

# 10 Tips for Art activities in RE



1. Time is precious in RE – try and add value to RE lessons by avoiding simple ‘colour in’ activities and look for more creative art-focussed activities that add to the child’s learning and interpretation.

*Creativity is found to support the child’s spiritual development.*

2. Use art as a response to a Bible story to show the child’s understanding of the story. In this way they retell the story as an interpreter.

*We frequently ask children to draw the story, especially in younger classes, but remember to see if we can also encourage the child’s to work more deeply and interpret the story. You then have some true RE outcomes.*

*Draw:* the key moment  
the turning point of the story  
your favourite moment  
the scene before the story started  
the scene after the story ended  
from the eyes of one of the characters  
the story as a cartoon strip.



3. Add words to art and art to words

*Look at the art work and imagine dialogues, add speech bubbles, thought bubbles, captions and titles. Do the words enhance or dull the impact of the artwork?*

*Encourage the children to script their thoughts about their own art, what inspired them, what they drew, what choices they made in terms of colour and content, what does their picture tell the viewer about them?*

4. As we interpret stories and concepts in RE there are centuries of art works for us to explore: artistic interpretations of stories, art from different parts of the world, art for churches, art for museums, art for and by children.

*You can look for the Bible story in National Gallery collections, look at artwork in the Chester Beatty Library online collections (including Bible papyri and Islamic art), and RE specific websites and collections. [www.imaginor.com](http://www.imaginor.com) [www.reteachingresources.co.uk](http://www.reteachingresources.co.uk)*



5. Stained Glass windows are in most churches. They often interpret Bible stories and children can think about the decisions the artists made about colour and content. Worksheets for investigating stained glass are available on this website (in Church visits).

*You can find out about famous stained glass artists and studios, eg An Túr Gloine. You will find the Church of Ireland David Lawrence collection of stained glass on [www.gloine.ie](http://www.gloine.ie) and you can search windows by theme, artist or church.*

6. Art in church buildings is not limited to stained glass windows. It can be inspiration for many art strands and can provide stimulus for art discussions or creative work in the classroom.



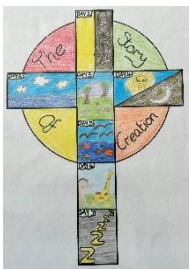
*Tiles, organ pipes, sculptures, fabric frontals, robes, tapestries, wall hangings, pictures, nativity sets, crosses and icons, - all these are windows to sacred art and artefacts. What would children design for a church, what makes this art 'sacred art'?*

7. When deciding on art for festival time, like Christmas and Easter then look for the key stories and symbols so as the story is represented with respect for the centrality of the story in Christianity.

*Think about what items are important in Easter art or Christmas art and try to make sure they are part of your planning.*

8. When teaching about other world religions note to be sure that art is encountered with respect, for example if teaching about Islam it would be based on patterns and design work. Islamic rules say that Allah and the Prophets may not be pictured.

*The Chester Beatty library (online and on site) has a fantastic collection of Islamic art.*



9. Celtic Christian art is full of possibilities for the primary classroom and RE can be integrated effectively with literacy, history and art.

*Looking at artefacts such as the Book of Kells and other monastic writings bring us straight into Bible texts. High (Celtic) crosses mostly contain Bible images. Children can create their own High Cross with favourite Bible stories.*

10. Add questions and thoughts to RE classroom displays. Think of what having the display on the wall continues to teach the children about the story or concept you have been teaching.

*One persistent error is the frequent display of cotton wool sheep in infant classrooms. The point of the story is not the sheep, but the shepherd who cares for each one. Add a shepherd to the display! Add questions on sticky notes to displays, for example: What did we learn about Jesus in this story? What do you think is the most important event in our display? What questions do we have about this story?*

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