

Religion and the Media

Aim of this unit: To consider the ways in which religion is portrayed in TV.

- Religious and moral issues in the Soaps
- The purpose of religion-specific broadcasting.
- How effective each area is in portraying religious ideas.
- The effect the portrayal of religion within these areas is intended to have on the target audience.



Religion and the Media

Religious and moral issues in
the Soaps



At the end of the next group of lessons I will...

- Have understood the definitions of religious and moral issues in the textbook.
- Have identified moral and religious issues in episodes of Emmerdale and Coronation Street.
- Have thought about why these issues are addressed in the Soaps.

In this lesson I will ...

- Learn what a soap area is
- Learn what a moral issue is
- Learn what a religious issue is

What are soaps?

- On average people spend 3-4 hours a day watching T.V - Soaps are the most popular
- They contain stories between characters in a small community
- Coronation Street and Eastenders are most popular (13 million per episode)
- Soaps often take REAL issues, e.g. drug addiction, teenage pregnancy, violence and raise public awareness
- They are like moral stories - eventually good overcomes evil

Read pages 37-41 of Religion in Contemporary Society

- Write down your understanding of a Religious theme
- Write down your understanding of moral issues.
- What are the key differences between moral issues and religious themes?

Definitions...

- **A Religious issue**
- Either an issue connected with the meaning of life, or to do with some particular religious beliefs/practices that people disagree about.

- **A Moral issue**
- An argument about whether some type of action is right or wrong (often these will be religious issues as well. e.g. Divorce, Abortion etc)

Watch the clip from Coronation Street

rebirth

Science
and
religion

faith

indoctrination

creationism

Supernatural
being



Spiritual
sustenance

commitment

Baptism

tokenism

Answer these questions...

1. Identify 2 religious themes in the episode of Coronation Street.
2. Explain why these are religious issues and what Christian believers would say about them?
3. Identify 2 Moral issues in the episode. Explain why these are moral issues.

4. Why do you think the soap dealt with these issues?
5. In what other ways could the issue have been dealt with?
6. How would you have dealt with this issue and why?

Exploring soaps



4. List all the Soaps that you have heard of.
5. Write down religious and/or moral issues from any of these soaps after watching an episode.
6. How would a Christian believer have dealt with one of these issues? Explain why.



Case study

- We are going to watch episodes of Emmerdale
- You need to answer the questions on the sheet as you watch these episodes.

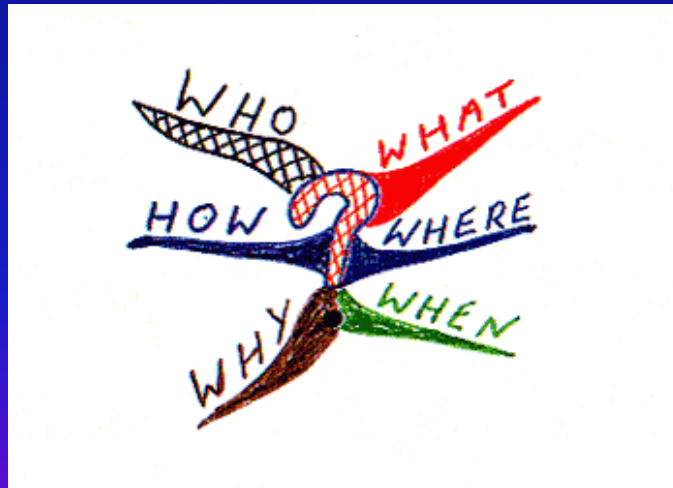


Feed back.....

- What were the religious theme(s)/ideas?
- Why do you think they have chosen religious people like a vicar and his wife as the focus for this storyline?
- Are religious people portrayed fairly in this programme?

Questions you would like to ask

Today we have been watching a series of clips from *Emmerdale* on the death of a baby. Write down 3 questions today's lesson has inspired you to think of.



Suffering

Why is it such a challenge to the
Christian faith?

The following makes people question the existence of God

- The random distribution of suffering
- The degree to which people suffer
- Suffering of the innocent



Why
should
innocent
children
suffer?

Death & Suffering is Everywhere

- We see pain, suffering and death all around us
- September 11, 2001 attack on WTC resulted in the death of 3000
- Tsunami kills more than 250,000 in Dec. 2004
- 2 million Sudanese Christians have been martyred for their faith
- Earthquakes, floods, airplane crashes cause thousands of deaths
- Holocaust wipes out 6 million Jews during WWII
- Human suffering, from toothaches to broken limbs and cancer

Moral Evil

- Evil that is the result of the free will actions of human beings.
 - Most of the evil we encounter is moral evil.



Natural Evil

- Evil and suffering not caused by human beings.
 - Ex. The Indian Ocean Tsunami of December 2004.



God is All-Powerful & All-Loving

- How can an all-powerful, all-loving God allow pain, suffering and evil?
 - People ask why such things occur
 - Why such death and suffering if a loving God is in control?
 - Atheists use the pervasiveness of suffering to discredit a 'loving God'
- Why doesn't God use His power to stop the evil, suffering, pain, and death?

How do Christians reply?

- There was no suffering before the fall
- When man rebelled the process of decay and death began. Suffering is part of the process
- Suffering is often due to the consequences of mans own actions.
- Suffering is not always negative
- Suffering is necessary in an orderly world e.g. if you fall you will hurt yourself due to the law of gravity.

Greatest Test of Faith

- To believe that God is good
- God has clearly revealed His character and demonstrated it to us in the cross
- Rom. 8:32, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"
- Rom. 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

Testing Faith

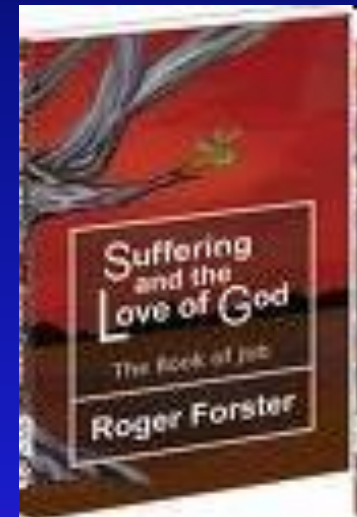
- Hab. 3:17-18, "Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls -- Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation."
- God never asks humankind to understand, but just to trust Him

What About "Senseless" Suffering?

- What about specific cases of "senseless" suffering?
- Suffering is part of the 'big picture' involving sin
- Suffering can be:
 - The direct result of human sin
 - By the deliberate sinful acts of others
 - By the social policies of tyrannical dictators and oppressive governments
 - By natural disasters or accidents
- Individual cases of suffering are not always correlated with particular sins of individuals

God Allowed Job's Suffering

- Job 1:1, "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil."
 - Suffered intensely
 - Lost all of his children, servants and possessions in one day
 - Struck by a painful illness
 - The Lord never told Job the specific reasons for his suffering, but God had His reasons
 - God demanded that Job not question the decisions of his Maker



The Christian's Hope

- The hope of a resurrection is the key to understanding suffering
- Bertrand Russell said that no one could sit by the bed of a child with a terminal disease and believe in a loving God
 - A minister challenged Russell to explain what he could offer such a child
 - An atheist could only say "Sorry, you had your chance; this is the end for you"
- The Christian has hope that this life is not the end

Believers & Suffering

- Christians may not see the reasons for some suffering in this life
- It can test faith and/or refocus hope
- **Rom. 5:3-4**, "And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope."
- Suffering is character-building for the believer

More Reasons For Suffering

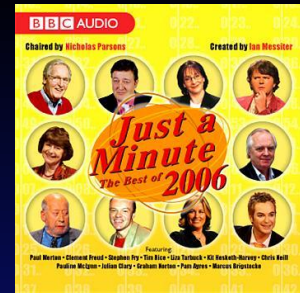
- Heb. 5:8-9, "though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."
- Suffering can help some to come to know Christ
- Suffering can make humans more able to comfort others who suffer

Christian Source of Hope

- The Cross of Christ is the believer's foundation for the hope and faith needed to endure and overcome trials
- Scripture does not guarantee a trial-free life
- Job 1:1, "Job who was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil."
- Rom. 8:37, Christians are given the hopeful promise of an overcoming life through the Cross of Christ

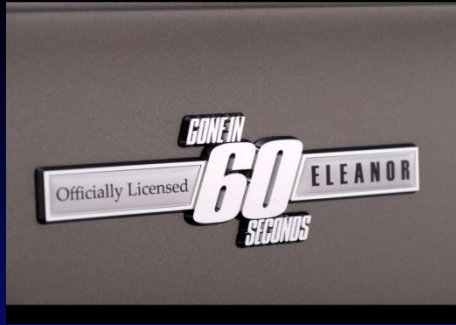


Just a Minute

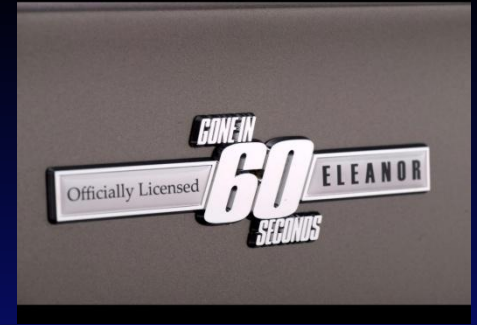


One student starts to speak about the Christian response to suffering. At the first repetition, pause or mistake another takes over - and so on until the minute is up.





60 Seconds



Timer on board -

[http://classtools.net/main_area/template_loader.php/?
timer](http://classtools.net/main_area/template_loader.php/?timer)

Set students the challenge of summing up the lesson in sixty seconds.

Students then read out their summations until a really full picture is presented to the class.

What do you know?



Christian perspectives on suffering

You must use a mixture of pictures and words

Written task

- Answer this question;

'Television Soap operas offer a good way for dealing with religious and moral issues'

Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer showing you have considered another point of view. (15)

Written task

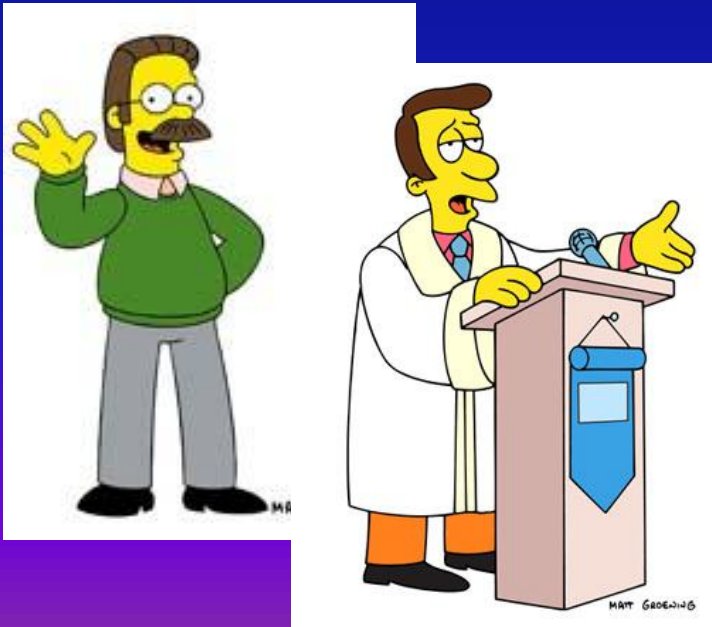
- **Level 2** Some brief attempt made to address the question in a very simple way, with little understanding, reason or analysis. Sparing/imprecise use of specialist vocabulary. Accuracy and legibility barely adequate. (3-4 marks)
- **Level 3** Outline answer. Reasoning is simplistic and basic. Evidence and examples lacking or minimal. Sparing/inaccurate use of specialist vocabulary. Adequate accuracy of spelling and legibility.(5-6 marks)
- **Level 4** A partially adequate treatment for the topic, mainly accurate and largely relevant. Basic or patchy understanding; An attempt is made to construct an argument, partially supported by some reasoning and/or evidence.. Form and style suitable in some respects. Some use made of specialist vocabulary. Satisfactory legibility and accuracy in spelling etc. (7-9 marks)
- **Level 5** Addresses the question; mainly accurate and largely relevant knowledge demonstrating understanding of main ideas. More than one view is mentioned with limited analysis or comment. Form and style are appropriate and largely accurate. Some accurate use of specialist vocabulary. (10-11 marks)
- **Level 6** A fairly full answer in the time available, including key facts and ideas, presented with accuracy and relevance. Different views are considered, with some critical analysis or comment. Form and style are suitable. Material is organised coherently and specialist vocabulary is used accurately.(12-13 marks)
- **Level 7** A thorough answer in the time available; an accurate and relevant treatment of the topic, showing thorough knowledge and understanding. Different views are analysed and evaluated. Form and style highly suitable. Good legibility and high level of accuracy.(14-15 marks)

What image does religion have on TV?

Ashley - Emmerdale



Father Ted

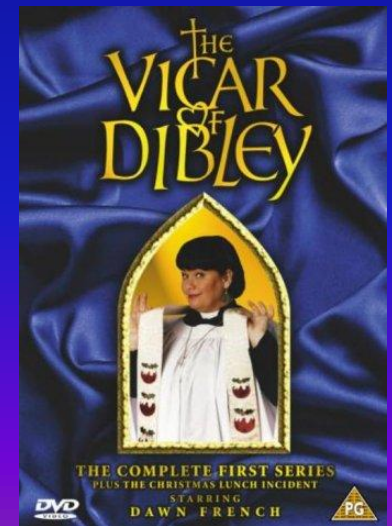


The Simpsons

Cadfael – medieval detective



Coronation St – Emily Bishop



Vicar of Dibley

Now answer the following using your research:

Soaps present religious people as out of touch with the modern world. Do you agree? Give reasons for your opinion, showing you have considered another point of view. Your answer should refer to specific television programmes.

(15 marks)

Reasons why it may show religious people as out of touch with the modern world;

- living in a world of their own/ not part of normal life
- old fashioned ideas and beliefs
- does not reflect reality
- does not show religious belief as something that makes people's life better
- Don't feature in main storylines or in some soaps at all.

Look at other side of argument;

- it still shows the characters in a likeable way/uses humour affectionately in relation to some characters e.g. Emily Bishop.
- Shows religion is still a part of everyday life as it features in storylines
- Emmerdale has made a vicar a main character with some prominent storylines involving real-life issues.
- Coronation Street has given a religious storyline to a young and relevant character (Sophie Webster)
- Deal with human experience e.g. Birth/relationships/death which are always relevant.

Your views - what do you think - are they shown as out of touch? Give good reasons for why you hold these views.

5

5

1

5

5

1

5 - 5 - 3

Summarise today's topic in 5 sentences.

Summarise today's topic in 5 words.

Summarise today's topic in 3 words.



Extra! Extra!

Write a newspaper headline about today's lesson...

(i.e. sensational, serious, tabloid etc.)





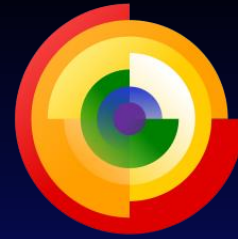
True or False



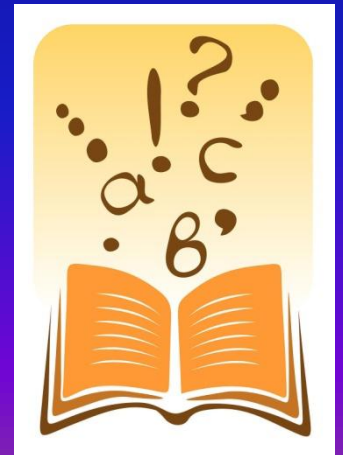
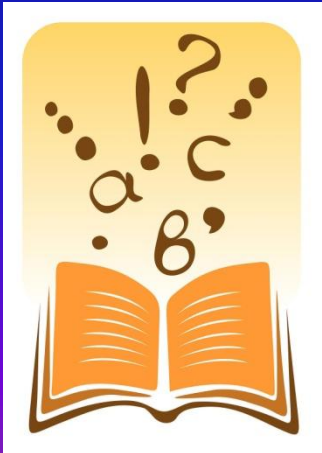
True.....or is it false!



Definition



Write a paragraph explaining, as concisely as you can, what the different types of religious programming are.



4 in 5 people in the UK and worldwide claim a religious identity.



More people attend Anglican church services on a Sunday than a football match on a Saturday.

Only 1.1 billion of the world's 6 billion inhabitants describe themselves as non-believers.



People can no longer assume that the young are less religious than their parents.

Jot down your responses to these statements

the big questions



Nicky Campbell
hosts a series
of moral,
ethical and
religious
debates

Should Britain
ban the burka?

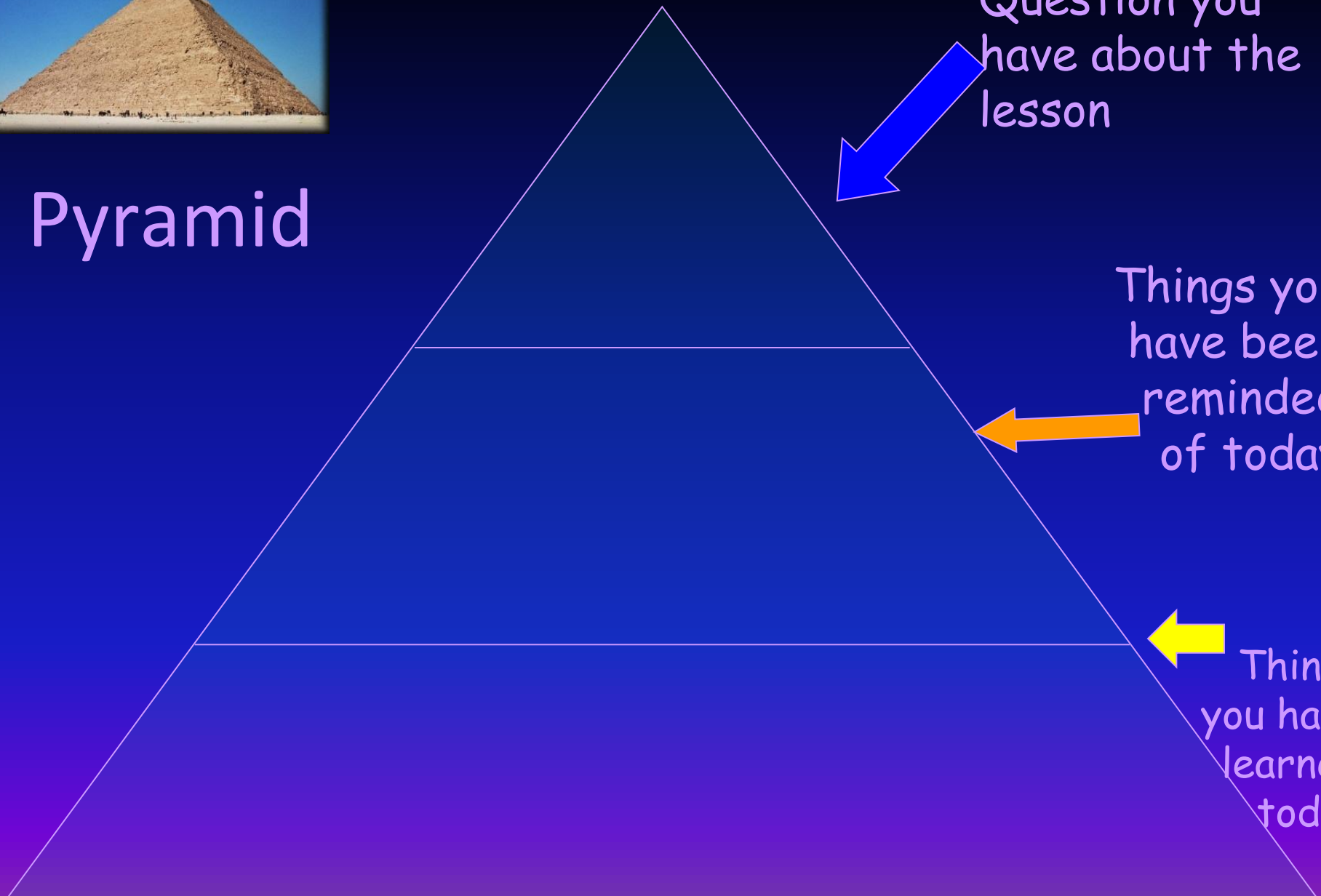
Does love of neighbour mean we
should pursue a more open
immigration policy?

Should Catholic
priests be allowed to
marry?

Write down 3
questions you think a
programme called
"The Big Questions"
might ask.



Pyramid





Day of reckoning: First women priests
embraced as equals
Saturday 12 March 1994



Congregations keep faith with women priests
May 17, 2004



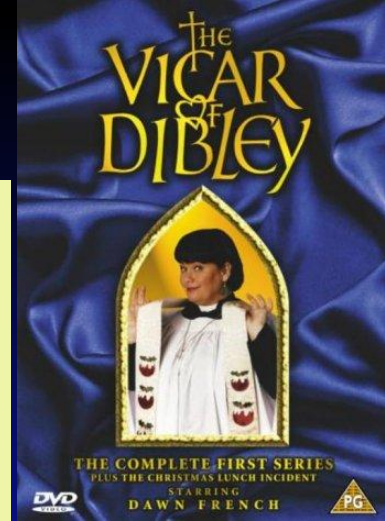
More women than men are being ordained to
Anglican priesthood November 14, 2007



Woman curate on temporary leave after
hate campaign Saturday 8 December 2007

The Vicar of Dibley

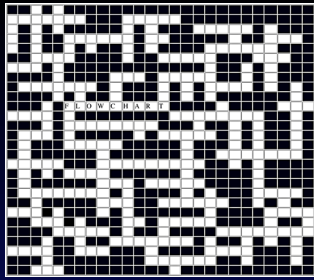
“Normal” characters in popular drama are almost exclusively secular. In comedy programmes, religious characters are rarely credited with a sense of humour; their targets of humour, not its source. Geraldine in the Vicar of Dibley is a rare exception. (Taking Belief seriously BBC seminar May 2005)



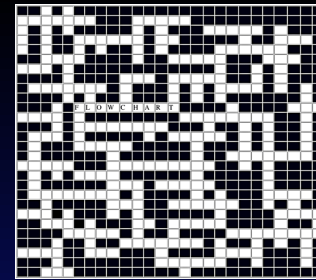
Comedy helps us understand each others' lives and beliefs. Comedy's purpose is laughter, and laughter breaks down psychological barriers bringing the unfamiliar or alien within our imaginative grasp. An obvious example was...Richard Curtis's determination in creating The Vicar of Dibley to confront the furore over women priests and show how normal a woman's ministry would be in the real world. (Taking Belief Seriously BBC seminar May 2005.)



1. What are the villagers' expectations of their new vicar?
2. How do they react to Geraldine?
3. What stereotypes are mentioned in relation to vicars and gender?
4. Why are female vicars still a controversial issue for some Christians?
5. Why did some Christians argue that women should be ordained?
6. "Many women who became ordained after 1994 found themselves in the face of opposition. Criticism, sexism and ridicule." Sum up how the first episode of *The Vicar of Dibley* reflects this?



Word Fill



e.g. Fill in the missing words

The *---* *-----* - a programme that is specifically made for people who are interested in religion. It would usually appear at a particular time on a *-----* morning or evening. *E.g. -----* *-----*, the 'Big Questions'.

In recent times there has been a conscious effort to promote wider ----- by making programmes which reflect an increasingly ----- Britain.

A Jihad for Love - film by Parvez Sharma

- What was your reaction to the response of radio callers condemning homosexuality?
- Should the radio presenter in South Africa be so open with his children considering the Muslim attitude generally?
- How do you think such programmes will affect people's opinions of Islam?
- What impression did the film give of Islam? Do you think it was fair?
- What effect did the lack of voice-over commentary have?
- Why do you think Parvez Sharma adopted this approach?
- Do you think the film was biased in any way?

Recap: Religious programming

- Religious or moral programmes can appear in:
- The '**God Slot**' - a programme that is specifically made for people who are interested in religion. It would usually appear at a particular time on a Sunday morning or evening. *E.g. Songs of praise, the 'Big Questions'*
- In ordinary programmes like Soaps, documentaries, situation comedies etc. that have religious or moral themes.

