

# Citizenship and RE

## Ideas and activities for 8 – 12s



### Who marches out of step Hears a different drum

Martin Luther King preached and lived the 'different drum', and was vilified by the mainstream 'good citizens' in his time. In his final speech before he was murdered, he mused on the obituary he would like. 'Say I was a drum major for justice'.

Perhaps two things contributed to his ability to challenge injustice. First there was the strength that came from the community he lived in, and second the beliefs he derived from the Christian tradition about human nature and dignity. This article offers some suggestions to help pupils explore some of the ways beliefs might influence citizens.

**Time:** 3 long, or six short lessons

**Structure:** There are three stages to the work, each focusing on a different skill:

1. Expressing some of your beliefs carefully. What beliefs matter most to you? (Skill: express yourself clearly)
2. Speculating about some difficult situations for citizens. What would you do if...? (Skill: apply your beliefs and ideas to new situations)
3. Link up the work about beliefs and citizenship (Skill: empathetic synthesis of belief and behaviour)

#### Part 1: Express beliefs.

Get pupils to look at some different creeds, or statements of belief, and work towards writing some of their own. A writing frame, and an extended discussion about what creeds are, and how they express beliefs, are helpful starting points. The examples here are selected from year seven pupils at Coleridge Community College, Cambridge:

'I believe in my religion, which is Islam. Belief is very important to people. I believe that in everyone's life they have done at least one thing bad. I believe all the bad people will go to hell, and all the kind and helpful people will go to heaven.' Shiplu.

I believe in God.  
I believe in what dreams I have.  
I believe in life after death.  
I believe that some time, I will die. People should have a good life before they die.  
I believe life is because of God. Lisa

I believe that there is no God or Jesus.  
I believe that there was acid in the sky, which clashed together to make the big bang.  
I believe that we need trees to live.  
I believe that there is life after death.  
I believe that when you get taught properly, it's a gift.  
I believe that people should be treated in the way you would like to be treated.' Katrina

There are some useful examples of Christian creeds in 'Teaching RE 11-16 Easter (CEM, 1993)

## Part 2. Speculate

Pupils can work in small groups, 3s or 4s are best. Each pupil chooses one of the 'What would you do if...' situations, and turns it into a story. It helps to structure the story into three sections, first telling the incident from the box, second explaining what happened next, third writing about how the 'you' in the story felt afterwards.

### Imagine: What would you do if...

You're walking to the playground. You see 3 boys from the class above you. They're surrounding a younger pupil, being rude about his trainers. You glance round, but you can't see anyone else. One turns to you, and sneers 'you wanna get involved?'

You are sixteen. Out with your mates on a Friday night, you feel shocked when some of them start saying racist things about another group of teenagers from a different ethnic group. They seem to think it's all a bit of a joke.

You start work in a shop on Saturdays. Everyone seems friendly, but one person is ignored. No one speaks to them, or includes them in jokes, or makes them coffee. This person does the job well, and seems to accept the way the others treat them.

Two houses away from you on the street, there is a very old person who can't get out much. You never see them, but their cat is always out and about scavenging. The cat is so mangy, skinny and bony that you wonder if it will starve to death

In your area, there is a charity that helps older people who can't get out. They need pairs of volunteers to shop for the elderly. It takes about an hour each week. You have some spare time, and a friend tells you about the need.

Walking home from school, you pass a mechanic's workshop and yard. You often notice old oil spilled – or tipped – into the gutters and drains. You read in the paper that fish in the stream down your way are dying. You wonder about the oil...

Walking home with a few friends through town, you wander through a couple of stores. You realise that one of your friends, the oldest in the group has taken small chocolate items off the shelves, shoplifting. Outside, she / he offers the stolen chocolate around.

You get a job with a company that makes and sells cosmetics of various kinds. After you start work, you find out that the products are tested on animals. This is legal, but still seems cruel to you. At the end of your first week, the boss asks: 'Any problems?'

### **Part Three: Linking beliefs and citizenship**

This discussion is the most challenging and important part of the work. A group discussion, in 3s or 4s, with class feedback, might work best, or circle time could be used. Pupils could make a chart showing what beliefs lie behind the actions in the stories. Discuss the stories children have written, perhaps using questions like:

- What would Martin Luther King, or Buddha, or Jesus, or a different religion say about this?
- What guidance do some teachings from particular religions offer to people for dealing with situations like this? Teachers might provide some relevant examples from sacred texts)
- If someone was trying to live by the Five Precepts of Buddhism, or the Jewish Ten Commandments, what would they do in each situation? Which precepts and commandments are relevant?
- What beliefs (maybe from the creeds you wrote?) guide you in your own decisions and behaviour?

To see how pupils' thinking is getting on, ask everyone to complete the sentence (perhaps anonymously):

**'What you believe makes a difference because...'**