

This is a new section where we look at some of the usual substantive content of RE – in this book: Christmas, and for older pupils: what influences people's dress – from the perspectives of different disciplines. This 'multidisciplinary RE' section introduces pupils to the questions, methods and findings of religious studies and sociology. Each term we will use real academics, and the pupils will get to know them as our lead investigators. In this book, our lead investigators are Dr Chris Cotter and Dr Rachael Shillitoe.

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY RE:

Introduction for teachers

Religious studies studies religion! This includes myths, rituals, values, lifestyles, practices and beliefs, for example, in the past and today. It extends to studying non-religious contexts too. We ask lots of questions, such as questions about beliefs in gods and what it means to be (non)religious, and about links between religion, behaviour and how people decide what is right and wrong.



DR CHRIS COTTER

Sociology is all about people's everyday lives. We look at individual people, groups and organisations. We look at how our society makes a difference in our lives and how the world around us changes. We like to talk to people, asking lots of questions. We observe people, looking for patterns to find out why they do what they do.



DR RACHAEL SHILLITOE

Introducing RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Religious studies is an exciting academic field. It involves many different methods of study, and focuses on many areas of human experience, all around the world and through history. It is very diverse, but it all focuses on a central concept: religion.

In everyday life (and in RE), we have a basic idea of what religion is. This usually includes a belief in gods or higher beings, combined with a community, worship practices, a central text and systems of rules and guidelines on behaviour.

When we look closely, we see that not all traditions have these same features. Some are important to one tradition but not at all to another tradition. Some do not have gods, key texts or structures of leadership. Also, not all followers stick to official teachings.

So, we have to look at what it is that makes something a religion, and why. We do this by looking at how religions have been practised in the past and today. We notice, for example, that our everyday idea of 'religion' uses Christianity as its model. So, we ask: is that model fair and right for looking at other religions? People are starting to say no.

We are not trying to find out if a religion is 'true' or not, but about how religion (and non-religion) works and its impact. We ask questions, looking at religions carefully, examining what we find and comparing with other religions. We do not answer the questions as if we are members of the religion (even if we are, but as someone who looks at the evidence from an investigator's point of view. We use different research methods – from interviews and questionnaires to textual analysis and art history – to find answers, depending on our questions.

Dr Chris Cotter

Introducing SOCIOLOGY

Sociologists are interested in society. We look at individuals, groups and organisations that make up society. We ask questions about people's everyday lives, and how they experience each other and the world around them.

We also ask big questions about how society is structured, how it works and how it changes. We are interested in how individuals create and shape the world around them, and, in turn, how society (and its parts) affects the daily lives of individuals.

Sociologists look at lots of different topics. We look at things like crime, gender and sexuality, inequalities and race. We look at things like religion and social class. Often these interests overlap, and we think about how all these things connect and affect each other. For example, a sociologist looking at inequalities would also think about gender, race and social class.

Sociologists of religion are interested in all these things. We want to know about people's day-to-day lives, but also look at the bigger picture and see what whole populations think and do. Sociologists of religion ask people questions about their beliefs or practices. We ask what their experiences of religion have been like and how has that shaped who they are. For example, if you were brought up in a religious family and attended a faith school, did this affect your belief, attitudes and identity, and if so, how?

Sociologists use different ways to learn about this. We ask people directly, using interviews and questions, or by spending time with them to find out lots of detail about how they live. We also use surveys and questionnaires so they can ask more people and get a better idea about how large groups act, think and feel about things.

Dr Rachael Shillitoe

How do people celebrate Christmas?



BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE FOR THE TEACHER



In this unit of work, pupils will get the opportunity to investigate the question 'How do people celebrate Christmas?' in two different ways.

Firstly, pupils will take a religious studies approach to answering the question. They will meet our religious studies expert Dr Chris, who says that this discipline is (not surprisingly) about studying religion and religions.

While answering the question in the role of religious studies experts, pupils will find out about how Christmas is celebrated, by looking at pictures of people celebrating both at home and in church, and by researching using a page from a non-fiction book.

Pupils then move on to taking on the role of sociologists. Our resident sociologist is Dr Rachael, who explains that sociology is about how people live in relationship with each other and in wider society.

In their role as sociologists, pupils will examine data about how the UK population celebrates or does not celebrate Christmas, analyse statements given by individuals on how they personally celebrate, and finally design and carry out their own survey.

Pupils are encouraged to answer the question 'How do people celebrate Christmas?' through the lens of religious studies, and later answer it again through the lens of sociology. This provides them with a basis for understanding the strengths of each discipline when investigating questions in RE lessons.

This links to RE Today unit of work L2.5 Why are festivals important to religious communities?

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE FOR THE PUPIL

By the end of this unit pupils should know:

- people can study the celebration of Christmas using different disciplines
- religious studies can allow us to look at evidence in order to find out how Christians celebrate at Christmas; we do not answer RE questions about Christmas from the point of view of a Christian when we look through a religious studies lens
- sociology can tell us about how society works – we can look at large groups of people (such as data on how Christmas is celebrated in the UK), or even individual subjects

Key vocabulary:

religious studies, sociology, Christmas, nativity, advent, crib service



PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

In order to access the learning in this unit, it would be useful for pupils to have prior knowledge of:

- the nativity story
- practices of Christians at Christmas.

ASSESSMENT FOR 7-9s

The statements below suggest expected outcomes from this unit for 9-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

- Recognise that you can study the celebration of Christmas in different ways.
- Describe two different answers to 'How do people celebrate Christmas?' by a religious studies expert and a sociologist.
- Identify some differences in how people celebrate Christmas.
- Describe how the way people celebrate Christmas might show something about their beliefs.
- Raise important questions and suggest answers about how far the Christmas celebration practices studied might make a difference to how pupils think and live.

This unit helps pupils in Scotland to achieve RME 0-03a, 1-03a, 1-03b and 2-03b.



ERESOURCES

Go to www.natre.org.uk/bqic-big-questions-big-answers to access the resources below:

- images for the whiteboard of Dr Rachael and Dr Chris
- more detailed investigator profiles of Dr Chris and Dr Rachael
- short clips of Dr Chris and Dr Rachael introducing the tasks
- links to extra information about crib services
- further pages for the information book used in Step 2 (Resource 5.2)
- short films of UK residents explaining how they celebrate Christmas
- inference squares for Step 1 (Resource 5.1)

Members can also access a pupil booklet to guide pupils through their learning.

Being a religious studies investigator

STEP 1

Introducing Religious Studies

Introduce pupils to Dr Chris using the introduction and picture from p. 19 and the short online clip.

Ensure pupils understand that he is a religious studies expert, so whenever he tries to answer questions linked to religion, he will do so by looking at particular religions carefully and examining what he finds. He does not answer the question as if he is a member of the religion (even if he actually is part of that religion in real life), but as someone who looks at the evidence from an investigator's point of view.

Explain that pupils are going to be religious studies investigators today and try to answer a question in

exactly the same way as Dr Chris would. The question they are answering is 'How do people celebrate Christmas?' To do this, they will start by looking at pictures of people celebrating Christmas both at home and at church.

In groups, give pupils an A3 version of one of the inference grids (online Resource 5.1). Ask pupils to look at the central pictures and then fill in the box closest to them with their observations. Once finished, pupils should make educated guesses about the pictures to fill in the next rectangle. The outer box should be filled in last and is for any questions they have regarding the pictures – do give pupils help with finding the answers to these.

STEP 2

Celebrating at home and at church

Explain that while looking at pictures is one way of finding out information about a religion or worldview, another method that a religious studies expert might use is researching from sources; for example, by using information books or watching films that give facts. They may note what things are done by religious and/or non-religious people.

Ask pupils to look at the page about Christmas from an information book (Resource 5.2 and with a further page in online Resource 5.2A). Pupils should see if they can each find two facts that are new to them about how Christmas is celebrated at home, and one about how it is celebrated in church.

Refer to the part of Resource 5.2 that talks about nativity or crib services. If pupils do not know about nativity/crib services, share a selection of the clips in the links in eResources.

Ensure pupils are confident with the ideas that:

- the service can come in many forms
- services are generally aimed at/very welcoming to children
- the story of Jesus being born will usually be retold, and at some point the attendees will watch the baby Jesus being laid in a crib

Ask pupils to work in groups to plan a crib service for a local church. Although there is lots of freedom in how they decide to run the service, pupils should ensure that the key elements are included. Ideas can be presented in a range of ways, including:

- developing an e-book
- storyboarding the service using a comic-strip creator app
- scripting the service
- creating a film of the service they have created

As an alternative or extra activity, pupils could research Christingle services and create an extra section for the information book. Ensure they include a labelled picture of a Christingle showing the meaning of each of the different parts.

STEP 3

Religious studies investigator findings

Ask pupils to think back to the pictures they used in Step 1 and the information they found in Step 2.

They should use their learning from these two activities alone to answer the question 'How do people celebrate Christmas?' You could give them some sentence-starters to support their responses. Save these answers for Step 7.

CHRISTMAS INFORMATION BOOKLET

Lots of people celebrate Christmas, whether or not they are Christians themselves. Read this page to find out more about how Christmas is celebrated in the UK. Think about what things are Christian, and what are also secular (non-religious).

Christmas at church



There are many different types of church in the UK and most of them celebrate Christmas. They do not all celebrate in exactly the same way. Here are some of the things that may happen:

Advent: *advent* means 'arrival of something important'. At Christmas, many Christians remember the arrival on earth of Jesus. From four Sundays before Christmas Day, people begin to prepare for Christmas – the day when Jesus' arrival is celebrated. An advent wreath is often lit in church. It has four candles on the outside (one is lit on each Sunday leading up to Christmas), and one in the middle that will be lit on Christmas Day.

Reading from the Bible: parts of the Bible that are read in church at this time of year will often talk about the birth of Jesus.



Midnight Mass: some churches hold a service after sunset or near to midnight on Christmas Eve so that everyone can look forward to Christmas and celebrate together.

Christmas at home



Nativity plays: many families will have children who take part in nativity plays in the weeks before Christmas. These plays tell the story of the birth of Jesus.

Dinner: lots of people really enjoy a big Christmas dinner!

Gifts: there are many reasons why gifts are given at Christmas. In the Bible, the wise men give gifts to the baby Jesus. Christians often describe Jesus as 'God's gift to the world', so his birth is remembered by the giving and receiving of gifts.

Christmas message: for about the last 100 years, a speech from the King or Queen has been given on Christmas Day. It talks about the main things that have happened since last Christmas, and important ideas for everyone to think about. Lots of people in the UK, whether Christian or not, watch these speeches on television on the afternoon of Christmas Day.



Nativity or crib services

Many churches have nativity or crib services to tell the story of Jesus' birth. As lots of children attend these services, they are often quite imaginative and fun so that everyone can enjoy and take part.

They might include:

- dressing up as characters from the nativity story
- acting out the story
- singing songs about Jesus' birth
- watching a figure of Jesus being placed into a crib
- prayers
- wishing everyone a happy Christmas ... and much more!



Carols

Carols are songs sung at Christmas. Their lyrics are about the birth of Jesus and often show Christian beliefs about it, just like these:

Joy to the World; the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King!
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room.
And Heaven and nature sing.
(Isaac Watts)

Although you might think that carols are often sung in church, when Christmas carols were first popular they were more likely to be sung in homes.

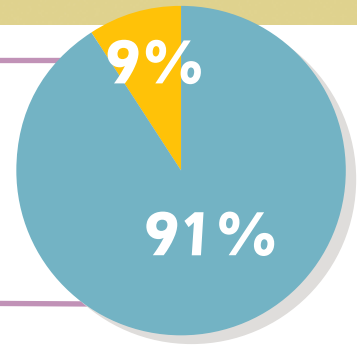


HOW DO PEOPLE CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS?

In 2016 a survey showed how many people celebrated Christmas:

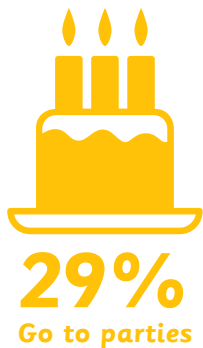
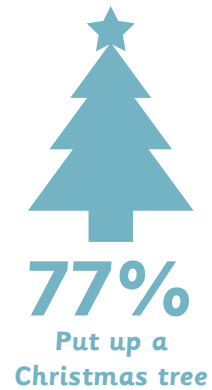
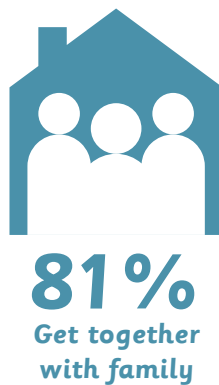
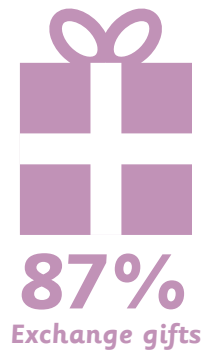
91 per cent celebrated Christmas, 9 per cent didn't. This survey asked 2,022 adults (people over 18), representing the population of England, Scotland and Wales.

Source: humanism.org.uk/2016/12/16/friends-family-food-and-giving-the-real-meaning-of-christmas-revealed/
used by permission of Humanists UK



In 2020, lots of people in the UK were asked about Christmas. Here's how they answered some questions:

What do you usually do for Christmas?



This survey asked 2,169 people aged 16+, representing all adults in the UK.

Source: yougov.co.uk/topics/philosophy/articles-reports/2020/12/29/how-britons-celebrate-christmas-and-easter
YouGov, by permission

60%

41%

A different survey in 2018 asked what people like doing at Christmas.

Along with some of the same ideas as the other survey, people also said they like:

singing carols (60 per cent)

watching Christmas adverts (41 per cent)

Source: yougov.co.uk/topics/lifestyle/articles-reports/2018/12/24/britains-favourite-things-about-christmas-family-f
YouGov, by permission

Being sociologists for a day

STEP 4A

A sociological approach

Now introduce pupils to Dr Rachael Shillitoe (see p. 19). Explain that as a sociologist, it is important that Rachael looks at society, how people live together and the relationship between people and the world around them.

Ultimately sociologists try to understand how society works, the institutions and relationships that make up society and the individual experience.

Tell pupils that they are going to be sociology investigators, part of Rachael's team. They are going to try to answer the question 'How do people celebrate Christmas?', but this time are going to try answering it as a sociologist might, by looking at people and groups of people in our society. Play the clip of Dr Rachael explaining their task (see eResources).

STEP 4B

Looking at some data

Explain that some people have collected information to help us to understand the number of people who celebrate Christmas in this country. Tell pupils that we have around 67 million people in Britain (help them understand this by putting it in a relevant context; for example, how many times the amount of people in your nearest town).

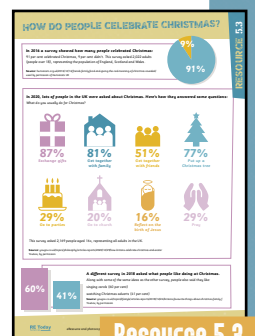
Ask pupils to discuss and predict how many people in Britain celebrate Christmas. Reveal that it is just under 61 million people (and show this as 91 per cent on the diagram), which is actually far more than the number of people in this country who are actually Christian. This also means that just over 6 million people (9 per cent) do not celebrate Christmas.

Ask pupils to predict how many people in Britain say that at Christmas they usually:

- exchange presents (87 per cent)
- go to church (20 per cent)
- reflect on the birth of Jesus (22 per cent)
- put up a Christmas tree (77 per cent)

Share the infographic Resource 5.3 with groups or the whole class and read the data to find out the answers.

What information in the infographic was surprising?



Resource 5.3

Investigating some real people

STEP 5

Put pupils into small groups and explain that they are going to look at individual people now rather than all the people in Britain.

Assign each pupil in a group a different character from Resource 5.4 or from one of the short films (see eResources for the film link).

Ask them to find out:

- what religious or non-religious worldview this person holds
- if he or she celebrates Christmas, and if yes, how
- what he or she says is most important at Christmas

Pupils should share their findings with the rest of their group. Discuss the similarities and differences noticed in the people's practices and points of view.



STEP 6

A survey

Pupils have already looked at some information about Christmas for everyone in Britain and what is important about Christmas for some individuals. Another way of working used by sociologists is to ask your own questions and analyse the results. Look together at some sample questions that pupils might choose to ask about how people celebrate Christmas from the questionnaire in Resource 5.5.

SURVEY DESIGNERS

What is the purpose of your survey?

What are the questions you want to ask?

What are the results?

Thank you for completing this survey.

Resource 5.5

Ask pupils to formulate a set of five questions that they would like to ask people about how they celebrate Christmas. At least four should have multiple-choice answers. The options they choose will be very important, and you could exemplify this with a question with poor choices that only work for religious people; for example, 'What is your favourite Christmas activity: Christingle service, church on Christmas Day, reading the nativity story, lighting the advent candle?'

Once the survey is finished, pupils should pose the questions to a group of people. This should include adults, children, Christians and those who are not Christian. Results for multiple-choice questions should be recorded via tally charts. For any question that is not multiple-choice, pupils should capture the response in full (the respondent or pupils may write it down, verbal responses can be recorded electronically, etc.).

Once pupils have completed their survey, it is time to analyse the results. For each tally chart, pupils should write one sentence stating what their results show them (it will be a good idea to model one or two of these first, and some pupils may benefit from seeing the data in another form, such as a bar chart).

For any other question, pupils should look through the answers – are there any patterns that they can see? Do lots of people give similar information in their response? Are all of the responses different? Once pupils have made a finding, they can write their sentence. Give pupils some sentence-starters to support their writing.



STEP 7

Summing it up

Ask pupils to focus solely on what they learnt from the activities in steps 4, 5 and 6. Just using this knowledge, they should record their answer to 'How do the people we have looked at celebrate Christmas?' and save this for Step 8.

STEP 8

Religious studies? Sociology? Both?

Pupils should compare their two answers to the question 'How do people celebrate Christmas?' Ask and gather opinions on: does one answer give you more information than the other? Does one answer the question better than the other? What would happen if you only tried to answer the question through being a religious studies expert and not a sociologist? What would happen if you only tried to answer the question by being a sociologist and not a religious studies expert? Is knowing both sets of answers more helpful than if we only had one set of answers?

Remind pupils of the activities they carried out in the role of religious studies experts and those that they did as sociologists in order to answer 'How do people celebrate Christmas?' Put three signs around the room: 'Religious studies', 'Both together' and 'Sociology'. Pupils should walk to the sign that shows the method they think is best when it comes to answering questions in RE, and should be prepared to justify and debate their answers.

HOW WE CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS

Hi, I'm Anton and I love Christmas! All of my family are Christian, so we enjoy celebrating Christmas together. We have lots of decorations up, a huge tree, and my mum cooks the most amazing turkey. For us, Christmas is all about being with our family.



My name is Jaya. We don't celebrate Christmas at all because we are Hindu, not Christian. I love Christmas time because all my friends and neighbours are busy, so it is very peaceful in my house. The peace and quiet is very relaxing.



Cameron here! Christmas is time for a well-deserved rest with my friends and family. I don't have a religion, but I still think it is fun to celebrate Christmas. Most people in my country celebrate Christmas, even if they are not Christian ... and so do I! The delicious food and drink is one of my favourite parts of the Christmas season. But the very best bit is being able to give presents to my friends and family. It's brilliant to watch their faces as they open their gifts.



Hi, I'm Grace. Christmas is an important time for me because I get to think about and celebrate the birth of Jesus. I go to church most Sundays, but I especially enjoy going there on Christmas Day. It helps me think about what Jesus' birth means to me as a Christian. When I give my family presents, it reminds me that Jesus is God's gift to the world.



I'm Promise. Christmas is a time when I go to church with my family. I go at Easter too, but don't go to church during the rest of the year. It's a time when we think about Jesus and are really grateful for him – that's what Christmas is all about for us! After our special lunch on Christmas Day, my family always sits together in front of the TV to watch the Queen's Christmas message.



Hello, I'm Vivek. Even though my family are Hindu, we always have some celebrations at Christmas time. I think most people do. We put up some decorations in our house to make it look really pretty and eat lots of delicious food. Celebrating and sharing food and gifts with family and friends is important because they are ways of letting others know that you care about them. Also, the programmes and films on TV at Christmas are normally brilliant!



SURVEY DESIGNERS

You are going to ask five people about how they celebrate Christmas. To do this, you can design a survey with questions on it. Here are some questions that you might ask:

1 Is Christmas important to you?

Yes	No	Don't know

2 What do you do to get ready for Christmas?

Sing Christmas carols	Wrap presents	See the advent wreath in church	Watch a nativity play	Go to a party	Go shopping	None of these

3 What do you do on Christmas Day?

Spend time with family	Go to church	Nothing special	Eat Christmas dinner	Something else

4 What do you think about on Christmas Day?

Giving and receiving presents	What I can watch on television	Jesus being born	How lovely it is to relax	None of these

5 What is the most important thing about Christmas for you?

Thank you for
answering
this survey

Design a similar survey. Make sure that lots of the questions give a choice of answers, just like questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 here.