- the principle of trying to follow the guidance, ethics and rules set out by religious worldviews for many followers

## ASSESSMENT FOR 7-11s

The statements below suggest expected outcomes from this unit for 10-year-olds. Adapt them for the age of pupils you are teaching. These link to the outcomes for this series of books shown on the webpages. You may need to adapt them slightly for the syllabus or guidelines you follow.

### Expected

- Describe and explain some of the key beliefs about food in the Hindu dharma, Judaism and Islam.
- Describe some ways in which beliefs about food are shown in the way people live.
- Make connections between the laws and practices about food in different religious worldviews, explaining their importance to different people.

**This unit helps pupils in Scotland to achieve 2-04b, 2-06c, 2-09b and 2-09d.**

## ERESOURCES



Go to [www.natre.org.uk/bqic-big-questions-big-answers](http://www.natre.org.uk/bqic-big-questions-big-answers) to access the resources below:

- teacher and older-pupil information films on kosher and *goshallas*
- further information in the knowledge section of RE:ONLINE

**Members are able to download extra resources to support this unit:**

- a copy of the unit
- a PowerPoint presentation
- a full-page version of the question grid on p. 19



## Food

### ACTIVITY 1:

Bring in a selection and/or photos of food to show pupils. Ensure you include both popular and unpopular food, meat and vegetable products, organic and fair trade, and sweet and savoury. Discuss with the pupils which of these they would choose to eat or not eat, and why. Note down the reasons. If the following reasons do not come up, ask pupils if they make decisions based on: health, the environment and/or ethical beliefs.

Explain that in this unit we are going to explore how what you believe affects what you choose to eat. Share that there will be a focus on Hindus, Muslims and Jewish people, and collect what pupils already know about these religious worldviews.

## Does everyone do the same?

### ACTIVITY 3:

It is important that pupils understand that there is diversity of belief and practice within each worldview.

Show a variety of foods and ask if a Jewish, Muslim or Hindu person would be happy to eat them, and why or why not.

Next, ask pupils in their groups to look at Resource 4.2 on p. 20. Ask them to identify and describe similarities and differences within the different religious worldviews, and how what they believe affects what they choose to eat.

Now reshoot the foods from earlier and create some answers as to who eats what and why, with more use of terms such as 'some', 'many' and 'most'.



Resource 4.2

## Active reading

### ACTIVITY 2:

For these activities you will need groups of three pupils to each have a copy of Resource 4.1 on pp. 17–19. Explain that you are going to find out about the importance of beliefs regarding what people eat, involving people in three religious worldviews: Jewish, Muslim and Hindu people.

#### Summarising

Read the text on p. 17 to pupils and ask them to sum up what they have heard in one or two sentences.

Next, give the text on p. 17 to each group.

Ask them to:

- underline any words that they think someone would need to find out more about
- write no more than five sentences that summarise what they have read

#### Digging deeper

Give each group of three a copy of the three interviews on pp. 18–19. Ask each pupil to read one interview and summarise what they have found out using the question grid on p. 19. After filling in the grid, pupils explain to the rest of their group what they found out from their interview. Next, ask them to identify and describe similarities and differences between the different religious worldviews, and how what they believe affects what they choose to eat.

#### Defining

Go back to the words they underlined on p. 17. Underline any further words that require defining on pp. 18–19.

Using information gained, any books or additional resources, create a glossary of terms that could be added to the magazine article.

Ensure pupils are clear on the meaning for the key words in this section of the book: kosher, *treif*, Torah, kashrut, ahimsa, vegetarian, sacred, *goshalla*, halal, haram, Qur'an, Khalifah.



Resource 4.1

## Writing to show understanding

### ACTIVITY 4:

Below are three suggested writing activities. You can either allow pupils to choose the activity, match the activities to the age and ability of the pupil or use a writing style that links with the learning you are doing in English. Each of these tasks allows pupils to apply what they have learnt about food laws, practices and how what people believe affects what they eat. The menu-writing task may be suitable for less able or younger pupils.

#### Menu

Ask pupils to create a menu for a buffet where there will be Hindu, Jewish and Muslim people in attendance. Make sure the menu has plenty of food that everyone can eat. In the explanation they must include:

- key vocabulary from the glossary task
- on an annotated version of the menu, an explanation of why food has been excluded or included

#### Factsheet on food

Ask pupils to create a factsheet for a local food business to display in its kitchen. In the explanation they must include:

- key vocabulary from the glossary task
- an explanation of what food can or cannot be eaten by many members of these three religious worldviews
- useful labelled and/or annotated diagrams

#### Leaflet

Ask pupils to write a leaflet about food in different religious worldviews to be placed in a local library or community centre. In the leaflet they must include:

- an explanation of why some Hindus, Muslims and Jewish people eat or do not eat certain foods
- two or three examples of the decisions that a person might be faced with around food
- quotes from people who belong to the religious worldviews
- examples of foods that are or are not eaten by many who are members of these religious communities
- useful diagrams
- key vocabulary with definitions, referring to their glossary



## food and belief

**H**ow do your beliefs affect what you eat, where you eat or when you eat? We are not talking about the food that you like or do not like, but how what you believe, what is most important to you, affects whether you choose to eat a particular food. An increasing number of people are becoming vegetarian or vegan for health or environmental reasons or because of concern for animal welfare. In this article we are looking at three religious worldviews and how, for our interviewees, following these religions affects their food choices.

### How do Muslims decide what they should eat and drink?

Most Muslims believe it is their duty to look after the world as it is Allah's creation. This idea is called Khalifah. Food that can be eaten is called 'halal' or 'permitted', and food that should not be eaten is called 'haram' or 'forbidden'. For example, any meat from a pig is haram, and drinking any alcohol is also forbidden. Any animal that is used for meat must be looked after and then killed following the laws of Islam.

For some Muslims – for example, Shi'a Muslims – there may be extra foods that they consider to be haram.

### How do Hindus decide what they should eat and drink?

Decisions about what to eat for people following the Hindu dharma often start from the important Hindu concept of ahimsa. Ahimsa is all about non-violence. It is also about being caring and compassionate in their lives. Many Hindus believe that all living things come from the supreme being or Brahman and have a spark of the divine in them. For many Hindu people the idea of non-violence means respect for all living things, plants, animals and humans.

For many Hindus this means being vegetarian. Other Hindus choose to eat some fish and meat due to the Hindu tradition they follow. Other Hindus are vegetarian and also do not eat eggs, onions or garlic. Very few Hindus will eat beef as the cow has a significant place in the Hindu dharma.

### The cow

The cow is believed to be sacred and is often treated particularly well by Hindus; for example, Hindu farmers still look after cows when they no longer provide milk. There are special places set up to care for cows, called *goshallas*. Is there a *goshalla* near where you live?

### How do Jewish people decide what they should eat and drink?

Within Judaism there are a series of laws about food in the Torah; the name for these are 'kashrut'. Food that can be eaten is called 'kosher' and food that should not be eaten is called 'treif'. The majority of people who are Orthodox Jews will follow all of these food laws, but some other Jewish communities will make up their own minds about the food laws. People who are Jewish but not religious may not follow any of these rules but might still avoid some foods because they think it is part of their identity.

### Kosher food rules

Some of the main rules are:

- Only eat mammals that chew the cud and have split hooves, such as cows, goats and sheep – but not pigs.
- Only eat fish with fins and scales, such as salmon and cod – not prawns.
- There is a particular way in which animals must be killed to be kosher.
- Milk and meat products should be eaten separately; for example, a cheeseburger could not be eaten. Many Jewish people have separate crockery and cutlery for milk and meat products, and leave an amount of time between eating milk and meat products.



## How do you decide what you eat? Is what you eat similar to or different from people who follow these religious worldviews? What are the reasons for you making choices about food?

Read about a variety of people who follow these religious worldviews and how it affects what they choose to eat:



**Do your beliefs affect what you choose to eat? If so, how?**



**Ellie:** My

Judaism is as much about tradition as it is about belief, laws and practices. Keeping kosher is a very conscious part of that tradition and has framed my commitment to diet and ethical practices within that. I am now vegan, but when I did eat meat, it was always kosher and I did not eat *treif*. I had no interest in trying pork, shellfish or any other un-kosher products (which includes gelatine-based sweets and desserts), and I did not mix milk and meat. I keep a kosher home, and so do many of my close friends. It's just a way of life.

### Which beliefs affect your food choices?

Judaism forbids cruelty to animals. Laws were created 'to prevent the suffering of living creatures', and it's this notion of compassion which I buy into and has had a significant impact on choices. I feel it's about preserving and maintaining tradition as much as a lifestyle choice.

### How does this affect you in your daily life?

Keeping kosher in public is not difficult any more, especially if you live within a large Jewish community. Whilst there are plenty of kosher restaurants, regular restaurants have become more versatile in their menus; there is never a problem of suitable options. Although I would not want to eat at a well-known fast-food-style restaurant.

At home we keep milk and meat separate (different sinks, cutlery, crockery, and so on) and this is just what we do – it's a natural part of our lives. Keeping kosher is about sharing in a moral, ethical tradition which we have a responsibility to preserve and pass on to our children. It's not difficult, we think it makes sense and it's actually a privilege.



**Do your beliefs affect what you choose to eat? If so, how?**



**Zainab:** As a Muslim my beliefs

prohibit eating meat that isn't halal, meaning that there are specific guidelines of how animals are essentially slaughtered in order for the meat to be permissible to eat. Due to growing up around these rules, I choose to eat meat/foods that are halal. It is also not allowed to drink any type of alcohol.

There are different rulings for different types of Muslims, but because I am a Shi'a Muslim we also do not eat fish that don't have scales (excluding prawns and shrimp).

### Which beliefs affect your food choices?

I think because Islam is a religion with quite clear guidelines, the dietary requirements are considered to be 'basic' beliefs that a Muslim follows, which is why sometimes some non-religious Muslims would mostly eat halal foods even if they don't practise the religion. Personally my food choices are affected by the Qur'an as it states the rules of what we are and are not allowed to consume, such as we can't have pork or alcohol.

### How does this affect you in your daily life?

Halal food is not the norm in Britain, which is why it is sometimes hard to find places to eat that offer my dietary requirements. However, vegan and vegetarian options are extremely common these days, so I usually choose from them.

Alcohol, on the other hand, is drunk by many people, which makes it difficult sometimes to stay away from when it is almost everywhere and part of [people's] culture and lifestyle. I think it is part of my commitment and self-control not to drink alcohol. There are lots of social activities that don't involve drinking which I can join in with.

## Do your beliefs affect what you choose to eat? If so, how?



**Molly:** I was brought up in a traditional Hindu household. This meant that we ate a fully vegetarian diet and avoided certain vegetables – e.g. mushrooms, onions and garlic – that were considered impure. When I went away to university I experimented with my own cooking and I used onions and garlic.

I prefer to purchase organic or free-range milk and dairy products, as cows can be badly treated within the British farming industry; i.e. fed in barns and constantly milked, similar to the issue with battery-farmed chickens. This is important to me as cows are sacred to Hindus.



**Dhilan:** My mum does all the cooking in my house, so we have been brought up eating vegetarian food. My grandmother also cooks for us, and she makes traditional Indian vegetarian food. I would not choose otherwise. I also like being vegetarian as I don't like the idea of animals being slaughtered unlawfully for my food.

### Which beliefs affect your food choices?

**Molly:** I make sure that I only purchase organic milk, because of how Hindus respect the Holy Cow. From being very young we are fed cow's milk. This means that we should treat cows with respect as they provide us with our nourishment that helps us to grow. Also as some of the key images of the divine are depicted with cows: for example, Krishna is a cowherd and Shiva is shown with Nandi the bull.

Another reason that many Hindus are vegetarian is because of the law of ahimsa, which means 'non-violence'. This links to being vegetarian as it harms animals to prepare them as meat. This would also have a negative impact on a Hindu's relationship/links with the divine. We want to keep the divine happy with each of us.

**Devan:** Being vegetarian is an important part of my identity as a Hindu. It is also important to me to uphold our family traditions and values.

### How does this affect you in your daily life?

**Devan:** This means that we take a packed lunch to school that meets with what we need and like to eat. We usually try to eat in vegetarian restaurants, especially when we are with our grandmother. Lots of Indian vegetarian places can do onion- and garlic-free food. It is really annoying when our friends bring in birthday sweets, which we can't eat if they contain gelatine. We miss out on eating them with our friends.

**Dhilan:** I like to take a packed lunch to school so that they are healthy vegetarian meals. When we eat out as a family, we have to check the menus carefully and sometimes are limited in our choices. We usually choose Italian restaurants as they have more options – but I would choose South Indian restaurants most as only they have my favourite meal.

I also get a bit frustrated about not being able to share our friends' birthday sweets. We bring them home and our dad (who is not Hindu) eats them – he doesn't even buy us any in return!



The three most important things about food choices/guidance are:

Why is following food guidance important to your interviewee?

Name of interviewee

Three important words or ideas and their meanings:

Three questions I would like to ask:

# DIVERSITY WITHIN WORLDVIEWS

**Not everyone who follows a particular religious or non-religious worldview believes the same thing, and their beliefs often affect how they live their lives in different ways. Our magazine article (Resource 4.1) showed some things that are important to many Jewish, Muslim and Hindu people. Below are three different people who follow these religious worldviews.**

Read their answers to the questions and see where they are the same as or different from the people you have already learnt about.

Sarah, who is Jewish, said:

**Do your beliefs affect what you choose to eat? If so, how?**

I was raised in a strictly kosher household and I understood that is how life should be. Eating kosher was a rule in my religion. I now do not keep fully kosher – my home is kosher but I eat non-kosher meat outside of the home. I still choose not to eat anything that cannot be kosher: e.g. bacon, prawns.

**Which beliefs affect your food choices?**

I believe I still keep to some religious rules as this is what I grew up with – it is what I know and what I was taught to be true for my family and those who follow Judaism. Now I'm an adult, I see that Judaism encompasses many different aspects and I choose not to eat foods that are not kosher.

**How does this affect you in your daily life?**

I am lucky that this doesn't affect my daily life as there is always a choice.

Tahir, who is Muslim, said:

**Do your beliefs affect what you choose to eat? If so, how?**

My beliefs definitely affect my food choices because Islam prohibits certain foods, so I try to align my food choices with those rulings.

**Which beliefs affect your food choices?**

The belief that certain foods are haram – not permitted – and that certain foods are blessed affects my food choices.

**How does this affect you in your daily life?**

It doesn't really affect home life apart from the fact that we buy groceries and meat that are halal. We are really lucky that where we live makes that possible.

When planning to go out to eat with friends, we would usually enquire about whether the food is halal before going. Some of my friends who are Muslim do not follow the rules in the same way as me. I read ingredients really carefully to avoid things like animal gelatine (it is in some sweets), but not all my friends do.

Talitha, who is Hindu, said:

**Do your beliefs affect what you choose to eat? If so, how?**

I was brought up in a relaxed Hindu household, where we were open with the food choices we made. However, eating beef was prohibited due to cows being a sacred animal and representative of dharma, and being associated with deities like Krishna. After moving out of my family home and moving to university, I didn't want to eat beef, and still choose not to.

**Which beliefs affect your food choices?**

I have inherited my mum and grandmother's traits with being givers of food. I believe this is a strong tradition in Hindu religion, being 'givers'. During my childhood, my friends would always leave our home being well fed and sometimes even went home with a doggy bag. I love hosting dinner parties and cooking, and I believe food makes your soul happy. Also, a personal choice, I have reduced my intake of red meat and pork – not necessarily for religious reasons but for personal preference for health and well-being reasons. I still don't eat any beef.

**How does this affect you in your daily life?**

Hinduism heavily focuses on nourishing your mind and body. Therefore, the food and lifestyle choices that I make will have an impact on my way of life no matter how little or big they are.

