

Religion and Multiculturalism

Britain has attracted people from all over the world for centuries. Even now! 7% (4 million people) in the UK come from ethnic minorities.

.....
'Love your neighbour as yourself.' (The Bible, Mark)

'Defend the rights of the poor and needy.' (The Bible, Proverbs)

'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.' (The Bible, Romans)

'We celebrate the diversity in our country.' (Tony Blair, ex-PM)

'Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt.' (The Bible, Exodus)

'Love your neighbour.' (The Bible, Mark) – worth repeating!

Topic 4 Religion and Multiculturalism Within this topic you should know:

why Britain has become a multicultural society, including an outline knowledge of the history of immigration;
the concepts of tolerance, respect, diversity, multiculturalism and political correctness;
religion and its involvement in politics and the debate about whether religion and politics should mix;
advantages and disadvantages of a multicultural society, e.g. diversity, culture, celebrations, segregation, misunderstanding;
issues such as having a state religion, blasphemy laws and freedom of choice;
debate about asylum seekers, integration v segregation, immigration and emigration;
influence of faith communities, locally, nationally and internationally, including projects run by faith communities;
customs and celebrations, such as festivals in the community, e.g. Wesak, Christmas, Diwali, Eid ul Fitr, Pesach and Baisakhi.

Exam Questions #A

- 16 Give two reasons why some people come to live in the United Kingdom. (2 marks)
17 Explain the attitudes of religious believers to multiculturalism. (4 marks)
18 'In a multicultural society all religious festivals should be holidays.' What do you think? Explain your opinion. (3 marks)
19 Explain how celebrating a religious festival might help to strengthen community relations. (3 marks)
20 'Religious believers should be involved in politics.' Do you agree?
Give reasons for your answer, showing that you have thought about more than one point of view.
Refer to religious arguments in your answer. (6 marks)

Exam Questions #B

- 16 Explain why some people say religious believers should be involved in politics. (3 marks)
17 'The United Kingdom should not have a state religion.' What do you think? Explain your opinion. (3 marks)
18 Explain the work done by **either** a local **or** a national project run by a faith community. (4 marks)
19 Explain briefly what is meant by the term 'integration'. (2 marks)
20 'The United Kingdom should welcome all asylum seekers.' Do you agree?
Give reasons for your answer, showing that you have thought about more than one point of view.
Refer to religious arguments in your answer. (6 marks)

Exam Questions #C

- 16 Describe ways in which faith communities can play a positive role in their local communities. (3 marks)
17 Explain religious attitudes towards multiculturalism. (4 marks)
18 Explain briefly what is meant by the term 'tolerance'. (2 marks)
19 'Blasphemy laws are needed to protect religion.' What do you think? Explain your opinion. (3 marks)
20 'All countries should welcome immigrants.' Do you agree?
Give reasons for your answer, showing that you have thought about more than one point of view.
Refer to religious arguments in your answer. (6 marks)

Multiculturalism ‘Defend the rights of the poor and needy.’ (The Bible, Proverbs) ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ (The Bible, Mark)

4.1 Multiculturalism **Why has Britain become a multicultural society?**

Key reasons include: invasion e.g. Roman and Normans; the British Empire e.g. Indians and West Indians; economic opportunities e.g. Celts, Romans and Poles; fleeing persecution e.g. Gypsies and Jews; governmental encouragement e.g. ‘Windrush’ generation and Euro-nurses.

4.2 Multicultural Britain **The Influences of Multiculturalism in Britain**

Britain has been greatly influenced by the different ethnic communities. However it is still mainly a ‘Christian’ country: 71.6% Christian; 2.7% Islamic; 1.5% Hindu; 0.6% Sikh; 0.5% Jewish; 0.3% Buddhist. London is a good example of a multicultural city. Over 250 languages are spoken as a first language.

4.3 Advantages and disadvantages of multiculturalism

Positive influences include: food restaurants e.g. Chinese, Italian & Indian; food choices in supermarkets e.g. spices; music e.g. reggae, salsa; cultural celebrations e.g. Chinese New Year and the Notting Hill Carnival; contribution to British sport (Olympics / cricket etc.); diversity of culture and lifestyles (makes our society interesting); better public services e.g. foreign nurses, doctors and dentists; helps reduce prejudice and tension by face to face understanding.

Negative influences include: can encourage prejudice and discrimination; often causes unrest between groups; high unemployment and housing problems are often blamed on immigrants; communication problems, including language problems in schools and workplaces; hard to avoid offending groups; rise in xenophobia; segregation often occurs rather than positive integration.

4.4 Religion and politics **Should religion and politics mix?**

Quote from Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks:

“I can’t imagine anything worse than rule by religious leaders and I would have nothing to do with it.”

Some countries have very close links between religion and politics, for example Saudi Arabia and Iran (theocracy).

In other countries government and politics are separate; people vote for members of parliament (democracy).

Religion has been involved a lot in British history.

The Queen is still head of the Church of England and has some involvement in the formation of a new Government.

Tony Blair calls himself a Christian. Many MPs are religious and many archbishops are involved in making laws.

The Pope is still very influential on issues such as abortion, contraception and divorce.

There are many arguments for and against mixing religion and politics:

Against

Politics is a struggle for power; religion is concerned with spiritual things.

Members of other faiths (or none) may take offence if religion influences politics.

Political beliefs and religious beliefs may be in conflict; for example, Roman Catholics oppose abortion, but the state does not.

For

Religious believers feel it is right to influence people on moral issues.

Some politicians are involved for their own ends; religious believers should think of others first.

Every area of life should be represented in politics, including minority faith groups.

Mixing religion and politics might help to stop extremism and terrorism.

Christian views about politics

Many Christians are involved in politics; the last three Prime ministers have claimed to be Christians.

However, other Christians do not think religion and politics should mix because Jesus said:

‘Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.’ (The Bible, Luke 20:25)

4.5 State religion and blasphemy laws In the UK the state religion is Christianity and the C of E is the main denomination.

The Pope was in charge of the Church of England, but he refused to annul Henry VIII’s marriage, so Henry VIII declared himself as Supreme Head of the Church of England. The Queen is now Head of State. The Queen has to approve the appointment of archbishops and bishops.

The Church of England is also involved in making laws. Two archbishops sit in the House of Lords and are called the ‘Lord’s Spiritual.’

Some people argue that we shouldn’t have a state religion because we are now a multicultural, multi-faith society.

Others argue that it is part of tradition and culture, so why change a ‘good’ thing.

Blasphemy Laws The laws that prevent talk or behaviour which insults God (**Church of England only**).

Laws introduced in 1838 and 1977 to protect Christianity only. John Gott (“Jesus is a clown.”) was last person sent to prison, in 1922.

Many Muslims wanted law extended to Islam to protect their prophet Muhammad, especially after Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* (1988).

Others want the law abolished to allow ‘freedom of speech’. In 2006 a law to punish religious hatred was passed to protect **all** religions.

4.6 Immigration More people enter GB (250,000 immigrants a year) than leave (70,000 emigrants a year). Why do people come to Britain?

Economic reasons. Wages in Britain are higher than in many countries, such as the Eastern European countries, Africa or India.

The potential to earn more and have a higher standard of living is very attractive; the poorest people in GB are relatively wealthy, globally.

Job opportunities. Britain has had a relatively high employment rate and many skills are in great demand.

For example, without immigrants the National Health Service would probably collapse; other industries e.g. food & construction would suffer.

Tolerance, respect and freedom. Britain has a reputation for tolerance (allowing differences without interference or discrimination), respect of difference cultures and of the right of people to be different. In some countries, religious and minority groups face persecution.

To escape war. Some migrants come to Britain to escape conflict in their homeland.

Why does Britain need

immigrants?

Essential skills. Immigrants provide skills which Britain needs e.g. IT and medical expertise; half of new doctors are immigrants. **Contribution to the economy.** Within 15 years there will be more pensioners than children; immigrants are usually young. **Motivation.** Many immigrants are prepared to do jobs that British workers dislike, such as cleaning and fruit picking.

Problems with immigration Some British people see immigrants as a threat.

Some are worried about losing their jobs or housing, or are prejudiced against people who are 'different'.

High levels of immigration put pressure on services such as education.

Without positive integration, racial or religious tension can divide communities.

The BNP states that it would like to end all 'non-white' immigration

4.7 Asylum seekers 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' (The Bible, Mark) 'Defend the rights of the poor & needy.' (The Bible, Proverbs)

Every year thousands of people (500 a week – a quarter are successful) claiming to be asylum seekers ask to enter GB.

They request asylum; this word means refuge or place of safety.

The majority of successful applicants come from countries, such as Iraq which have a poor record of protecting human rights.

Those who are unsuccessful are deported to their home country. Most religious believers support the granting of asylum to persecuted people.

What do Christians say and do? In theory they all welcome and accept anyone. The Parable of the Good Samaritan teaches them to help someone, no matter who they are (the man from Samaria helped a Jew even though their communities hated each other).

It is natural for groups of a similar background to want to live and work close to each other.

However, sometimes too much segregation occurs...

Separation into such groups is often not good for the local community.

Mixing reduces tension, builds trust and helps people to integrate. Integration gives more opportunities for people to respect each other.

The government promotes Political Correctness (PC) to try and reduce different groups being offended.

4.8 Faith communities Government recognises the positive role that faith communities can make.

Hope 2008 (in case you didn't know!) is a Christian-led faith group based in Devon. It aims to create a welcoming environment for all by: being welcoming e.g. giving a plant to new arrivals and organising a free cream tea for everyone in the town;

improving the environment e.g. picking up litter in hedgerows and cleaning road signs.

Hope 2008 hopes that these activities and acts of kindness create a sense of belonging for all, not just for Christians. Nice...

Some faith groups also bring together people from different religions.

For example, Religions for Peace went to meet G8 (the eight richest countries) leaders in Japan in 2008.

100 leaders from all the main religions called on the G8 to work to reduce wars and poverty, and to protect the environment.

4.9 / 4.10 Religious festivals All religions have their own celebrations e.g. Christians (Christmas and Easter) and Hindus/Sikhs (Diwali). Our communities are often enriched by the variety of different celebrations. Their celebrations can bring communities together.

Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus. In Britain, Christmas day is on 25 December, although the actual day of the birth of Jesus is not known.

In Britain Christians and non-Christians exchange cards, and children look forward to the secret arrival of Father Christmas with presents.

Shops and homes are decorated with Christmas lights, trees, holly and other decorations, and families often try to get together for Christmas.

Food such as mince pies, Christmas cake, Christmas pudding and roast turkey is eaten, and many (including Humanities!) parties take place.

Christians see Christmas as a time for promoting peace and goodwill and for giving to charity.

Some display nativity scenes in windows (or watch children act them out) and Christmas songs called carols are sung.

Special celebration services are held, such as Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve.

Diwali Hindu festival of Light; lights are a symbol of good over evil; fireworks, lights, flowers, are used; gifts of sweets are given; the Goddess of wealth (Lakshmi) is thanked; homes are cleaned and decorated with candles and lamps.
Sikhs also celebrate Diwali but for them it remembers their struggle for freedom; Leicester has one of the biggest celebrations outside of India.

KEY WORDS	Definitions for... <u>Topic 4 Multiculturalism</u>
Multicultural	
Immigration	
Celebrations	
Diversity	
Culture	
Xenophobia	
Politics	
Democracy + Theocracy	
State religion	
Freedom of choice	
Blasphemy laws	
Emigration	
Tolerance	
Respect + Political correctness	
Asylum seeker	
Integration Segregation	
Faith community Hope 2008 Religions for Peace	
Festival Custom Christmas (+ for Christians)	

