

Within this unit, pupils will find out about the importance of creation within the 'Big Story' of the Bible. They will study Genesis 1 and find out about how different Christians may interpret this text in different ways. Pupils will spend time discussing and weighing up whether Genesis 1 is conflicting or complementary with what science says. Pupils will also encounter scientists who are religious and those who are not, and discuss how they may or may not find science and faith compatible. They will encounter different theological theories that some Christians use to interpret the creation story, suggesting why these may be helpful for believers. By the end of the unit, pupils should understand that whilst some people see science and religion as opposites, others do not.

Key Vocabulary

- Science
- Genesis
- Big bang theory
- Complementary
- Creation
- Literal
- Creator
- Conflicting
- Interpretation
- Theory



Lesson 1: What can we find out about the creation story in Genesis 1?

STEP 1: Introduce the big question to pupils and ask what they already know about the Christian creation story found in Genesis 1. Explain that pupils are going to be finding out more about this text and different views about whether it is conflicting or complementary with science.

STEP 2: Give pupils a copy of the text of Genesis 1. Work through the text as a class, unpicking key vocabulary and phrasing. Encourage pupils to highlight and annotate the text with their notes as you read it together (you might like to show pupils some examples from journaling Bibles to show that many Christians also do this). Ask pupils if there was anything that they found surprising, confusing, or interesting within the text.

STEP 3: Talk to pupils about the role of a theologian. Tell pupils that they are going to be investigating the text using a research sheet. Give pupils the research sheet and encourage them to study the text in more detail. Bring the class back together and discuss key findings.

Lesson 2: What might many Christians see as important in Genesis 1?

STEP 1: Recap the last lesson and discuss what pupils found out about Genesis 1. Explain to pupils that Christians interpret this text in a variety of ways and ask for their views about why it is important for Christians to have a firm understanding of the text before deciding how they might interpret it.

STEP 2: Show pupils some pictures of stained-glass windows that depict the creation story in Genesis 1. Which key parts of the text can pupils see in the images? Explain that in the past, many people were not taught how to read and could not access the text found in the Bible. So stained glass and pictures in churches were used to share the stories found in the Bible.

STEP 3: Show a picture of Hannah Dunnett's work, explain that Hannah is an artist from Truro in Cornwall. Hannah has a different way of sharing the messages found in different Biblical texts. Show some of Hannah's work to the pupils*. Explain that Hannah selects key parts of the text to share with people in her pictures.

STEP 4: Ask pupils which parts of Genesis 1 they think would be important for people to read to gain a firm understanding of the text – make a list of these. If they are not mentioned, ensure that God as the creator, God's creation as 'good' and the aspects of creation being made through God's voice are all included. Explain that pupils will be creating their own pictures sharing the meaning of Genesis 1 for a Christian and based on Hannah's work. Carefully discuss which quotes they might use, linked to the list that the class has just made made earlier and if appropriate, encourage them to use biblical referencing. Give pupils the art planning sheet to plan their images before creating them.

STEP 5: Remind pupils of their discussion from STEP 1 about how it may very well be best for a Christian to have a good understanding of a biblical text before interpreting it. Explain that not all Christians interpret Biblical texts in the same way, as they will see in future lessons. Explain that whilst some people think religion and science are complete opposites, not everybody does. Introduce Steph, Alice and Markus, explaining that each one has shared their views about religion and science. Ask pupils to decide which of the people thinks that religion is more likely to have the answers to questions (Markus), which would prioritise science (Alice) and which thinks we need a mixture of both (Steph).**

*You might like to use [Christian Artist - Hannah Dunnett - Christian Composer - Ben Dunnett](http://benandhannahdunnett.com)
(benandhannahdunnett.com)

**This PDF is taken from the book *Big World, Big Ideas* by RE Today Services in collaboration with The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion

Lesson 3: What relationships do scientists have with religious worldviews?

STEP 1: Recap knowledge from previous lessons using the Sticky Knowledge slides.

STEP 2: Introduce pupils to a scientific explanation of how the universe came to be. It might be useful to use a simple timeline or film starting with the Big Bang, moving through until the universe today.* Discuss the events so that pupils understand sufficiently. Put pupils into groups and give each group 5 minutes to devise a short role play showing the timeline of the Big Bang through to the universe today.

STEP 3: Remind pupils of the discussion at the end of the last lesson, focusing on the fact that whilst some people see religion and science as opposites, plenty do not and there is a huge range of ideas about how well religion and science can complement each other. With pupils recall which character would prioritise religious answers over scientific (Markus), which would prioritise scientific (Alice) and which both (Steph).

STEP 4: Ask pupils whether they think religious people or scientists found out about the Big Bang. Introduce Georges Lemaître. Explain he was a Catholic Priest who taught at a Catholic University in Belgium in the 1900s. He was also a famous scientist and mathematician who managed to prove the universe was growing larger – this work led to the Big Bang theory. Ask pupils whether they can put Lemaître into a category of 'religion' or 'science', or whether they think it is fairer to put him into both categories. Introduce pupils to a range of scientists from throughout history – ensure that several of these are both scientists and openly practice a religious worldview. These could include Jennifer Wiseman (Christian worldview), Carl Feit (Jewish worldview), Varadaraja V Raman (Hindu worldview), Avicenna (Muslim worldview), Hildegard of Bingen (Christian worldview), Georges Lemaître (Christian worldview), Gurdev Singh Khush (Sikh worldview)*. Also introduce some scientists who do not believe in God (but ensure that they have spoken out about this and are not just assumed to be atheists) such as Stephen Hawking. Ask pupils to take one scientist each, research the person's worldview, their scientific work, their view about God. Pupils can share findings in whole class feedback. Ask pupils whether the idea that religious people can be scientists and vice versa was surprising or not and why.

* [Big World, Big Ideas](#) by RE Today Services in collaboration with The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion contains some resources that might be useful for this lesson. A timeline from the Big Bang until the universe today can be found on page 24 and a 'Hall of Fame' of people who follow(ed) a religious worldview and also held science to be important can be found on page 12. Provided in your resources.

Lesson 4: How and why do some Christians see both science and religion as important?

STEP 1: Recap what was learnt last lesson with pupils. Remind pupils of Genesis 1 and ask them to pick out the main events, then the key messages. Discuss whether pupils can identify anything that may not link well with science. Remind pupils that some people think that science and religion complement each other (briefly ask pupils for examples based on the last lesson) whilst others say that they do not. Ask for pupils' opinions on why some might people say that science and the Christian creation story are conflicting.

STEP 2: If pupils looked at Jennifer Wiseman in the last lesson, remind them of her, if not, introduce Jennifer Wiseman to the pupils. Explain that Jennifer Wiseman is a very accomplished scientist and a Christian. Show pupils a video of Jennifer Wiseman, introducing her and what she does*. Encourage pupils to fill in the research sheet while they are watching (you may wish to play the video more than once).

STEP 3: Discuss with pupils how although Jennifer Wiseman has found evidence of protons around the Earth that suggest the Big Bang did happen, she remains a committed Christian who believes that there are some things that she cannot fully understand because she is not God. Ask pupils if they think that it is easy for Jennifer Wiseman to have this view and share it with others. What might other people say in response to this view? Show pupils a video of Jennifer Wiseman explaining her faith, her understanding of science and the way in which she views the relationship between the two in more detail**. Use the research sheet to add any extra notes under the relevant headings.

STEP 4: Explain that many Christians have many ways of interpreting the text that we have been studying. Ask pupils why they think that different Christians interpret the text in different ways. Look at Harry's email from page 21 of *Big World Big Ideas* by RE Today Services (provided within your resources) as an example of how a Christian who is not a professional scientist might think about Genesis, science and their relationship. Ask pupils to classify the questions in the email to show those that Harry might answer by looking at scientific theories, and those that he might answer by

looking at the text in Genesis. Challenge pupils with devising some more questions that could be answered by one, or maybe both of these sources.

*You may find this film useful: <https://youtu.be/pjj81La1wH0>

**This film might be helpful here: <https://youtu.be/IQY5j01XB7o>

Lesson 5: What are some different Christian views about the relationship between science and religion?

STEP 1: Recap the last lesson with pupils. Discuss how Jennifer Wiseman described her understanding of how she believes God created the world. Encourage pupils to make reference to their notes from the videos as they share their responses. Ask: Do all Christians believe the same thing? Remind pupils that there are many ways that different Christians interpret the creation story.

STEP 2: Introduce creation resource sheet 3 from *Understanding Christianity* to the pupils (included in your resources). Explain that they need to read the statements and take onboard what the two Christian people are saying. Can they match the statements with the beliefs of the two different Christians?

STEP 3: With pupils, create a continuum line running from 'All Christians believe...' to 'No Christians believe...' Together, decide where the statement 'Genesis 1 is an important religious text but it does not describe the way the world actually began' could sensibly be placed on the line. Remind pupils that there is no definite answer here, but that they need to explain their reason for any placement. Once finished, pupils could work as a class, in small groups or individually to place other statements onto the continuum line including 'God is the creator of the universe', 'Science has all the answers', 'Science is there to answer 'how' questions. Religion answers 'why' questions', 'The world is an amazing place', 'Genesis 1 is true but not literally true. It contains truths about what God is like'.

STEP 4: Remind pupils that some people see a conflict between science and religion whilst others do not. Give pupils the statement 'Science and Genesis are not opposites'. Ask pupils to give reasons for why they agree or disagree with this statement. Explain that in next week's lesson, they will be having a debate. Encourage pupils to prepare for the debate by creating a table with 'agree' and 'disagree', populating it with reasons for and against the statement. Look back through this PPT and allow pupils to improve their tables in light of arguments on any of the slides, if they see fit.

Lesson 6: Science and religion: conflicting or complementary?

STEP 1: Recap the last lesson with pupils, including what was written on their tables in STEP 4.

STEP 2: Invite pupils to hold a debate based on the statement 'Science and Genesis are not opposites' using the notes that they wrote in last week's lesson. It might be helpful before the debate starts to split the class in half and ask one half to argue 'for' the statement whilst the other argues 'against'. If you do this, at the end allow pupils time to consider and share (should they wish) their personal opinions on the statement based on their own ideas about science and Genesis, and what they have heard in the debate. Discuss whether pupils thought this way at the start of the unit – if not, what changed their views?

STEP 3: Work through the sticky knowledge questions and encourage pupils to complete the sticky knowledge quiz sheet.

Learning Outcomes

- Identify what type of text some Christians say Genesis 1 is, and its purpose.
- Taking account of the context, suggest what Genesis 1 might mean, and compare their ideas with ways in which Christians interpret it, showing awareness of different interpretations
- Make clear connections between Genesis 1 and Christian belief about God as Creator.
- Show understanding of why many Christians find science and faith go together
- Identify key ideas arising from their study of Genesis 1 and comment on how far these are helpful or inspiring, justifying their responses.
- Weigh up how far the Genesis 1 creation narrative is in conflict, or is complementary, with a scientific account, giving good reasons for their views