

## Dealing with Difficult Issues

This Interfaith Explorers Learning Resource is designed to support children understanding the three Abrahamic religions and their connections. We recognise however that using this Learning Resource will inevitably result in the expression of differences in opinions and statements of belief. There may be some sensitivity around this according to the context of your school.

We hope the background information and suggested strategies for teachers will support you in responding to issues, perhaps about extremism and terrorism, that may arise either in classroom discussion with children or with parents/carers.

We suggest that teachers discuss with senior staff and agree the school's approach to any issues that may arise related to your school context prior to the use of the Learning Resource. **Open and frank discussions dealing with difficult issues with adults and children in a structured and secure setting enables us to broaden our understanding of each other and the wider world. This is the intention of the Interfaith Explorers Learning Resource.**

We suggest that teachers inform pupils and parents ahead of time about the content of the Interfaith Explorers Learning Resource using the parental letter template in Classroom and Teaching Resources

Should there be any questions or concerns from parents/carers you could share Professor Khalili's Message to Teachers and Parents on the teachers page or arrange a showing of the video for an understanding of the rationale and purpose of pupils' learning.

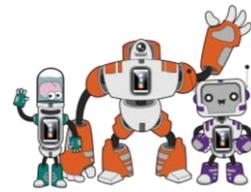
The question of terrorism may arise as it is frequently linked in with religious extremism in the media.

In fact, terrorism is not a recent phenomenon. It can be traced back thousands of years. Throughout history individuals, groups, governments and rebel organisations have all used kidnapping, assault and murder of political officials and members of the public, inciting fear or terror to achieve their goals. These sorts of atrocities have been largely driven by differences of territorial, political and moral ideals not just religious or spiritual beliefs. Those who turn to terror may belong to groups who have been denied citizenship, the right to vote or to speak freely or the ability to practice their religion. They may have been persecuted for their race nationality or class. A government might have made an effort to act lawfully and fairly for all its citizens but a minority may have objected to that decision.

The history of terrorism is the history of political dissent, the violent disagreement with government or authority. It is also the history of criminality, the mentally deranged and fanatics.

Whether we talk about the Gun Powder plot of 1605, when Guy Fawkes tried to blow up the English Parliament or the modern day threats of Islamic fundamentalists' terrorism is the unfortunate result of different citizens with opposite views living side by side

Some examples of the breadth and scope of terrorist activities through history:



- Terrorism in the ancient Roman world – hijacking of warships and murder of crew.
- 1793-4 The French Reign of Terror – rival political faction after the onset of The French Revolution
- 1881 – Assassination by suicide bomber Tsar Alexander II of Russia
- The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand 1914 – start of the First World War
- Aerial bombing of civilians during the second World War 1939 -1945 – both sides
- 1963 Assassination of President Kennedy (USA) by someone mentally deranged
- IRA between 1960 and 1997 Irish Nationalists in Northern Ireland mounted a campaign to drive out the British
- 1972, the terrorist group “Black September” took Israeli athletes hostage from the Olympic village in Munich
- 1970 -80 Anti-abortion activism (largely non-violent protest but also violent terrorist behaviour such as bombings
- South Africa, the use of terrorism in opposition and resistance to apartheid
- Bombing in Bali 2002 – An extremist organisation
- Animal rights groups vandalising laboratories, stealing animals, arson, bombing and personal threats to employees.
- 9/11 Attack on the World Trade Centre by Al-Qaeda

### **The BBC Newsround website has this helpful explanation of terrorism for children**

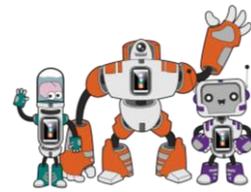
Terrorism is the use of violence and intimidation to achieve political ends.  
Terrorists want to change the way governments and politicians behave.  
They do not do this by voting or by trying to convince people of their arguments.  
They do it by frightening people into behaving the way the terrorists want.

In other words...

Terrorism isn't new; it's been around for hundreds and thousands of years.  
It's the use of violence, like bombs, to try to frighten people into behaving in a certain way.  
People become more worried after a big attack. It's important to remember that one of the reasons big attacks get so much attention is because they're so unusual and do not happen very often

Some of the difficult issues/situations causing rise for discussion could be:

- Ignorance – lack of accurate information
- Children asking questions or making observations/ comments that could potentially cause offence - Are children intending to cause offence or are they merely repeating and trying to make sense of conflicting information?



There are the strategies of Making Choices scenarios, Opinion Line, Hot Seating, Debating in the Learning Unit that can be employed to help you structure discussions and explore issues such as Prejudice/ discrimination in a constructive way.

You may wish to try these strategies out first on less contentious issues if you are unfamiliar with them.