

How and why do people mark the significant events in life?

In this unit, pupils will learn about the beliefs of people from different worldviews surrounding commitment and promises. They will discuss the meaning and importance of ceremonies of commitment for religious and non-religious people. They will take time to consider the links between ideas of love, commitment and promises within the ceremonies that they study. Pupils will learn about several rites of passage and use their knowledge to reflect upon whether it is good for everyone to see life as a journey, and to mark the milestones.

Key Vocabulary

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| • Significant | • Bar Mitzvah |
| • Journey | • Bat Mitzvah |
| • Baptism | • Ceremony |
| • Commitment | • Wedding |
| • Marriage | • Sacred thread |



Lesson 1: How and why do people mark the significant events in life?

STEP 1: Share the big question for the unit with pupils.

- Ask pupils what they think is meant by 'Life's journey'.
- Ask: Who might you meet on life's journey?
- What might happen to people on life's journey?
- What or who might keep people safe on life's journey?

STEP 2: Share some of the events of your life journey with pupils using a road map. Give pupils their own roadmap and encourage them to map out the events of their own lives.

STEP 3: Bring the class back together and encourage pupils to share their own journey of life with other people in their class.

Have any of them had memorable events in their own lives?

Discuss whether any of these were directly linked to a religious or non-religious worldview.

Ask pupils which events they think would be the most memorable or special.

STEP 4: Explain that each of us takes a journey through life and some of us take a religious journey, others take a non-religious journey and others take a journey that is a mixture of the two.

Ask pupils to suggest reasons why each of our journeys may have similarities but also many differences. Show pupils some pictures of celebrations or ceremonies that mark milestones from different life journeys (e.g. weddings from different worldviews, believer's baptism, baby welcoming ceremonies, infant baptism, funerals etc).

Check how far pupils can use their knowledge from other units to say what these are and why they are important by working in pairs to make notes on the images they see and then giving feedback to the class.

Ask pupils to look at the images again and suggest how someone from a religious worldview might have used their faith to guide them through life's journey.

STEP 5: As a class, make a list of journeys of life ceremonies pupils know about from Christianity, Judaism and Islam (save this list for lesson 2). Explain that within this unit, we are going to be finding out more about these ceremonies in more detail.

Lesson 2: What is the significance of baptism for Christians? What happens and what does it mean?

STEP 1: Use the sticky knowledge quiz slides to recap key learning from last time. Discuss the meaning of the journey of life and look back over the list of ceremonies that pupils created in the last lesson.

STEP 2: Show pupils some pictures of believer's and infant baptism. Give pupils post it notes and encourage them to write down what they know about these two journey of life ceremonies. They can also write what they would like to find out. Explain that Baptism is a way of Christians welcoming the baby, child or adult into the church (Christian family). Ask pupils the following questions:

- Why do you think that Christians choose to welcome people this way?
- Which example might they be following?

Remind pupils about the baptism of Jesus, by sharing some images depicting this. Remind pupils of the key events of Jesus' baptism (it might help to show some of the slides from the Year 3 Trinity unit with which pupils are already familiar). Explain that Christians welcome people into the Christian church family through baptism because they want to follow the example of Jesus.

STEP 3: Show pupils two pictures, one of infant baptism and one of believer's baptism.

- Ask pupils if these are the same.
- Ask: What is the same? What is different?

- Why do different Christians choose to do different things when it comes to baptism?

Explain that at infant baptism, the parents and godparents promise to bring the baby or child up as a Christian. Ask pupils if they can remember any of the signs and symbols that they might see at an infant baptism. Watch an infant baptism to remind pupils of the key events*.

STEP 4: Show pupils an image of believer's baptism. Explain that some Christians believe that they should wait until they are old enough to make their own decisions about baptism so do not baptise babies who are too young to decide for themselves. These baptisms are called believer's baptisms.

Watch a film showing a believer's baptism and ask what signs and symbols pupils can see within this ceremony**.

STEP 5: Explain that in Church of England Churches, parents often baptise their babies and promise to try to bring them up to know Jesus. When the babies grow up, sometimes they feel that they want to become a Christian themselves. When they have made this decision, they might choose to be confirmed. Confirmation means that the believer becomes a full adult member of the church and can take communion.

STEP 6: Watch the videos again and complete the baptism investigation research sheet.

* <https://request.org.uk/resource/restart/2014/04/08/infant-baptism-in-an-anglican-church/> might be a useful link here.

**You might find Religious Studies KS2: Baptism - BBC Teach helpful. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/religious-studies-ks2-baptism/zm32nrd>

Lesson 3: How do many Jewish people mark becoming an adult?

STEP 1: Use the sticky knowledge quiz slides to recap the learning for this unit so far. Check that pupils can remember the names of the journey of life ceremonies that they studied in the last lesson. Explain that this time, we are going to be finding out about how many Jewish people mark becoming an adult.

STEP 2: Ask pupils if they know of anyone who has celebrated an 18th birthday recently. Do they know why 18th birthday celebrations are important and special?

Explain that in the UK, the 18th birthday is special because it marks when a person becomes an adult. Tell pupils that for Jewish people, girls become bat mitzvah and enter adulthood at the age of 12 or 13 (depending on which branch of Judaism their family belongs to) and boys become bar mitzvah, entering adulthood at 13. Explain that bar mitzvah means 'son of the commandment' and bat mitzvah means 'daughter of the commandment'. Explain that after becoming bar/bat Mitzvah – meaning 'son/daughter of the commandment' – young people are considered morally responsible for their own decisions and actions and old enough to follow the mitzvot (commandments) for themselves.

STEP 3: Watch a video clip about a bar or bat mitzvah ceremony *. Ask: What happens at a bat/bar mitzvah ceremony?

STEP 4: Read the Meaningful Milestones article from RE Ideas: Literacy by RE Today Services** and discuss the key events and reflections from a bar mitzvah and/or bat mitzvah. Discuss with pupils why they think that Bar and Bat Mitzvah are so important for Jewish people today.

Ask: why are they an important step on the journey of life for a Jewish person?

STEP 5: Ask pupils to write a postcard congratulating either Elliott, Sarah or a character from the film watched in STEP 3 on their bar/bat mitzvah. Tell pupils that their postcards should include the following features:

1. a description of at least one thing that happened during the bar/bat Mitzvah ceremony.
2. Pupil's understanding of the significance of becoming bar/bat mitzvah and of the specific parts of the ceremony and celebrations
3. Technical language with definitions of key vocabulary.

*You might like to use the clip from My Life, My Religion <https://youtu.be/RDZuvPpzXCk>

** this is available as part of your membership

Lesson 4: What ceremonies do many Hindus mark in the journey of life?

STEP 1: Recap the unit so far with pupils.

Ask: What have you learnt about the journey of life so far?

Can you name any ceremonies that Jewish people and Christians might have?

Explain that in this lesson we are going to be finding out about journey of life ceremonies for Hindu people.

STEP 2: Show pupils some images linked to previous units on Hindu Dharma; ask pupils to share what they know and can remember about Hindu Dharma.

Use a film outlining some key beliefs in Hindu Dharma*.

STEP 3: Explain that today we are going to be looking at the Hindu sacred thread ceremony and what it means within the journey of life. Recap with pupils the cycle of samsara. Discuss with pupils what this tells Hindus about the journey of life and ask them to remind you and each other why dharma and karma are so important

STEP 4: Tell pupils that between ages 8-12 some Hindu boys (and sometimes, but more rarely, girls) go through the sacred thread ceremony. The child will be given a 'sacred thread' which they must wear all their life, a new thread must be put on before an old one can be removed. The ceremony is sometimes called second birth because it is meant to purify the person giving them a fresh start for the next stage of their life as an adult. Show pupils a video of a sacred thread ceremony and ask them to report upon what they observe. Discuss the diversity of these ceremonies and how they can be celebrated in different ways.

Show a film of this ceremony**

STEP 5: Ask pupils to discuss the following questions:

- What do you think Hindus might mean when they talk about purifying a person before they begin the next stage of their lives?
- What kind of changes to the way a person behaves might need to take place?
- Can you suggest a reason why the 'sacred thread' needs to be worn at all times?

Pupils to create an invitation for a Hindu child to use to invite a friend to their sacred thread ceremony. The invitation will need to include information about the features and symbolism within the ceremony.

* You might find the My Life, My Religion film helpful here currently at www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02n5xj7

** You might find these films of a sacred thread ceremony useful. Currently found here

www.youtube.com/watch?v=4oLA75rRN6k or www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p010xyj2

Lesson 5: Why do people choose to get married? What do wedding ceremonies show us about commitment, love, promises?

STEP 1: Use the sticky knowledge quiz slides to recap the key learning from this unit so far. Discuss the different worldviews and ceremonies that we have learnt about.

Ask:

- Where does each one fit in on the journey of life?
- Why might someone feel that these ceremonies are part of life's journey?
- Why might they be remembered?

Explain that today we are going to be finding out about weddings and why people from different worldviews might choose to get married.

STEP 2: Show pupils some photographs from different wedding ceremonies.

Ask:

- What is happening in the pictures?
- Why might someone choose to get married?

Show pupils four different quotes showing couples' explanations of why they want to get married. Ask for pupils' opinions on which reason they think is the best. Ask them to consider whether and why couples might have more than one reason.

STEP 3: Explain that many religious couples try to marry for life, choose to bring their children up together within a marriage, try to be faithful to their partner, make a home together and follow what they believe to be God's rules.

Show pupils the quotes again; ask them whether they can spot these themes within them. Explain that over the next two lessons, we are going to be creating a leaflet to share information about what different worldviews think about marriage.

STEP 4: Introduce Christian marriage to pupils. Ask them to share what they remember from what they studied in earlier units. Show pupils a video of a couple talking about what happened in their wedding and why they chose to get married*.

Ask pupils to record in their notes (that will be used to create their leaflet later in the lesson) what Christians promise each other and some of the things that happen in the wedding ceremony. Explain that Christians promise 'for better or for worse'; what do pupils think this means? What might some of the worse things be? What might be better? Explain that for Christians, marriage is not only a promise between the couple but a promise (covenant) made with God.

STEP 5: Encourage pupils to use their notes to start their leaflet explaining what marriage is about for people from different worldviews. Encourage them to share the themes that have been discussed within the lesson.

STEP 6: Show pupils some photographs from Jewish and Hindu weddings.** Ask what they already know and what they want to find out. Finish the lesson by watching a film clip of a Hindu Wedding ceremony**. Ask pupils to pick out what promises are made. Explain that for some Hindus it is traditional to take seven steps together. Tell

pupils that these whilst these seven steps can symbolise different things, they are often to represent the following promises and/hopes:

- We will look after one another.
- Both families will accept us like their own child.
- We will love one another's families.
- We will try to be happy and get on well together.
- We hope to have children.
- Happy or sad we will share everything together.
- We will stay married for all our lives.

Ask: How are these promises the same or different to those made many Christians? Pupils should add further information to their leaflets based on what they have found out so far in STEP 6.

* You might like to watch a clip from TrueTube <https://youtu.be/7ZMUhZknCIs>

** a Hindu wedding album is available by searching wedding. It is from Exploring RE Hindu worldviews

***You might find the My Life, My Religion clip about a Hindu wedding to be helpful here:

<https://youtu.be/rs83rrB5E4E>

Lesson 6: Why do people choose to get married? What do wedding ceremonies show us about commitment, love, promises?

STEP 1: Recap the last lesson by talking about weddings with pupils.

- Ask: What do you know about weddings from different worldviews?
- How might they be the same?
- How might they be different?

Explain that this time we are going to be finding out about Jewish weddings.

STEP 2: Use the PowerPoint slides to talk through the symbolism and promises that are made a Jewish wedding.

Ask: What is similar to and what is different from Christian and Hindu weddings?

Encourage pupils to add more information to their leaflets based on their learning. Talk with pupils about non-religious weddings, show some examples of promises that are made.* Encourage pupils to pick out similarities and differences between these and wedding ceremonies that they have already seen.

Discuss why pupils think that some people choose to write their own vows.

STEP 3: Use the sticky knowledge quiz slides to recap the themes and knowledge from the unit. Pupils to complete the assessment sheet for this unit.

*You can add an extra week to this learning pathway by using the resource on non-religious weddings from Exploring non-religious worldviews- this is free as part of your membership and can be found by searching 'wedding' on the NATRE website there is a set of ppt slides- we recommend doing this

Learning Outcomes

- Identify some beliefs about love, commitment and promises in two religious traditions and describe what they mean.
- Offer informed suggestions about the meaning and importance of ceremonies of commitment for religious and non-religious people today
- Describe what happens in ceremonies of commitment (e.g. baptism, sacred thread, marriage) and say what these rituals mean.
- Make simple links between beliefs about love and commitment and how people in at least two religious traditions live (e.g. through celebrating forgiveness, salvation and freedom at festivals)
- Identify some differences in how people celebrate commitment (e.g. different practices of marriage, or Christian baptism)
- Raise questions and suggest answers about whether it is good for everyone to see life as journey, and to mark the milestones.
- Make links between ideas of love, commitment and promises in religious and non-religious ceremonies.
- Give good reasons why they think ceremonies of commitment are or are not valuable today