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Information for Teachers

The Bahá'í Faith is the world's seventh largest religion. The Bahá'í House of Worship in New Delhi (the "Lotus Temple") is currently the world's most visited building and the striking Bahá'í gardens on the slopes of Mount Carmel are becoming more well-known. These worksheets give basic information about the history, beliefs and practices of the Bahá'í Faith. The Bahá'í emphasis on the oneness of humanity, and its acceptance of the divine origin of the world's major religions, may make it a useful topic for pupils to study as part of their Religious Education programme.

This series of photocopiable masters sets out to provide teachers of secondary schools with accessible materials which can readily be adapted and built upon. The simple publication format allows the teacher to store his or her additional material alongside these printed pages.

These worksheets are mainly intended for Key Stage 3 but some teachers may find them suitable for certain purposes within Key Stage 4.

The Warwick Bahá'í Bookshop allows the photocopying of pages marked "copiable page" for educational use within the educational establishment which has purchased or downloaded this copy. (In the case of purchase or download by a local Bahá'í community for its own use, the pages may be copied for use by all the classes which are run by that Bahá'í community.)

Photographs are reprinted with permission of the Bahá'í International Community and have been reproduced from <http://media.bahai.org>. The website of the Bahá'í International Community is at www.bahai.org.

Information and resources designed specifically for use in UK schools can be accessed at <http://re.bahai.org.uk>. General information about the Bahá'í Faith can be viewed at www.bahai.org.uk.

See Appendix 1 for a list of websites which provide further information on the Bahá'í Faith.

See Appendix 2 for details of leaflets available.

See Appendix 3 for books for children published by the Warwick Bahá'í Bookshop. A wide range of books about the Bahá'í Faith can be ordered from www.bahaibooks.org.uk.

**Published by the Warwick Bahá'í Bookshop,
The Haven, 6 Welsh Road West, Southam, Warwickshire, CV47 0JN.
www.warwickbahaibookshop.co.uk**



The Purpose of Life

Bahá'ís believe that each of us is in the world for a reason. A human being is a body with a soul. When the body dies, the soul, because it is not physical, does not die with the body. In this life, the soul needs to gain good qualities. As it deals with the difficulties of life, it learns honesty, trustworthiness, love for others, patience, compassion and other good qualities. After death, the soul needs these qualities, or “virtues”, for the next life.

Bahá'ís do not believe that we can properly understand what the next life is like. Can a baby, while in its mother's womb, guess what this world is like? The baby is wrapped up in its own world and does not even realise that there is another world outside that.



In the same way, when we are in this world we can't understand the spiritual world which encircles us.

When our body dies, our soul goes on to a completely different plane of existence. We still have our memories of this life, and we will be able to recognise people we knew.

Bahá'ís do not believe that heaven and hell are actual, physical places. Heaven is the feeling of being closer to God and getting closer to perfection. Hell is realising how far away we are from God and from perfection. The next world is not static – we do not just stay there and do nothing. According to what we have learned in this life, we progress at different rates, but always growing towards God.

All this means, as every religion has told us, that we should make an effort to be kind, honest and helpful – we are developing our souls ready for the next world.

Activity

1. Do you think it is a surprise for a baby when it is born and finds itself in this world?
2. Do you think the baby could have imagined what it was like?
3. Do you think we can possibly imagine what the next world is like?
4. Do you think we will be surprised when we see it? Why?



Prayer

Bahá'ís see prayer as conversation with God. If a person loves someone, he or she will want to be with that person and talk to them as much as possible. And the more you get to know a person, the more you love them. It is the same if someone loves God. He or she will want to talk to God as much as possible.

The body needs food every day for it to grow. In the same way, the soul needs spiritual food every day so it will grow. This spiritual food is prayer.

There are many Bahá'í prayers for specific situations. This prayer is for when we have problems, many Bahá'ís learn it by heart:

“Is there any Remover of difficulties save God?
Say: Praised be God! He is God! All are His
servants and all abide by His bidding!”

Prayers do not have to be said in a special building although Bahá'ís do have some Houses of Worship. Bahá'u'lláh said:

“Blessed is the spot, and the house, and the place,
and the city, and the heart, and the mountain,
and the refuge, and the cave, and the valley, and
the land, and the sea, and the island, and the
meadow where mention of God hath been made,
and His praise glorified.”

Activity

1. What happens to the body if it doesn't get enough food?
2. What will happen to the soul if it doesn't get enough spiritual food?
3. Draw a picture to illustrate the last quotation.



Daily Devotions

Daily prayer is so important that every day, Bahá'ís between the ages of 15 and 70 must choose one of three Daily Obligatory Prayers to say. These are known as the Short, Medium and Long Obligatory prayers. Obligatory means it must be done. Here is the Short Obligatory Prayer, which is said while standing to face the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. It is said at noon or soon afterwards:

"I bear witness, O my God, that Thou hast created me to know Thee and to worship Thee. I testify, at this moment, to my powerlessness and to Thy might, to my poverty and to Thy wealth. There is none other God but Thee, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting."

Activity

"Bear witness" and "testify" both mean the same thing: to swear that something is true. What does a Bahá'í swear is true when he or she says this prayer?

Bahá'u'lláh also said that it is important to read a short piece from the Scriptures each morning and each night and to think about what it means.

Bahá'ís should also meditate every day, by sitting down and repeating the phrase "Alláh-u-Abhá!" 95 times. This means "God is the All-Glorious". This same phrase is also used as a greeting amongst Bahá'ís.

Nobody else has the right to check up on whether a Bahá'í is remembering to do any of these things, they are strictly between the individual and God.

Activity

1. Does a small child have to say an Obligatory Prayer every day?
2. How many daily Obligatory prayers are there?
3. What should a Bahá'í do each morning and evening?
4. How many times must a Bahá'í repeat "Alláh-u-Abhá!" ?
5. Does anyone check up to see if a Bahá'í is saying his or her prayers?



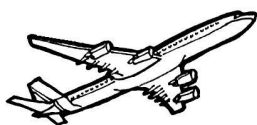
The Bahá'í Fast

During the Bahá'í month of Alá (which falls during the first 3 weeks of March), there is a fast from sunrise to sunset. Bahá'ís aged between 15 and 70 do not eat or drink between these times. This should be a time for remembering that the soul is more important than the body, and for prayer. You should not fast if you are ill and need not fast if you are doing heavy manual labour or making a journey of more than 9 hours. Women need not fast when they are pregnant or breastfeeding. The Fast takes place during the last month of the Bahá'í year. It ends with the New Year festival which is a Holy Day.

Activity

Mark whether each person should fast.

| Person | Yes or No |
|---|-----------|
| A mother with a newborn baby | |
| A 12-year old girl at school | |
| An 80-year old lady with breathing problems | |
| A builder who is fit and healthy | |
| A man flying to Australia | |
| A lady expecting twins | |
| A man mowing his lawn | |
| A 16-year old boy who is at home with flu | |
| An R.E. teacher aged 43 | |
| A computer programmer | |





Funerals

When a Bahá'í dies, they should be buried somewhere nearby – within an hour's travel at most. In some countries, people carry their dead relatives for long distances to bury them at holy shrines or sacred places. The Bahá'í law discourages this. A special burial ring goes on one of the fingers of the dead person, and the body is wrapped in cloth and placed in a coffin for burial. On the ring are written the words:

"I came forth from God, and return unto Him, detached from all save Him, holding fast to His Name, the Merciful, the Compassionate."

There is a special prayer which should be said at the funeral. One person reads the prayer while everyone else listens. There are no priests in the Bahá'í Faith so the family choose the person they want to read the prayer. Bahá'u'lláh explained that we should actually be happy for the dead person, as they are going to the next world:

"I have made death a messenger of joy to thee, wherefore dost thou grieve?"

If the person has lived a good, unselfish life, they will be very happy in the next world. The soul leaves the body behind, like taking off a coat, and will continue to grow towards God. We can help people in the next world to make more progress by praying for them. They can also pray for us. This is a prayer we can say for them:

"O my God! ... Verily, I beseech Thee to forgive the sins of such as have abandoned the physical garment and have ascended to the spiritual world. O my Lord! Purify them from trespasses, dispel their sorrows, and change their darkness into light. Cause them to enter the garden of happiness, cleanse them with the most pure water, and grant them to behold Thy splendours on the loftiest mount."

Activity

Imagine someone in the next world is praying for you. Make a list of the things you would like them to ask for.



Children

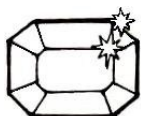
There are no special rituals or ceremonies for Bahá'í children. When a child is born to Bahá'í parents, they may wish to have a "naming day" when they will invite friends and relatives for prayers and a celebration.

In the same way, if an adult decides to become a Bahá'í, they only have to say so, there is no special ceremony when they join the Bahá'í community.

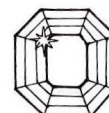
The age of maturity for Bahá'ís is 15. At that age a young person takes on the responsibilities of prayer and of fasting. If a person under the age of 15 wishes to be a Bahá'í, they need the permission of their parents.

Education

One of the Bahá'í principles is education for all and the Bahá'ís consider this very important, especially for girls. In fact, if parents have a boy and a girl and cannot afford to send both of them to school, they should send the girl. This is because girls grow up to become mothers, and mothers are the first teachers of their children.



Bahá'ís see education as "mining for jewels". This means that everyone has talents or "jewels" within them which need to be found and polished so they shine brightly. The Bahá'í Writings say:



"Every child is potentially the light of the world."



Bahá'í children are fully involved in the life of the Bahá'í community. At the regular meetings of the Bahá'ís, the Nineteen Day Feasts, they can say prayers and join in the discussions. They may also give money to the Bahá'í Fund (this is something which only Bahá'ís can do).

Another Bahá'í principle is looking at things with an open mind and deciding for yourself what you think is true. Bahá'í children are taught about all the world religions. At the age of 15 they should decide for themselves if they believe in Bahá'u'lláh and therefore wish to continue as part of the Bahá'í community.

Activity

1. What changes take place for a young Bahá'í when they become 15?
2. What might a child feel if he or she were told they were "potentially the light of the world"?
3. What talents or good qualities ("jewels") do you have?
4. Think of some of your friends. What talents or good qualities do they have?



Marriage

For Bahá'ís, it is important to understand the basic belief that men and women are equal. This obviously means that the husband and wife must be seen as a partnership or as a team.

For a Bahá'í wedding to take place, the bride and groom must have freely chosen one another, without any interference from others. When they decide that they would like to be married, they then ask for approval from their parents. The parents cannot disapprove because of any kind of prejudice – class, colour, background, religion, etc., but they can point out if they think that the personalities of the couple are not really suited to one another, and that they should not rush into it.



Once everyone is happy about it, the wedding takes place, and should be the uniting of two families. In front of witnesses, the bride and groom each say:

“Verily, we all abide by the will of God” .

It is up to the couple which local wedding customs should go into the ceremony, and what prayers or songs to include.

Divorce

Bahá'ís should avoid divorce if at all possible. Their families and the Local Assembly will try to help them if they are having problems. However, if the couple come to really dislike one another, they must live apart for one year. If they still want to separate, the divorce is then granted.

Activity

1. Can Bahá'ís have an arranged marriage?
2. Apart from the couple, who else has to agree to the wedding?
3. Can a Bahá'í marry someone who isn't a Bahá'í?
4. What must the couple say for the marriage ceremony?
5. What is the only reason for divorce?
6. How long must the couple live apart before the divorce is granted?
7. Do you think it is a good idea that the parents have to approve of the wedding?



How to Behave

Bahá'ís believe that we should treat other people well. We should be kind to everybody, respectful, honest and fair to them. Bahá'u'lláh said:

“Be fair to yourselves and to others.”

To be fair to others, we should not talk about them behind their backs. When we say unkind things about other people, even if we think that what we say is the truth, it is called “backbiting”. It is backbiting that causes enormous trouble between people, and especially at school! It says in the Bahá'í Writings that we should concentrate on the good things about people:

“If a man has ten good qualities and one bad one, look at the ten and forget the one; and if a man has ten bad qualities and one good one, to look at the one and forget the ten.”

Bahá'ís should always be truthful and honest:

“Truthfulness is the foundation of all human virtues. Without truthfulness, progress and success... are impossible for any soul.”

We should use our tongues to speak wisely and with purity:

“Defile not thy tongue with cursing...”
“The tongue is for mentioning that which is good; pollute it not with evil speech.”

Kindness and charity mean seeing other people as more important than ourselves:

“Blessed is he who prefers his brother before himself.”

Activity

1. List five kind deeds which you could do today.
2. List three things which Bahá'ís think are examples of bad behaviour.
3. Has doing this worksheet changed how you will behave in the future? And if so, how will you change?



Appendix 1 - Useful Websites

The following websites provide further information on the Bahá'í Faith which may be of use to teachers of R.E.:

<http://www.bahai.org>

The official Web site of the Bahá'í International Community, offering information about the Bahá'í Faith and its worldwide community to the general public, as well as to journalists, academics, and researchers.

<http://www.bahaullah.com>

This contains details on the life of Bahá'u'lláh and of His Writings.

<http://info.bahai.org>

Bahá'í Topics, an information resource including a brief introduction to the Bahá'í Faith, its teachings, history, and community activities, in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Persian, and Arabic.

<http://reference.bahai.org>

The Bahá'í Reference Library, containing downloadable versions of all the authoritative texts of the Bahá'í Faith in English, Persian and Arabic.

<http://news.bahai.org>

The Bahá'í World News Service, reporting on news, activities, and developments around the world.

<http://media.bahai.org>

The Bahá'í Media Bank, a collection of more than 2,500 usable, high-resolution images of historical figures, holy places and buildings, and contemporary community activities. All photographs within this publication are from this website.

<http://statements.bahai.org>

A collection of statements offering the Bahá'í perspective on contemporary issues and themes, submitted by the Bahá'í International Community to United Nations agencies and conferences.

<http://www.onecountry.org>

One Country is the online newsletter of the Bahá'í International Community. The site contains numerous in-depth feature stories on the United Nations, noteworthy social and economic development projects, environmental efforts, and educational programmes.

<http://terraces.bahai.org>

The history and purpose of, and useful visitor information about the garden terraces at the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa.



Appendix 2 - Leaflets

Page 1 of 2

The Warwick Bahá'í Bookshop produces a wide range of A4 3-fold leaflets, in a standardised two-colour format, many of which are suitable for classroom use. For the most part, these concentrate on one area of Bahá'í belief, ideals or practice. The price is 10p per leaflet, plus postage. The Bookshop will send out orders of any size, single or multiple copies. The list below indicates for which Key Stages each leaflet may be appropriate:

GENERAL (INTRODUCTORY)

| | |
|--|-------|
| The Bahá'í Faith-What Is It? | 2 3 4 |
| The Bahá'í Faith-Being A Bahá'í | 3 4 |
| The Bahá'í Faith-How It Began | 2 3 4 |
| Cyflwyno'r Ffydd Bahá'í [<i>Welsh</i>] | 2 3 4 |
| The Bahá'í Faith – A New Religion for a New Age ** | 3 4 |
| Bahá'u'lláh - The Promised One | 4 |
| Bahá'u'lláh - Messenger Of God | 4 |
| Bahá'u'lláh [<i>simple text</i>] | 3 4 |
| ** full colour | |

SPIRITUAL SUBJECTS

| | |
|--|-------|
| The Nature of God | 4 |
| Prayer and Meditation | 3 4 |
| The Life of the Soul | 4 |
| Why Are We Here? | 3 4 5 |
| The Meaning of Suffering | 4 5 |
| Words of Inspiration [<i>quotations</i>] | 4 5 |
| Good and Evil | 3 4 5 |
| Fasting and the Bahá'í Fast | 3 4 |
| Health & Healing - A Bahá'í View | 4 5 |

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER RELIGIONS

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| All Religions Are One | 3 4 5 |
| The Return of Christ | 3 4 |
| Hinduism and the Bahá'í Faith | 3 4 |
| Buddhism and the Bahá'í Faith | 3 4 |
| Sikhism and the Bahá'í Faith | 3 4 |
| Islam and the Bahá'í Faith | 3 4 |
| Judaism and the Bahá'í Faith | 3 4 |
| Christianity and the Bahá'í Faith | 3 4 |

continued...



Appendix 2 - Leaflets

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Continued...

MISCELLANEOUS SUBJECTS

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Bahá'í Marriage | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Family Life | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Food and Farming | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Treatment of Animals | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Caring for the Environment | | 4 | 5 |
| Sustainable Development | | | 5 |
| Bahá'í Consultation | | 4 | 5 |
| Bahá'í Administration | | 4 | 5 |
| The New World Order | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| God's Promise To Humanity | | 4 | |
| The Importance of Religion | | 4 | 5 |
| The Way to World Peace | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Freedom From Terrorism | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| World Citizenship | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The New Age | | | 5 |
| Space - The Final Frontier? | | 4 | 5 |
| One Human Race [<i>on racism</i>] | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The Status of Women | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Religion and Science | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Economics - A Bahá'í Approach | | 4 | 5 |
| Bahá'í Education | | 4 | 5 |
| Law and Order | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Freedom Of Speech | | 4 | 5 |
| 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Britain | | 3 | 4 |
| The Bahá'í Faith & Queen Victoria | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| The Future of Monarchy | | 3 | 4 |

'PRESENTATION' series

A6 single fold, 5p each:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bahá'í Prayers [<i>9 short prayers</i>] | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Life after Death | | 3 | 4 | 5 |

The Warwick Bahá'í Bookshop can be contacted at:

The Haven, 6, Welsh Road West, Southam, Warwickshire, CV47 0JN,
or by telephone on 01926 817291.

Orders and enquiries also via www.warwickbahaibookshop.co.uk.

The text of these leaflets can also be viewed at www.warwickbahaibookshop.co.uk.



Appendix 3 - Some Useful Books

Although there is a wide range of Bahá'í literature available (e.g. www.bahaibooks.org.uk), the Warwick Bahá'í Bookshop specialises in producing simple materials, including small books. Teachers of Key Stage 3 may find the following of use:

“The Bahá'í Faith”

by Patrick Vickers.

This is a simple introductory book based on a Bahá'í family. It has 64 pages, with full colour photographs on virtually every page, and has been written specifically for pupils of between 8 and 14 years. The subject matter has been tailored to the concerns and interests of this age group, and the vocabulary is not particularly challenging. Copies are available at a reduced price of £1.25 for schools, plus postage. A half class set (15 copies) would cost £18.75 plus postage (which is always charged at cost).

“The Life of the Báb”

“The Life of Bahá'u'lláh”

“The Life of `Abdu'l-Bahá”

“The Life of the Guardian”

by Helena Hastie.

These 32-page booklets each tell the life story of a central figure from early Bahá'í history. Written in a straightforward style, they are probably suitable for most KS3 students. They would also make excellent background reading for any teacher wishing to deepen their professional knowledge on the Bahá'í Faith. Each book costs £1.50, or £5.00 for the set of four, plus postage.

“My Book of Prayers – What can I say when...?”

“My Book of Readings – What can I read when...?”

produced in conjunction with Sapling Publications.

These two books, at just £1.00 each (plus postage), were produced for children from Bahá'í families rather than for teenagers, but they may be of use in the classroom as a source of Bahá'í prayers and writings on different subjects. They provide prayers or readings for e.g. “What can I say when someone is ill?” or “What can I read when I am upset about something?” In the context of the classroom, the books could also be used as a source of display material or as genuine Bahá'í “artefacts”. The prayers and readings could be used for individual pupils to read aloud to the class.

Sample pages from these books can be viewed on the Bookshop website:-

<http://www.warwickbahaibookshop.co.uk>

To order please contact enquiries@warwickbahaibookshop.co.uk.