

What do different religious and non-religious worldviews say about how we should treat our environment?

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE FOR THE TEACHER

FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

- The Christian creation story in the first chapter of Genesis contains the idea that God gave humans dominion over the created world. Some Christians now interpret this as them being asked to be stewards of the world.
- Tikkun olam means 'healing the world' – this Jewish concept does not only refer to environmental issues but also to social justice issues.

- Tu B'Shevat is the new year for trees. It takes place on the fifteenth day of the Jewish month of Shevat. It reminds Jewish people of the importance of the land. This festival of love for trees reminds Jewish people of their story of a people who lived off the fruit of the land.
- It is a festival where trees are planted and fruit is eaten – a reminder of the responsibility to look after the land for future generations.

People who hold both religious and non-religious worldviews have had their ideas about the world we live in and the climate emergency challenged over recent years. This has led to a rethinking of the meaning and significance of some sacred texts by some people, and also a call to action to protect the world; perhaps due to a concern about God's creation being destroyed, or a role that people feel they have as stewards of the natural world, or as a way of protecting the world for future generations.

In this unit we explore through story, celebrations and actions what some people do to look after the world and what influences them to behave in that way. Pupils consider their own environmental actions; consider stories from Christianity and Judaism that for some lead to a desire to care for the environment; create persuasive poster art; and explore the festival of Tu B'shevat via story and taste.

This learning links to RE Today units of work 1.8/1.9 How should we care for others and the world and why does it matter?

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE FOR THE PUPIL

By the end of this unit pupils should know:

- many people from different religious and non-religious worldviews want to look after the environment because of their beliefs and values
- many Christians believe it is important to look after the world because it is good
- the festival of Tu B'shevat helps many Jewish people to think about looking after the world
- lots of people with a non-religious worldview work hard to protect the planet

Key vocabulary:

world, creation, Tu B'shevat, environment

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

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

- the story of creation from Genesis in the Bible
- the idea that people hold different beliefs and have different ideas about things that are important to them

ASSESSMENT FOR 5-7s

The statements below suggest expected outcomes from this unit for 6-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

- Identify and describe a core Christian belief about looking after the world.
- Give a clear, simple account of what the festival of Tu B'shevat might show about the beliefs of many Jewish people.
- Give examples of ways that Christian/Jewish and/or non-religious people put their beliefs about looking after the world into action.
- Think, talk and ask questions about their own ideas about looking after the world and whether these are the same as the ideas they have been learning about.

This unit helps pupils in Scotland to achieve RME 0-04a, 0-06a, 1-02a, 1-04a, 1-04c and 1-05a.

ERESOURCES



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

- a tally chart/pictogram (Resource 3.1)
- links to Christian and Jewish green charities and organisations
- an animated version of the story on Resource 3.3
- information on eating fruit at Tu B'shevat
- links to some suitable Spirited Art entries to use in Activity 6

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

- a PowerPoint presentation
- a copy of this unit to download



ACTIVITY 1

Looking after the world around you

Ask the pupils if they do anything to look after the world around them. Collect up their ideas. Show them the chart in online Resource 3.1. You can make it a tally chart or a pictogram.

Your own idea	
Reducing plastic	
Not wasting things	
Composting	
Litter-picking	
Recycling	

Images: Marina Akinina, Antonov Maxim, ArtMarkova/Shutterstock

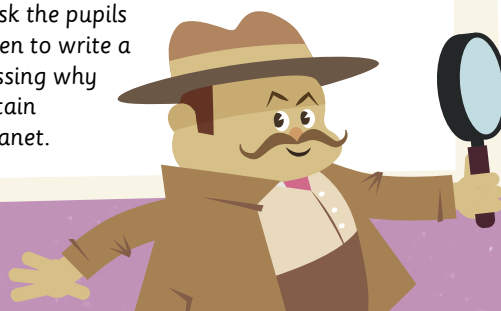
Fill in this chart with your class. Notice that there is space for an idea that came from your pupils. Give each child a speech bubble to write why they do (or do not do) each of the actions on the chart. Encourage them to explain why these actions are or are not important for them.

Introduce the four children from different religious and non-religious worldviews in Resource 3.2. Read about each of them.

Ask:

- Do some of them do the same things to look after the world as your class?
- Do they do these things for the same or different reasons?
- Do some of them have the same ideas as your class?

Add them to your chart. Ask the pupils to choose two of the children to write a speech bubble from, expressing why they do (or do not do) certain actions to look after the planet.



ACTIVITY 2

God's good earth

Remind the pupils of the creation story at the beginning of the Bible. Ensure they know that lots of Christians think that this story means they should look after the world. Some Christians think this is exactly how the world was made, but many more believe it was a way of explaining the beginning of the world before anyone knew how it began.

Recap a simplified version of the story of creation (Genesis 1). Get the pupils to notice or join in with the text repeated at the end of each part of the story: 'God said, it was good'.

Ask the pupils:

- What do you think the story says God thought was good?
- Do you think Dexter and Grace would agree with your ideas?

Set up a conscience alley: first, put pupils in groups of seven. One of the pupils will walk through three children on either side, facing each other. One side is the Good side and one side is the Bad side. As one pupil walks through the alley, the first pupil on the Good side says something that's good about the world today, then the first pupil on the Bad side says something that's bad about the world today, and so on. In their groups, the pupils create a 'Good and Bad' collage about the state of the earth today. Talk about these in circle time and see what the class agree about.

Ask the pupils:

- Who or what can make the world more beautiful again?
- What might Christians think they should do to look after and improve the world and make it better?
- Why might they want to do this?

ACTIVITY 3

Persuading other people

Explain that looking after the environment is so important to Grace that she wants other people to do the same. Create a poster that Grace might create for her school or church to persuade people to do some of the same things as her. Can the pupils remember what she does? Go back to Resource 3.2 to remind them of her actions and why she does them.

Make sure the poster:

- gives clear ideas of what people can do to be more 'green'
- uses pictures and words to show the ideas
- shows why Grace thinks it is important as a Christian to do these things

After they have finished their poster, ask pupils:

- Might Dexter and Cameron make a poster like this? Why? Why not?
- If either of them did, how might it be different?

ACTIVITY 4

A story from Tu B'shevat

Explain to pupils that for Jewish people like Hannah, an important idea is looking after the world. There is even a special phrase, 'Tikkun olam', which means 'mending the world'. Re-read what Hannah says in Resource 3.2.

Ask the pupils:

- Can they see any examples of Hannah trying to 'mend the world'?

Share some information about the Jewish new year for trees, Tu B'shevat (see eResources). Explain that individuals or synagogues often go out and plant trees together as part of this festival. Ask the pupils to think about why they might do this.

Give each child a piece of paper containing five boxes. Share the story in Resource 3.3 with the pupils. Read it out in five chunks. After each chunk, ask the pupils to draw a quick sketch in one of the boxes. Once you have finished the story, ask them to retell their story to their partner.

Either as a class, or (for older or more able pupils) in groups, answer the questions in the speech bubbles in Resource 3.3 in numerical order.

ACTIVITY 5

Fruity flavours

Explain to pupils that for Jewish people like Hannah, Tu B'shevat does not only mean planting trees. It is also an opportunity to try different fruits, particularly those that are plentiful in Israel.

Explain to the pupils that in Hannah's family they try to eat a fruit that they have not eaten in the past year. Some of Hannah's friends do different things, such as eating fruits that are mentioned in the Torah or associated with Israel, like pomegranate, grapes, olives, dates, wheat, barley and figs. In the eResources, you can find lots more about traditions linked to fruit at Tu B'shevat from a variety of Jewish communities around the world to share with your pupils.

Bring in some of the fruits mentioned above and challenge the pupils to eat one they have not had before. As the pupils eat them, explain how long it took before that tree developed fruit. For some Jewish people, eating the fruit is a reminder of the seeds in the fruit and how they make new plants that will grow fruit for people in the future.

Ask pupils to draw the fruit they have eaten and write next to it: 'I think Jewish people eat fruit at the new year for trees because ...'

Discuss with the pupils how eating the fruit, planting the trees and having a whole festival day focused on the environment might affect a Jewish person's beliefs, ideas and actions.

ACTIVITY 6

An artistic response

Show pupils some Spirited Arts responses to the 2020 competition category 'God's good earth'. See the suggested links in eResources, but there are a variety of pieces of work on the website that you could show to your pupils.

Ask the pupils to explain:

- What they can tell about the pupil's worldview, and ideas about how we should treat the environment, from their artwork and words?

Finally, ask the pupils to create a piece of art and writing that could be an entry for the competition that shows either what Hannah (Jewish worldview), Grace (Christian worldview) or Cameron (non-religious) might create for the competition.

The art and write-up should show how the child's particular beliefs and ideas have affected the work created.

Compare the artworks and writing created by the class. Discuss:

- What are the similarities and differences between the work?
- If you created a piece of art would yours be similar or different? Why?



Nature has continued
Poppy, Berro
CE Primary School



Sea Turtles
Ange, Beau, Jacob,
Joel, Noah, Theo,
Lilly, Nathan
of St Botolph's
CE academy

OUR GREEN IDEAS

Grace

My name is Grace. I am 8 and I am a Christian. We go to church every week. I'm part of my church, which is called Greenlight. We think that God wants us to look after the world and if we don't do it now it will be ruined forever. We do loads of things to show the other people in our church how important this is, like making little films and writing prayers. We even bought fully recyclable takeaway cups for the church café.

In our group we think we are part of the creation of God and need to protect it because we have not looked after it in the past. We have solar panels on our house and try and grow lots of our own food at the allotment. We even take our old vegetables, fruit and teabags to make compost to help the plants grow. In the garden we have a bug hotel and feed the birds. We arrange litter-picks at the local park and I help run the eco club at school. We won an award from *First News* for collecting crisp packets to be recycled, raising money for the hospital.

For Christmas this year my mum made a reusable advent calendar and our church group did a Secret Santa of homemade things – it was great. My dad got a homemade candle and I got some homemade sweets.



Dexter

My name is Dexter and I am 7. My mum says our family is Christian. We celebrate Christmas and sometimes I go to Church for weddings or with my granny.

I have a packed lunch at school and every day my sandwiches are wrapped in cling film. I try to put it in the right bin, but sometimes when I am in a hurry it is easier to put it in the food waste bin. I think the eco club probably sort the waste, so I don't think it matters too much when I forget.

Hannah is my best friend and she is really good about doing the right thing to look after the environment. I suppose I think I should be better at looking after the world because I really like seeing the birds on my way to school. I would hate it if the rubbish on the playground was eaten by them.



Hannah

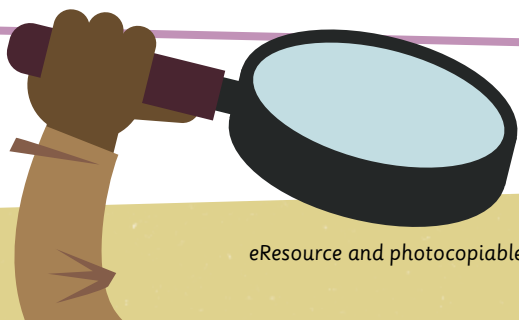
Hi, I am Hannah. I am 7, and being Jewish is really important in my family. We celebrate all the festivals and sometimes go to the synagogue too.

I live on the edge of the city and I worry about all the pollution from the cars. It makes me cough. My religion teaches us that we need to look after the world – repair it from the things we have done to it. This is called '*Tikkun olam*'. We even have a special festival for planting trees every year. I think God wants us to look after this world, so I try really hard not to waste things. At Hannukah my presents were in pretty brown paper that my dad had drawn pictures on, with no glitter or bows. At school and home I'm really careful to put things in the right bin, and I make sure I only take as much as I can eat at school dinners.

Cameron

My name is Cameron and I am 8. I think that looking after the world around us is really important. We watched the programme *Blue Planet II* on TV. I was really scared when I saw the bird feeding plastic to its chicks.

I try really hard to think about the amount of plastic I use. We use a packed lunch box with my sandwiches in reusable wrapping, and I have a reusable straw for drinks. We have lots of different bins in a drawer in our kitchen. One for rubbish, one for recycling and one for apple cores and other vegetable waste. I'm one of the eco monitors at school and I make sure people pick up litter. My mum says I have to think more about not wasting so much as I'm always throwing away paper I haven't used up.



HONI THE CIRCLE-MAKER

How long do you think it takes a tree to grow fruit?

Would the man be alive long enough to see the fruit?

Why do you think he planted the tree?

A wise rabbi was walking along a road when he saw a man planting a tree. The rabbi asked him, 'How many years will it take for fruit to grow on this tree?' The man said, 'As it is a carob tree it might take as long as 70 years.'

The rabbi asked, 'Are you so fit and strong that you expect to live that long and eat its fruit?'

The man answered, 'The trees and plants around me give me fruit and food because my grandparents and great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents planted them for me. So I will do the same for my children so they can eat from these trees.'

Adapted from Midrash (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Ta'anit 23a)

What do you think this story is about?

Why is this story important to lots of Jewish people?

What might this story encourage Jewish people to do? Is it just to plant trees, or more than that?