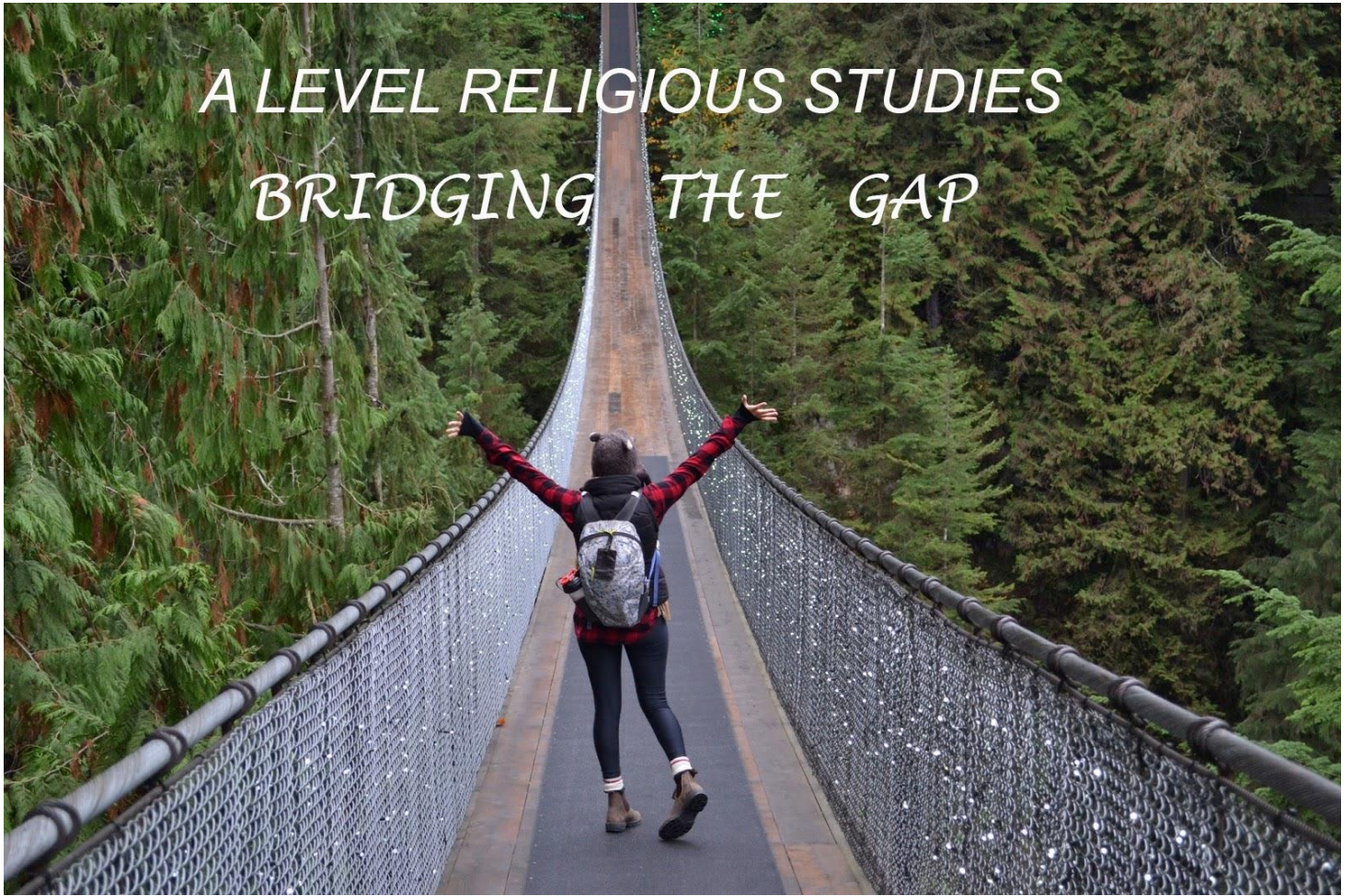


A LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
BRIDGING THE GAP



**A Level Religious Studies at Plymouth High School**  
**Yr11 into yr12 summer transition task:**



**Contents**

Introduction 2

An introduction to Buddhism 6

An introduction to Ethics 10

An introduction to Philosophy 14

Reading to think 16

**Please also take a look at these webinars which are very useful:-**

<https://www1.chester.ac.uk/theology-and-religious-studies/schools-engagement/trs-chester-level-webinars/new-trs-chester>

## Introduction

Welcome to Buddhism, Philosophy and Ethics at A Level!

This table shows the main topics studied in each unit:

Unit 1: Buddhism	Unit 2: Philosophy	Unit 3: Ethics
<p>Foundations: The origins and development of Buddhism and the sources of wisdom on which it is based</p> <p>Insight: Beliefs, teachings and ideas about Human life, the world and ultimate reality</p> <p>Living: diversity of ethics and practice, religious identity, key moral principles</p> <p>Development: significant social and historical developments</p> <p>Society: the relationship between Buddhism and society</p> <p>Challenges: science, secularisation, multi-culturalism, gender roles</p>	<p>Philosophical language and thought</p> <p>The existence of God God and the World</p> <p>Theological and Philosophical developments</p> <p>Religious language: Negative, Analogical or Symbolic</p> <p>Religious language: Twentieth Century Perspectives</p>	<p>Normative Ethical Theories: Religious Approaches</p> <p>Normative Ethical theories</p> <p>Applied ethics</p> <p>Ethical Language: Meta-ethics</p> <p>Significant ideas Developments in Ethical thought</p>

This 'bridging the gap' booklet will help you to gain an understanding of the topics being covered in each unit. You should complete the tasks in as much detail as possible, ready for submission at the start of the year.

The course requires you to develop your own knowledge and understanding of the world through studying one of the world's oldest philosophical traditions, Buddhism, along with arguments for and against the existence of God plus views on what makes someone a good or moral person. To be successful in this course, you need to be able to explain the reasons and ideas using evidence and examples that you are not only presented with during lessons but also during your own research and study.

**Ideas to get you thinking...**

For each of the following, choose which you would 'rather' and explain why. Your explanations should contain evidence and examples to back up your point of view...

1. Would you rather live without music or live without TV?

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2. Would you rather find true love or find 10 million pounds but never have a relationship?

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3. Would you rather always say what is on your mind or never speak again?

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4. Would you rather end world hunger or end hatred in the world?

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5. Would you rather be forgotten when you died or be hatefully remembered?

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6. Would you rather be rich but in an unhappy job or make less money but with a job you like?

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7. Would you rather be able to read everyone's mind all of the time or always know their future?

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## An introduction to Buddhism

**Section A Key Terms:** Use your own research to define the following key terms:

<b>Anatta</b>	
<b>Anicca</b>	
<b>Buddha</b>	
<b>Dhamma</b>	
<b>Dukkha</b>	
<b>Enlightenment</b>	
<b>Five Khandhas</b>	
<b>Four Noble Truths</b>	
<b>Kamma (Karma)</b>	
<b>Nibbana</b>	
<b>Noble Eightfold Path</b>	

<b>Samsara</b>	
<b>Three fires/Poisons</b>	

In addition, make a list of definitions of any other terms that you come across whilst researching. 7

**Section B Key Questions:** Use your own research to answer the following questions.

Who was the Buddha?	
Why is Siddhartha important to Buddhists today?	
Summarise, very briefly, Buddhist beliefs	





### **Buddhism: Useful Websites and Reading List**

#### **Websites:**

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/topics/z8tb4wx> (BBC Bitesize guides on Buddhism)

<http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/5minbud.htm>

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/buddhism>

<http://www.religionfacts.com/buddhism>

[www.ahandfulofleaves](http://www.ahandfulofleaves.com) (you will need to translate the page)

[www.clear-vision.org/Schools/Teachers](http://www.clear-vision.org/Schools/Teachers)

[www.dharmanet.org](http://www.dharmanet.org)



[www.buddhanet.net](http://www.buddhanet.net)

[www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism)

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/buddhism>

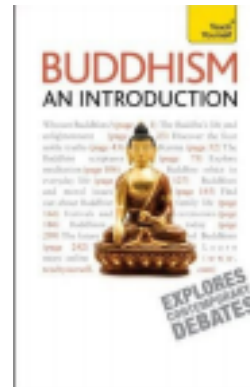
### Books

A New Approach: Buddhism by S Clarke and M Thompson

Teach Yourself Buddhism (the Teach Yourself series)

Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction by D Keown

Introducing Buddhism by C Prebish and D Keown



In addition: download or write off for a free copy (enclose SAE) of 'The Four Noble Truths' by Ajahn Sumedho. <http://www.buddhanet.net/4noble.htm>

Amaravati publications Amaravati  
Buddhist Centre Great Gaddesden  
Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP1  
3BZ .

Read it and make notes.

## An introduction to Ethics

Is it possible to desire the bad? The answer may seem obviously to be yes. We desire many things that are bad for us, and others of the planet: long-haul flights, too much sweet food, and sex with someone you shouldn't. Yet as Plato realised, there is something odd about this. If we want something, then surely it is because we think it to be good? You wouldn't want a triple chocolate muffin unless you thought it tasted good? If you really truly felt that the bad outweighed the good, surely you wouldn't want it anymore?

The conundrum has no easy solution. But it raises an important issue that manifests itself in many ways: how do we know that what we think is good is really good, or whether what we think bad is really bad?

Take this quiz to see how ethical your decision making process is:

Part 1:

		<b>Stron gly agree</b>	<b>Tend to agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Tend to disagree</b>	<b>Stron gly disagr ee</b>
<b>1</b>	Buying organic food is in the best interests of both people & the planet					
<b>2</b>	Frequent flyers who pay for CO2 reductions to offset their emissions are taking as moral a stance on global warming as people who never fly for environmental reasons					
<b>3</b>	It is always better to buy local produce than food which has been flown in from hundreds or thousands of miles away					
<b>4</b>	It is not in principle wrong for powerful Western nations to use their military forces without UN support to overthrow tyrannical regimes					
<b>5</b>	Every country should sign up to the Kyoto protocols which aim to stabilise the extent of greenhouse gas concentrations in the universe.					

11

<b>6</b>	Given a choice between increasing environmental damage and cutting economic growth, it is sometimes better to increase environmental damage.					
<b>7</b>	Western customers should boycott companies if any of their goods are found to have been made using child labour in the developing world.					

8	Genetically modified foods have a great potential to help nourish the world.					
9	Free trade is more important than aid or certified Fair Trade for the developing world.					
10	We need to do more to resist the power of supermarkets and multinational chains.					

Scores:

	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Qs 1,3,5,7 & 10	2	1	0	-1	-2
Qs 2,4,6,8 & 9	-2	-1	0	1	2

Total Score for Part 1 (Officially Ethical Beliefs) \_\_\_\_\_

Part 2

Now answer these questions as honestly as possible:

		True	False
1	I buy organic food whenever I possible can		
2	I only use a car when walking, cycling or using public transport is practically impossible		
3	I always make sure that the food I buy has not been imported from other continents		
4	It would be wrong to use military force without UN support to end a modern day Auschwitz		
5	My house uses all low-energy light bulbs (fittings permitting), the household appliances in our house have high efficiency energy ratings and I don't leave my TV on standby or my phone charger plugged in		
6	In the last two years I have not taken any flights which were not strictly necessary		
7	I have taken reasonable steps to make sure that the clothing stores I usually buy have sound policies on the use of child, sweated and forced labour		

8	I would rather eat non-GM foods which had been treated with four times as many pesticides than GM foods treated with a quarter of pesticides		
9	I always buy certified Fair Trade goods where they are available as an option, and I actively seek them out		

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10	I regularly shop in a supermarket		
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Scores:

For every True statement, you score 2 points.

For every False statement, you lose two points.

Total Score for Part 2 (Officially ethical actions) \_\_\_\_\_

What does the result mean?

Officially Ethical	In both your beliefs and your actions, you are an example of the moral values in liberal Western society.
Officially Unethical	You reject the moral values of a liberal Western society and live your life accordingly.
Unofficially Unethical	Although you tend to agree with the moral values of a liberal Western society, your actions do not live up to these ideals.
Unofficially Ethical	Although you reject the moral values of a liberal Western society, you actually live your life according to them – which is quite odd!

So, can we actually have a set of moral principles that everyone abides by, whether they are the Queen of England,

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the President of the USA or a street child living in an Indian slum?

Basically, those people who think that we can have a set of rules that everyone follows in all situations are called Absolutists – we have a set of absolute rules. Those who think that we need to treat each situation differently, depending on who is involved are called Relativists – moral rules are relative depending on the situation.

What 3 advantages can you think of for having absolute rules?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

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2.

3.

What 3 disadvantages can you think of for having absolute rules?

1.

2.

3.

Are there any rules that could be absolute?

## An introduction to Philosophy

Philosophy in a minute...

According to the Concise Chambers Dictionary, philosophy is:

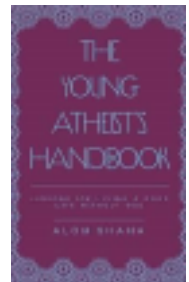
1. The search for truth and knowledge concerning the universe, human existence, perception and behaviour, pursued by means of reflection, reasoning and argument.
2. Any particular system or set of beliefs established as a result of this.
3. A set of principles that serves as a basis for making judgments and decisions.



Philosophy is an activity - the attempt to understand the general principles and ideas that lie behind various aspects of life and the language we use to convey them. Political philosophy, for example, asks questions about justice and equality, about how a state should be organised.

Philosophy as a subject also involves examining the 'history of ideas' - what thinkers have said on fundamental questions over the centuries. You can examine the philosophy of a particular period - the philosophy of Ancient Greece, for example, is particularly important for understanding western thought and culture. You might look at the philosophy of the European Enlightenment, or of the twentieth century, each giving an insight into ideas that developed out of and shaped a particular period of history. But the most straightforward way of approaching philosophy is through its subject matter - the philosophy of mind, of language, of religion, of science, of politics, of the theory of knowledge and so on.

Philosophy aims first and foremost for clarification - of thoughts, of concepts, of language. To philosophise is to think clearly and accurately. It is both an academic subject and an essential life skill.



Task:

An extract from 'The Young Atheists Handbook' by Alom Shaha can be found over the next few pages. Read the extract and answer the following questions, giving evidence and examples to back up the points you are making.

1. Why did Robert Buckman say that our parents are our first gods?

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2. How is 'inventing a God' a strategy for coping with grief?

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3. Why is a belief in God not required to believe in 'a soul'?





**Reading to think...**

Read one of the following books (available from the LRC; Plymouth Libraries or you can buy your own copy) and write a review explaining how it can link to either the Ethics units and / or the Philosophy units. You should also include your own personal view on the issues presented.

Proof of Heaven by Dr Eben Alexander Old Souls by Tom Shroder The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot Hey Nostradamus by Douglas Coupland The Passage by Justin Cronin A year of living Biblically by A J Jacobs The Rapture by Liz Jensen Flash Forward by Robert Sawyer The Slap by Christos Tsiolkas To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee Lord of the Flies by William Golding Being Mortal by Atul Gawande All the light we cannot see by Anthony Doerr Do no harm by Henry Marsh We are not ourselves by Matthew Thomas Never Let Me Go by Kazuo Ishiguro Alone in Berlin by Hans Fallada The Pelican Brief by John Grisham An Innocent Man by John Grisham Keeping Faith by Jodi Picoult We need to talk about Kevin by Lionel Shriver Dominion by C J Sansom Two Brothers by Ben Elton The First Casualty by Ben Elton

Chosen Book \_\_\_\_\_

Synopsis

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How I think it links to the Ethics and / or Philosophy unit

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My own personal opinion of the book – what do I think of the issues covered?

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