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Key Question: U2.1 Why do some people believe God exists?

This investigation enables pupils to learn in depth from different religious and non-religious groups about the nature of belief in God. Pupils enquire into the key question- raising questions about the nature and existence of God focussing on Christian ideas about God. Pupils will consider why people do or don't believe in God and the impact that might have on the way they live their everyday life. This investigation provides an opportunity to meet Christians, agnostics and atheists and ask questions about why they do or don't believe in God. It enables a clear sequence of learning and the development of a rich knowledge of different worldviews. Pupils use some if the main disciplines with which religion and worldviews are studied.

The investigation implements the **principal aim of RE,** which is to engage pupils in systematic enquiry into significant human questions which religion and worldviews address, so that they can develop the understanding and skills needed to appreciate and appraise varied responses to these questions, as well as develop responses of their own.

Step 1: Select a key question

U2.1 Why do some people believe God exists?

Year group: Recommended Year 5

Strand: Believing

Questions in this thread:
1.1-3 Who is Christian/ Muslim / Jewish and what do they believe?
L2.1 What do different people believe about God?
3.1 Do we need to prove God's existence?

Religions and worldviews:
Christians, non-religious e.g. Humanist

Make sure that you can explain where this unit/question fits into key stage planning e.g. how it builds on previous learning in RE; what other subject areas it links to, if appropriate.

Step 2: Select learning outcomes

- Use the learning outcomes from column 2 of the key question outlines on p.66.
- Select learning outcomes appropriate for the age and ability of your pupils.
- Being clear about these outcomes will help you to decide what and how to teach.

Emerging	Expected	Exceeding
• **Define the terms theist, atheist and agnostic and give examples of statements that reflect these beliefs (B1).** • **Give two reasons why a Christian believes in God and one why an atheist does not (A3).**	• **Outline clearly a Christian understanding of what God is like, using examples and evidence (A2).** • **Give examples of ways in which believing in God is valuable in the lives of Christians, and ways in which it can be challenging (B2).** • **Express thoughtful ideas about the impact of believing or not believing in God on someone's life (B1).** • **Present different views on why people believe in God or not, including their own ideas (C1).**	• **Explain how Christians sometimes disagree about what God is like, giving examples of how they interpret texts differently (B3).** • **Enquire into what some atheists, agnostics and theists say about God, expressing their own ideas and arguments, using evidence and examples (C1).**

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Step 3: Select specific content	• Look at the suggested content for your key question, from column 3 in the unit outlines. • Select the best content (from here, or additional information from elsewhere) to help you to teach in an engaging way so that pupils achieve the learning outcomes. **This plan has selected the following content to exemplify the learning outcomes. Pupils will:** • Find out about how many people in the world and in your local area believe in God – using global statistics and the 2011 UK census (use 2021 data when available). Ask pupils why they think so many people believe in God. Collect these reasons. Find out about how many do not believe. Learn the words 'theist' (believes in God), agnostic (cannot say if God exists or not) and atheist (believes there is no god). • Set up an enquiry to explore the key question. Ask pupils to raise questions about the existence and nature of God. Focus on Christian ideas of God, in order to make this more manageable. Start by clarifying what Christians believe God is like. Build on learning from Key Question L2.1, and explore some of the names of God and metaphors for God in the Bible (e.g. God as Father, Spirit, Son, eternal, almighty, holy, shepherd, rock, fortress, light). If this God is real, what difference would 'he' make to the way people live? Make links with prior learning about the Bible and its 'big story' (Key Question L2.2). • Explore some reasons why people do or do not believe in God. Consider some of the main reasons. These include reasons from psychology of religion, and from philosophy: family background – many people believe (or don't believe) because of their home background; religious experience – many people say they have experienced a sense of 'the presence of God' or had prayer answered; many would argue that the universe, the Earth and life are extraordinary and are best explained as the result of an all-powerful Creator. Many people who do not believe in God point to the existence of terrible suffering as a key reason. Some argue that there is no need to use a Creator to explain the existence of the universe and life. • Consider ways in which Christians read the Genesis account of creation. Explore why some Christians read it literally; explore how lots of Christians read it as expressing some truths about God and human beings without reading it literally. Find out about Christians who are also scientists (e.g. Jennifer Wiseman, John Polkinghorne, Denis Alexander). • Invite some Christians, agnostics and atheists in to answer questions about why they do or do not believe in God.

NOTE: This unit of work offers around 8 hours of classroom ideas. You can select from it in order to achieve the learning outcomes set out in Step 2 above. The teaching and learning ideas are separated into different sections, each with its own learning objectives and outcomes. These sections do not necessarily constitute one lesson – teachers should decide how long their pupils need to spend on each section in order to fully grasp the concepts being taught.

Note also that pupils should have multiple opportunities to encounter the content you wish them to remember. Single encounters will not enable them to embed what they learn in their long-term memory.

NOTE: RE Today is not responsible for content on external websites. Please do always check content before showing to pupils.
Links were active and correct at time of publication, but they do not always last.

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<table>
<tr><td>Step 4: Assessment: write specific pupil outcomes</td><td colspan="3">

Turn the learning outcomes into pupil-friendly ‘I can’ or ‘You can’ statements.
You might adapt these specific outcomes to form ‘I can’ statements (for pupil self-assessment), ‘You can’ statements (for teacher assessment), and ‘Can you…?’ statements (for next steps or challenge)
Make the learning outcomes specific to the content you are teaching, to help you know just what it is that you want pupils to be able to understand and do as a result of their learning.
These ‘I can’/’You can’ statements will help you to integrate assessment for learning within your teaching, so that there is no need to do a separate end of unit assessment.

</td></tr>
<tr><td>Emerging</td><td colspan="2">Expected</td><td>Exceeding</td></tr>
<tr><td>I can…
You can…
Can you…?
Give two reasons why some people believe in God, one reason why some people do not believe in God and one reason why some people have not decided.
Define the terms: theism, atheism and agnosticism.
show understanding of the difference between a fact, belief and opinion.</td><td colspan="2">I can…
You can…
Can you…?
Outline clearly, with reasons, a Christian understanding of God
Give several examples to show how believing in God can affect people’s lives differently
Give examples of ways in which believing in God is valuable in the lives of Christians, and ways in which it can be challenging
Express their own ideas about theism, atheism and agnosticism.
Suggest answers to some of the Big Questions about the existence of God
Consider reasons that people might believe or not believe in God
Respond thoughtfully to the question, “Is God real?”, giving evidence to back up my ideas
consider how facts, beliefs and opinions come about and how they are interpreted.
respond thoughtfully to the question, “Is God real?”, giving evidence to back up my ideas.</td><td>I can…
You can…
Can you…?
Describe and explain some of the differences between people’s ideas of what God is like and whether God exists
Consider the different ways in which sacred text can be interpreted.
Express and explain similarities and differences between Christian beliefs about how the world began.
reflect upon the argument that God cannot be all-powerful and all-loving if the world is like this – full of suffering.
Understand why the natural world is seen by many Christians as evidence for belief in God.
Explain some of the differences between people’s ideas of what God is like and whether God exists</td></tr>
<tr><td>Step 5: Develop teaching and learning activities</td><td colspan="3">

Develop active learning opportunities and investigations, using some engaging stimuli, to enable pupils to achieve the outcomes.
Don’t forget the skills you want pupils to develop, as well as the content you want them to understand.
Make sure that the activities allow pupils to practise these skills as well as show their understanding.

</td></tr>
</table>

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LESSON OBJECTIVES	Teaching and learning ideas and activities	LEARNING OUTCOMES
How many people believe in God?		
Pupils will learn: Gather information and ideas about the religious make-up of the world, the UK and their local area. Some reasons why some people believe in God, some people do not believe in God and some people have not decided. The definitions of the terms; theism, atheism and agnosticism. Express their own ideas about theism, atheism and agnosticism.	**Building a rich knowledge of religion globally** ▪ Begin with a guessing game in 4s. If the world was a village of 100 people how many would belong to each religion or non- religious group? What surprises them when the real figures are revealed? Christian (33.5), Muslim (18), Agnostic (15), Hindu (12.5), Other religions (9), Buddhists (6.5), Atheists (4.5), Jewish people (0.6), Sikhs (0.3). Which of these groups believe in God, which don't believe in God? Discuss the meanings of the words: theist, agnostic and atheist. Teach pupils that a sociologist might study religion via demographics. Work in your pair to sort the groups into theist (believes in God), agnostic (cannot say if God exists or not) and atheist (believes there is no god) ▪ If the UK was a village of 100 people? Pupils look at some more tables of statistics for religion in your local town, the region, the UK and the world. What do they observe? The government site www.statistics.gov.uk is great – but teachers may need to mediate for simplicity. The basic figures from 2011 say: 59 Christians, 25 non-religious, 5 Muslim, 11 other. ▪ Ask the pupils to work in their groups to form 3 reasons why a person might believe in God, 3 reasons a person might not believe in God and 3 reasons why a person might not have made a decision about their beliefs about God. ▪ Stick one word: theist, atheist and agnostic in 3 different locations in the room. Share these of descriptions of people's beliefs like the examples below. After reading out each example ask the pupils to move to the word that most accurately describes their belief. Ask pupils why they have made their decision. Do they agree or disagree with the opinion offered? - **I believe in following reason, rationality and science. These guide me in my life decisions.** - **I think there is more to life than what is here on earth but I can't quite decide what it is.** - **I know that there is more than just us and my faith guides me** - **I need more evidence to make any decisions about God** - **I have thought a bit about God and haven't made my mind up but to be honest I'm not all that bothered about it** - **God is hard to define and unknowable** - **I need evidence and no-one has shown me evidence of God yet** - **I believe everything happens for a reason** - **I think there's some sort of power in the universe, but I'm not sure it is best called 'God'**	**These activities will help pupils to work towards achieving the following expected outcomes:** **Emerging** • **Define the terms theist, atheist and agnostic and give examples of statements that reflect these beliefs (B1).** • **Give two reasons why a Christian believes in God and one why an atheist does not (A3).** **Expected** • **Present different views on why people believe in God or not, including their own ideas (C1).**

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LESSON OBJECTIVES	Teaching and learning ideas and activities	LEARNING OUTCOMES
Is God real? What do Christians think?		
Pupils will learn to: Describe the God of Christianity, using some technical words and Biblical metaphors accurately Give reasons why some people believe in God and some people do not Suggest answers to some of the Big Questions about the existence of God Talk about some of the differences between people's ideas of what God is like and whether God exists	This session gives you the opportunity to engage your inner actor and dress as any well-known fictional detective. Set up an enquiry for the pupils by acting in role as a detective, the boss of a detective agency, and present the big investigation question in an envelope. The class need to then undertake a series of activities to give their own answer to the question. There are a series of activities to support them to learn before expressing their own ideas. • Ask pupils to list all the questions that they think they will need to answer if you are going to solve the Big Question. If they struggle you could give them a selection of questions to choose from e.g. who is this God? What kind of God are we talking about? What kind of God are we not talking about? Are there any witnesses for this God? Can I trust them? Are there any witnesses against this God?.....and many more • Focus the investigation on Christianity and explore What is God supposed to be like? Discuss with the pupils how they are going to find out about what God is supposed to be like? What are they going to need to do? • Share some metaphors and similes about God from the Bible. What do each of these tell the pupils about God? Provide pupils with the quotes or ask them to look them up to see what they say about God. Discuss with pupils what simile and metaphor is. You could use; Father (Psalm 103:13), Creator (Genesis 1:1), Rock (Deuteronomy 32:3-4), Shepherd (Psalm 32), Fortress (" Samuel (22:2-3), Light (1 John 1:5), Jesus (Colossians 1:15;2:9), Spirit (John 4:24), Eternal (1 Timothy 1:17), Everywhere (Jeremiah 34:24), Almighty (Matthew 19:26). • Ask pupils to create a wanted poster for God- they wouldn't be able to draw God so what would their description say? What is this God like? • Explain to pupils that many people think it is really hard to describe what God is like and so one medieval Jewish thinker, Maimonides, used 'the negative way' describing what God is not. As a class come with a series of statements about what God is not like. Collect them all together. Do these descriptions about what God is NOT like help to make more sense of what Christians think God is like? Why? • As a class, talk about who you would like to have as witnesses in this investigation. Make a list of people from history and today. Who would be the best witnesses and why? Are there any local people who would come in to your school to answer some questions? Witness interrogation: Arrange for two people to come to your class one Christian and one Atheist. In a pair, make a list of your interview questions. Share these with another pair and decide your	**These activities will help pupils to work towards achieving the following expected outcomes:** **Emerging** • **Define the terms theist, atheist and agnostic and give examples of statements that reflect these beliefs (B1).** • **Give two reasons why a Christian believes in God and one why an atheist does not (A3).** **Expected** • **Outline clearly a Christian understanding of what God is like, using examples and evidence (A2).** • **Present different views on why people believe in God or not, including their own ideas (C1).** • **Express thoughtful ideas about the impact of believing or not believing in God on someone's life (B1).** • **Give examples of ways in which believing in God is valuable in the lives of Christians, and ways in which it can be challenging (B2).**

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Respond thoughtfully to the question, "Is God real?", giving evidence to back up my ideas	best three questions. Then share these top questions with the class and decide your most important ten class questions. Interrogate! • Ask pupils to collect evidence from home can they each get 3 or 4 quotes from friends and family about whether or not they believe in God, why and how this affects their life. If each pupil brings three that is 90 responses to work with. You could work as a class to sort these and discuss them e.g. give some to each group and ask them to create a continuum on their desk from 'Yes, God is real' to 'No, God is not real' Place the statements on the line. Discuss what do each of these people think God is like? Can you tell why they believe or don't believe? What difference do the beliefs make to how they live? This information will then feed into the final task of the unit writing a report back to 'the boss'. It is important that RE provides challenging writing opportunities for all pupils in which they can use the rich knowledge of religion and worldviews they are gaining. **Notes:** A detailed version of this activity with supporting resource sheets can be found in *RE Ideas: God* Edited Fiona Moss, RE Today Services. https://shop.retoday.org.uk/9781905893768 This could happen in a series of RE lessons but it would be particularly suited to an RE week style of teaching and learning. This is a series of lessons taking 3-4 hours.	**Exceeding** • **Enquire into what some atheists, agnostics and theists say about God, expressing their own ideas and arguments, using evidence and examples (C1).**

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LESSON OBJECTIVES	Teaching and learning ideas and activities	LEARNING OUTCOMES
How do we know what is true? Why do people believe or not believe in God?		
Pupils will learn to: consider how facts, beliefs and opinions come about and how they are interpreted. show understanding of the difference between a fact, belief and opinion. consider reasons that people might believe or not believe in God reflect upon the argument that God cannot be all-powerful and all-loving if the world is like this – full of suffering.	**Starter: Distinguishing facts, beliefs and opinions** • Stimulus statements – pupils to sort into whether they are Fact, Belief or Opinion. • For example: Leicester City is the best football club in the Premiership; the world is spherical; the capital city of England is London; when I die I will go to Heaven, Henry VIII had six wives; God does not exist; dinosaurs once walked on this earth; brussels sprouts are disgusting. **Justifying categories** • Pupils report back and justify their categorisation. Highlight important words on board as they are used by pupils – proof, evidence, idea, probability, argument knowledge, possible. Use these words to introduce next activity. • Pupils to move along continuum line on the floor of the classroom in response to the statements: The following words provide the continuum line: Proved / Very Strong Evidence / Some Evidence / Possible but uncertain / Some Evidence Against / Strong Evidence Against / Disproved. • Sample statements: The earth is round. The sun revolves around the earth. The big bang began the universe. Scientists can explain everything without referring to God. God created the universe for a purpose. The world exists. • Introduce idea of **interpretation** (you could use optical illusions to illustrate the point). How we interpret apparently neutral "facts" can affect how we view them. Discuss statements used in previous exercise. E.g. The world exists – discuss chance, accidence, purpose. Add historical dimension by discussing previously held "fact" that sun revolves around the earth – what was the significance of Galileo's discovery – how was his new fact interpreted? • Pupils to provide a fact, belief, and opinion statement of their own and explain how someone else might interpret their statements legitimately but differently. **Reasons for believing not believing in God** • Explore some reasons why people do or do not believe in God. Consider some of the main reasons. These include: family background – many people believe (or don't believe) because of their home background; religious experience – many people say they have experienced a sense of 'the presence of God' or had prayer answered; many would argue that the universe, the Earth and life are extraordinary and are best explained as the result of an all-powerful Creator. Many people who do not believe in God	**These activities will help pupils to work towards achieving the following expected outcomes:** **Emerging** • **Give two reasons why a Christian believes in God and one why an atheist does not (A3).** **Expected** • **Outline clearly a Christian understanding of what God is like, using examples and evidence (A2).** • **Give examples of ways in which believing in God is valuable in the lives of Christians, and ways in which it can be challenging (B2).** • **Present different views on why people believe in God or not, including their own ideas (C1).**

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	point to the existence of terrible suffering as a key reason. Some argue that there is no need to use a Creator to explain the existence of the universe and life. • Ask pupils to work in a group to write one reason that people believe and one reason that people don't believe in God in each category family background, religious experience, the amazing world, suffering. • Share reasons. Are some more persuasive than others? **Good news/ Bad news** Divide pupils into groups and hand out newspapers. Ask pupils to collect stories and sort stories into those which depict a good world and those which depict a bad world. Deepen this simple activity by asking them to list possible candidates to explain who's responsible for the good and for the evil. • Pupils present their best good and bad story to the class. • Lead into discussion: is the world more bad than good? Include - Are newspapers the best of way discerning this? What do we mean by "bad" and "good"? Introduce difference between natural and moral evil. What does this mean for our understanding of the nature and existence of God? Is God responsible? • In groups, pupils use one of their 'bad world' stories to create their own news report for "God Watch News". Groups must write their news reports from one of the following points of view (ways of interpreting the events): - The event is absolute proof that God doesn't exist; - The event offers some challenges the existence of a loving God; - The event shows that God wants humans to work to change the world; - The event shows that God wants humans to practice the virtues of patience and faithfulness; - The event says nothing about the existence and nature of God – humans are to blame. • News reports can include role-played eye-witness accounts, recreations of the events, expert comments and so on. Pupils perform news reports to the class. **Plenary:** Ask pupils to share the best reason that they can think of for believing in God and the best reason they can think of for not believing in God. **Notes:** This is a series of lessons taking 2-3 hours This is a suitable agnostic song for pupils, posing the questions of the unit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Rh62aWp5Ow	**Exceeding** • **Explain how Christians sometimes disagree about what God is like, giving examples of how they interpret texts differently (B3).** • **Enquire into what some atheists, agnostics and theists say about God, expressing their own ideas and arguments, using evidence and examples (C1).**

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LESSON OBJECTIVES	Teaching and learning ideas and activities	LEARNING OUTCOMES
What do Christians believe about how the world began? Do they all share the same idea?		
Pupils will learn to: Understand why the natural world is seen by many Christians as evidence for belief in God. Consider some of the different ways in which sacred texts, e.g. from the Bible book of Genesis, can be interpreted. Express and explain similarities and differences between varied Christian beliefs about how the world began.	**What looks like a design and what looks random?** • Ask pupils to bring with them, or show pupils various items you have collected, or send pupils outside on a 5 minute mission to find something beautiful and well designed in the natural world (e.g. leaf, daisy, acorn, piece of fruit). Discuss these items: do they seem to be accidents, random, or designed? **How did the world begin?** • Discussion: Where do these objects get their fitness for purpose? Too amazing to be chance? Consider the idea of evolution (ensure that pupils have covering this in KS2 Science before embarking on this learning) – does this rule out God? If God did design the universe, what does the universe tell us about what God is like? Does this fit with the descriptions of God learnt about in prior lessons? • Consider Creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2. (Could show using Lego Bible freeze-frames). Explain that Christians view these accounts differently – some read it literally, while others see it as telling a truth about human nature. In both interpretations Christians see God as creator and designer of the natural world. It's a belief shared with Sikhs, Muslims and Jews – but not with atheists. • What impacts and challenges might such beliefs have upon the lives of Christians? Do all Christians think the same? (No – illustrate some diversity) • Statements for and against the design argument posted around classroom, such as: - We just think the world in beautiful because we're taught to think if something works well it is beautiful; - Evolution means that the Bible stories are meaningless; - Our world could easily have come about by chance. There are billions of planets that it is simply the law of averages that at least one planet would contain life; - Everything clearly has a purpose: there can be no doubt that the world has a designer; - Even if 'God' did design the universe, that doesn't mean 'God' still exists today; - If God did design the universe, then sack God. The design is bad e.g. evil and pain. • Pupils write responses/ reflections/ questions on post-it notes and stick them onto statement posters.	**These activities will help pupils to work towards achieving the following expected outcomes:** **Emerging** • **Give two reasons why a Christian believes in God and one why an atheist does not (A3).** **Expected** • **Give examples of ways in which believing in God is valuable in the lives of Christians, and ways in which it can be challenging (B2).** • **Express thoughtful ideas about the impact of believing or not believing in God on someone's life (B1).** • **Present different views on why people believe in God or not, including their own ideas (C1).** **Exceeding** • **Explain how Christians sometimes disagree about what God is like, giving examples of how they interpret texts differently (B3).**

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	• Introduce simple "big bang" theory. For many atheist scientists, this provides an alternative explanation of the origins of the universe, one that does not require a Creator. However, many Christians argue that God is responsible for the big bang. Taking note of viewpoints from atheists and Christians, recognising that there is a range of views within Christianity, as a class add responses / reflections / questions onto a final poster responding to this saying: **"God caused the big bang that created the universe."** Think about who might agree and disagree and why. • Divide pupils into small groups – each group is assigned one poster (including the big bang theory) and must collate sticky note ideas into a speech in response to the statement. Groups deliver speeches **What do scientists think?** More able pupils could find some examples of scientists, including those who are non-religious (see the Understanding Humanism website resource on Humanist Heritage for examples https://heritage.humanists.uk/category/science/); compare with some scientists involved in cosmology who are Christians e.g. Jennifer Wiseman, John Polkinghorne, Denis Alexander. See: http://request.org.uk/issues/ultimate-questions/science-faith/	• **Enquire into what some atheists, agnostics and theists say about God, expressing their own ideas and arguments, using evidence and examples (C1).**

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LESSON OBJECTIVES	Teaching and learning ideas and activities	LEARNING OUTCOMES

Is God real? Why do some people believe God exists? Why do some people believe God doesn't exist?

Pupils will learn:

reasons why some people believe in God and some people do not

several examples to show how believing in God can affect people's lives differently

answers to some of the Big Questions about the existence of God

some of the differences between people's ideas of what God is like and whether God exists

respond thoughtfully to the question, "Is God real?", giving evidence to back up my ideas.

Go back into you detective persona from the lessons on 'Is God real?' And demand your report. Spend time in role recapping from the class what they have found about different beliefs about God, evidence for the beliefs and how they affect people's behaviour. Announce deadline day and ask pupils to put together their report using at least two of the sentence starters from each column. Offer pupils different ways of presenting their report e.g. newspaper article or balanced argument. This is an important opportunity for pupils to deploy their new knowledge and skills in extended writing in RE and connects well to the English curriculum.

Is God real?

Introduction	On the one hand…	On the other hand…	Conclusion
This question is..	Most Christians say that God is…	Some people believe that God is not real because…	For Christians, the strongest evidence for God seems to be…
This is an important question because…	This means that God is not…	Another reason is …	For atheists, the strongest evidence that there is no God seems to be…
This is a big question because…	Some people believe this God is real because…	This is a strong /weak argument because…	Believing in God is a big part in millions of people's lives because…
When the question says "God", most Christians mean…	Others believe because…	Some people think no one should believe in God because…	Arguments don't always persuade people to believe or not to believe, because…
In order to answer this question I have had to…	This is a strong/weak argument because…	Some people are quite happy for others to believe, even if they don't, because…	This is an important question to explore because…
The main question leads to lots of other questions, such as…	Believing in God is very important for some people, for example…	Believing that there is no God might affect how a person lives, for example…	I think… because…
	Believing in God can have a big impact for some people because…		I am not sure about the answer to this question because…
	Many people who believe in God don't think you can actually prove God's existence but they say…		

These activities will help pupils to work towards achieving the following expected outcomes:

Emerging

- **Give two reasons why a Christian believes in God and one why an atheist does not (A3).**

Expected

- **Present different views on why people believe in God or not, including their own ideas (C1).**

Exceeding

- **Enquire into what some atheists, agnostics and theists say about God, expressing their own ideas and arguments, using evidence and examples (C1).**

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