

RE-Juvinating and RE-Inspiring RE Conference 2021

Text Centred Teaching for 7-14s

- Religions have dynamic and interactive relations with texts which preserve their origins, challenge their practice, define their beliefs, encapsulate their spirituality and do a dozen other things...
- Religions are often currently interested in narrative theologies, the expression of ideas about God through story...
- RE has a long history with texts: from 1944 the Bible was the key to RE not least because it avoided any denominational bias...
- Teaching with texts can be dynamic, spiritual, intriguing, creative, thoughtful and generally riveting...
- One good way of expressing the aims of RE is in terms of hermeneutics, the processes of interpretation. What do we want from RE? For pupils to be confident and able interpreters of religious 'texts' of all kinds...

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#ReReRE2021



RE in Action

Examples of classroom RE from ages 7 to 14 years which enable teachers to clarify progress and the impact of RE

From RE Today's advisory team

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A Hindu creation story, in a picture

The modern picturing of ancient narratives in this Hindu example is powerful because it suggests that the Hindu communities continue to find meaning and points of reflection through the new forms of expression in relation to their scriptures. What do we see here? From the figure of Vishnu, asleep on the primeval ocean, a lotus flower blossoms – from his belly button. This only happens when the goddess massages his feet. Within the lotus, the divine creator Brahma is revealed and he begins his work of world-making.

The scriptural narrative:

Then even nothingness was not, nor existence,
 There was no air then, nor the heavens beyond it.
 What covered it? Where was it? In whose keeping?
 Was there then cosmic water, in depths unfathomed?
 2. Then there was neither death nor immortality
 nor was there then the torch of night and day.
 The One breathed windlessly and self-sustaining.
 There was that One then, and there was no other.

3. At first there was only darkness wrapped in darkness.

All this was only unilluminated cosmic water.
 That One which came to be, enclosed in nothing,
 arose at last, born of the power of heat.

4. In the beginning desire descended on it -
 that was the primal seed, born of the mind.
 The sages who have searched their hearts with wisdom
 know that which is kin to that which is not.

5. And they have stretched their cord across the void,
 and know what was above, and what below.
 Seminal powers made fertile mighty forces.
 Below was strength, and over it was impulse.

6. But, after all, who knows, and who can say
 Whence it all came, and how creation happened?
 the gods themselves are later than creation,
 so who knows truly whence it has arisen?

7. Whence all creation had its origin,
 the creator, whether he fashioned it or whether he did not, the creator,
 who surveys it all from highest heaven, he knows — or maybe even he
 does not know.



Ganesha Images: the modern in the tradition Change and continuities in Sanatan Dharma

“Pure and peaceful doer of all good.
Take away my fear and anger.
Let me see You everywhere and at all times.
Show me the truth.
Remove all barriers in my mind
To understanding, true trust and love.
Guide me to a harmonious life.”

“O keeper of the gate to life,
Open that gate for me.
Let me feel Your intricate mind
Moving all things toward the divine
Open the gate for me
To a life of continuous worship.
Let me enter a new world
Where my ego is not my God.
Open the gate; let me through
To Your blissful world of trust, love and harmony.”

“We do not ask for anything, but simply offer our feelings of love and recognition to Lord Ganesha. The more we worship and come to understand Him, the more we realize the greatness of His work in our life and see His presence all around us.”

“Thank You, Ganesha, for the wonderful fulfilment You have brought into my life.
I show gratitude by giving generously at the temple where You received and answered my prayers.
Your energy is the blossoming origin of love.
Praise to You who are the source of all sweetness.
I take refuge in grateful surrender at Your holy feet.”

Allah: by the medieval
Muslim theologian Al-Ghazali
"He in his essence is one, without any partner.
Single without any similar
Eternal without any opposite
Separate without any like
He is one prior with nothing before him
From eternity without any beginning
Abiding in existence without any after him
To eternity without an end
Subsisting without ending
Abiding without termination
Measure does not bind him
Boundaries do not contain him."

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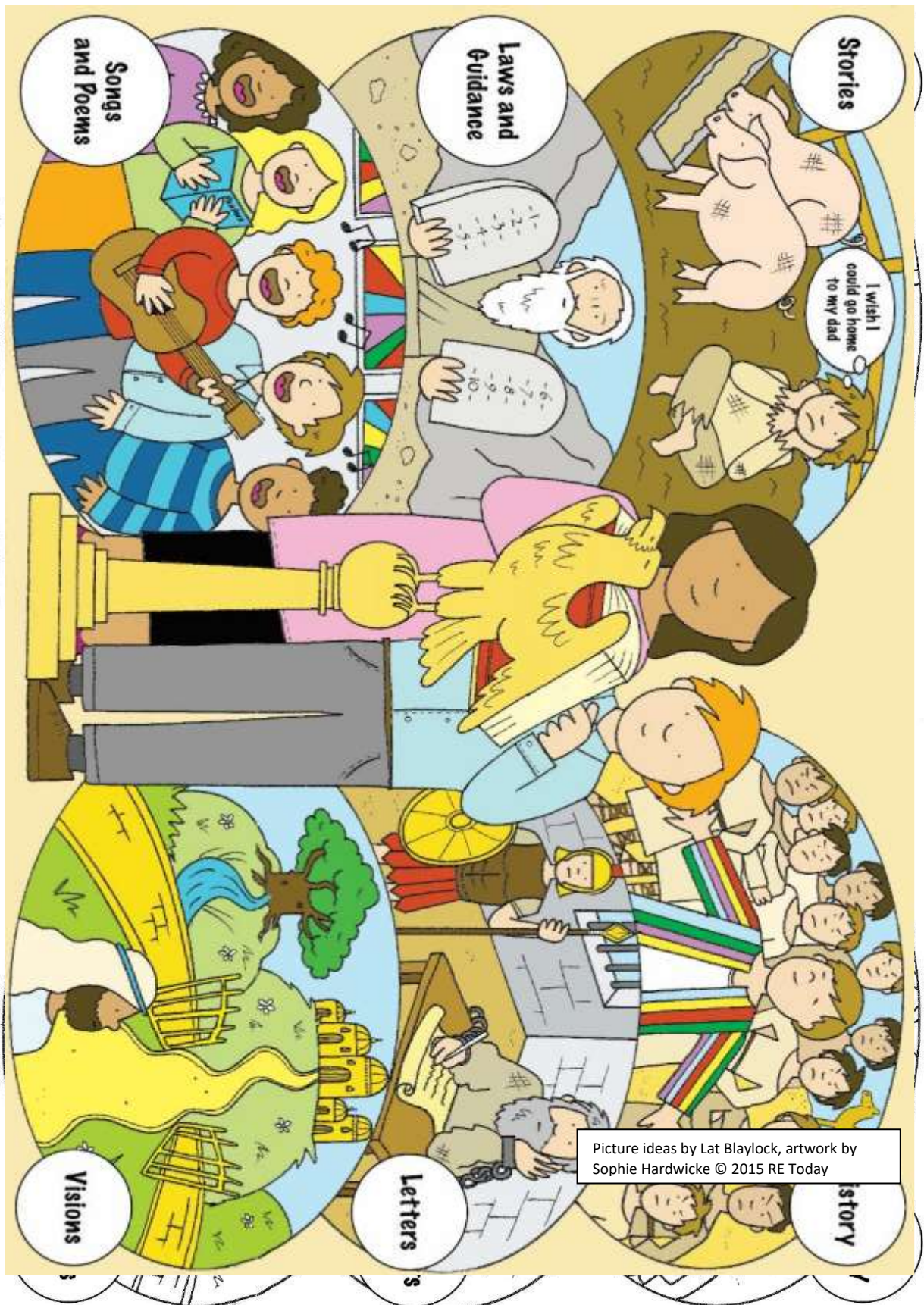


Text in RE: 7 blooming flowers

1. Texts energise religion creatively. They can do the same for RE
2. Narrative theologies communicate religious ideas very effectively
3. Story telling is a central RE teaching skill: find your JK Rowling
4. Aim to enable children to interpret
5. Don't ask 'what is the moral?' Ask: what hidden messages can you see?
6. Don't dumb down, or imagine it's too hard: text may need wrestling, but your pupils like wrestling. Give it time
7. Religious authenticity and pupil profundity unite here.



Why are there different types of writing in the Bible?	Ages 11-12								
<p>Background Knowledge for teachers:</p> <p>The Christian Bible is a collection of 66 ‘books’ – some are only a page in length, mind – written by 40 or more different authors over a period of perhaps 1200 years. 39 of the books are shared with the Jewish Bible, and Christians often call these the ‘Old Testament’ but some teachers of RE prefer to say ‘Jewish Bible’ to be respectful. The ‘New Testament’ is made up of the other 27 of the books, including a dozen by Saint Paul and two long ones by Saint Luke (who wrote more of the New Testament than even Paul).</p> <p>The Bible has always been very important in Christianity: the source of information and teachings about Jesus, and a record of human ideas about God. It’s seen as a treasure trove of wise words. Many Christians see it as an inspired book, given by God to the writers who were guided by the Holy Spirit. Ideas about how this inspiration ‘works’ vary, but daily reading, preaching in church and deep study are signals of the value of the text.</p> <p>It’s very diverse. In this chapter, pupils will learn about 6 different kinds of literature found in the Bible, and the ways in which Christians use these types of writing.</p> <p>Essential knowledge for pupils</p> <p>Pupils should know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Bible is made of lots of different kinds of books, and Christians believe it is a guide to life and a revelation from God • That the Bible’s teaching comes in different forms including stories, history, laws, visions, poems and letters • That the bible is a source of wisdom for Christians, and other people may find its teaching wise as well. 	<p>Assessment for learning</p> <p>These pupil-friendly ‘I can’ statements describe outcomes to this work that may be expected of almost all pupils aged 1 (steps or levels 2 - 3). Some 12-13s work at 5, most at 4.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="874 398 1449 1579"> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="874 398 986 584"> Step / Level 2 I can... </td> <td data-bbox="986 398 1449 584"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Suggest a simple reason why Christians think the Bible matters ▪ Give examples of two kinds of writing found in the Bible </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="874 584 986 875"> Step / Level 3 I can... (Most 11 year olds) </td> <td data-bbox="986 584 1449 875"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Give examples of how Christians use the Bible, identifying and describe examples of laws, songs, visions and stories from the Bible ▪ Make connections between Bible wisdom and ideas and values of my own </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="874 875 986 1167"> Step / Level 4 I can... (Many 11 year olds) </td> <td data-bbox="986 875 1449 1167"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outline the main types of writing found in the Bible, giving examples ▪ Make reasoned connections between Bible texts and key Christian beliefs, e.g. in Jesus as the Son of God or in the Holy Spirit’s inspiration of the Bible </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="874 1167 986 1579"> Step / Level 5 I can... (Some 11 year olds) </td> <td data-bbox="986 1167 1449 1579"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relate Biblical ideas, teachings, and beliefs to issues and questions in the world today, reflecting thoughtfully on their own responses. ▪ Explain the place in Christian belief of some big ideas from the bible (e.g. creation, fall, incarnation, gospel, salvation and people of God). </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>This set of lessons will help pupils in Scotland to achieve RME 2-01a and 3-01a.</p>	Step / Level 2 I can...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Suggest a simple reason why Christians think the Bible matters ▪ Give examples of two kinds of writing found in the Bible 	Step / Level 3 I can... (Most 11 year olds)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Give examples of how Christians use the Bible, identifying and describe examples of laws, songs, visions and stories from the Bible ▪ Make connections between Bible wisdom and ideas and values of my own 	Step / Level 4 I can... (Many 11 year olds)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outline the main types of writing found in the Bible, giving examples ▪ Make reasoned connections between Bible texts and key Christian beliefs, e.g. in Jesus as the Son of God or in the Holy Spirit’s inspiration of the Bible 	Step / Level 5 I can... (Some 11 year olds)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relate Biblical ideas, teachings, and beliefs to issues and questions in the world today, reflecting thoughtfully on their own responses. ▪ Explain the place in Christian belief of some big ideas from the bible (e.g. creation, fall, incarnation, gospel, salvation and people of God).
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<p>Web ideas and connections</p> <p>Bible Gateway is the best search site for Bible text: www.biblegateway.com</p> <p>The Bible Society website has loads of information and ideas about the Bible: https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/about-bible-society</p>	<p>On the RE today website:</p> <p>Members and subscribers can download the picture of the different kinds of Bible writing (in both full colour and as a black and white line drawing) from the RE today website, making it easy to use on a whiteboard, or to print additional copies for the classroom.</p>								



Songs and Poems

Laws and Guidance

Stories

I wish I could go home to my dad

Visions

Letters

History

Picture ideas by Lat Blaylock, artwork by Sophie Hardwicke © 2015 RE Today

Learning Activities about different kinds of Bible writing

Activity 1: Working with the Picture: 6 kinds of writing in the Bible

The pictures of different kinds of Bible writing (in full colour and as a black and white line drawing) are rich resources for learning, which can be used to introduce this work to pupils in various ways. Ask pupils about their prior knowledge: do they know the different kinds of writing in the Bible? Many will not. Ask pupils to have a careful look at the picture (from the whiteboard?) and notice the 6 kinds of writing in the Bible from the picture. Teach them that the Bible has 5 books of Laws, 21 letters, 17 books of history (which contain lots of stories). There is one long song book (Psalms) with 150 songs in it. 18 books are mostly visions. Ask pupils to work in pairs and write 'facts and questions' around the edge of the picture (use the line drawing for this, perhaps mounted on a larger sheet of paper). Can they get ten facts and ten questions? Share the questions and see if you can supply some answers – others may need saving for a later lesson (see Activity 5 below).

Activity 2: Bible Box – think about the six different kinds of Bible writing.

This activity uses a simple 'cube making' design activity to help pupils to see that the Bible, for Christians, is 'one book, many parts'. The six faces of the cube refer to six different kinds of writing found in the Bible. Each of these is exemplified with two quotations on the information sheet below. You might begin by giving this sheet to pupils in pairs, cut up into 24 pieces: can they work out the right order for it all? Each type of writing also has a logo or symbol to identify it. These are to be stuck onto the outside of the box. There is a template for the box as well (it is best if this is doubled in size, copied onto 180GSM card). Ask pupils which of the 6 kinds of writing they think might be: most interesting / most useful / most difficult / most inspiring / most memorable. Why?

Activity 3: Choose three from seven reasons why the Bible matters to Christians

This provides an additional activity, in which pupils think about and prioritise different reasons why the Bible is important for Christians. They discuss these 7 reasons and select the three they think explain best why the Bible is the world's bestselling book – ever! Ask them to rewrite their chosen three reasons onto a tiny scroll, in beautiful writing, decorated with suitable symbols for 'Holy Words'. The scroll might be titled 'What makes the Bible a holy book for Christians?' Pupils make a tiny scroll to go inside their 'Bible Box'. The finished boxes should make a good classroom display to reinforce the learning.

Activity 4: What did we learn?

When pupils have made their boxes, and classified their different writing types, recap the whole of the work carefully asking them to say what they learned about the Bible. Return to the questions they asked and the ideas they learned in Activities 1-3 above: have they found any answers? This might set the agenda for further work.

Activity 5: Can we ask an expert?

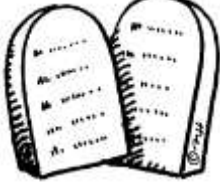





Invite a Christian person, maybe a local priest or minister, to come and visit the class and answer pupils' questions about the Bible and all its different kinds of writing. Ask your visitor to explain why they love the Bible and talk about their favourite verses, stories and visions from the scriptures

Activity 6: Visions and dreams of our own

Use the final page of the handout to set up an activity that makes use of learner's imagination in a creative way. The Bible begins with a perfect garden and ends with a perfect city: visions of the good earth and the good life are found at many places between the covers! But school RE doesn't often engage with these visions: here is a way forward. Ask pupils to experiment reading aloud the simplified text from Revelation, and to create a poem of their own vision of a perfect London, Glasgow, Bognor or Nether Wallop: wherever they live. Such poetry can be illustrated in many different ways. The activity aims at expressing values and spirituality clearly and in relation to the Bible text.

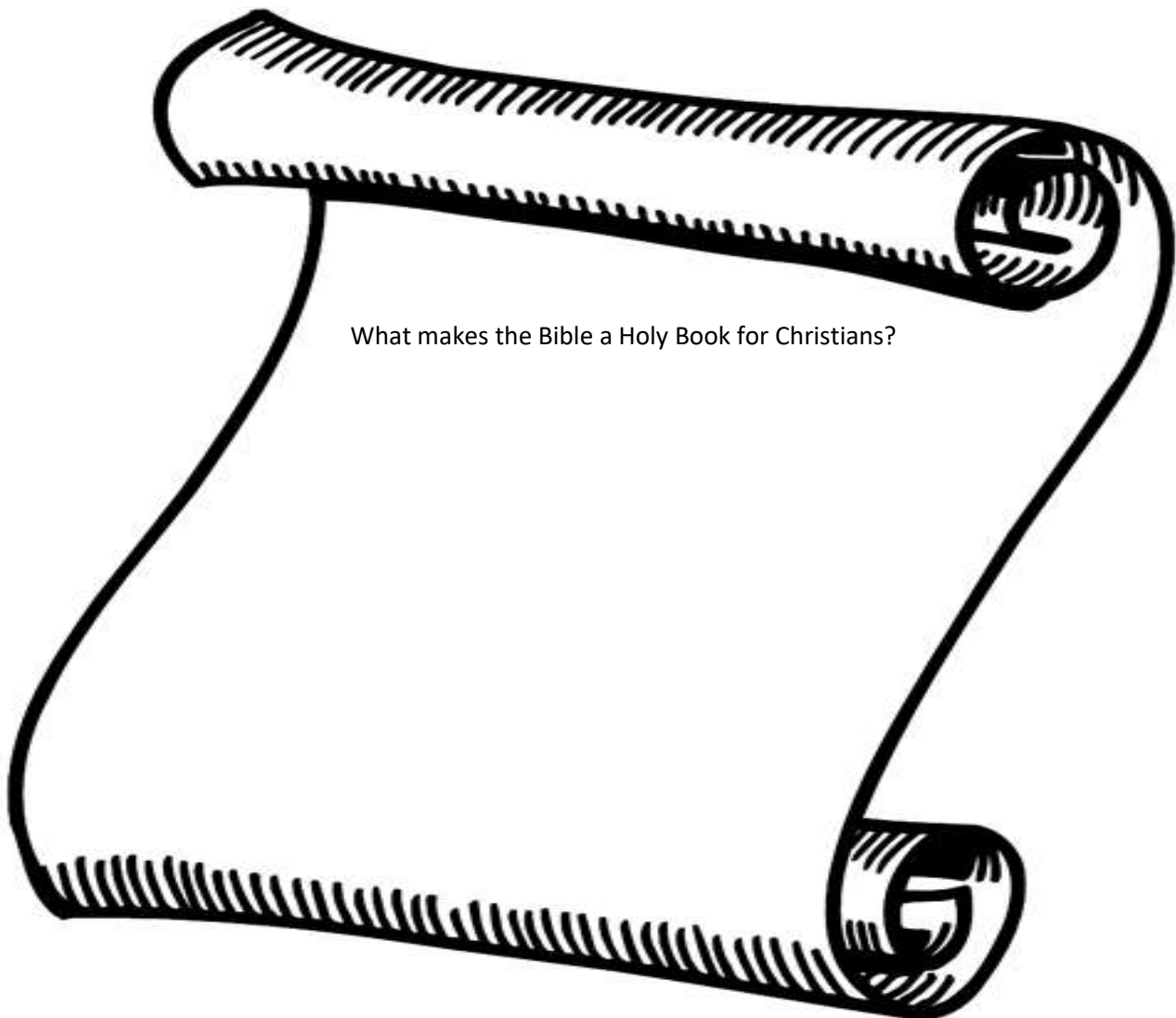
Activity 2: Making a Bible Box ~ what to do

You are going to make a small 'Bible Box' from thin card. It will help you to learn that the Bible, for Christians, is 'one book, many parts'. The six faces of the cube refer to different kinds of writing found in the Bible. In the chart below are two quotes for each of the 6 types of writing. Each type of writing also has a logo or symbol to identify it. These are to be stuck on the outside of the box. Then you will be making a tiny scroll to go inside the box, giving your choice of reasons why the Bible means a lot to Christians.

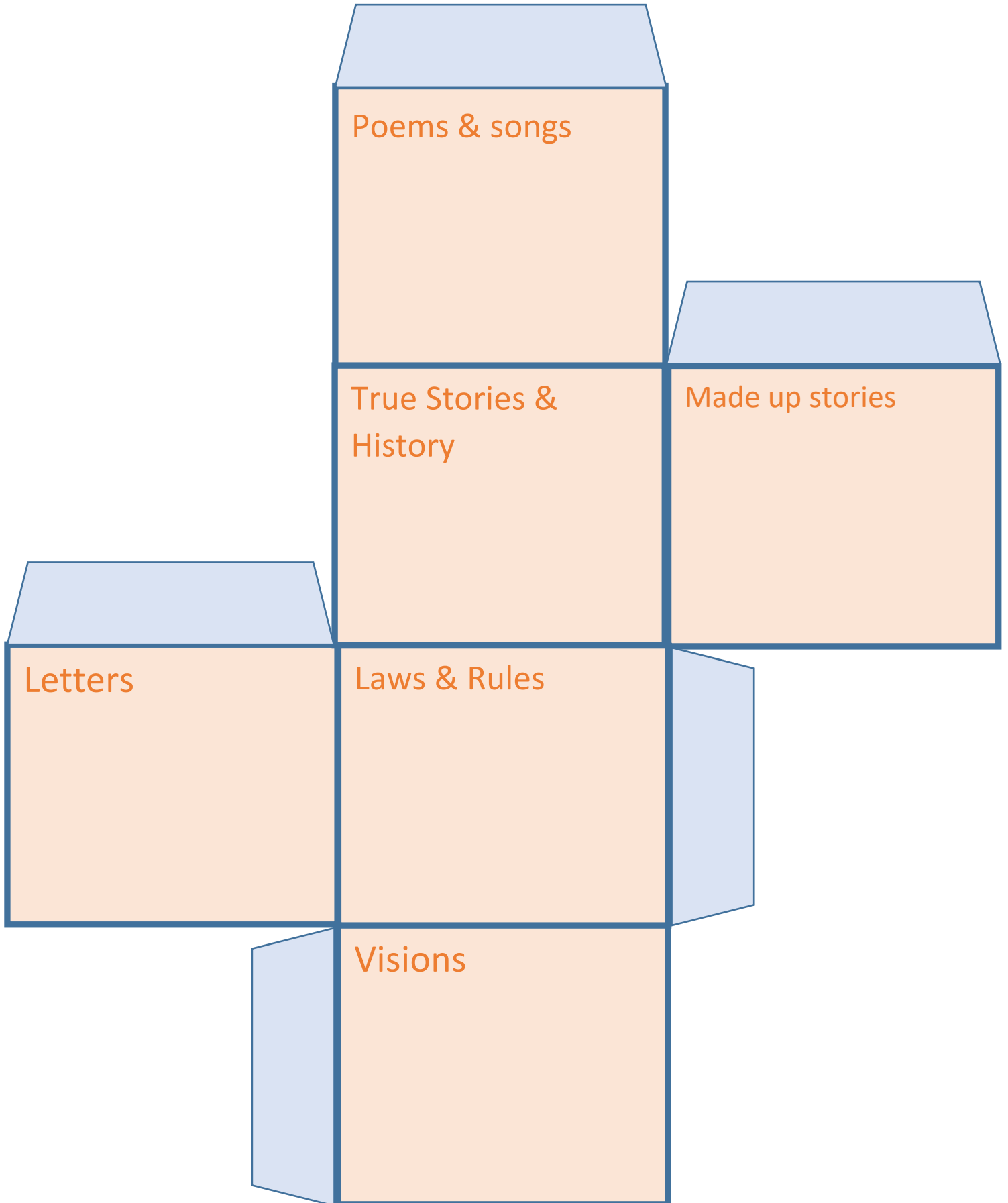
<p>Laws</p>	<p>"Worship only the One True God You must not kill. You must not lie. You must not steal."</p>	<p>"Do to other people what you would like them to do to you."</p>	
<p>Poems & Songs</p>	<p>"The Lord is my shepherd. I have everything I need. He leads me in green fields and by still waters."</p>	<p>"Love is patient Love is kind Love is not jealous Love does not boast Love always hopes Love always keeps going Love never fails"</p>	
<p>Visions</p>	<p>"In my vision I saw people turning swords into ploughs and their weapons into garden tools. War was stopped and peace was made."</p>	<p>"I saw a new heaven, and a new earth, and the old heaven and earth passed away... The tree of life grew there, to heal all the nations..."</p>	
<p>Stories from history</p>	<p>There was a boy named Joseph who was his dad's favourite. He had an amazing coloured coat to prove it...</p>	<p>When Mary's baby was born, she cradled him in an animal feeding trough: there was no room in the hotels of Bethlehem...</p>	
<p>Made up stories</p>	<p>"God told Noah to build a great boat because a flood was coming. All the animals needed somewhere to be safe..."</p>	<p>"A man was attacked by thieves on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, and lay wounded on the ground. 3 people walked along..."</p>	
<p>Letters</p>	<p>"Dear Christians in Rome, I am writing to you to share God's good news about Jesus..."</p>	<p>"Dear Timothy, I am writing to encourage you to keep on following your Christian faith..."</p>	

Activity 3: Seven Reasons why the Bible Matters to Christians: Choose three.

<p><i>Discuss these 7 ideas. With your partner, choose three which you think explain why the Bible is the world's bestselling book – ever! Put your chosen three reasons onto a tiny scroll, in beautiful writing, decorated with suitable symbols for 'Holy Words'.</i></p>	<p>“The Bible is a bestseller because it is where all the main stories of Jesus are found. If you worship Jesus, you want to know all about Him”</p>	<p>“Christians love the Bible because when they read it, they think they can hear God’s Spirit speaking to them through the words.”</p>	<p>“Christians try to follow the Bible’s teaching so that they can live as God wants them to live. It’s a guide for life.”</p>
<p>“The Bible has something for everyone and for every occasion: laws, songs, stories, beliefs, history, poems and more.”</p>	<p>“Some parts of the Bible are full of visions and dreams. This makes it popular because everyone needs a dream.”</p>	<p>“Humans cannot work out much about God for themselves. The Bible is a revelation: it shows us what God is like. That’s really important.”</p>	<p>“The stories in the Bible are full of people who messed up and failed, but God sticks by them. Christians love this, because they mess up too.”</p>



The Bible in a Box



Activity 6: Imagining a perfect future for the place where you live.

Saint John wrote this in the Bible.

“I saw a vision

I saw a vision of the future

**I saw the new Jerusalem coming down
to Earth from Heaven, pure like a
diamond, clear like a crystal**

Gates of gold, open to all

There is no sun there:

God is the light of the city.

**I saw the River of Life flowing out of the
city**

**And in the centre of the city I saw the
Tree of Life**

**And every leaf on the tree was for the
healing of the nations.**

**There was no crying there. Every tear
was wiped away.”**

(Simplified from Revelation 20-22)

*Try reading this aloud in some different styles: dreamy and peaceful?
Loud and passionate? Precise and sharp? Amazed! Passionate!*

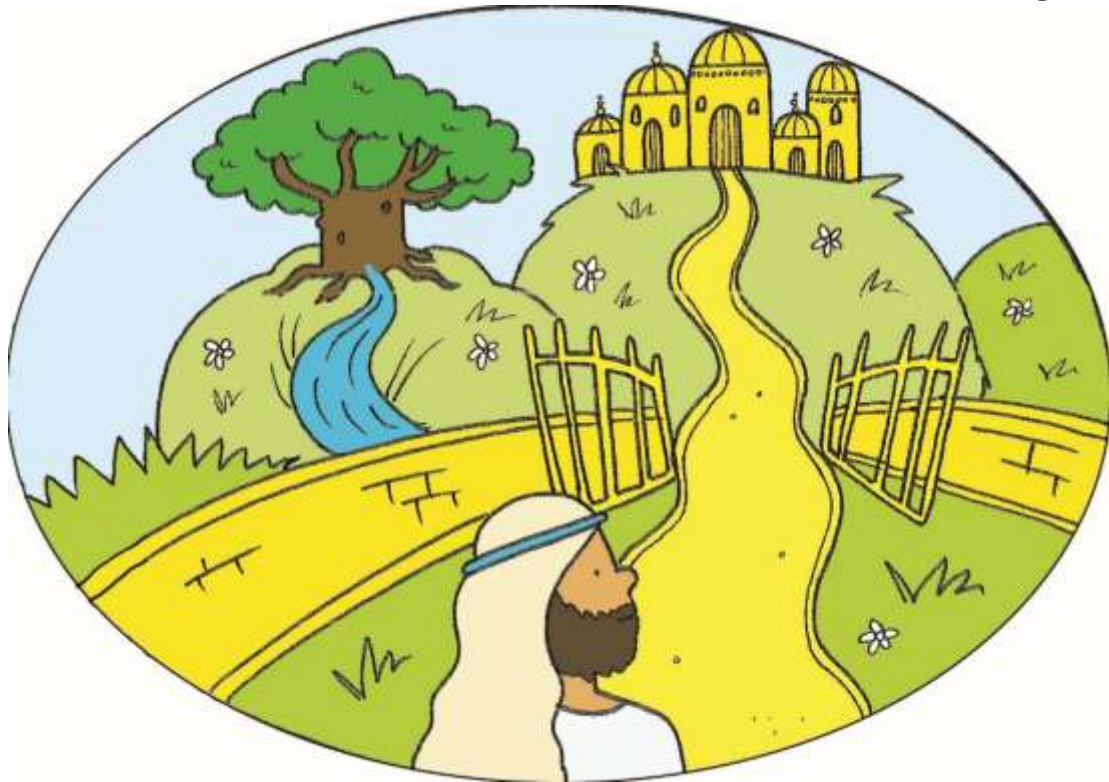
Which seems to fit the words best?

Look at the image in the drawing of Saint John’s vision. He imagines the city he lived in – Jerusalem – turned into something perfect. Like most cities, in reality it was a stinky, dirty overcrowded and dangerous place.

Imagine your city, town or village, turned perfect. What would it be like?

Write your own vision of the ‘Perfect Town’ for where you live.

- What would it look like?
- What would it be made of?
- What would it be similar to?
- Would it be like the New Jerusalem?
- What would grow there?
- What would flow there?
- What would you never see there?



Laurel Saunders, 14, made this image of the new Jerusalem drawing on William Blake's famous hymn. She writes: 'Jerusalem' by William Blake seems to have a strong meaning to me, when I listened to the hymn I felt extremely proud and patriotic of England and Wiltshire, also the feeling when you listen to pastoral music which projects Christianity to me.

My piece of artwork is trying to communicate that our soul (and God essentially) can be found in the land we live on, nature surrounding us and specifically music!

Jerusalem reminded me of rural Women's Institutes as that is their signature song (E.g. Calendar Girls, Jam and Jerusalem – comedies about WI). I used the words in the poem to create a collage image, but

also using the sheet music from the song too! One of the lines state '...Walk upon England's mountains green?' and instantly I pictured Wiltshire with its rolling hills that touch the sky and so that is what I created a scene of England's grassland. Another line says 'And was the holy Lamb of God, on England's pleasant pastures seen?' I then decided to include a lamb, newly born (which I imagined as being the embodiment of God – in my eyes when listening to the song), but created by using the sheet music which represents the spirit of God dancing and roaming the pastures of Britain's countryside free to all of whom observe!

I am an agnostic, which means I believe that no one can know if God exists or not. I still acknowledge others' beliefs but choose myself to not believe in God. However I do feel as if God can be in nature or music and that I can communicate to Him through them. When I look at the forests near me or the bluebell woods or just villages, I have a sense of wonder and freedom/liberty almost as if everything is simple and pure: a perfect Jerusalem here in Wiltshire."