



# Pearson Edexcel

## GCE Religious Studies Transition Pack

### Introduction

The period following the GCSE exam series offers a unique opportunity to explore some weighty issues in Religious Studies and to get students engaged and prepared for the challenging debates which await them as they embark on their GCE (AS/A Level) programme of study.

The activities included in this document are designed as a teacher facing resource which can be adapted as you need. The intention is to help students consolidate and expand their knowledge and understanding of topics covered in Pearson Edexcel's Religious Studies GCSEs, to aid their transition into our A and/or AS Level Religious Studies courses.

This pack contains a selection of tasks and activities which focus on the following four topics:

- The soul, life after death and personal identity
- The euthanasia debate
- The existence of God (intelligent design)
- Miracles and religious experiences

These topics have been chosen to engage students and all are relevant to our AS and A Level specifications. Each contains a range of \*external articles and/or video clips (in relevant topics) and questions, research tasks and further reading which are designed to be used either as in class or independent learning activities.

If you have any further questions on how to use these materials, please contact Pearson's Religious Studies team on this email: [teachingreligiousstudies@pearson.com](mailto:teachingreligiousstudies@pearson.com)



*\*Please be aware that in some instances, resources linked to this document present a single viewpoint and are used as a catalyst to spark debate and discussion in the classroom. Whilst external content may not be aligned to Pearson's views or your views as the reader/user, we will always seek to present the full range of factual evidence acknowledging the different narratives and perspectives and to produce content that deals with topics in a fair and balanced way, to enable learners to critically evaluate the full range of evidence and views. We are committed to ensuring learning is based on evidence and fact, reflects our commitments to DE&I and is ethical and legal.*



# Pearson Edexcel

## GCE Religious Studies Transition Topic 1



### *The soul*

*'Do humans have a soul?'*  
*'Are we just our physical body?'*

Philosophical questions about consciousness and personal identity have been asked across the ages. Our GCE course allows students to delve into questions about the immortality of the soul, rebirth, reincarnation, the replica theory and resurrection.

\* Please be advised that the links included below refer to death and discussions around the way people die and some may find the content upsetting.

### Stimulus

Watch this documentary about children who claim to remember their past lives.

- Video clip: [The boy who lived before](#)
- Video clip: [The Story of Nicola, Reincarnation Experiments](#)

Watch the following records of people who have claimed to have had a near death experience.

- Video clip: [Near Death Experience \(Blind Woman Sees For The First Time\):](#)
- Video clip: [11 yr Old Went to Heaven and Back, and Tells What He Saw!](#)

### Discussion questions

1. Why might someone consider this sufficient evidence for the existence of a soul?
2. Why might someone consider this sufficient evidence for a belief in reincarnation?
3. What objections might someone have to using these accounts as evidence?
4. Why might someone consider this sufficient evidence for a belief in an afterlife such as heaven?
5. What objections might someone have to using these accounts as evidence?
6. Overall, do you think there is such a thing as a soul? Why or why not?
7. Overall, do you think there is an afterlife? Why or why not?



# Pearson Edexcel

## GCE Religious Studies Transition Topic 1

### Further Research

1. Look up the research of Kenneth Ring, Raymond Moody, Susan Blackmore on Near Death Experiences
2. Research contrasting religious views about the soul (Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism all have very different beliefs)

### Further Reading

- [https://philosophynow.org/issues/82/On\\_The\\_Soul](https://philosophynow.org/issues/82/On_The_Soul)
- <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20180615-can-artificial-intelligence-have-a-soul-and-religion>

### Notes



# Pearson Edexcel

## GCE Religious Studies Transition Topic 2



### *Euthanasia*

*'Is helping someone have a good death ethical?'*  
The question of the sanctity of human life and the place of humans in deciding life or death decisions, runs through much of our ethical debate. Our GCE course looks at questions around assisted dying, euthanasia, palliative care, the law, human choice and the concept of personhood.

\* Please be advised that the link to the documentary highlighted in yellow, is to a BBC documentary which shows a person ending their life and some may find the content upsetting.

### Stimulus

Watch the following clips discussing the arguments around euthanasia:

- Video clip: [Euthanasia: playing God?](#)
- Video clip: [Writing your own end](#)
- Video Clip: [Assisted dying: 'I just wish the law would allow me to have him for a little longer'](#)

Watch the following Louis Theroux documentary:

- Video Clip: [\\*Louis Theroux: Altered States: 2. Choosing Death](#)

### Discussion questions

1. What do you think is the strongest argument in favour of 'euthanasia' and why?
2. What do you think is the strongest argument against 'euthanasia' and why?
3. Overall, do you think euthanasia should be legalised within the UK? (Explain your reasoning)



# Pearson Edexcel

## GCE Religious Studies Transition Topic 2

### Further Research

Research the following six individuals with regard to the euthanasia debate:

Diane Pretty	Terri Schiavo	Robert and Jennifer Stokes
Chantal Sébire	Daniel James	Tony Bland

### Further Reading

- <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/jan/18/death-on-demand-has-euthanasia-gone-too-far-netherlands-assisted-dying>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-56597771>
- <https://www.leeds.ac.uk/news-health/news/article/4983/direct-experience-of-dementia-strengthens-support-for-euthanasia>

### Notes



# Pearson Edexcel

## GCE Religious Studies Transition Topic 3



### *The existence of God*

#### *'Does God exist?'*

The existence of God has been debated across cultures and throughout history. Our GCE course looks at some of the classical arguments for God's existence; such as the idea of God as the first mover, the explanation for intricate design in the universe and what it means to be god, and considers how these arguments stand up in the modern day.

\* Please be advised that the link highlighted in yellow, is to a video clip which shows the autopsy of a giraffe, and some viewers may find the content upsetting.

### Stimulus

Read the following excerpt from William Paley.

*In crossing a beach, suppose I hit my foot against a stone. Suppose I were asked how the stone came to be there. I might possibly answer that, for anything I knew to the contrary, it had lain there forever. It would be difficult to show that this answer is absurd. But suppose I had found a watch upon the ground, and it should be asked how the watch happened to be in that place. I should hardly think of the answer which I had before given--that for anything I knew the watch might have always been there--would be an acceptable answer.*

*Yet why should not this answer serve for the watch as well as for the stone? Why is it not as admissible in the second case as in the first? For this reason, and for no other: namely, that when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive -- what we could not discover in the stone -- that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose. The parts are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion, and that motion so regulated as to point out the hour of the day. If the different parts had been differently shaped from what they are, of a different size from what they are, or placed after any other manner or in any other order than that in which they are placed, either no motion at all would have been carried on in the machine, or none which would have answered the use that is now served by it...*

*...Every observation which was made in our first chapter concerning the watch may be repeated with strict propriety concerning the eye, concerning animals, concerning plants, concerning, indeed, all the organized parts of the works of nature.*

Watch the following clips relating to the design argument.

- Video clip: [William Paley's Watchmaker Argument](#)
- Video clip: [\\*Richard Dawkins demonstrates laryngeal nerve of the giraffe](#)
- Video clip: [Stephen Fry on God | The Meaning Of Life | RTÉ One](#)



# Pearson Edexcel

## GCE Religious Studies Transition Topic 3

### Discussion questions

1. Why does William Paley think the watch is different to the rock?
2. How does Paley consider the watch similar to the human eye?
3. How does the process of moving from watch to the existence of a watchmaker, link to the existence of God?
4. What evidence is there of 'intelligent design'? Can you find any other examples in the world?
5. Do you think this is evidence that there is a God?
6. What are the main objections to this 'design argument'? How could worldwide events in 2000-2022 be used as evidence against 'intelligent design'?
7. Overall, do you think the design argument is successful as evidence for God's existence?

### Further Research

1. Research the 'aesthetic argument' and the 'anthropic principle'
2. Research the arguments from Richard Dawkins, David Hume and Douglas Adams against the idea of 'intelligent design'

### Further Reading

- [https://pages.uoregon.edu/sshoemak/323/texts/william\\_paley.htm](https://pages.uoregon.edu/sshoemak/323/texts/william_paley.htm)
- [https://philosophynow.org/issues/50/The\\_Return\\_of\\_the\\_Design\\_Argument](https://philosophynow.org/issues/50/The_Return_of_the_Design_Argument)
- <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/evolution-intelligent-design>

### Notes



# Pearson Edexcel

## GCE Religious Studies Transition Topic 4



### *Miracles and religious experiences*

Individuals and groups throughout history and in the modern day have claimed to have experienced the divine. Some claim to have seen God and felt divine power whereas others attribute miraculous events to God. Our GCE course looks at the nature and influence of religious experiences and the scientific debate around miracles.

\* Please be advised that the link highlighted in **yellow**, is to a video which contains some use of strong language which some viewers may find offensive.

### Stimulus

Some people believe that God acts in the world through miracles or that they have experiences with the divine, either through visions, prayer or feeling a divine presence.

Read the following article.

- Article: [An inexplicable experience](#)

Watch the following examples of religious experiences.

- Video clip: [Christian Testimony - Davey Falcus - Gangland To God - Word Out Productions](#)
- Video clip: [The Overwhelming Spiritual Experience Lenny Kravitz Had as a Child | Belief | OWN](#)

Read the following article about religious experiences and temporal lobe epilepsy.

- Article: [Finding God in a seizure: the link between temporal lobe epilepsy and mysticism](#)

Watch the documentary by Derren Brown on 'healing miracles.'

- Video Clip: [\\*Derren Brown - Miracles for Sale](#)



# Pearson Edexcel

## GCE Religious Studies Transition Topic 4

### Discussion questions

1. What do you think is being experienced?
2. Why might someone think this is an example of a religious experience of some kind?
3. Why might someone think it could be explained without religion?
4. Why do you think some people attribute these experiences to God/the divine?
5. What objections might someone have to claiming that these are evidence of God/the divine?
6. Does 'temporal lobe epilepsy' explain all religious experiences?
7. To what extent does this weaken the argument for God's existence?
8. Overall, do you think these experiences are genuine experiences? Explain your answer.
9. Overall, do you think these could be seen as evidence for the existence of God? Explain your answer.

### Further Research

Research the following and consider how they affect the discussion around religious experiences:

- Michael Persinger's God helmet
- Sigmund Freud's belief that religious experience is an illusion or a neurosis
- Near-death experiences

### Further Reading

- [https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/322539#\\_noHeaderPrefixedContent](https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/322539#_noHeaderPrefixedContent)
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-45679730>

### Notes