

Inclusive RE

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REtoday
Services

**Engaging with
Secondary RE**

Including gifted pupils in RE

For the teacher

A commitment to inclusion involves meeting the learning needs of all, including the gifted and talented (G&T) pupil in RE. The focus here takes the ideas about 'why people matter' and 'what is the self/what does it mean to be human' from varied religious and atheistic sources for learning about the concept of 'the self': what is 'self'? Should we esteem the self, as the UK culture does? Or deny and sacrifice it as the Christians say? Is the self an illusion, the Buddhists view? Should you submit the self to Allah, with the Muslims?

These pages will exemplify G&T differentiation strategies using Christian, Buddhist and Muslim examples along with some from contemporary secular culture. Page 20 offers some theoretical support to the activities.

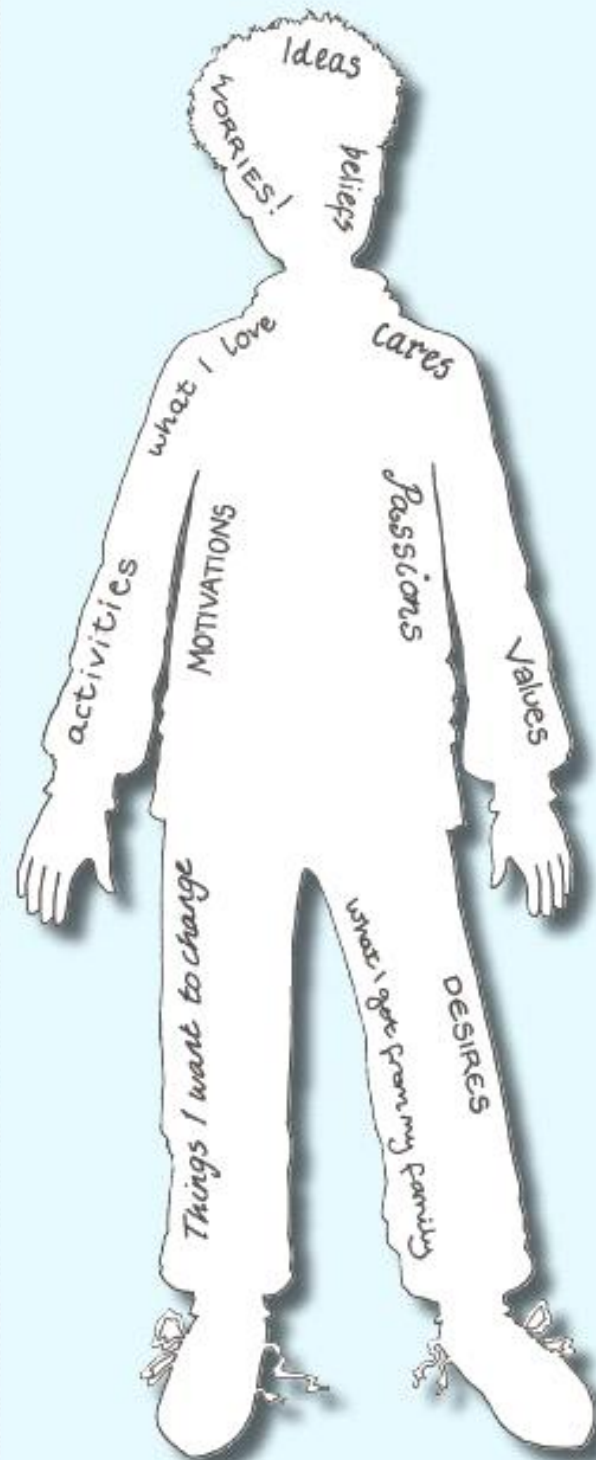
Activity 1 What makes a self?

To get pupils thinking about what we mean by 'self', ask them in pairs to complete the image in the next column, for a fictional character, by writing in all the notes and additions they can. Try: Harry Potter, Rachel from Friends, Shrek, Spiderman, Ugly Betty or whoever is current. Can learners guess who the other pairs were thinking of? Then get them to complete a 'self image' for themselves. This can be private if they wish. Discuss the idea that 'self' is hard to define, and that all selves are different.

Six opening questions

- What is the self?
- What is your identity?
- How has it been formed?
- Why do the Buddhists believe there is no self?
- Why do the Christians ask people to sacrifice themselves?
- What does it mean for Muslims to submit the self to Allah?

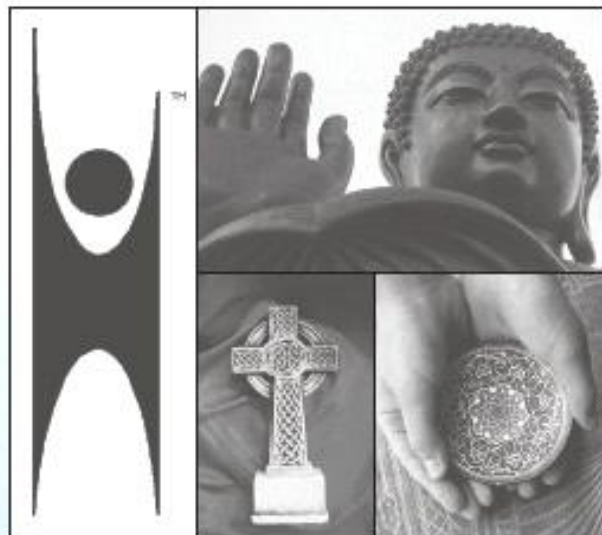
Make an image of the self



Activity 2 Compare four perspectives on 'the self'

Cut copies of this page into four cards, and make a set for each pair of pupils. Ask them to do three things with the cards:

1. Rank them 1–4 from the one that is closest to their own view to the one furthest from their perspective.
2. Note down three questions that each perspective on 'self' raises for them.
3. Think up two implications of each of these views of the self – how would it lead the Buddhist, Muslim, Christian and Humanist to behave?



'I know a monk who shaves his eyebrows. It's a way of setting aside the vain, clinging craving for physical comfort or good looks. If Paris Hilton is an example of what western society celebrates, then I think that is the opposite of what the Buddha taught. Buddhist teaching is that the self is a kind of illusion, a part of a dream. There is no 'real you', just a collection of distractions picked up along the way through life. We think so much about 'I', 'me' and 'mine' that we are fooled: this 'self' is not real at all. Everything keeps changing, all of us are fluid. There isn't a fixed "self".'

'Christians believe that the "self" or "soul" is the gift of God, but that it's been corrupted by evil or sin. We were made to be friends with God, but our bad actions have broken the friendship. God has given us great gifts – to learn, to laugh, to love, to make music, to create. But we've turned all these gifts as much into evil as into goodness. The corrupted self is all twisted up: it needs to be renewed. We believe that selfishness can be set aside, through the example of Jesus and the power of God's Spirit. Jesus taught us: live a life of love. By his power, we'll win against our own selves.'

'The Muslim tradition says that Allah has given you one life, and the purpose of life is to find Allah, and submit to Him. We are all born as worshippers of Allah, but some of us drift away to selfish ways of life. Anyone can come back to Allah. When we take our final journey – death – then this life and this "self" will seem like a dream to us. The next life, which we hope will be in Paradise, is the real thing. So we use this life as a test bed, a proving ground and a trial run, and we rely on the mercy of Allah so that we will become our true selves in the next life.'

'A Humanist is a person who believes in humanity, but not in gods or angels. Humanist ideas about the self vary. We think that science explains best what it means to be human, so we think we are evolved from other life forms. We like the idea that you can be good without God, and we love the way human ingenuity and inventiveness makes life better. We like the idea that humans can find good reasons to love the truth and love each other without any religion making or forcing them to do it.'