

Year 9 RE- Why is there suffering? Are there any good solutions?

Believing – considering religious beliefs, teachings, sources; questions about meaning, purpose and truth

1. Suffering and Evil

Evil is a cause of human suffering. There are two types of evil:

- **moral evil** - the acts of humans which are considered to be morally wrong
- **natural evil** - natural disasters, such as earthquakes or tsunamis

These two types of evil can work together, e.g. human evil can make natural evil worse. If natural evil, e.g. a drought brought on by lack of rainfall, causes crops to fail, the policies of a government can make the food shortages for the poorest people worse (moral evil).

2. Problem of Evil and Suffering.

For theists, the existence of evil and suffering creates a problem for God. As they believe that God is all-powerful and all-loving, God has the capability to stop all suffering, but either God can't or chooses not to. This is called the Inconsistent Triad.

- God has given people **free will** – the ability to choose between right and wrong for themselves. God has shown people how they should live (e.g. the Ten Commandments; Jesus' life and teaching), but it is up to them to decide whether or not to follow God's instructions.
- The story of humanity's battle with good and evil is told in the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve chose to disobey God by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This is called **the Fall**. Some people believe that as a result of Adam and Eve's first sins, each human is born with a tendency towards evil. This is called **Original Sin**.
- The belief in **karma** causes some people to believe that suffering is the consequence of our actions, either in this life, or the previous one. People who believe this believe that we are responsible for our actions and will be rewarded or punished, depending on how good or bad our actions are.
- For atheists, there is no problem of evil and suffering as they do not believe in an all-powerful being who could potentially intervene to stop all the evil and suffering on the earth.

3. Suffering of Jesus

The death of Jesus had a purpose and many Christians feel hope when they reflect on the suffering of Christ. It reminds them that Jesus can understand physical and mental suffering that all humans go through. It also shows that there can be a purpose to suffering. The death of Jesus on the cross wasn't the end of the story, as Christians believe he rose again three days later. The Resurrection shows that God can triumph over evil. This helps give Christians hope, as they might think God has a plan, even if they don't know what it is. It can also give Christians hope that the suffering won't go on forever and good things will come to those who have faith in God.

Key Terms

Shoah- the Jewish term for the Holocaust translate to mean the burning.

atheist: someone who does not believe in God

dukkha: The Buddhist concept of suffering and dissatisfaction with life

4 Noble Truths- Buddhist teaching about how to stop suffering

dharma- Buddhist teaching

anatta- Buddhist term meaning no soul or self

annica- the Buddhist term for impermanence or change

evil- Something that is morally wrong or unjust, doing the wrong thing

free will: The ability to act based on your own decision

omnibenevolent: All loving

omnipotent: All powerful

omnipresent: Always present, present everywhere

omniscient: All knowing

4. Suffering of Job. This story tells of a man, Job, who has his faith tested. Satan claims that Job only believes in God because he is successful and doesn't suffer. God gives Satan permission to test Job's faith by making him suffer. Satan does this by:

- Attacking his servants
- Stealing his animals
- Killing all his children
- Making Job sick

Despite all the different ways that Satan causes Job to suffer, Job's faith in God never waivers, despite never knowing why he went through the suffering. "I was born with nothing, and I will die with nothing. The Lord gave and now He has taken away. May his name be praised!" As a result of his continued faith, everything Job had lost is restored.

Some Christians believe suffering is a test of faith and won't expect to know why they have been caused to suffer.

5. Responding to Suffering - Parable of the Sheep and Goats. Jesus taught his followers to '*love your neighbour as yourself*' and this teaching is contained in the Parable of the Sheep and Goats. In the parable, Jesus explains that the righteous people (sheep) who helped those in need will be rewarded with spending eternity in heaven. Those who have ignored people in need will spend eternity in hell as a punishment. Jesus says that helping people in need is the same as helping Jesus himself. Ignoring people who are going through suffering is not an option. This is why many Christians support charities such as Christian Aid and aim to reduce the suffering of others as much as possible.

6. Suffering in Buddhism. Suffering is a natural part of life. When Siddhartha left the palace in which he lived, the three people he saw were an old man, an ill man and a dead person. This taught him that people suffer in life. The Four Noble Truths are a summary of the Buddha's teachings. It is these truths that the Buddha taught to his first disciples after he was enlightened.

1. All existence is dukkha (suffering)
2. The cause of dukkha is craving.
3. Stopping suffering comes with the stopping craving
4. Following the Eightfold Path can bring an end to suffering

The Buddha taught that craving is ultimately caused by greed, ignorance & hatred. The Buddha taught that the way to get rid of the desire that causes suffering is to free yourself from being attached to it. Buddhists believe that following the Eightfold Path will help them to reach enlightenment. This will end the cycle of suffering. Buddhists also believe in karma or 'intentional action'.

Buddhists try to perform good actions, e.g. based in generosity and compassion. They avoid performing bad actions, e.g. based on greed and hatred. Actions also determine where they will be reborn in the next life. Good actions with good intentions can mean being born as a human. Bad actions with bad intentions can mean rebirth as an animal, or into a hell realm. Buddhists believe that they should help those who are suffering and may work with charities to help bring an end to those going through suffering.



Key Terms :

Resurrection: Rising from the dead, being restored to life

Righteous: morally right or justifiable, doing the right thing

Sin: An immoral act, going against God's law

Suffering: Undergoing pain or distress

The Fall: The disobedience of Adam and Eve, which resulted in sin being in the world

Theist: Someone who believes in God

Key Quotes:

"The righteous person may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all."

Psalms 34:19

"Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance."

Romans 5:3

"The root of suffering is attachment."
The Buddha

"All conditioned things are impermanent' — when one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from suffering."
The Buddha

Is religion a power for peace or a cause of conflict in the world today?

PEACE ♦ The Qur’an teaches Muslims they <i>should never respond to violence with violence</i> . For example, the holy book states ‘When aggressive people address them, reply, with words of peace.’ (<i>Qur’an, Surah 25:63</i>) This shows Muslims how they should respond to being provoked in a peaceful way. Therefore violence is unacceptable if you are a Muslim. ♦ The meaning of Islam is ‘peace’ and one of Allah’s characteristics is as a ‘Source of Peace’. This illustrates how Islam does not have any connection to provoking violence. ♦ Muslims greet each other by saying ‘al-salamu’alaykum. This means ‘peace be upon you’ and is also recited at the end of each daily prayer when Muslims turn their heads to each side. ♦The Qur’an discourages Muslims from doing anything that threatens peace. In the Qur’an it states ‘God does not love arrogant or boastful people.’ (Qur’an, Surah 31) 	PEACE-MAKING * All humans were created by Allah therefore everyone should be treated with respect so the world is harmonious. <i>Allah dislikes anything that interrupts peace therefore Muslims are taught to be peacemakers and build a better society.</i> * The good deeds and the evil deeds are not equal. Respond to [evil] by that [deed] which is better (good) ; and thereupon, the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend. (<i>Quran 41:34</i>) Many Muslims are inspired by the teachings of peace to work for a better world. <i>Muslim Peace Fellowship (MPF)</i> describes itself as ‘a gathering of peace and justice – of all backgrounds who are dedicated to the beauty of Islam evident in the world.’  Muslim Peace Fellowship We work for the establishment of peace AIMS OF MPF: 1.Working against injustice and for peace at home, within communities and nations and globally. 2.Showing a commitment to peace on behalf of all Muslims. 3.Reaching out to people of other religions to further mutual	Golden Rule It is often claimed that religion causes conflict and war. It is true that sometimes deeply held beliefs can lead to clashes, and there have been many wars that were caused by disputes over religion and beliefs. However, for many people religion can be a power for peace. A message of peace and love towards others is at the heart of all of the major world religions. This is called The Golden Rule. It is the principle that you should treat others as you would like to be treated yourself, and it is found in one form or another in every major religion. Most religions prize forgiveness as a strength, and discourage people from taking revenge on those who have wronged them.	JIHAD Jihad means 'to struggle in the way of Allah.' The Muslim concept of jihad is often confused with the idea of holy war. Most Muslim scholars agree there are two levels of jihad, and that of these, greater jihad is the more important. Greater jihad This refers to the personal spiritual struggle of every Muslim to follow the teachings of Allah in their daily lives, and includes overcoming evils such as anger, greed, pride and hatred, forgiving people who hurt them, and working for social justice. Lesser jihad (Holy War) Most Muslims are not pacifists, and believe it is justifiable to struggle to defend Islam, for justice, or in self-defence, and to use force if necessary. If all peaceful means fail, a Muslim should be ready to fight to defend the ummah against aggression, to defend the oppressed, or to combat injustice. This is lesser jihad.																				
PACIFISM Pacifism Some religions teach total non-violence and non-harm, such as branches of Hinduism and Buddhism. This approach is called pacifism. Followers of certain branches of Christianity are pacifists, such as Quakers. The Hindu leader, Mohandas Gandhi (often called Mahatma Gandhi) led a successful non-violent struggle to free India from British rule. The Christian preacher, Dr Martin Luther King, found inspiration in Gandhi’s non-violent struggle. Dr King believed that Jesus had preached a message that you should love everyone, including your enemies. He led the struggle for black people to be given equal rights in the USA, and he did so without the use of violence	JUST WAR A just war Some religions teach that conflict and taking up arms can be justified in the right circumstances. Sikhs, for example, have faced persecution throughout their history and have been involved in violent clashes with other faiths. Likewise, Islam is not a pacifist religion, but there are very strict rules about when a war can be justified and how to behave when wars are being fought. Islam is strict about avoiding unnecessary harm and violence both to the enemy and any innocent bystanders. Similarly, most branches of Christianity accept that sometimes war and violence can be necessary, and like Islam, there are specific rules for when a war can happen and how it should be fought. People often refer to the Second World War as an example of a just war, because it brought an end to the Holocaust and to Nazi rule.	JUST WAR The Just War Theory is a set of criteria for judging when fighting might be justified to achieve peace, as well as a set of rules for how a war should be fought. The theory has become part of the modern system of international law and has been adopted by the United Nations (UN). Conditions for a just war <table><tr><td>Just cause</td><td>The reasons for fighting should be to uphold justice</td></tr><tr><td>Comparative Justice</td><td>Those affected by injustices should expect a better future following the war.</td></tr><tr><td>Legitimate authority</td><td>Only a recognized leader or head of state can sanction a war</td></tr><tr><td>Right intention</td><td>The motive to fight should be to re-establish peace and restore human rights.</td></tr><tr><td>Probability of success</td><td>There should be a strong likelihood that the war will be won</td></tr><tr><td>Last resort</td><td>War should only take place if all efforts for peace have been tried and have failed.</td></tr><tr><td>Proportionality</td><td>The amount of force used in war should be in proportion to the problem.</td></tr></table>	Just cause	The reasons for fighting should be to uphold justice	Comparative Justice	Those affected by injustices should expect a better future following the war.	Legitimate authority	Only a recognized leader or head of state can sanction a war	Right intention	The motive to fight should be to re-establish peace and restore human rights.	Probability of success	There should be a strong likelihood that the war will be won	Last resort	War should only take place if all efforts for peace have been tried and have failed.	Proportionality	The amount of force used in war should be in proportion to the problem.	JUST WAR - ISLAMIC VIEW <table><tr><td>BOTH</td><td>Sunni and Shia both believe that fighting in some wars are justifiable.</td></tr><tr><td>SUNNI</td><td>Authority would be from a prophet or khalifah (religious leader).</td></tr><tr><td>SHIA</td><td>Authority from a prophet or 1 of the 12 imams (person who leads salah).</td></tr></table> WHAT DOES THE QURAN SAY? Muslims should migrate (move) to escape persecution because God’s Earth is ‘spacious enough for you to migrate to some other place.’ (Surah 4) ‘Why should you not fight in God’s cause and for those oppressed men, women and children who cry out.’ (Qur’an, Surah 4)	BOTH	Sunni and Shia both believe that fighting in some wars are justifiable.	SUNNI	Authority would be from a prophet or khalifah (religious leader).	SHIA	Authority from a prophet or 1 of the 12 imams (person who leads salah).
Just cause	The reasons for fighting should be to uphold justice																						
Comparative Justice	Those affected by injustices should expect a better future following the war.																						
Legitimate authority	Only a recognized leader or head of state can sanction a war																						
Right intention	The motive to fight should be to re-establish peace and restore human rights.																						
Probability of success	There should be a strong likelihood that the war will be won																						
Last resort	War should only take place if all efforts for peace have been tried and have failed.																						
Proportionality	The amount of force used in war should be in proportion to the problem.																						
BOTH	Sunni and Shia both believe that fighting in some wars are justifiable.																						
SUNNI	Authority would be from a prophet or khalifah (religious leader).																						
SHIA	Authority from a prophet or 1 of the 12 imams (person who leads salah).																						

keyword	definition
Peace	Absence of oppression, corruption, injustice and tyranny
Justice	Fairness; all people having equal opportunities and provisions
Forgiveness	A choice to not blame someone for wrongdoing and not seek revenge or let resentment build up
Conflict	Conflict is a serious disagreement between people regarding a particular matter.
Situation Ethics	An approach to morality based on what the most loving thing is to do.
Pacifism	Pacifism is the belief that all instances of violence and war are wrong and should be avoided.
Just War	The Just War Theory is a set of criteria for judging when fighting might be justified to achieve peace, as well as a set of rules for how a war should be fought.
Holy War	a war declared or waged in support of a religious cause.
Lesser Jihad	To struggle to defend Islam, for justice, or in self-defence, and to use force if necessary

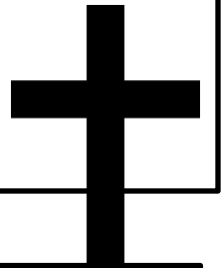
Christianity sources of wisdom

Jesus said: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

(Matthew 5:44)

"If anyone strikes you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also."

(Matthew 5:39)



Islam sources of wisdom

The Prophet Muhammad said:

"Do you know what is better than charity and fasting and prayer? It is keeping peace and good relations between people, as quarrels and bad feelings destroy mankind."

(Hadith)

"Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not go beyond limits. Allah does not love aggressors."

(Qur'an 2:190)



<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zhpg47h>



Religious teachings tend to focus on how people can live alongside each other with love, understanding and compassion. However, there are many different religions and different beliefs, and this can sometimes lead to conflict.