

Resource reviews

- ★★★★★ very highly recommended / absolutely outstanding
- ★★★★☆ highly recommended / extremely good
- ★★★☆☆ recommended / good
- ★★★☆☆ recommended with minor reservations / mediocre
- ★★☆☆☆ recommended with major reservations / weak
- ★☆☆☆☆ not recommended / extremely weak

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The *Resource Reviews* section of the ACT website contains a free-to-view, searchable database with more than 250 reviews written *by* and *for* Christian educators from a biblical Christian perspective.

www.christian-teachers.org.uk

Literate RE

Pamela Draycott (ed.), 2006
RE Today Services
paperback, 32pp, £8.90
illustrations: black and white photos/drawings
ISBN 978-1-904024-84-2
use: KS3 RE/Literacy



The introduction, under the heading of 'Frequently Asked Questions', provides a good explanation of why the RE teacher should be concerned about literacy, although I would hope most would already know! Then follow many useful classroom activities. They are clearly described, simple to use in the classroom and, generally imaginative. Some are very clearly linked to learning objectives in the QCA *Non-Statutory Framework for RE*, and I find it a pity that this useful format isn't used for all of the activities.

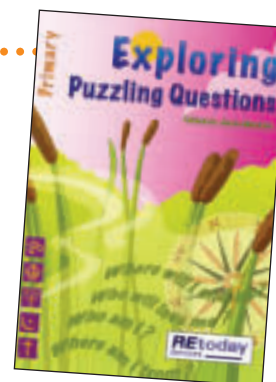
The chapter headings are somewhat random and do not make navigating the book easy, nor do they make it clear what content is covered! Nevertheless, this should not detract from the excellent activities detailed in the chapters. The specified activities include a debate on forgiveness, including possible motions, quotations and Bible references as well as an introductory discussion; several interesting activities around the impact of sacred texts based on life after death, including a wonderful multi-choice writing frame which ensures that pupils cover a variety of ideas and some written work around Shiva Nataraja, including a poem framework and some thinking and drawing tasks.

This 32-page book contains excellent activities, explanations, suggested additional resources, ideas for ICT and photocopiable pages, all well worth £8.90.

REVIEWER Jocelyn Sumner, Partnership Director, University of Exeter (formerly Head of RE at Teign School, Kingsteignton, Devon).

Exploring Puzzling Questions

Joyce Mackley (ed.), 2006
RE Today Services
paperback, 32pp, £7.90
illustrations: black and white photos/drawings
ISBN 978-1-904024-61-3
use: KS1 and KS2 RE, and across the wider primary school curriculum



This is an excellent resource for primary teachers. It is clear to use, being 32 pages in A4 format. Sections are boxed, making it easy on the eye. These are quite close together, but the print is clear. There are no colour pictures, but these are not missed. Although designed for RE, the skills it teaches can be used in PSE and indeed across the curriculum. In these days when RE teaching skills are hardly taught in colleges and universities, this would be a great book to present to each NQT in your school.

The subjects covered are: using probing questions and answering children's questions, using Persona Dolls, Godly Play skills, KS1 practical strategies for puzzling questions, practical strategies for KS2, using story, using poetry, using digital resources and making your own, beliefs and questions. There are ICT and web page links. There are also suggestions for other books that may be of help. All of the activities are linked to the QCA *Non-Statutory Framework for RE*. Using this book in the classroom will really stimulate you and your children to become active questioners and seekers. The *RE Today* team have made this an invaluable resource for each teacher, not just the RE co-ordinator.

REVIEWER Moira Kleissner, School Librarian and Supply Teacher, Hillside Community Primary School, Ipswich, Suffolk.

Key Beliefs, Ultimate Questions and Life Issues for AQA Specification B

Lesley Parry, 2006
Hodder Murray
paperback, 115pp, £11.99
illustrations: colour illustrations/photos
ISBN 978-0-340-92540-9
use: KS4 GCSE (specifically AQA Specification B)

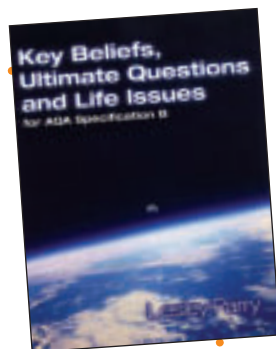


This book completes the Hodder Murray series that accompanies the AQA B Religious Studies specification. The textbook is well presented with stimulating visual images and photographs. Tables, diagrams and mindmaps are utilised well. The text itself is clear and accessible to the majority of students.

The four main areas of study are the beliefs of the six main world religions, Questions of Meaning (including suffering, life after death and the existence of God), Life Issues (including prejudice, abortion, war and peace), and Planet Earth (including animal rights and the environment). At the end of each section are opportunities for exam practice. These exercises not only provide questions, but suggestions on what the examiner is looking for and how to set out answers. In addition, there are a variety of ideas to help students improve their revision technique and, ultimately, their grade. In each section the beliefs of each religion are colour-coded which may help some students remember the material better.

Whilst the questions provided help students to develop their exam technique, there are few activities to stimulate creative thinking or originality. However, overall this is a very useful text for GCSE students and an essential resource for any classroom where this specification is being followed.

REVIEWER Kathryn Wright, Independent Education Consultant.



Engaging the culture: Christians at work in education

Richard Edlin and Jill Ireland (eds.), 2006
NICE
paperback, 255pp, AUD\$66.00 (approx. £27.00)
illustrations: black and white photographs of authors
ISBN 0-9752422-1-0
use: to stimulate professional reflection about the nature and purpose of Christian influence in education



Published by the National Institute for Christian Education (NICE) in Australia, this book is a collection of essays written by Christian educationalists who share a conviction that questions of ontology (what is real?) and epistemology (how can we know what is real?) must be dealt with as part and parcel of any meaningful discussion about the character and content of Christian school-based education.

The book's 14 chapters cover a lot of ground. For example, Ken Dickens asks whether enrolling one's own children in a Christian school is an act of obedience to God; Trevor Cooling implores Christian educators to be 'theologically curious' and compares and contrasts the 'faithful transmission' and 'theological contextualisation' models of being theologically faithful; David I. Smith uses his experiences as a Christian teacher of languages to consider wider pedagogical and professional themes, including the nature of honesty and integrity in the classroom; and Coralie Harris shares her insights into making classroom routines and lessons more God-honouring. Each chapter ends with 'questions for discussion' and references. The questions are all open ended and vary in length and difficulty.

Given the book's emphasis upon integrating theory and practice, it is interesting to note that the word 'praxis' is not included in either the five-page index or the seven-page glossary. Nonetheless, this useful book manages, on its own terms, to ride two wild horses without falling off. On the one hand, it recognises and addresses the nitty-gritty stuff of work-a-day classroom life. On the other, it acknowledges and wrestles with some of the big theological and philosophical questions of our age – the ones that shape worldview, culture, political policy and education practice.

REVIEWER Rupert Kaye, ACT Chief Executive.

