

KS3 Lesson Plan 6 – Exploring Secularism

Art and secularism

Background	<p><i>The arts and literature have played an important role in every human rights and social change movement including secularism. Societal discussions such as the right balance between freedom of and from religion are often explored through the arts. Different arts and literature can both reinforce religious privilege and discrimination and challenge it through providing expression for new ideas and promoting tolerance. (NSS)</i></p> <p>Visual art forms such as painting, sculpture, cinema, theatre, cartoons, and advertising have a rich history of holding religious excess to account and for challenging or poking fun at religious pomposity and hypocrisy.</p> <p>Visual forms of satire or challenge have come under attack since they have been created, and this is no different today. Galleries, artists, and advertising companies have been and are still attacked physically, through the media - artists' right to freedom of expression is regularly questioned and practitioners pressurised to conform to religious sensitivity.</p>
A secularist viewpoint	<p>Freedom from discrimination or censorship and freedom to communicate is vital in a democracy in debate, reportage, creative media, and any public arena.</p> <p>There cannot be a democratic society without the fundamental right to freedom of expression. The progress of society and the development of every individual depend on the possibility of receiving and imparting information and ideas. This freedom is not only applicable to expressions that are favourably received or regarded as inoffensive but also to those that may shock, offend, or disturb the state or any sector of the population.</p> <p><i>Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights protects not only the information or ideas that are favourably received or regarded as inoffensive or as a matter of indifference, but also those that offend, shock, or disturb; such are the demands of that pluralism, tolerance, and broad-mindedness without which there is no democratic society.</i></p> <p>(NSS)</p>
Curriculum Links	<p>Art and design programmes of study: key stage 3</p> <p>Purpose of study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• They should also know how art and design both reflect and shape our history, and contribute to the culture, creativity, and wealth of our nation.

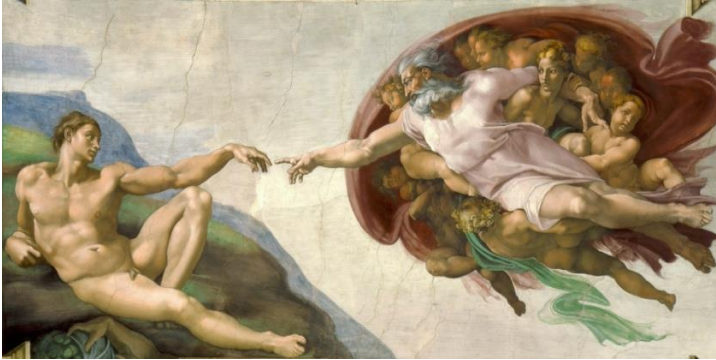
KS3 Lesson Plan 6 – Exploring Secularism

Art and secularism

	<p>Aims</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• evaluate and analyse creative works using the language of art, craft, and design• know about great artists, craft makers and designers, and understand the historical and cultural development of their art forms. <p>Subject content Key stage 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• They should develop a critical understanding of artists, architects and designers, expressing reasoned judgements that can inform their own work. <p>Pupils should be taught:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• about the history of art, craft, design and architecture, including periods, styles and major movements from ancient times up to the present day. <p>RE at KS3</p> <p>Key concepts of religious education at key stage 3</p> <p>1.1 Beliefs, teachings, and sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding and responding critically to beliefs and attitudes. <p>1.2 Practices and ways of life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exploring the impact of religions and beliefs on how people live their lives. <p>1.3 Identity, diversity and belonging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exploring the variety, difference and relationships that exist within and between religions, values, and beliefs. <p>1.6 Values and commitments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding how moral values and a sense of obligation can come from beliefs and experience.• Evaluating their own and others' values in order to make informed, rational and imaginative choices.
--	--

KS3 Lesson Plan 6 – Exploring Secularism

Art and secularism

Key Question	How does art challenge religious privilege, tolerance, and discrimination?
Learning Outcomes	<p>Expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I can explain how visual forms of expression have challenged religious privilege/excess and give an example. <p>Greater Depth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I can explain how visual forms of expression have challenged religious privilege/excess using a range of examples.• Using examples, I can put forward my own views on whether visual form is justified in its criticism of religious privilege/excess.
Stimulus	<p><i>Check the following vocabulary with students:</i></p> <p>Parody – a humorous or satirical imitation of a serious piece of literature or artwork</p> <p>Satire - the use of irony, sarcasm, ridicule in exposing, denouncing, or deriding vice, folly</p> <p>The Flying Spaghetti Monster</p> <p><i>The Creation of Adam is a painting by Italian artist Michelangelo, which forms a key part of the Sistine Chapel's ceiling, painted c. 1508–1512.</i></p> <p>It depicts the Biblical creation narrative from the Book of Genesis in which God gives life to Adam, the first man.</p> <p>First discuss the original image and its meaning within the context of Christianity. What does it depict and what impact would it have had on worshippers sitting beneath it and looking up?</p>  The image is a reproduction of the famous fresco 'The Creation of Adam' by Michelangelo. It depicts Adam on the left, reclining on a rocky surface, reaching out with his right hand towards God on the right. God is shown in a dynamic, reclining position, supported by several other figures, with his right hand extended towards Adam's hand. The two hands are just inches apart, creating a sense of tension and divine spark. The background shows a landscape with hills and a sky.

KS3 Lesson Plan 6 – Exploring Secularism

Art and secularism



The parody below it depicts The Flying Spaghetti Monster. Who is the god of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster (or Pastafarianism) - a group that encourages a unique view of religion and was created to oppose the teaching of creationism to school children in the United States. The Church of the FSM was created by Bobby Henderson in 2005.

Many followers of the FSM wear pasta strainers on their heads in homage to their god and endeavour to be nice everyone. 'Believers' end their prayers with 'r-amen' rather than 'a-men'.

So, is the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster just a joke? In one way it is, but for Bobby his 'religion' represents many very important principles. In an open letter explaining his thoughts on his new 'religion', Henderson explains that if creationism is to be taught alongside evolution, so should the belief that a Flying Spaghetti Monster created the universe.

Anotonio Federici



Antonio Federici's Ice Cream's advert presented a pregnant nun eating ice cream in a church alongside the slogan "immaculately conceived". The Advertising Standards Authority banned it, saying it mocked Catholic beliefs.

KS3 Lesson Plan 6 – Exploring Secularism

Art and secularism

Antonio Federici Ltd said the idea of "conception" represented the creation of their ice cream. It went on to say that the use of religious imagery represented its passion for its product. The firm said it also wished to "comment on and question, using satire and gentle humour, the relevance and hypocrisy of religion and the attitudes of the church to social issues".

The ASA said in its ruling: "We considered the use of a nun pregnant through immaculate conception was likely to be seen as a distortion and mockery of the beliefs of Catholics. We concluded that to use such an image in a light-hearted way to advertise ice cream was likely to cause serious offence to readers, particularly Catholics."

The ASA banned another advert for Antonio Federici in July 2009 that showed a priest and a nun appearing as if they were about to kiss.

The Satirical Approach to Religion



Throughout history, satirists have mirrored and poked fun at the society that surrounds them. Satirists feel that they have a moral imperative to emphasise and draw attention to, the hypocrisies of the period in which they work.

Martin Anderson, (1854 – 1932), better known by his pseudonym *Cynicus*, was a Scottish artist, political cartoonist, postcard illustrator, and publisher. Above is one of his early satirical cartoons, 'My eyes and thoughts to Heaven go, I ne'er see common things below...'

A play on a line from Shakespeare, the satirical message of this cartoon can be taken in different ways. Victorian satirists started to question political, social religious excess and hypocrisy.

KS3 Lesson Plan 6 – Exploring Secularism

Art and secularism

This cartoon shows a vicar strolling with a large bible whilst looking up to the sky. Directly in front of him a poor looking young girl puts out her hand as if asking for money, although the vicar does not seem to see her – he is too busy looking towards the heavens.

Comics have been a key element of the Arab world since the early 20th century, and today a flourishing group of Muslim cartoonists living across the world regularly comment on political and cultural events. Muslim cartoonists across the Middle East have bravely criticised ISIS through artwork and cartoons.

In the cartoon 'God and ISIS' by Osama Hajjaj, God appears and intervenes in an impending brutal murder by directly speaking to a surprised-looking ISIS fighter. The message is clear – Hajjaj does not believe that *his* God approves of the extremist behaviour of ISIS and their allies.

'This is my blood – this is my body...' by Alexander Kosolapov



In the early 2000s a collection of canvases entitled "This is my blood | This is my body" created outrage amongst many Christians. He positioned Jesus alongside McDonalds and Coca Cola logos.

"There was public condemnation of my exhibition," he said. "My work was called extremist...I was not myself called extremist," he clarified, "but I had to explain to a court the cultural and political meaning of my work."

Kosolapov compares materialistic culture with religious iconography combining the imagery from both in his work.

KS3 Lesson Plan 6 – Exploring Secularism

Art and secularism

Exercises	<p>Viewpoints to discuss</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <i>“The whole point of art is freedom of expression. I don’t believe in any form of censorship – art should offend – that’s its job – if it doesn’t offend then it’s just bland wallpaper. Let me make myself clear, nothing should be off limits in art – it should always challenge the establishment and the status quo...”</i>2. <i>“I think there should be some limits to what these so-called artists do – I mean there was one bloke who just pickles sharks and charges millions for them – and you shouldn’t be able to just upset people for the sake of it either – religion means a lot to some people so leave it alone!”</i>3. <i>“I find the whole debate very difficult...I don’t want to put rules on art but then I don’t want to offend people either...and so much of this conceptual art is so difficult to understand...what does the law say about it?”</i>4. <i>“The only art to be allowed should be religious and only representing the one, true religion... and it should be very respectful and only allowed to be shown in our holy buildings...”</i> <p><i>Split the class into four groups and ask them to discuss and answer the points below. After 15-20 minutes ask them to feed back to the rest of the class.</i></p> <p>Questions and talking points for students</p> <p><u>Group 1 – The Flying Spaghetti Monster</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">a) Do you think that Bobby really believes, “the universe was created by a Flying Spaghetti Monster...”?b) If not, <i>why</i> might he be saying that he does?c) Bobby said in a letter, ‘We feel strongly that the overwhelming scientific evidence pointing towards evolutionary processes is nothing but a coincidence, put in place by Him.’ Why might Bobby be mentioning ‘overwhelming scientific evidence’? Might this help us to understand what he really believes?
-----------	---

KS3 Lesson Plan 6 – Exploring Secularism

Art and secularism

d) Do you feel that Bobby's 'religion' is disrespectful or offensive to the established world religions? If so, what should be done about it? Is it acceptable to offend religion?

e) Read and discuss Bobby's open letter

<https://www.spaghettimonster.org/about/open-letter/>

Group 2 - Antonio Federici's Ice Cream's advert

a) The tag line is, 'Immaculately conceived'. Can you explain this in terms of the image of a pregnant nun and *why* some Christians might find this offensive?

b) Do you believe the company's response that, 'idea of "conception" represented the development of their ice cream.'? Discuss with your group/the class.

c) In picture number 4, the tag line reads, 'we believe in salvation' – meaning we believe in being saved. What or who might the advert be suggesting needs to be saved?

d) Since many Christian churches teach that homosexual behaviour is sinful, why might this image be controversial?

e) Do you think these adverts are disrespectful or offensive? Is it ever acceptable to offend religion? Do you think it's acceptable to offend religious people to help sell ice cream?

Group 3 - 'My eyes and thoughts to Heaven go, I ne'er see common things below...' and 'God and ISIS.'

a) What or who do you think this cartoon might be criticising? Is it criticising an individual, a religion or an attitude?

b) Should a religious person be held to a higher standard of personal behaviour than a non-religious person?

c) Why did the artist create this image? What might it tell us about the artist? What could it tell us about the society he was living in?

d) In 'God and ISIS', can you explain why the image could be described as 'turning the tables on the extremists.'

e) Do you think it is more powerful for a Muslim to create this cartoon rather than a non-Muslim? If so, can you explain why?

KS3 Lesson Plan 6 – Exploring Secularism

Art and secularism

Group 4 - 'This is my blood – this is my body...' by Alexander Kosolapov

- a) First impressions – talk about the image and text – what do you think of it?
- b) How does the text on the images relate to core Christian belief?
- c) Do you feel this artwork is mocking a core religious belief – what is your opinion on whether art has the right to mock religious belief.
- d) What point might be artist be making in juxtaposing iconic religious imagery with iconic modern advertising imagery? Could it be interpreted as *pro-religious* or as an attack on the modern world?
- e) Do you think these images are offensive? How do you justify your point of view?

True or False Quiz – use as an optional consolidation of learning

	True	False
1. The Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster is just a joke to make fun of religion.		
2. Followers of the FSM <i>really</i> believe that a 'noodly deity' created the universe.		
3. Many followers wear meatballs on their heads to honour their god.		
4. The Advertising Standards Authority didn't ban the Federici advert as they found it to be non-offensive to catholics.		
5. The Federici advertisement with the two priests was created as a celebration of the church's attitude towards homosexual relationships.		
6. The message behind the Cynicus Victorian cartoon could be – <i>some religious</i>		

KS3 Lesson Plan 6 – Exploring Secularism

Art and secularism

	<p><i>people spend more time thinking about abstract religious notions than acting upon the actual words of their holy text in the real world.</i></p>		
	<p>7. The message could be – <i>don't beg or get in the way of important religious people.</i></p>		
	<p>8. Kosolapov's artwork is deeply offensive to many Christians.</p>		
	<p>9. Kosolapov's artwork juxtaposes traditional religious icons with modern iconic advertising.</p>		
<p>Answers</p>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. False – although it has much intrinsic humour, it also makes important points about religious privilege. education and secularism. 2. False – they don't really believe this – it is a satirical position. 3. False – they wear pasta strainers to make a point about religious privilege. 4. False – they said it was offensive and banned it. 5. False – it played on the church's difficult relationship with homosexuality. 6. True – this is a possible message behind the cartoon. 7. False – this is not what the artist meant 8. True – Yes, many Christians found it offensive as they felt it mocked their core religious values. 9. True – yes it does. 			
<p><i>Take it Further 1</i></p>	<p>Research a range of satirical cartoons, artworks and adverts that are critical of religious excess or privilege.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a collage that illustrates the historical and cultural development of satire and parody in the visual arts. 		

KS3 Lesson Plan 6 – Exploring Secularism

Art and secularism

Take it Further 2

Ask students to research the two news stories below. They are both about religious groups or individuals using direct action to censor or request censorship of an artist's work.

Q1. What do students feel about groups or individuals using intimidation or direct action to censor artists?

Q2. Can it ever be justified?

Q.3 Should religious groups be able to cite blasphemy to censor art?

'Christian Group's Intimidation Tactics Must Be Challenged'

<https://www.secularism.org.uk/christiangroupsintimidationtacti.html>

'NSS asks art gallery to review decision to uphold blasphemy code'

<https://www.secularism.org.uk/news/2019/05/nss-asks-art-gallery-to-review-decision-to-uphold-blasphemy-code>