

# WHY TEACH THIS?

This lesson aims to breathe **new life** into religious education by harnessing the power of mystery and developing **independence** and metacognition in learners. Moving away from the **traditional** six world faiths, the session explores **the foundations** of a modern day religion through one central **big question** 'how can two girls change the world?'

As a secondary school RE teacher, I often find that whilst the country's biggest religions are largely well understood by teachers, those outside of this are all too often disregarded, despite their relevance to hundreds of thousands of pupils across the country. The 2011 census, for example, saw a 79% increase in the number of Spiritualists in the UK over the last decade; surely it's crucial that we equip our learners to understand 'new' or 'modern' religions just as much as the traditional big six world faiths?

Modern Spiritualism was founded in 1848 when the two Fox sisters claimed to be facilitating communication with spirits of people who had died in Hydesville, New York. It attracted notable followers such as Arthur Conan Doyle and even sparked interest from Queen Victoria and Charles Dickens – and is now said to be the eighth largest religion in Britain.

# SISTER ACT

DEVELOP GREAT LEARNING HABITS AND EXPAND LEARNERS' KNOWLEDGE OF TODAY'S SPIRITUAL LANDSCAPE, WITH THIS INTRIGUING LESSON FROM **CRAIG WRIGHT...**



## +KEY RESOURCE



Faith in Action is CAFOD's complete online package for teaching any GCSE Religious Studies wealth and poverty unit. The online package has three full lessons with stories from the people CAFOD works with overseas, activities, worksheets and video clips. The lessons can be used to address and challenge pupils' perceptions of poverty, helping them explore why the world is unfair, and how people put faith into action to tackle issues of injustice.

Visit [cafod.org.uk/secondary](http://cafod.org.uk/secondary) for more free to download curriculum and form time resources to challenge and inspire your students to take action for global justice. [cafod.org.uk/faithinaction](http://cafod.org.uk/faithinaction)



## INFORMATION CORNER

### ABOUT OUR EXPERT



Craig Wright is a teacher of RE & sociology at Park View School in Chester-Le-Street, County Durham. Follow him on twitter @cwright2209

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

THE SPIRITUALIST'S NATIONAL UNION (SNU) HOLDS CHARITABLE STATUS IN THE UK AND HAS BEEN LEGALLY RECOGNISED BY THE HOME OFFICE SINCE 1939 AS AN APPOINTING BODY FOR SPIRITUALIST MINISTERS. THE SNU HAS DEVELOPED A COMPREHENSIVE PACK FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS CONTAINING A FULL RANGE OF LEAFLETS, LESSON IDEAS AND A BOOK ON SPIRITUALIST PHILOSOPHY. THE PACK IS FREE AND SUITABLE FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY TEACHERS. IT IS AVAILABLE FROM [SNU.ORG.UK](http://SNU.ORG.UK).

### STARTER ACTIVITY

The lesson is based on Guy Claxton's Building Learning Power theory, which is all about creating a culture in classrooms that helps young people become better learners, both in school and out. Centred around one question – 'how can two girls change the world?' – the learning habits developed in the lesson include 'collaboration' to solve the mystery of the Fox sisters, and 'use questioning' to consider the lesson's big questions and discover the story of Hydesville.

As an introduction, when your students enter the classroom, a picture of the Hydesville cottage, the family home of the Fox sisters, should be clearly displayed on the board and on print-outs on desks. Learners are asked to imagine what has happened in the house and generate theories as to why it may be the subject of study. After a few minutes of working together, you should begin to collate ideas. It is a good idea to record these somewhere – on the board or on sticky notes that can be referred to throughout the lesson. Learners are not expected to know anything at all at this stage; it is about generating interest and intrigue, engaging them properly and measuring the starting points.

### MAIN ACTIVITIES

#### Task one:

Once students have begun to consider the goings on in the Hydesville cottage, you should introduce the big question and learning objectives for the day and explain to the pupils that they will be solving the mystery of the Hydesville cottage. To do this there will be three rounds of card activities, which will build up knowledge and understanding. The first set of cards will contain picture clues: the Fox sisters, a map of the New York area, the cottage, some passers-by etc. Learners are asked to start ordering the cards to discover the story. The second round of cards contain paragraphs of texts detailing parts of a 'rapping' evening; learners are encouraged to make links between what they are reading and the pictures from the previous round. The third and final round presents an array of 'witness statements', which can give a broad opinion of the Fox sisters and the Hydesville story – again learners are asked to fit these alongside the cards from the previous rounds, to support their evaluation skills.

#### Progress check:

Together, learners clarify through discussion what happened at Hydesville and begin to consider why it is important for Spiritualists. Consider using prompts or images to structure the discussion. For example, can

students make links between different images to fully explain the story of Hydesville?

#### Task two:

Learners are then shown an image of the Fox sisters in 1848. Introduce the big question again and discuss with the class: can two girls change the world? Explore the lives of other remarkable individuals who brought about change in their teenage years and collate the ideas on the main board. To further develop the discussion, use maps of the world showing the spread of Spiritualism today and the UK census data that shows the number of Spiritualists compared to other 'minority religious groups'. As well as the global spread of Spiritualism, learners could reflect on their own local community or area and discover whether they have a local Spiritualist church or Lyceum.

#### Progress check:

Encourage students to consider learning habits that they have used throughout the lesson.

### SUMMARY

One of my favourite plenaries involves using exit cards that ask pupils to reflect on their progress throughout the lesson. You could ask students to use a 'PEE' paragraph (point-evidence-explain) in their evaluation to boost literacy skills. Encourage them to identify which 'learning habits' they have boosted during the session. For example, 'Today I have used questioning. I did this by asking my classmates what they thought happened at Hydesville. I think I used questioning well because it helped me to uncover the story of how Spiritualism began.'