

The awesome seed



Lesson Plan

Lesson title	The awesome seed
Learning objective	Pupils know that seeds are objects in the natural world that can represent spiritual and creative potential.
Pupils will:	Learn that seeds have been used as symbols in several religions. Understand that seeds can symbolise their own potential.
Key words	Awe, wonder, potential, seed of inspiration

Plan	Resources
<p>Introduction</p> <p>Explain to the class that people often use symbols to convey important beliefs. And that during the course of this lesson they will be considering why people would use seeds as symbols of their faith, their deeds and their creativity or other talent or potential. Ask pupils what are some uses of seeds that they know from their daily experience. What is the smallest seed they know? What is the largest ? Show the pupils images of seeds (Resource 1) (or show them a picture of mustard seeds from Resource 2). Have they ever seen a seed sprout, or planted a seed and watched it grow?</p>	<p>Resource 1: Pictures of range of seeds</p>
<p>Activity 1</p> <p>Show the class a handful of mustard seeds, letting them take a few so that they can see how small they are. In your own words tell the parable of the mustard seed from Mark 4 (Resource 3). Explain that Jesus was talking about how faith can grow into something as large as a tree. Ask: why do you think a tiny seed can be a symbol of the power of faith or belief in something?</p>	<p>Resource 2: Pack or picture of mustard seeds.</p> <p>Resource 3: The parable of the mustard seed (child-friendly version).</p>



Plan

Resources

Activity 2

Point out that the Muslim holy book, the Qur'an, also uses the mustard seed as a symbol of the belief that God is aware of the tiniest things people do, whether good or bad (**Resource 4**). Ask: Look again at your mustard seeds. Do you think the Qur'an is suggesting that even acts we consider small and unimportant can be significant? How does your feeling towards someone change when they do something small like unexpectedly giving you a compliment or sharing something with you? Read second quote from the Qur'an (**Resource 4**) and tell class a bit about what the Prophet Muhammad had to say about the power of kindness and generosity of spirit.

Perhaps invite the class to act out a situation in which a person enters into a room where there are other people already present. Try acting out different scenarios, e.g. in which the new person is not warmly greeted and nobody smiles. How does it make that person feel? Then act out the situation again, this time getting the others to greet the new person warmly. How does this influence what happens next?

Resource 4: Quotes from the Qur'an and other relevant information

Activity 3

Show the class some pictures of banyan trees. Ask the following: Do you know how big this tree grows? Show the pupils an image of a Banyan tree next to a person so that they can see how big the tree is (**Resource 5**). Show the pupils an image of the fruits of the banyan tree. Ask pupils to guess how big the seed of a banyan tree is. Then tell them to make a small dot on a piece of white paper using a sharp pencil. Explain that the seed of that huge tree is that small (**Resource 5**). You can also show the pupils a dried fig and explain that the banyan tree belongs to the same group of trees as the common edible fig tree (*Ficus carica*) belongs to.

Ask them to imagine a tree which is topsy-turvy, an upside down tree. Tell them that Hindus believe that the whole world came from God, like a tree growing upside down.

Dried figs

Resource 5: The banyan tree

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Plan	Resources
<p>Explain that you are going to show them how some Hindus explain how the world came into being. Ask one of the pupils to stand near the corner of the room. Explain that this person symbolises the seed/root of this upside down tree. Then ask the pupil to extend their hands. Two other pupils each take one of the first pupil's hands and so on, until the whole class has formed the shape of a tree which is topsy-turvy, branching from a single root, which is God.</p>	
<p>Activity 4 Show the pupils the Hindu Aum symbol (Resource 6): ask if anyone in the class knows what religion this symbol belongs to. Play a YouTube video of people chanting Aum (see Resources). Ask class an open question: why do they think people are chanting Aum? Explain that Hindus believe that certain sounds, which they call 'seed syllables', have great spiritual power. And that this particular sound is thought to help believers grow spiritually (You could compare this to crowds chanting for a team during some sporting activity, i.e. that the chanting is supposed to give strength to the players and encourage them to do their best.).</p> <p>Remind the class of the topsy-turvy tree. Explain that another way some Hindus picture the beginning of the universe is through the power of the seed-syllable Aum. Replay the video of the Aum chant and get the children to 'act out' imaginatively the beginning of creation, e.g. by all standing close together at the beginning and then moving outwards to symbolise the expansion of the universe.</p>	<p>You-tube clip of the Aum chanting. E.g. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VHTE8Ab05g&feature=related</p> <p>Resource 6: The Aum symbol and background information</p>
<p>Activity 5 Summarise that seeds have been symbols of our tiniest deeds, our faith, and the power of sound. Ask children to consider that ideas can also be pictured as seeds, for instance ideas for a drawing, or a dance. They can also be used to picture our talents, for instance musical potential that might some day grow and blossom into the ability to sing or play an instrument. Return to the mustard seed and point out how carefully we have to look after something so small.</p> <p>In this final activity pupils draw (or make a collage) representing a container for seeds that represent their own potential. They can, if they like, label the seeds,</p>	<p>Materials for drawing and/or making a collage</p> <p>Resource 7: Background information on the Millennium Seed Bank and pictures</p>



Plan

Resources

according to what each seed symbolises for them. Also, they may depict some of the seeds in varying stages of germination or development. Encourage them to use their imagination to picture both seeds and container, reminding them that in this lesson we are looking at seeds as symbols.

At the end of the activity ask the pupils to present to the whole class their seed bank drawings/collages. You can tell them about international seed banks (**Resource 7**). That just as they (i.e. the pupils) are symbolically protecting their individual potential in their drawings, international seed banks strive to preserve something precious for all humankind.

Plenary

Summarise the lesson with discussion questions such as: What are some uses of seeds that you know from your daily experience? What is similar about a seed that you can hold in your hand and the seed of an idea? Why do you think a tiny seed can be a symbol of the power of faith or belief in something? Give some examples of how something small – e.g. seed, idea, movement, musical note – becomes something much larger.

Ask pupils to write a paragraph describing the ideas depicted in their picture /collage, relating it to some of the ideas discussed.

Pupils may be able to:

1. Say something about seeds.
2. Say something about how seeds are used as symbols.
3. Give a specific example of how seeds have been used symbolically in one or more religions.
4. Express creatively – either in a picture or in a piece of writing – some of the ideas discussed in the lesson.
5. Relate their own ideas about seeds as symbols to those found in some religious traditions.