

# Cultivating peace



## Botanic Garden Lesson Plan

Lesson title	Cultivating peace 3
Learning objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Pupils understand the concept of Paradise, Heaven and the Garden of Eden.</li><li>■ Pupils know that a garden can be a place for reflection and cultivating inner peace.</li></ul>
Pupils will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Relate features of gardens to the symbolism of Paradise.</li><li>● Recognise elements of a garden that can create the feeling of peace</li></ul>
Key words	Paradise, Garden of Eden, Islamic gardens

### Plan

#### Introduction

Read aloud the texts from the holy books (the Bible and Qur'an) (**Resource 1**).

Discuss the images that the texts evoke.

Ask the pupils: Where do you think these texts are coming from?

Point out that the concept of Paradise/Heaven, the ultimate dwelling or state of the virtuous people after they die, and the concept of the Garden of Eden, the place where the first man, Adam and the first woman, Eve lived after they were created by God are often described and/or regarded as synonymous in Islam and Christianity. The links of the garden with both the Garden of Eden (creation) and Paradise (life after death, eternal home) show that to humans, a garden is at once a point of origin and a place of return. It suggests cycles, mortality, transformation and everlasting life.

The concept of Paradise as a garden is exemplified in many Biblical and Qur'anic passages. It is indicative that Jannah, which is how Paradise is referred to in the Qur'an is an Arabic word which also means garden. Ask the pupils what Paradise means to them.

Point out to the pupils that Paradise is a place in which existence is positive, harmonious and timeless. In Paradise there is no human suffering and there is only peace, prosperity and happiness. Explain to the pupils that today they are

### Resources

**Resource 1:** Excerpts from the Qur'an and the Bible referring to the Paradise

# Cultivating peace



## Botanic Garden Lesson Plan

Plan	Resources
<p>going to learn more about how the concept of Paradise has inspired the design of gardens but first they will go on a walk in the gardens to find out what feelings different elements of a garden may evoke in them.</p>	
<p><b>Activity 1</b> Provide the pupils with paper and pencil and explain to them that they will visit different areas of the gardens where they will stand and feel the environment. Each time they will write down the feeling that each area evokes in them and if possible also write down what made them feel in a particular way.</p> <p>Take the pupils to five different areas of the garden that may evoke in them different feelings. Choose areas strikingly different to each other, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ shaded/dense forest areas and open/unsheltered/open grassland areas that are exposed to the sun and rain</li><li>■ areas close to water and if possible close to flowing water so that the pupils will focus on listening to the sounds; areas that simulate arid/desert environments</li><li>■ structured/design oriented areas and areas with wild growing vegetation that give a more naturalistic feeling.</li><li>■ areas that simulate rainforest environments, rock gardens or alpine environments.</li><li>■ areas with alleys of high trees</li></ul> <p>Pause in each area for 3-5 minutes and let the pupils reflect on and make notes of the feelings that the area evokes in them.</p>	<p><b>Materials required:</b> Paper, pencils, clipboards</p>
<p><b>Activity 2</b> Tell the pupils that with this next activity they will relate their exploration of the gardens and the different features to the idea of Paradise.</p> <p>Explain to the pupils that both Islamic and Christian representations of Paradise refer to a garden surrounded by a wall and in fact the word paradise comes to us from the Persian 'pairidaeza' which literally means walled area.</p>	<p><b>Resource 2:</b> Symbols used in everyday life <b>Resource 3:</b> Images of Paradise <b>Resource 4:</b> Background information on the Islamic and Christian-cloistered gardens <b>Materials for collage:</b> paper, coloured pencils, newspapers/magazines, scissors, glue, paints, brushes</p>

## Cultivating peace



## Botanic Garden Lesson Plan

### Plan

Explain to the pupils what a symbol is: "A thing that represents or stands for something else". Show them three everyday symbols and ask them to explain what these may mean **(Resource 2)**

Ask the pupils why they think both religions (Christianity and Islam) have chosen a garden as a symbol of Paradise.

Explain to the pupils that creating a garden can be regarded as an act of creating a Paradise on earth. And the central function of this Paradise is spiritual, mainly for contemplation and spiritual renewal. A garden is a place of peace and harmony, a place to promote and reflect spiritual well-being, a place where there is refreshment for the soul. The spiritual purpose, both religious and philosophical, was a primary purpose in creating gardens. And it was a guide to what a garden should comprise and how it should be constructed.

Francis Bacon an English famous philosopher wrote: *A garden is the purest of human pleasures. It is the greatest refreshment of the spirits of man.*

Show images of Paradise including Christian gardens and Islamic gardens **(Resource 3)**.

Ask the pupils to describe the images of the gardens and identify similarities or differences. Ask the pupils to imagine what they think that some of the garden features may symbolise.

Explain the symbolism **(Resource 4)**.

Ask the pupils to explain which of the features of the Paradise gardens in the images, they also found in the gardens during their walk.

Split the pupils into groups of four and ask them: If you were to make your own Paradise how would it feel to be there? Suggest to the pupils that some of the places they visited in the gardens may evoke the same feelings with the ones they would expect in their Paradise. Ask the pupils in groups to design their own

### Resources

# Cultivating peace



## Botanic Garden Lesson Plan

### Plan

Paradise. Ask them: which elements/features from the ones you have seen and learned about would you include in your Paradise?

Point out that they are also free to add elements or features that they didn't find in the gardens but they feel are important, based on their previous experiences. Provide pupils with paper, coloured pencils, or even with newspapers, magazines, scissors, glue so that they can do a collage and create their Paradise garden.

Ask the pupils to present their gardens to the rest of the class. Encourage them to speak about the the features they included, why, and how it will feel like in their Paradise.

### Plenary

Show pupils images of different gardens (Resource 5) and ask them if they can identify any features of the gardens and their symbolism especially related to the concepts of Paradise and/or Garden of Eden. Ask them to imagine how it would make them feel if they could visit these gardens.

### Resources

**Resource 5:** Images of gardens