



Reflections from a pilot in progress:

Dr Anastasia Badder has been piloting a new object-led approach, combined with stop motion animation, as a strategy to assist non-specialists with conversations about religion in UK primary schools. She recounts:

Entering the classroom, I ask the children about religion—what’s their experience? Does religious difference make people different?

Next, I introduce a selection of religious artefacts and invite their attention. Objects can take on special significance within religion, but the task I set is *not* to retell existing stories but to choose an object and invent a story for it. Children work in pairs or threes, choosing a shared object. They think of a word to characterise their object—an adjective? Some association? Together they explain this to neighbouring children, exchanging ideas. Introducing new resources—simple craft supplies—I invite each group to create a scene around their object. And then to imagine a very short story to explore what this object is doing in the scene. To give their story a title. At last, I hand out tablet devices and ask each group to open the Stop-Motion Studio app. They will use this to animate their stories—although as often as not, the animation task provokes some deviation in their planned narrative, in response to the object’s affordances and limitations or simply some new inspiration.

As a class, we watch the films back. And then we discuss the process. How did they choose their objects? What challenges did they encounter? How did they resolve disagreements? What did they do to tackle the practical task of ‘moving’ their object?

Later, I interview the teacher to learn their thoughts. Only now do I learn that the child who volunteered an anecdote about grandad’s dreidel (‘I know that!’) is normally shy, retiring, that the class teacher had no idea of this religious heritage. Over and over, we discover the children’s expertise, that amidst generations of fear and illiteracy, it may simply be that we forgot how to talk about religion well. And that children know just how to welcome the invitation.

Through object interactions and digital storytelling, teachers learn from their class—later I may return to enquire: Has what you learned change how you teach? Do the children continue to share their expertise?

In the meantime, I draw quick encouragement from the simplest of feedback: the teachers tell their friends, and I am invited to visit more classrooms.

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