

What are your commitments?

A powerful classroom tool for every pupil to explore questions of commitment by Lat Blaylock, RE Today

For the RE teacher : Here I present a powerful and game strategy for RE which enables all pupils to use talking and listening group work to clarify their own commitments, including religious commitments, and to give evidence of achievement.

The aims for the activity are to enable pupils to:

- Think for themselves about commitments, including religious commitments;
- Discuss issues of commitment and the impact of belief, worship and inspirational figures thoughtfully in a small group
- Clarify their own commitments through reasoned conversation in relation to religious commitments
- Think carefully about the commitments of religious people, including some key leaders.
- Follow up work enables the learner to build K&U of commitment in different religions and worldviews.

RE too often ignores or marginalises its concerns about individual expression, and makes too much, by comparison, of its intentions to teach facts. Use this game with your 11-14 year old pupils, and the follow up activities that go with it, and let them set the expectations of the level of discussion in RE at a high level.

Practicalities: For a class of thirty, you will need to make 8 copies of the gameboard and playing pieces. Cut up the playing pieces, and put a set in an envelope for each group of four players. Arrange the class to sit in groups of four – 5 works as well, but three is too few. Mixed and unusual groups are positively good for this game. Allow about 25+ minutes to play the game, then about 90 minutes if you want to do most of the follow up work. This can be ‘chunked’ into two or three more lessons if you like.



Curriculum Relevance

The game is purpose built to address questions of commitment, which feature centrally in the study of any religion or belief system – more centrally than ‘beliefs’ I suggest.

Achievement and outcomes

Here are some achievement + progress statements from the NBVRIA Age Related Standards (2018) that describe the achievements pupils may show when they play the game and tackle the follow up work.

14YO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make relevant connections between different areas of study (doctrine, sources, structures, worship and life), showing how one area influences others
14YO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Compare their own and others' responses to questions of belief and values, leading to reasonable explanations of their own and others' views, in the light of religious teaching
14YO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrate an understanding of the significance and influence of common and divergent views and practices within and between religions
From the 14-16 achievements:	
16YO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluate their own response to questions of meaning and purpose, in light of religious and nonreligious views and beliefs, leading to a well-informed account of their own and others' views
16YO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use a range of sources of wisdom and authority appropriately to provide explanations of aspects of each area of study, using these sources with increasing sophistication and as evidence to support particular points of view

Everyone's committed... I'm committed to...

...my family	...telling the truth, even when it hurts	...looking out for my friends, even if it costs me	...animal rights: they matter as much as us
...my God	...finding a harmless path in life (Ahimsa)	...my self	...helping my mum: she's made sacrifices for me
...environmental protection, a green future	...making money: it makes the world go round	...opening my life up to all that God has for me	...a more fair society
...making the world less racist	...worshipping in my holy place	...having a laugh: happiness is the key to life	...equal rights for women and men (some way to go!)
...finding and doing a job that helps others	...looking good, so my clothes and make up matter	...improving my dancing	...living for pleasure and enjoying life to the full
...a fairer world: I support global aid charities	...my family, so I make time for them	...getting better at my sport	...being the best I can be in my school work
...creativity, so I make time for my art and my talent	...my music, so I spotify and dance	...my spiritual life, as I understand it	...living one day at a time
...a good rebirth	...serving my God and other people	...my future	...learning more each day
...my music, so I practice a lot	...fulfilling my ambitions and getting to the top	...being the best that I can be	...all the thrills of life I can find.
...this day, this moment, the potential of NOW!	...living with integrity, not being a hypocrite	...prayer and reflection, to give me chance to grow as a person	???

How to play this game: focus carefully on commitment

1. Make a board and set of cards for each group of 4 pupils. On the board, a green square stands for things you are committed to, a red one for the things you are not committed to, and an orange space is for things you're not so sure about.
2. Pupils must put the cards in a pile, face downwards, and play in turns, around the group.
3. When it's your turn, you must do three things:
 - a. Read out the top card;
 - b. Ask the other players where they would put it and why;
 - c. Ignore them, and put it where you think it goes for you.
4. When it's your turn, if you want to, you can also move another person's card to a space that you choose: **'Move one, place one'** is the rule.
5. All cards must be in one space only – no overlapping is allowed.
6. When the cards are all out, play three more rounds, in which you just swap two cards over. Say why.

Afterwards: teaching and learning strategies developed from the game

- a. Get each group to think about how a character (from fiction?) would play: What are the top commitments for these: Buzz Lightyear / Princess Fiona from Shrek / Hermione Granger / Luke Skywalker / Simba the Lion King / Britney Spears / Harry Kane / Taylor Swift / Zac Ephron / Katie Hopkins any others.
- b. Ask pupils what their top five commitments would be. How do these make a difference to their lives? Where have they come from? Which are hardest to maintain? Which are spiritual, religious or philosophical?
- c. Ask pupils which five things in the game they are definitely not committed to, and why.
- d. Use the three statements below to explore religious commitments. They come from a Hindu, a Jew and a Christian. Get pupils in their groups to read the speech bubbles carefully, and see if they can 'spot' six commitments from each of these twelve year olds. Can they also write a similar speech about their own lives? These should be no longer than 150 words.
- e. Can pupils suggest why religious commitments are so strong for some people?
- f. Can pupils think and talk about the commitments of some great leaders or heroes from the religions? What is the Rabbi, or the Vicar committed to? What about Gandhi or Moses, Jesus or Mother Teresa? Malala or Dr Hany El Bana?
- g. Use the writing frame below to get pupils to record their thoughts about their own commitments. The focus is on the L4 skill of giving reasons for their answers to questions of commitment. It can be simplified for lower achieving pupils.
- h. Discuss two big ideas with the class (this is hard, but well worth the effort):
 - **INFLUENCE.** What does it mean? Who is an influence on us? What is it in our lives that makes us committed to some things, not to others? Ask pupils to try and say who has influenced their commitments.
 - **HYPOCRISY.** What does this mean? Why do people often say one thing and do another? Why do we find it hard to live up to our commitments?

Karam, 13: "I live in Leicester, which is a city of four religions. In my religion, we worship different gods and goddesses. At home we have a shrine to the god Shiva. There's a murti (you would call it a statue) and we pray together there, all the family, in the morning. It helps us to be calm and to think clearly. I am learning to play rugby at school at the moment. Leicester has one of the best rugby clubs in Europe. One of my commitments is to be vegetarian. We never eat meat, because animals have lives just like us, so it's better not to kill them. When I grow up, I'd like to run my own business, and make enough money to travel to visit my Indian relatives whenever I want to."

Hannah, 12: "We are a large family from London, and our faith makes a lot of differences to our way of life. I don't go to a Jewish school (there isn't one near to us) but we do lots of Jewish things in our family and on Shabbat at the Synagogue. We try to keep all the Commandments of the Torah. I like the festivals best, and my favourite is Pesach, because I'm the youngest in our family. I am a dancer, but sometimes I miss a performance if it's on Shabbat. I don't mind this, because it matters to me to follow the Torah. I want to be a professional dancer when I grow up."

Chris, 14: "Me and my family live in Lincoln. I like football, and I usually play every Saturday in the season. I like Spiderman comics. I draw my own versions of Spiderman stories when I have time. My religion is important to me as well. My family go to worship every Sunday, and I enjoy my group at Church (It's called 'Pathfinders, because we're trying to find the best path to live life). I think it's important to pray and worship. Jesus gave us life, and he gave his life for us, so I want to give something back. When I grow up, if I'm not good enough to be a footballer, then I'd like to work for Christian Aid, travelling in less developed countries to try and help people in need."

My Own Top 5 Commitments	Some reasons for my commitments	Something I do to show I am committed (impact!)	What Jesus (or the Buddha) would say about my commitments (use scripture quotes)
1	This matters most to me because...	To put this into action I...	
2	I'm very committed to this one because...	This makes a difference to my life by...	
3	My reason for choosing this is...	The impact of this one is...	
4	This is important because...	This commitment means that I have to...	
5	I care about this because...	I show this commitment by...	

<p>“You’ll be happy if you are hungry and thirsty for justice. One day it will be yours!”</p>	<p>“Don’t judge others and then they won’t judge you.”</p>	<p>“People who are pure hearted are blessed. They will get to see God!”</p>
<p>“Don’t worry about money and possessions – look at the flowers that do no work. No one else dresses as beautifully as them.”</p>	<p>“If you forgive others, then they will forgive you.”</p>	<p>“When you pray, you don’t need to babble away! God hears in secret, and will reward your secret prayer.”</p>
<p>“Don’t worry about tomorrow – tomorrow will take care of itself.”</p>	<p>Do not be afraid. I’m going ahead to prepare a place for you. In my Father’s house are many mansions, many rooms.”</p>	<p>‘Greater love has no one than this that they lay down their lives for their friends.’</p>
<p>Jesus said: “I am the Bread of Life”</p> <p>Jesus said: “I am the Good shepherd”</p>	<p>Jesus said: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”</p>	<p>Jesus said: “Come to me all you who are worn out and heavy loaded. I will give you rest.”</p>

Use the quotes to decide how #Jesus might respond to your commitments and those of others you are studying.

Everyone's committed

