

Challenging Religious and Worldview Stereotypes

A Toolkit

This 'Challenging Religious and Worldview Stereotypes' toolkit is a resource to support schools in dealing with the topic of stereotyping and how to overcome it. It contains resources and films on which to base your teaching within RE, PSHE or Citizenship lessons and in tutor time.



Introduction

Student RE Matters

Student RE Matters is a group of young people interested in moral and religious issues from different backgrounds and cultures who get together each half term from different Newham secondary schools. It gives an opportunity for these students to discuss spiritual and moral issues that are important to them. Student RE Matters has been running in Newham for 18 years. It is known nationally for the innovative work it has produced on identity and faith sensitivities.

A Toolkit for Overcoming Religious and Worldview Stereotypes

Each year students complete a project which they select, and in 2022/23, the focus was on challenging religious and worldview stereotypes. On the project students had opportunities to meet and interview representatives from various religious and worldview perspectives. They engaged in discussions about stereotyping, shared their experiences, and explored ways to combat and conquer it. This toolkit is a product of the project, which was made possible by funding from Culham St Gabriel's and the Westhill Endowment Trust. The toolkit includes films that challenge stereotypes and additional educational resources.

Using this toolkit

This toolkit contains assembly and classroom ideas for you to use within your school. The intention is that you choose activities that are suitable for your context. We hope that you find them useful!



Assembly Ideas

Some thoughts about assemblies

The person leading the assembly would need to talk to the pupils about the need for tolerance and respect to people no matter what their beliefs (religious or worldview) and the reason why we need respect of difference to live well together.



To ensure your assembly complied with legal requirements for a daily act of collective worship for all schools, you need to ensure there is a moment of prayer or reflection at the end of your input. In Newham we suggest to schools that they base the words they use for this part of the assembly around these words:

- We are now going to have a moment of silence. You may want to use this time to pray or think about God, or you may want to focus on today's theme or message...Go on to give your theme.'
- 'I'm going to say a prayer; if you would like to pray with me, please repeat the words with me in your head. If you do not want to pray, please think carefully about today's message and what it means for you and reflect on that.'
- 'If you pray, please listen to this prayer. If you don't pray, think about today's theme carefully'. You could use a set prayer from one religious group, or write a general prayer that all those who believe in God could say.
- 'Christians have a special prayer about today's theme. Please listen to it and make it your prayer if you want to.'
- 'We are going to have a moment of silence, and in the silence we want to ask you to reflect on our theme for today/this week



Our Films

We have created as part of this project a selection of short films that could be used in assemblies and in the classroom. The films can be found [here](#)



Disclaimer these films were made in July 2023 and contain an image of Russell Brand and the Dalai Lama before allegations against him were made public. Their images appear fleetingly in a montage along with other people and places from religion and worldviews)

Plug In Ideas for assemblies for all Key Stages

Show one of the ‘concept line’ films on a loop as students come into the hall or room

Once everyone is in the room, play the short film again, explaining which religion or worldview we are asking them this questions about: “What is more or less ‘X’?” Have the final image of the film paused to show where the different images have come from within that religion or worldview. Talk about what has surprised you (for example, that the 2nd oldest mosque in the world is in China and looks like a Chinese temple)



Ask the pupils - some of the images you may have expected to see, but others will have been unexpected. What images were a surprise for you?

Secondary - explain that today we are going to talk about stereotyping

Primary - explain that we are going to talk about making decisions about people without talking with them or getting to know them which is known as stereotyping. As you can see we don't always see the whole picture do we? (On this [google drive](#) link there is a PPT with many options for you to choose from as a teacher. We think we would use one of the images from here in the section called 'Illusions' to illustrate this point with pupils)

Switch On ideas for Primary

Below is a selection of ideas you could use to follow on from the plug in activities:

- Show some different artefacts from religions and worldviews - does anyone know what they are? Explain that we all have different beliefs, but sometimes people are judged because of what they wear or use.

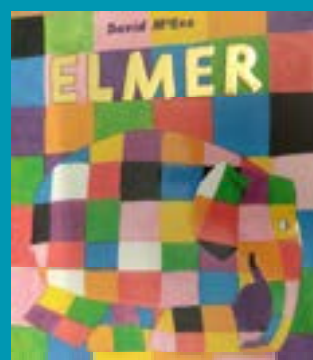
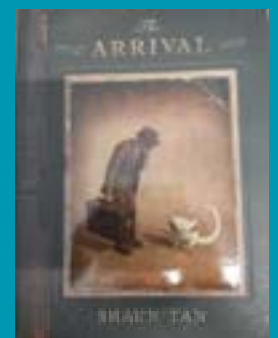
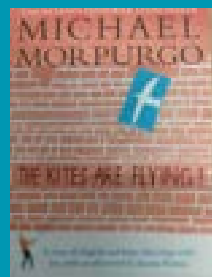
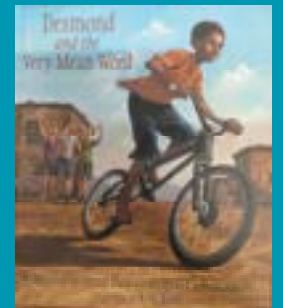
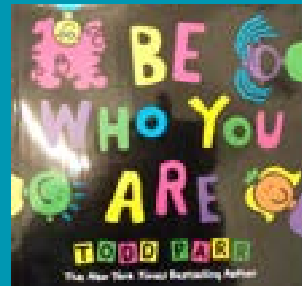
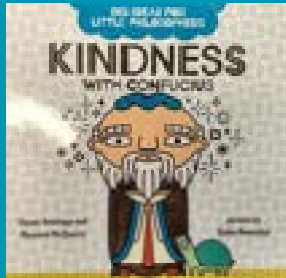
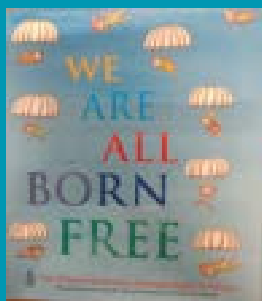
On this [google drive](#) link there is a PPT with many options for you to choose from as a teacher. We think we would use one of the images from here in the section called 'Every child has the right' to illustrate this next point with pupils) Show PPT slide 'Every child has the right' and then talk about why this right is important?

- Use [google drive](#) PPT slides of people who promotes unity and friendship (our examples are: Ibtihaj Muhammad and Desmond Tutu but you could use your own)

Ask the question: What can we do at school to help us to understand about other people and what they believe?

Here is a selection of stories that you could use in the rest of the week in classrooms or further assemblies to unpack this idea with your pupils.





Light up moments are legally what transforms an assembly (when we bring pupils together) into the legal act of collective worship. By giving pupils breathing space to think for themselves or pray embeds learning for them. Here are some suggested phrases you could read out to signal this time and help pupils to understand how to use the silence.

- We are now going to have a moment of silence. You may want to use this time to pray or think about God, or you may want to focus on today's theme or message of treating others as we would like to be treated
- 'I'm going to say a prayer; if you would like to pray with me, please repeat the words with me in your head. If you do not want to pray, please think carefully about today's message and what it means for you and reflect on that.'
- 'If you pray, please listen to this prayer. If you don't pray, think about today's theme carefully'. You could use a set prayer from one religious group, or write a general prayer that all those who believe in God could say.
- 'We are going to have a moment of silence, and in the silence we want to ask you to reflect on our theme of being a good friend.'

Switch On ideas for Secondary

Below is a selection of ideas you could use to follow on from the plug in activities:

Show this video made by Sabah Ahmedi who is known as 'The Young Imam' who asks people in London to guess his job and he will pay them £20! Ask for a hands up to show who guessed that he was an Imam?



Use a quiz to engage pupils with more stereotypes that they might hold and not realise it. (On this [google drive](#) link there is a PPT with many options for you to choose from as a teacher. We think we would use one of the images from here in the section called 'Short Quiz' to illustrate this next point with pupils) Use your decided elements from the short quiz, focusing on facts about the local area or global facts to help pupils see how stereotypes are easy for form Show A Definition of a religious or worldview definition of religious or worldview stereotype:

'A religious or worldview stereotype is a generalised and oversimplified belief or perception that a person holds about a particular religion or worldview. It is a



Or show the film 'What is religious stereotyping?' 2.07 mins



This film has a number of local religion and worldview leaders and representatives along with Student RE Matters pupils giving their answers to this question

Why is it important to think about this? These stereotypes are often negative and can lead to discrimination and prejudice against people who practice different religions or worldviews. Examples of religious or worldview stereotypes include assuming that all Muslims are terrorists, all Christians are Protestants (Roman Catholics aren't proper Christians - comes from the Reformation!), or all atheists are immoral because they don't have God or a sacred book to tell them how to act. It is important to recognise and challenge these stereotypes to promote understanding, tolerance, and respect for people of all religions and worldviews.

Or show the film 'Have you ever been stereotyped?'



This film has a number of local religion and worldview leaders and representatives giving their answers to this question

The important question is 'How do we overcome stereotyping?' Show the 'How do we overcome stereotyping' film? 1.23 mins as we watch it think about which students you agree with?



This film has local pupils from Newham schools talking about their ideas for how to overcome stereotypes



Light up ! - Reflection ideas for Secondary

Light up moments are legally what transforms an assembly (when we bring pupils together) into the legal act of collective worship. By giving pupils breathing space to think for themselves or pray embeds learning for them. Here are some suggested phrases you could read out to signal this time and help pupils to understand how to use the silence.

Input: If we are honest, we know that we have been guilty of stereotyping at some point in our lives

Reflect on 'What are some of the problems caused by stereotyping and is there one thing that we can do personally to overcome stereotypes?'

Other ideas for assemblies

There are a great set of assembly ideas for all Key Stages available from **Empathy Week**. You can sign up for free here: <https://www.empathy-week.com/free>



It is important to always be inclusive

You could also tell pupils what to do if they see or hear if stereotyping leads to bullying:

IF YOU'RE BEING BULLIED or SEE SOMEONE BEING BULLIED

Tell someone you trust about what you have seen

Keep a record of what happened (for example, dates and times, people present)

Don't retaliate

Surround yourself with people that make you feel good about yourself

Don't blame yourself - it is NOT your fault, but by doing nothing you don't help solve the problem

Be proud of who you are

Adapted from Anti-Bullying Alliance



Classroom activities for secondary schools

Show - One of the films from [here](#) (which models the starter activity for the pupils).

Hand out - a pack of images to [each group](#) . Students to take one of the images (or more depending on the size of your pupil group).



Alternative Starter Activity - Where do these quotes come from?

Ask Students to work in pairs – To read these quotations about love and kindness (available as a document on the [google drive](#)) Only one quote is not from a religion or worldview, can they decide which one? Can pupils decide where they all come from?

Practice truth, contentment and kindness; this is the most excellent way of life	Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no records of wrong	I have loved you with an everlasting love.
To love without condition to talk without intention, to give without reason, and to give without expectation, that's the spirit of true love.	Repay injury with justice and kindness with kindness	Love your enemies
Kindness should become the way of life, not the exception	"Kindness is a mark of faith, and whoever is not kind has no faith"	No act of kindness , no matter how small is ever wasted -

Reveal the answers - (On the [google drive](#) show PPT) where the answers about these quotations are given.

As a class - Reflect together on how well we did and what do we learn from this about how we can stereotype religions and worldviews?



Lesson Activity Choice 1: What is a stereotype?

Ask Students to work in pairs to finish this statement, 'A religious or a worldview stereotype is...' Students should be given a minute or two to think about their responses before being asked to share with their partner.

As a class - Discuss different answers that pupils have given. Is there a golden thread weaving its way through the answers that they can identify?

Compare their answer - Show A Definition of a religious or worldview definition of religious or worldview stereotype and see how this definition compares to our answers?

'A religious or worldview stereotype is a generalized and oversimplified belief or perception that a person holds about a particular religion or worldview. It is a preconceived notion that a person has about people who follow a certain religion or worldview, which may not be based on fact or experience.'

Write up - 'A religious or a worldview stereotype is...' the best answer they can give having thought about their answer.

Lesson Activity Choice 2: Why do stereotypes happen?

Ask students - to listen to the following extract:

<https://www.npr.org/transcripts/362373052>

Decide from the suggested activities below which are right to use with your class:

- Use the handout ([found here](#)), instruct students to select one sentence that resonates with them or seems to be an important idea. Have students read that sentence aloud. Be sure to tell students to listen for common themes. It is okay if the same sentence is read more than one time.
- In a small group highlight any parts of this interview that stood out to you in particular: What do you agree with? What do you disagree with? What would you add to this? Point out that this interview was held in America. Ask students to discuss in their groups if think that it reflects life in the UK too? – can they give reasons for their answer?
- Ask students to move to another group and compare their answers - What do you agree with? What did you disagree with?

Write up - Complete this sentence 'Stereotypes happen when...'



Lesson Activity Choice 3: Iceberg

Show - an Iceberg visual



Ask students - to list what they know about icebergs. The main idea you want to establish is that what one sees above the water is only the tip of the iceberg; the larger foundation rests below the surface. Then show them the image of all of an iceberg:



Give students the iceberg template located [here](#) .

Ask students to think of an example of a religious or worldview stereotype and to list everything they know about the facts of that stereotype in the tip area of the iceberg.

Beneath the surface In pairs or small groups ask students to think about what caused this stereotyping. In the bottom part of the iceberg (under the water), they should write answers to the question, 'what are the causes of this stereotype being seen/acted upon?'

As a class What did you learn from completing your iceberg? Of the causes listed in the bottom part of the iceberg, which one or two do you think are most significant? Why?

Write up - ask students to write up their learning from this activity.



Use the dartboard cards found [here](#) for this activity:

Place pupils in groups of 3s - (Note for teacher: it is easier to make decisions when in an odd numbered groups than an even numbered groups. This task asks students to decide what is the most important 'x', therefore lots of decisions to be made and 3's stop your learning time from being wasted) Give each group a copy of the [dart board](#) and a set of 6 cards about the causes of stereotyping along with 2 or 3 blank cards.

Ask pupils to read the possible answers - can they find any more possible causes of stereotyping? If so, ask them to write these new ideas on the blank piece of card.

Pupils then decide - which they think is the most important 'answer' to why stereotyping happens? Pupils/Students place this card on the bulls-eye (there can only be one card on the bulls-eye), then they can arrange the other cards on the dartboard showing how important they think each point is or isn't – the closer to the bulls-eye the more important they will think the reason is. Give pupils 5 mins to do this.

Ask - one group what they have placed on the bullseye and why, then see if any other group agrees with them, if they do whether they have another reason for putting that card on the bullseye (Teacher note: we don't want to hear the same reason repeated again and again, this wastes learning time, so let groups put up their hands if they have selected that card in the bullseye, but only allow new reasons to be voiced). Carry on finding out what other cards groups have placed on the bullseye and their reasons why. Keep asking throughout this feedback if the reasons people have given to a card to be on the bullseye make any group want to change any of their cards on their dartboard, allow pupils to do this.



Write up - Ask pupils after the feedback to finish this sentence "I think that the main cause of stereotyping is ... I think this because..."



[Watch the Sami Rhymes film](#)



Suggested discussion questions for after watching Sami:

What's worth talking about in this poem?
What is your favourite line and why?
What does this poem make you think about?
How would you challenge stereotypes at school?
How do we get to know people from different faiths together?
Sami talks about 'each other's territory' How can we go into 'each other's territory'?

Ask pupils for their response:

- 1. Write a summary paragraph of Sami's poem for an Interfaith magazine or newsletter.**
- 2. Write a four line poem that sums up Sami's poem.**

What can we do to challenge stereotypes?

What can we do to challenge stereotypes here in our school?

Potential ideas to start a conversation with your pupils (the list is not exhaustive)

- Our school community needs to get to know each other better. *How can we encourage this? What can we do as pupils? What can teachers do? What can The School do?*
- Our school needs to be taught more about the negative impacts of stereotypes. *What have you learned, that you feel that others need to know? When should you be taught this?*
- Run a campaign. *Create posters, run assemblies, hold an event, bring in a speaker, hold an International evening/day, when you can share food, music and customs. Have a look at Inter Faith Week held every November for some ideas. Take these ideas to School Council.*



What happens if stereotyping leads to religious bullying?

Look at the 'top tips for dealing with religious bullying' Ask students if they agree/disagree/want to add to the advice given here? Ask them to discuss with people on their table and then go onto write a think piece or blog around advice they would give people their age if they have experienced religious bullying. With a partner give three examples of where you could use the information you have learnt in this lesson elsewhere in school or out of school. Look at [School Resources \(anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk\)](http://SchoolResources.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk) for other ideas.

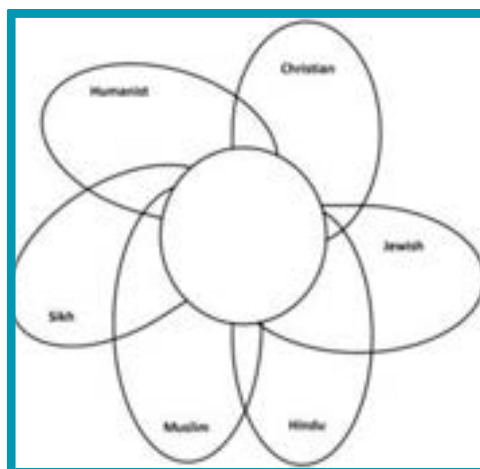
Gather Evidence. You should write down who is bullying you and write down the time it is happening so you would have a better chance of remembering what has happened.

Accept that it is not your fault. When you are going through this, you should remember that you haven't caused the bullying

Stay Safe. You should hang around with your friends and people you know because a bully won't bother bullying you if you are in a big crowd

Venn Diagram

Ask pupils to fill in the diagram below, with something unique that each religion or world views teaches about how we should treat others, and then placing ideas they all share into the circle in the middle.



Put some quotes from the films about Stereotyping in the middle of a big sheet of paper and ask students to write their responses or thoughts to the quote, around it, in silence.

Inform the groups that this activity will be completed in silence, with written communication only. Students should be told that they will have time to discuss the activity later, in pairs and in small groups. Ensure this is understood before beginning the activity to minimise interruptions. You can also remind students of their task as they begin each step.

- Students comment on the text and ask questions to each other in writing on the Big Paper. The written conversation must start on topic but can stray wherever the students take it. If someone in the group writes a question, another member of the group should answer in writing. Students can draw lines connecting a comment to a particular question. Make sure students know that more than one of them can write on the Big Paper at the same time. You can determine the length of this step, but it should be at least 10 minutes.
- Students comment on other groups' Big Papers
- Still working in silence, students leave their groups and walk around reading the other Big Papers. Students bring their pen with them and can write comments or further questions for thought on other Big Papers. Again, you can determine the length of time for this step based on the number of resources and your knowledge of the students.
- Students return to their group's Big Paper and the silence is broken
- The groups reassemble back at their own Big Paper. They should look at any new comments written by others. Now they can have a spoken conversation about the text, their own comments, what they read on other papers, and the comments their fellow students wrote for them. At this point, you might ask students to take out their journals and identify a question or comment that stands out to them.
- Discuss as a class
- Finally, discuss the session with the whole group. The conversation can begin with a simple prompt such as, "What did you learn from doing this activity?" This is the time to delve deeper into the content and use ideas on the Big Papers to draw out students' thoughts. The discussion can also touch upon the importance and difficulty of staying silent and students' level of comfort with the activity.

This idea is taken from



Write an Assembly

Ask Students to work together to write an assembly.
Ask students to complete a **dartboard activity**, looking at what makes a great assembly. Use the suggested cards at the back of this toolkit



Ask students to look at the Challenging stereotypes [films](#).

How could you use these to write an assembly? You might find this 'Plug in' 'Switch on' 'Light up' sheet useful

	PLUG IN – this is about awakening the children Using a stimulus e.g. music, picture, quotation, candle, flowers. We need to give the children time to prepare. A well chosen piece of music can help create an atmosphere for worship and reflection.
	SWITCH ON – this is about engaging the children It will usually focus on a particular story, article, drama or message. Using different approaches and involving different people will provide variety in worship. The material should be presented in an appealing way and be appropriate to the age group. Visual aids and artefacts can provide useful illustrations of key points and help the children to remember the message.
	LIGHT UP – this is about allowing the children to respond. It must include an opportunity for the pupils to reflect and if appropriate for them, to think about God. It may be a prayer, poem or guided reflection. This part must take place for it to be collective worship. Silence can allow time for individual thought and reflection, or prayer as appropriate.



Final Class Reflections on Toolkit

Below are some potential questions and activities to help your class reflect on their learning about religious and worldview stereotypes.

1. Referring back to lesson 1 ask pupils to look at their definition of stereotypes and discuss in pairs whether they can improve their answer.
2. As a class, discuss any of these changes and improvements , drawing out from pupils their learning about stereotypes.
3. As a class, make a list of what is harmful about stereotyping. You might want pupils to write down their top three points.
4. Discuss with pupils ‘are all stereotypes always negative?’
5. Ask pupils to answer the following statement, showing they have thought about a range of answers: ‘To seek understanding is always risky.’

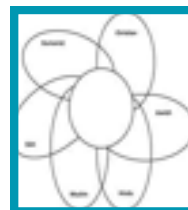
Handouts

These are all available on the [google drive](#)

What causes stereotypes dartboard activity



Venn Diagram



What makes a good assembly dartboard



Iceberg



Quotes about stereotypes

Practice truth, contentment and kindness; this is the most excellent way of life Guru Granth Sahib	Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no records of wrong New Testament - Christian	I have loved you with an everlasting love. Old Testament - Jewish
To love without condition to talk without intention, to give without reason, and to give without expectation, that's the spirit of true love. Bhagavad Gita Hindu	Repay injury with justice, and kindness with kindness Confucious Humanist	Love your enemies Jesus – New Testament
Kindness should become the way of life, not the exception The Buddha	“Kindness is a mark of faith, and whoever is not kind has no faith” Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)	No act of kindness , no matter how small is ever wasted - Aesop



We hope that you find this toolkit useful.

We would like to thank the Students and Schools from Newham Student RE Matters for their help with the original project. The project would not have been possible without the help of Newham SACRE and the representatives from the religion and worldviews who spoke with us - Thank You!

We would like to thank Culham St Gabriel's for their help in producing the films that are part of this project.



We would like to thank Westhill Endowment Trust for their help in producing this toolkit.



[For any further information about the toolkit or RE Matters, please get in touch with us here](#)



Inspiring and Transforming Education

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