

The image features a large banner with a black silhouette of a cow on the left side. The banner is set against a background of a sunset or sunrise with warm orange and red tones. The text 'HEARING THE VOICES OF CREATION' is written in white, bold, uppercase letters, following the curve of the banner. The banner is held up by white poles, and other colorful fabrics are visible in the background.

**TEACHER'S PACK**

**HEARING THE VOICES  
OF CREATION**

**A creative multimedia resource on  
understanding faiths and the environment**

Published by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation

Text copyright: Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) 2010

Permission is given for any of this to be reproduced so long as the original credit of ARC is noted in print, according to our Creative Commons licence.

ARC, The House, Kelston Park, Bath, BA1 9AE, UK

[www.arcworld.org](http://www.arcworld.org)

Printed in the United Kingdom from sustainably managed forests



## **Teacher's Pack by Victoria Fletcher**

Design by Kim Missen

Cover photograph by Richard Stonehouse

Drawings by Ranchor Prime

Supported by The Ashden Trust

Co-ordinated by ARC

DEvised BY MARTIN PALMER

With assistance of the team from The Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC)

Special thanks to Mary Bellekom, Victoria Finlay,  
Saskia Murk Jansen, Katriana Hazell and Susie Weldon

Welcome.

This booklet and DVD aim to help teachers of religious education key stage 3 to stimulate pupils' imaginative and artistic engagement with the topic of faiths and the environment through narrative, drama and music.

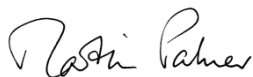
With minor adaptations it will also be of interest to teachers of citizenship, PHSE (personal, health, social and economic education), related subjects such as music and drama, and for teachers of key stages 1, 2 and 4.

*Hearing the Voices of Creation* was performed for the first time on November 3, 2009 at Windsor Castle at an event attended by Prince Philip and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon. It was to celebrate the major faiths coming together just before the UN climate change meeting at Copenhagen in order to launch their own long-term action plans to protect the planet.

Through words, dance, ritual and music drawn from the diverse traditions of six world faiths – Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism – this DVD version created for schools celebrates those times and ways in which we have allowed other parts of nature to speak for themselves. The performance is in four parts. It moves from Creation through Crisis, to exploring ways of Restoring the Balance, and ending with Images of the Future. It gives us a sense not only of our insignificance and failure as humans but also of our strengths and wisdom within the cosmic framework of the whole of nature. And it reminds us that we are a part of nature, not apart from nature.

The DVD will be suitable for use in class, for reflection and in school assemblies. This booklet includes an outline of the different religious core teachings and directs teachers to relevant web links, such as where the complete texts can be found online. It also provides suggestions on how the performance of *Hearing the Voices of Creation* could be adapted for performance by schools themselves.

What is this all about? As one religious leader said at Windsor: "The earth is not a problem but a source of wonder and joy."

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martin Palmer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Martin Palmer  
Director of ARC and narrator of the DVD

# PART ONE

## CREATION

**Lesson One:** Poem from the Rig Veda (The Dance of Creation – Hinduism) and Psalm 148 (All Creation Praises God – Judaism)

**Focus:** To understand the different ideas about the creation of our world and how we as humans fit into this.



### STARTER

*5 Minutes*

Discussion to introduce the topic. Pupils will discuss some of the ‘big’ questions surrounding creation in small groups and then share ideas with the whole class.

Ask pupils to get into groups and give each group one of the following questions:

1. Where did humans come from?
2. How and why did the earth begin?
3. Has our world been designed?
4. Do humans control the earth? Or is there something bigger?

Ask pupils to discuss their question for 2 minutes and then feed back to the whole class (3 minutes). Encourage pupils to question the ideas raised.

## RIG VEDA DANCE

*10 Minutes*

Show pupils the clip of the *Rig Veda Dance* and narrative.

**Teacher's note:** Within the Rig Veda, pupils should be able to understand that there is just one uncertainty with regard to what and why everything exists. Is God just one part of creation?

*Before:* Explain to pupils what the Rig Veda is (one of the oldest poems in the world, written in India more than 3,000 years ago). Then ask them to focus on how the dancer's movements reflect what the narrator is saying.

*After:* Ask them what they noticed about the dancer's movements. Spend a few minutes discussing this.

Then ask pupils to think about what is being said by the narrator. Look at the last phrase: 'The one who sees from heaven above, He only knows... or perhaps He does not know.' Discuss with pupils how this is about knowing where the universe (creation) comes from. Perhaps God knows... or perhaps even He does not know.

## PSALM 148 SONG

*10 Minutes*

Show pupils the clip of *Psalm 148* and narrative.

**Teacher's note:** Within Psalm 148, there is no question as to why everything exists. This is because Judaism and Christianity believe that God created the world and everything within it. However, the focus here is upon why do we, as humans, exist? Why are we, somehow, special? (Explain that 'Hallelujah' is Hebrew for 'Praise the Lord'.)

*Before:* Ask pupils to focus on what they can hear and see and to write down any key words/images relating to creation as they are watching. Tell them that you will ask them afterwards what a Psalm is.

*After:* Ask pupils what they heard and saw and discuss how the Psalm differs from the Hindu Rig Veda. What are the core meanings of both of these faiths in relation to creation? What do they believe about creation? Did God create us? And do they remember the explanation of what a Psalm is?

## MAIN TASK

*25 Minutes*

Pupils are to use their understandings from the two clips to create their own 2-minute creation dance/chant/rap. This will ensure that pupils have understood the ideas expressed in the two clips as well as drawing on their own opinions.

**Teacher's note:** Encourage ALL pupils to take part. Pupils with restricted movement may want to narrate their group's performance or take on the role of group leader.

Ask pupils to get into groups of five or six. Explain that they are creating their own creation dance/chant/rap and must draw on the ideas from the two clips as well as including ideas raised by the groups. It must be no longer than 2 minutes. Pupils will perform their dance/chant/rap at the end of the lesson.

To ensure pupils can work productively, set them a timed schedule:

- *5 minutes* to jot down ideas/movements/words to express particular points within their groups.
- *10 minutes* deciding on movements that will be suitable for their dance and how they want the dance/chant/rap to start, follow through and end.
- *10 minutes* rehearsing their dance routine in preparation for the final performance.

Pupils could decide on a narrator to ensure that their movements and ideas are being understood by the rest of the class.

## PLENARY

*10 Minutes*

Performances: Pupils are to show their performances to the rest of the class.

Ask groups to perform their dance/chant rap of 2 minutes, using 30 seconds after each performance for pupils watching to give their views on how well the group presented the concept of creation – has the group adopted a particular viewpoint – do they agree with these ancient stories? The Rig Veda or Psalm 148? Or have they shown an entirely new point of view?

If the class has a video camera, could you put some of these on to YouTube?

# PART TWO

## THE CRISIS

**Lesson Two:** The Story of the Monkey King (Buddhism) and The Story of the Tree (Christianity).

**Focus:** To understand the world through non-human eyes – the suffering that humanity causes to the rest of creation.



### STARTER

*5 Minutes*

Pupils will begin by discussing a ‘think’ to introduce them to the core of the lesson and allow them to use the thoughts from this initial discussion to guide them through the rest of the lesson. Have the think up on the board as pupils enter the classroom so they can begin thinking about the topic as they are preparing for the lesson.

**Think:** *‘If you were an animal or plant, what would you think of human behaviour?’*

Pupils can discuss this as a whole class or in smaller groups. As pupils are feeding ideas back to the class, the teacher can be writing up key ideas on the board so pupils can refer to them later on.

## THE STORY OF THE MONKEY KING

*10 Minutes*

Show pupils *The Story of the Monkey King* and narrative and discuss the core of the story.

*Before:* Direct pupils to focus on the story and its message.

*After:* Ask pupils what they believe the story was trying to tell them.

**Teacher's note:** Pupils should be able to understand from the story that non-humans often have good reason to fear human beings. Some humans believe the world is theirs and have little consideration for non-humans and others.

## THE STORY OF THE TREE

*15 Minutes*

Show pupils *The Story of the Tree* and narrative and discuss the core of the story.

**Teacher's note:** Pupils need to understand that within the story, it is a tree that is talking. Objectives include seeing how Christianity teaches how it was human cruelty and stupidity that led to the killing of the Son of God. This story, which was written 1,300 years ago, imagines what it felt like to be the tree – the cross. This raises questions about how humans have destroyed their own kind as well as the rest of creation and the Son of God. And it describes how Christ was a hero and a warrior, and how the tree too was brave, and stood firm. (The tree's words "...I saw the earth tremble" refer to Matthew 27.51: "the earth shook...".)

*Before:* Direct pupils to focus on the story and the message.

*After:* Ask them what the poet who wrote the story was trying to say.

After watching and discussing, ask how *The Story of the Monkey King* and *The Story of the Tree* are similar and how they are different. Are they both giving out the same message about humanity? About nature?

List examples in our world today where we can see people causing suffering to the world. But also think about how the tree and Christ were heroic and brave and think of examples of people who are heroic and brave.



## EXERCISE: CREATING A STORY

*25 Minutes*

Pupils will use the ideas raised in discussion from the two stories to write their own story, based on looking at the world through non-human eyes. There are two choices for the teacher:

- To create a story from the point of view of a tree, animal or plant, which looks at humans and depicts some of the suffering we can cause and how the rest of creation is affected.
- To write a story, again from the point of view of a non-human, which shows an example of heroism, of someone or something protecting the vulnerable elements of nature.

These may be full pieces of creative writing (prose or poem) or a storyboard.

**Teacher's note:** You may want to give pupils examples of this; eg, hunting, animal cruelty, deforestation and so on for the first. And for the second, discuss what kind of elements of nature could benefit other elements of nature: grasses through covering soil, or bees through pollinating flowers, for example.

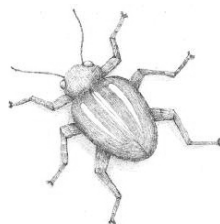
Pupils may work in groups or pairs.

## REFLECTION

*5 Minutes*

Pupils will go back to the question from the start of the lesson and think about how their thoughts and opinions have changed.

Does their story reflect a change they would like to see in the world?



# PART THREE

## RESTORING THE BALANCE

**Lesson Three:** Evening Prayer (Sikhism) and Finding the Path (Islam)

**Focus:** Understanding how we as humans can return to being part of creation and playing our distinctive role.



### STARTER

*5 Minutes*

A “thunk” to get pupils’ brains going.

**Thunk:** *‘How does nature protect us?’*

**Teacher’s note:** Pupils may want to discuss in pairs or groups before sharing ideas with the whole class. If they are struggling, prompt them with ideas; eg, nature gives us rain and sun to grow crops that feed people.

## EVENING PRAYER

*10 Minutes*

Show the clip from the *Evening Prayer* and the narrative.

**Teacher's note:** Before playing the clip of the *Evening Prayer* and the narrative, ask pupils to think about where humans fit into creation. Write down notes if necessary.

Spend 2 minutes afterwards discussing the ideas prompted by the music and the voice-over.

Pupils need to understand the Sikh teaching that humans need to be humble before the rest of creation. Creation is so much better at praising God than we are, and the power of humanity is minute in comparison to that of nature.

## FINDING THE PATH

*10 Minutes*

Show pupils the clip of *Finding the Path* and the narrative.

*Before:* Ask pupils to, again, think about where they fit into creation as they watch and listen.

*After:* Use the two clips to form the basis of a short discussion on our place within the world – do Sikhism and Islam share the same vision of something greater than humanity? Are we, as humans, the most powerful things on earth? Or is nature greater than us? Do we have the power to control nature?

**Teacher's note:** Think about eclipses and earthquakes and tides, and what human beings can do about them. Pupils need to explore how the Abrahamic Faiths (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) teach that we have a different role to the one described in the Sikh prayer. This section suggests we have become greedy with the natural world – and teaches that it is our duty to restore a balance.

## EXERCISE: WRITING A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

*30 Minutes*

Working individually or in pairs, pupils are to write a newspaper article from either the Islamic or the Sikh perspective as shown in these clips from the Qu'ran and the *Evening Prayer*.

**Teacher's note:** Either divide the class in two, with a different exercise for each group, or give pupils one of the following choices:

“Have human beings lost the plot?” asks God (Islamic clip)

or

“They think they're in charge but they're not,” says God (Sikh clip)

## PLENARY

*5 Minutes*

Roundup from today's lesson.

Pupils are to end by reflecting on everything they have learned. Is there something greater than just existence? Is there a reason why all of 'this' exists? Have humans lost the plot?



# PART FOUR

## IMAGES OF THE FUTURE

**Lesson Four:** All Creation Sings Together: The Canticale of the Creatures by St Francis of Assisi

**Focus:** To understand how we are all part of creation and that religions teach that we are part of a greater story.



### STARTER

10 Minutes

Circle of Life

**Teacher's note:** *All Creation Sings Together* is a hymn that is very similar to the story of the Circle of Life (as seen in *The Lion King*). You may want to show pupils a clip from *The Lion King* to aid their understanding.

Discuss the concept of the whole of life being connected, either as a family (from the Jewish, Christian, Muslim tradition) or as a web (from the Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh tradition).

Encourage pupils to think what happens to the whole of life when one part of a web or family becomes damaged.

## ALL CREATION SINGS TOGETHER

*10 Minutes*

Show clip from *All Creation Sings Together* and narrative.

**Teacher's note:** Pupils should understand St. Francis' belief that all creation acts as a family, with God as the Father. The world is like a web and if it should become broken or damaged then everything falls apart. He taught that it is our responsibility as humans to ensure that all living things continue to live and praise God.

Before playing the clip, ask pupils to think about the circle of life and where humans fit into this. If God is the Father, who are the Sisters? (There are two.) Who is the Mother? Who are the Brothers? (Another two.) Ask them to look out for these.

After watching the clip, ask pupils what they thought. Are we all linked together? Check the answers to the questions (Sisters are Water and Moon, Mother is Earth, Brothers are Sun and Air).

## EXERCISE: CREATION WEBS

*10 Minutes*

Pupils are to create their own webs of creation, to understand that we are all linked together. This is quite a quick exercise.

**Teacher's note:** First do an example on the board with the whole class. Then split the class into seven groups and give each a subject (or ask the pupils to vote for ones to do):

1. Bees
2. Seagulls
3. Trees
4. Water
5. Plants
6. Cows
7. Dogs

Eg: For Trees, pupils might draw the tree in the centre of the page and then, branching outwards, draw things that the tree is connected to or with (such as water, sun, earth, fruit or nuts). For cows there could be fields and grass, sun and water but also farmers and the milk industry. Lots of simple art.

Once pupils have completed the task, ask them to share their ideas, discuss the place of God in the map and then ask them: "Is all of creation linked together?"

## EXERCISE: MODELS OF CREATION

*25 Minutes*

Working in twos or threes, and building on what they have just done, pupils are to design their own models for creation. They may wish to draw this as a huge web again or as a tree or river and so on, but for this exercise they should put humans at the centre.

**Teacher's note:** Explain to pupils that they can now work in groups of two or three to design their own model of creation. Ask them to think carefully and maybe plan their ideas before drawing their model.

Have big pieces of paper and lots of coloured pencils.

## PLENARY

*5 Minutes*

End the lesson with a Question and Answer session.



## BUDDHISM – CORE TEACHINGS



<p><b>The Nature of God:</b> Some Buddhists recognise the existence of ‘supernatural’ or god-like beings, but Buddhists do not believe in an omnipotent creator God. All Buddhists recognise a transcendent truth and some conceive this in terms of a ‘Buddha Nature’, which infuses everything.</p>	<p><b>The Creation:</b> For Buddhists creation is cyclical, having no start and no end. It is part of the wheel of suffering to which we are attached through re-birth. Creation is just seen as part of this wheel.</p>	<p><b>Festivals:</b> Vesakha Puja celebrates the birth, enlightenment and passing into nirvana of the Buddha (May-June). Alsalha Puja celebrates the Buddha’s first sermon, when he taught the principles of Buddhism (July-August). The lunar New Year is a time to sweep away the negative aspects of the past year.</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## CHRISTIANITY – CORE TEACHINGS



<p><b>The Nature of God:</b> Christians believe in one God, creator of all things, considered to be three ‘persons’, the Trinity: God the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit. These three aspects of God co-exist within one Godhead.</p>	<p><b>The Creation:</b> All that exists does so through God, who began creation at a definite point in time and who will end creation. God created from nothing and all that he creates has purpose and meaning.</p>	<p><b>Festivals:</b> The main festivals mark the life of Jesus Christ: Christmas, celebrating his birth (December 25) and Easter, commemorating his death and resurrection (March-April). Traditionally, families feast on Shrove Tuesday, the last day before Lent, a period of fasting before the celebrations of Easter.</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## HINDUISM – CORE TEACHINGS



<p><b>The Nature of God:</b> Hindus believe in one Godhead or Divine Power, with innumerable forms. Three major forms are: Brahma, creator of each universe; Vishnu, sustainer and defender; and Shiva, destroyer and re-creator. Vishnu has 10 main forms, which come to aid the universe. These include Krishna and Rama.</p>	<p><b>The Creation:</b> Creation is cyclical. From the destruction of a previous universe, Brahma arises to create a new universe; Vishnu sustains it through a cycle of birth, growth and decline; Shiva destroys the universe and the cycle begins again.</p>	<p><b>Festivals:</b> Major festivals include Holi, the harvest festival in honour of love and of Krishna (February-March); Divali, the festival of lights celebrating New Year, honouring Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, and recalling the triumphant return of Rama and Sita from exile as told in the epic <i>Ramayana</i> (October-November).</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------



## ISLAM – CORE TEACHINGS



<p><b>The Nature of God:</b> Muslims believe that there is one God, Allah (Arabic for God). Allah is indivisible, has no equals, is the creator of all and has spoken to humanity through many prophets, of whom Muhammad is the last.</p>	<p><b>The Creation:</b> God is the creator. He simply says 'Be' and all things exist. God guides his creation and has a purpose for all forms of life within creation.</p>	<p><b>Festivals:</b> The Muslim calendar is lunar and moves 11 days earlier each year compared with the Western solar calendar. The months given here are for 2010. Eid ul Fitr (September) marks the end of Ramadan, the month of fasting (August); Eid ul Adha is the time of the Hajj, the pilgrimage to Makkah, and celebrates the obedience of the Prophet Ibrahim (November).</p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## JUDAISM – CORE TEACHINGS



<p><b>The Nature of God:</b> Jews believe in one God (whose name must not be pronounced), who created all things and who through his special covenant with the Jews has guided human life and destiny.</p>	<p><b>The Creation:</b> God is the creator, and the Book of Genesis says he created in six days and rested on the seventh. God will end creation in his own time.</p>	<p><b>Festivals:</b> Passover or Pesach celebrates the Exodus from Egypt (March-April); Shavuot, or Pentecost, marks the giving of the Law to Moses (May-June); Rosh Hashanah is the New Year Festival and Yom Kippur, the day of repentance (both September-October); Hanukah celebrates the survival of the Jews (December); Tu B'shvat marks the beginning of the New Year for the trees, when the almond trees bloom in Israel (January/February).</p>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## SIKHISM – CORE TEACHINGS



<p><b>The Nature of God:</b> Sikhs recognise one God, who is the true Guru (teacher). Unbound by time or space and beyond human definition, he makes himself known to those who are ready.</p>	<p><b>The Creation:</b> God is the creator of all, so all life is good. Attachment to this world means rebirth, so that release from this world is the highest goal.</p>	<p><b>Festivals:</b> Baisakhi celebrates the foundation of the Khalsa (April 13). Other major festivals include the Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev (May-June); the birthday of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism (October-November); the Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur (November-December); and the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh (December-January).</p>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

# LINKS TO FURTHER READING

## LINKS TO THE FULL TEXTS DESCRIBED IN THIS BOOKLET

### **Creation – [www.arcworld.org/lesson1](http://www.arcworld.org/lesson1)**

*The Dance of Creation* from the Rig Veda (Hinduism)

*Psalm 148, All Creation Praises God* (Judaism)

### **The Crisis – [www.arcworld.org/lesson2](http://www.arcworld.org/lesson2)**

*The Story of the Monkey King* (Buddhism)

*The Story of the Tree* (Christianity)

### **Restoring the Balance – [www.arcworld.org/lesson3](http://www.arcworld.org/lesson3)**

*Evening Prayer* (Sikhism)

*Finding the Path* (Islam)

### **Images of the Future – [www.arcworld.org/lesson4](http://www.arcworld.org/lesson4)**

*The Canticule of the Creatures: All Creation Sings Together*

## OTHER RECOMMENDED LINKS

### **[www.arcworld.org/faiths.htm](http://www.arcworld.org/faiths.htm)**

ARC works with 11 faiths worldwide. These faiths and their networks embrace 85% of the world's population: some five billion human beings. Drawing on their traditions, faith communities are working in countless ways to care for the environment. Link here to an outline of the basics of each faith's history, beliefs and teachings on ecology. At the end of each faith section are links for further information.

**[www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/rs/environment/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/rs/environment/)**

**[www.ecen.org/cms/index.php?page=climatechange](http://www.ecen.org/cms/index.php?page=climatechange)**

**[www.ecen.org/cms/index.php?page=creationtime](http://www.ecen.org/cms/index.php?page=creationtime)**

**[www.ecosikh.org](http://www.ecosikh.org)**