

Year 9 Philosophy & Religious Studies Curriculum

EXISTENTIAL QUESTIONS

THEME	EXISTENTIAL QUESTIONS		
Frequency	1 X 45 MINUTE LESSON PER WEEK		
	TOPICS	KEY ASSESSMENTS	EXTENSION ACTIVITIES THAT PARENTS CAN UNDERTAKE TO SUPPORT LEARNING
Autumn Term	<p style="text-align: center;">Challenges to Belief: Science and the Problem of Evil</p> <p>Investigating the challenge to religious belief posed by scientific theories about the origin of the universe (the Big Bang theory) and life (evolution by natural selection), and the problem of evil and suffering.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Example</p> <p style="text-align: center;">‘Religious beliefs are incompatible with scientific discoveries’ DISCUSS</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Discussions:</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Should we believe in anything that isn’t a fact? Why was the Galileo case important? Do the Big Bang and Darwinian evolution rule out the need for a creator? How should biblical creation stories be interpreted? The Copernican revolution: a greater paradigm shift than Darwin’s evolution? If our existence is a cosmic accident, can our lives hold any real meaning? Is heresy a thing of the past? Is it true that what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger? How much of the suffering in this world is man-made? Is the problem of evil an insurmountable obstacle to faith?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Wider Reading:</u> ‘<i>Sophie’s World</i>’ by Jostein Gaarder</p>
Spring Term	<p style="text-align: center;">Buddhism</p> <p>Investigating the origins and key teachings of Buddhism and its non-theistic answer to the problem of suffering.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Example</p> <p style="text-align: center;">‘Buddhism is a philosophy, not a religion’ DISCUSS</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Discussions:</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Is it better to be poor but wise or rich but ignorant? Is a beautiful lie better than an ugly truth? Is there anything that lasts forever? How might extremes be harmful? Is extreme living normalised in the western world today? What kinds of suffering are universal? Buddhists call greed, ignorance and anger the 3 poisons. Why might this be? Does suffering end when we accept things as they are?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Wider Reading:</u> ‘<i>Siddhartha</i>’ by Hermann Hess</p>
Summer Term	<p style="text-align: center;">Animal Rights</p> <p>Investigating the moral status of non-human animals in religious and non-religious ethical theories (Utilitarianism, speciesism), with focus on the use of animals in clothing, medicine, and entertainment.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Example</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“It is wrong to keep animals in captivity” DISCUSS</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Discussions:</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Is it always wrong to keep animals in captivity? How far is the use of animals for medical research justified? Animal products are often used for clothing, but where do we draw the line? Is personhood something only humans can have? What rights should we give to animals?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Wider Reading:</u> ‘<i>Watership Down</i>’ by Richard Adams</p>

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