

Lesson Plan 3 Does religion unite or divide people?

Skill: Critical thinking

Having thought about how hard it can be to approach controversial issues, this lesson looks at the challenge of navigating the differing narratives around a certain issue. It explores how critical thinking can be employed to spot biases and harmful agendas in the sources of information we expose ourselves to, as well as to be mindful of our own agendas / influences when seeking out and consuming information.

Factor:

Around controversial issues there's often a complicated landscape for deciphering truths which can be hard to navigate.

Skill:

Spotting our own biases and thinking critically about the media or information we consume; holding assumptions lightly and emphasising nuance.



Learning Objectives

- To examine our own information consumption and identify our own personal biases
- To understand how critical thinking can help to spot bias and agenda in narratives
- To practice seeking wide ranges of information and holding our own assumptions lightly

Preparation

- F&BF 'Controversial Issues' film
- PowerPoint 3 for class
- Safe Space Agreement and 'Parking' sheet
- 'Views on Religion: does it divide or unite?' handout, one per group of × 3 students
- 'My Biases' worksheet, one per student
- 'Top Tips for critical thinking' handout, one per student

Running time:

50 mins

Curriculum mapping

These pages show indicative maps of where we think this package fits with the RE, PSHE and Citizenship curricula:

Subject	RE
<p>1 Living Difference III</p> <p>Approach to enquiry five key steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicate and Apply to their own and others' experience• Enquire and Contextualise to engage intellectually• Evaluate to discern value for others and themselves	<p>2 The national curriculum framework for RE (NCFRE)</p> <p>KS3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• B2. Observe and interpret a wide range of ways in which commitment and identity are expressed. They develop insightful analysis and evaluation of controversies about commitment to religions and worldviews, accounting for the impact of diversity within and between communities.• C3. Explore and express insights into significant moral and ethical questions posed by being human in ways that are well-informed and which invite personal response, using reasoning which may draw on a range of examples from real life, fiction or other forms of media.

Curriculum mapping

Subject PSHE	
PSHE Association Programme of Study for PSHE education <i>Updated to include the statutory requirements outlined in the new RSE curriculum</i>	
• CORE THEME 3: LIVING IN THE WIDER WORLD	
KS3 Learning opportunities in Living in the Wider World Choices and pathways <ul style="list-style-type: none">• L10. to recognise and challenge stereotypes and family or cultural expectations that may limit aspirations Media literacy and digital resilience <ul style="list-style-type: none">• L20. that features of the internet can amplify risks and opportunities, e.g. speed and scale of information sharing, blurred public and private boundaries and a perception of anonymity• L23. to recognise the importance of seeking a variety of perspectives on issues and ways of assessing the evidence which supports those views	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• L24. to understand how the way people present themselves online can have positive and negative impacts on them• L25. to make informed decisions about whether different media and digital content are appropriate to view and develop the skills to act on them• L26. that on any issue there will be a range of viewpoints; to recognise the potential influence of extreme views on people's attitudes and behaviours

Curriculum mapping

Subject PSHE	
PSHE Association Programme of Study for PSHE education <i>Updated to include the statutory requirements outlined in the new RSE curriculum</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CORE THEME 3: LIVING IN THE WIDER WORLD	
KS4 Learning opportunities in Living in the Wider World Media literacy and digital resilience <ul style="list-style-type: none">• L24. that social media may disproportionately feature exaggerated or inaccurate information about situations, or extreme viewpoints; to recognise why and how this may influence opinions and perceptions of people and events• L27. strategies to critically assess bias, reliability and accuracy in digital content	

Curriculum mapping

Subject Citizenship	
Citizenship programmes of study: National curriculum in England	
KS3 Pupils should use and apply their knowledge and understanding whilst developing skills to research and interrogate evidence, debate and evaluate viewpoints, present reasoned arguments and take informed action.	KS4 Pupils should develop their skills to be able to use a range of research strategies, weigh up evidence, make persuasive arguments and substantiate their conclusions. They should experience and evaluate different ways that citizens can act together to solve problems and contribute to society.

Lesson 3 PPT

Recap the package so far: we've thought about having confidence in ourselves to seek out information and participate in a conversation around controversial issues. Today we'll be thinking about how we go about informing ourselves; what are our sources and how do we navigate them?

Safe Space Agreement

Recap your **Safe Space Agreement**. Then, write this lesson's controversial issue on the board: 'Does religion unite or divide people?'

'Parking' sheet

Take a simple survey: ask students to put their hands up to YES, NO and IT DEPENDS. Ask two volunteers who answered differently to come to the front and discuss for five minutes. Feel free to raise points or ask questions to stimulate the discussion further, though this is only an introduction.

Once they have done this, ask them to think about their influences. Where do their opinions and their information come from? Ask the class for suggestions too, and write these on the board. They could be:

- One's own personal faith, belief or identity
- Friends and family
- News, reports
- Literature
- Social media

Ask them to be as specific as possible, i.e. if they cite friends and family, how exactly does this happen? Or if social media, which channels, and how exactly do they lift information from them or see their views shaped?

Introduction / 10 mins

F&BF
'Controversial
Issues' film

Thank the volunteers and ask them to sit down.

Watch the relevant scene from our film.

Ask the class to suggest:

- What bias means
- Where we see bias in our sources of information
- Where we see bias in ourselves
- How this affects dialogue around controversial issues

Main Activity Their Biases, My Biases / 35 mins

'Views on Religion' handout,
one per group of
× 3 students

Part One: Thinking critically about sources

Ask your students to get into groups of two or three and work together through the 'Views on Religion: does it divide or unite?' handout.

They will have to take each source in turn and discuss the following questions:

- What do you think of this opinion?
- What is this person's worldview? Do we know?
- What part of this is factual? Which parts can we fact-check?
- Is there any bias here? Why / where / how?
- Is any of their language harmful?
- How does this match what you usually hear?

They can make notes on the handout or on corresponding paper. Give them around 15 minutes to do this. Then take 5 minutes to work through them together (pull the worksheet up onto the screen to do this), taking feedback from groups.

'My Biases'
worksheets

Part Two: Thinking critically about ourselves

Distribute the 'My Biases' worksheets, one per student.

Using the 'Views on Religion' handout, they must complete the questions on the worksheet. Before you ask them to do this, model your own answers.

Views On Religion

- 1** What sources of information are in my comfort zone / do I instinctively get pulled into?
- 2** What sources of information make me feel uncomfortable / make me instinctively recoil?
- 3** What kind of language is appealing / unappealing to me?
- 4** What kind of imagery is appealing / unappealing to me?
- 5** What kind of people do I like to agree with / disagree with?
- 6** How often do I look for information that supports my opinions?
- 7** How often do I look for information that contradicts my opinions?

Give them 5–10 minutes to do this while going around and supporting them with any misunderstandings. If they finish, encourage them to compare answers and discuss in their original groups of two or three.

Reflection / 5 mins

'Top Tips for critical thinking' handout, one per student

Ask your students the final question: What are some of the top tips for engaging critically around an issue? Take some responses.

Ask for any closing comments, recap what's on the 'parking' sheet and discuss follow-up if it can't be resolved there and then.

If you are following the package, distribute this week's 'top tips' and ask the students to stick them in their books.

Key skill for engaging in controversial discussion: critical thinking

Top tips for thinking critically about an issue:

- Acknowledge which sources you have and haven't consulted / are and aren't exposed to
- Try to establish the source's bias and look out for any red flags: harmful / de-humanising language, etc.
- Separate opinion from fact: fact-check the latter
- Reflect on your own response to that information (how do you feel, what do you think of it?) and what bias of your own that response reflects
- Seek opposing, alternative or a broad range of views on an issue in order to compare and contrast, getting a fuller picture

Explain the homework below.

"Next lesson we'll be looking at the fact that controversial issues evoke strong emotions in us and other people, and how this can act as a barrier to engagement."

Homework / preparation for next lesson

Ask your class to think about one issue they engage with that week, that's relatively controversial. This could be something that comes up in conversation, something they read about, or a discussion they're a part of on social media. Ask them to write a page answering the following questions:

- 1 What controversial issue did you engage with?
- 2 What did the conversations you had or the articles / opinions you read tell you?
- 3 Seek two alternative or opposing narratives on the issue: how did you decide what these should be, and where to find them? (Hint: what can you say about your existing info?)
- 4 What did you learn from comparing and contrasting them to your original sources?