

POST-SECULARISM AND PARABOLIC ENQUIRY IN THE PRIMARY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
CLASSROOM: DEVELOPING AN APPROPRIATE HERMENEUTIC

By

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Abstract

In this doctoral research, I propose that post-secularism calls the religious education (RE) community to look afresh at textual enquiry in the primary school (Reception to Year Six, ages four to eleven) in a way which brings rich hermeneutical possibilities and questions to the fore. The parables of Jesus are often presented within RE lessons as having a single meaning, often one which is secular-ethical rather than theological. As a consequence, pupils have sparse opportunities to consider a) that different people interpret a parable differently, and b) why variant readings exist. Despite increasing calls that students should understand the internal diversity of living religious traditions, it remains that few practical exemplifications exist to assist primary teachers in structuring such enquiries.

In an attempt to redress this state of play, this research trials a sequence of learning activities with Upper Key Stage Two pupils in three schools (n: 85 students). My research journey towards these trials involves proffering of a conception of post-secular RE, one informed by critical literature reviews into post-secularism and pupil agency. Using Biesta's (2015; 2017) domains of education as a purposeful frame, this envisioning presents an innovative direction for the subject, one which takes post-secular (non-) religiosity, epistemic ability (Habermas, 2006), pupil agency and a post-secular perception of the child seriously. This conception inspires a theory-informed post-secular enquiry into the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), which draws upon rich hermeneutical discussions sitting at the heart of parabolic scholarship. These enquiries were created to see if pupils can become more hermeneutically aware, developing reasoned responses to the question, 'Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?'.

This research is significant. It demonstrates that, contrary to wide and deeply-entrenched views, primary-aged pupils *can ably engage in rich hermeneutical reasoning pertaining to why a parable is interpreted differently by different people*. Through agentively encountering a myriad of perspectives and interpretive questions constellating around this parabolic narrative, pupils' efficaciously developed their understanding of self and others. This research makes a much-needed contribution towards our understanding of how epistemic ability and religious literacy could be developed in the crucible of the classroom through a more hermeneutically-informed RE offer. In so doing, the conceptualising and enacting of this post-secular RE can contribute substantially to pupils' substantive, disciplinary and personal knowledge (Ofsted, 2021b).

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List of abbreviations

BERA	British Educational Research Association
CEEO	Church of England Education Office
CoRE	Commission on Religious Education
COVID	COVID-19
CPD	Continuing professional development
DBE	Diocesan Board of Education
DfE	Department for Education
EAL	English as an additional language
EP	Emmanuel Project
FG	Focus group
KS1	Key Stage One
KS2	Key Stage Two
KS3	Key Stage Three
KS4	Key Stage Four
KS5	Key Stage Five
LE1	Learning Enquiry One
LE2	Learning Enquiry Two
LKS2	Lower Key Stage Two
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PGS	Parable of the Good Samaritan
PPG	Pupil Premium Grant
PSHE	Personal, social, health and economic education
RE	Religious education
REC	Religious Education Council for England and Wales
RQ	Research question
SACRE	Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
SCAA	School Curriculum and Assessment Authority
SEND	Special educational needs and disabilities
SIAMS	Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools
TA	Teaching Assistant
UC	Understanding Christianity
UKS	Upper Key Stage
UoB	University of Birmingham

CHAPTER ONE

1 INTRODUCTION

‘What is written in the Law?’ he replied. ‘*How do you read it?*’ (Luke 10:26 – Parable of the Good Samaritan¹)

‘[W]e as the teaching profession have possibly made things too narrow for children. The whole...‘this is what it means. Learn the message’ ’ (Teacher A)²

1.1 Journeys

Religious education (RE)³ and I have had quite the journey together. Never intending to train as a teacher, a number of serendipitous events in 2010/11 found me analysing data for a pilot study of the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus (Birmingham Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education, 2007).⁴ From then, my interest was kindled. An undergraduate dissertation on RE dovetailed with a successful application to train as a primary⁵ teacher. This led to five years working in a Church of England middle school as the RE subject leader, before taking a position as a Church of England RE adviser.

My half-decade in the classroom (2013-2018) came at a time of intense discussion within the RE community. Primarily, these deliberations sought to identify and address the widespread confusion of practitioners towards the aims and rationale of the subject (Chater and

¹ Hereafter, PGS.

² Teacher A Interview Two, lines 241-242, Appendix Twenty-Seven.

³ This research will focus upon RE in England. Unless specifically stated, all references to RE will be alluding to the subject within an English context.

⁴ These councils will hereafter be referred to as SACRES.

⁵ In this thesis, ‘primary’ will refer to primary-aged pupils (4-11 years). Within England, the educational landscape includes many different school types which cater for parts or all of this age-range – first, junior, primary, primary plus, middle, all through etc. I will therefore be mainly referring to pupil age-range when using the term ‘primary’, rather than primary schools specifically.

Erricker, 2013; Conroy et al., 2013; Gearon, 2013; Commission on Religious Education, 2017)^{6,7} One of the issues was that no clear and definitive aim existed. Various rationales for the subject had emerged and intertwined over the subject's history from 1944, resulting in a plethora of aspects that *could* or *should* be covered depending on which guidance one reads (Parker and Freathy, 2011; Gearon, 2013; Flanagan, 2019).⁸ The Office for Standards in Education⁹ (2013, p. 14) stated that the lack of a consistent and coherent rationale was at the heart of practitioner confusion, which in turn caused a 'negative impact on the quality of teaching, curriculum planning and the effectiveness of assessment'. In a subsequent review¹⁰ from The National Society¹¹ (2014) into RE in Church of England Schools, teacher¹² confusion about the subject's purpose was reiterated.

Unsurprisingly, calls for clarity and consensus in 2013 were swiftly followed by subject rationales proffered as the panacea. One notable example was *A Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England* from the Religious Education Council for England and Wales¹³

⁶ The 'Commission on Religious Education' will hereafter be referred to as 'CoRE'.

⁷ These discussions also focussed upon the variable (and often declining) support and provision for the subject across the country, caused in part by its omission from the English Baccalaureate (All Party Parliamentary Group, 2013; Clarke and Woodhead, 2015; CoRE, 2017; Religious Education Council for England and Wales, 2017).

⁸ Within the parameters of what legally must be adhered to in terms of curriculum coverage of RE in maintained, academy and free schools, i.e. that they 'shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (*Education Reform Act 1988*, Section 8.3).

⁹ Hereafter referred to as Ofsted.

¹⁰ The Ofsted (2013, p. 5) report did not include within its sample 'voluntary aided schools or academies with a religious designation'. Holding these findings to be indicative rather than conclusive of the situation in schools, the National Society for Promoting Religious Education (often known as the 'National Society') published the aforementioned report in which considered RE in these Church of England contexts.

¹¹ The National Society rebranded themselves as the Church of England Education Office (CEEEO) in 2015.

¹² It is important to state that a 'primary RE teacher' is a misnomer. In contrast to trained secondary RE teachers, the majority of primary teachers have no specialist qualification in RE and have had little subject specific training.

¹³ Hereafter, REC.

(2013). Despite boasting the endorsement of a wide range of professional organisations and bodies (representing a myriad of faiths and worldviews) in setting a clear path forward, the document added to confusion. Myself and other teachers were left perplexed by the vagueness of the proposed curriculum aims, and the lack of clarity around *which knowledge* should be taught and to *what end*. Consequently, the document's impact in providing subject consensus was limited (Barnes and Felderhof, 2014; Orme, 2020). A lack of impact also extended to other contributions to the debate, such as those of Chater and Erricker (2013) and Barnes (2014). Although they presented cases for what the underlying issues were in RE,¹⁴ they failed to apply their pedagogical recommendations to practical exemplifications which teachers could understand and use.

1.1.1 The socio-cultural reality of religion and belief

What was significantly common across the proposed aims offered during the time I entered the classroom (2013/14) was the importance of pupils learning about the socio-cultural reality of religion and belief in contemporary society (Chater and Erricker, 2013; Ofsted, 2013; REC, 2013; Barnes, 2014). Particularly stressed was the need for pupils to understand that religions are constantly changing and internally diverse, as opposed to monolithic bodies. This call both delighted and frustrated me within my professional role. I agreed wholeheartedly that allowing pupils to enquire into, and understand, the diversity of religiosity in society is a non-negotiable (how are pupils able to effectively navigate the

¹⁴ Chater and Erricker (2013) held that: the range of voices speaking into the subject through local determination stifled effective RE; local determination should be re-evaluated, and a pedagogy of 'bricolage' be used within classrooms (see Footnote 20, p. 6). Barnes (2014) contended that the subject community had failed to give due attention towards RE's contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

modern world, and flourish, without doing so?). However, nationally published resources and locally agreed syllabi generally failed to incorporate such enquiries into their plans.¹⁵ Too often these presented religions as single, tidy entities, perpetuating false and stereotypical views of religiosity¹⁶ (e.g. all Christians believe X, do this on Y and can be identified through Z). Teachers of RE were being told that classroom enquiry into the internal diversity of religion and belief was crucial, but had little guidance, through practical ideas or research, to support them.¹⁷

Although calls to be more attentive towards internal diversity applied across all religions and beliefs taught in RE, particular focus on the teaching of Christianity quickly emerged. Reports from Ofsted (2010; 2013) and the National Society (2014) declared that attempts for pupils to understand the socio-cultural reality of Christianity were stymied by a lack of theological enquiry into biblical texts. Too often, theological questions or consideration of how Christians might interpret biblical narratives were neglected, with practitioners focusing instead on morality, values and/or pupils' experiences.¹⁸ For instance:

¹⁵ For instance, the *Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Agreed Syllabus 2012-2017* (RE Today, 2011). Despite the repeated emphasis in this document's aims of the importance of helping students appreciate religious diversity, the Upper Key Stage Two unit on, 'What does it mean to be a Muslim?' presents the monolithic (re)presentation that all Muslims have the same beliefs, follow the Five Pillars in a similar way and regularly attend a mosque (p. 64). Likewise, the *Wiltshire Agreed Syllabus 2011* (Wiltshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education, 2011) also presented a simplistic view of religiosity. This can be seen in the Key Stage Two unit, 'How does a Christian follow Jesus?' (p. 52). Here, pupils are to 'identify the impact that believing in Jesus *will have* [emphasis my own] on a Christian's life' (p. 52). There is no recognition here that different Christians might be inspired by Jesus in different ways.

¹⁶ Although complex and multi-faceted definitions of religiosity abound (Holdcroft, 2006; Tiliouine and Belgoumidi, 2009), it can be summarised as the ways in which adherents express commitment to their religion.

¹⁷ This is compounded by RE sitting outside of the National Curriculum, as there is no curricular guidance and related resources emerging from the Department for Education (hereafter DfE) which national curriculum subjects receive. RE practitioners rely on non-statutory guidance provided by the REC, such as their *Draft Resource* on developing a worldviews approach (Pett, 2022) and their *National Content Standard* (2023).

¹⁸ Due, in part, to a misunderstanding and/or overemphasis on Attainment Target Two in RE – 'learning from' religion and belief (Ofsted, 2010, p. 42).

...it was common for teachers to use Jesus's parables to explore personal feelings or to decide how people should behave and not to make any reference to their religious significance. As a result, they lost the opportunity to extend pupils' understanding of Christian beliefs. (Ofsted, 2010, p. 33)¹⁹

A narrow focus on ethical readings of biblical texts had contributed to pupils' 'scant knowledge and understanding' of Christianity (Ofsted, 2013, p. 8). To redress this, schools were called to develop purposeful enquiries into Christian belief and practice within a coherent RE curriculum, informed by a clear rationale and delivered by practitioners who have had access to subject specific training (Ofsted, 2013; The National Society, 2014). These recommendations informed my practice and positionality as a teacher and subject leader new to post in a church school, and formed a core part of my departmental priorities (Flanagan, 2019).

In considering how pupils could develop their understanding of Christianity as a diverse, global faith across the curriculum in my own setting, a number of key questions emerged: *how should Christianity be represented in the classroom? How could pupils increasingly understand the internal diversity present across this living religious tradition? And which pedagogies would be effective in enabling such enquiries?* These questions were explored in the classroom alongside part-time Masters research (2013-16). It was during this period I encountered literature on the post-secular (Habermas, 2008; Gorski et al., 2012; Hotam and Wexler, 2013), pupil agency (Fielding and Moss, 2011; Ridgely, 2012; Gates, 2015) and

¹⁹ See also National Society (2014, pp. 27-28): 'while teachers were often using biblical stories with younger children they struggled to use the material more 'theologically' to explore key Christian ideas and practices...[needed is a] recognition of the diversity of different ways of thinking theologically within the Christian tradition'.

‘bricolage’²⁰ (Turtle, 1995; Chater and Erricker, 2013; Oswell, 2013). Conceptions of post-secular society drew attention to the plurality of worldviews existing in society as individuals negotiate truth claims and personal experiences, whilst related ‘post-secular’ perceptions of the child highlighted how young people agentively traverse available resources around them to construct meaning (Ridgely, 2012). These conceptions informed research which explored how pupils used a variety of sources – biblical texts, liturgy, hymns, images and interviews with Christians – to construct an informed response to the enquiry question, ‘How do Christians remember/celebrate salvation?’. Through this research, I increasingly perceived that the concept of a *post-secular society* and *child* helped clarify not only the nature and place of religion and belief in contemporary society, but also the purpose of, and attendant pedagogies in, RE. I concluded that further research into post-secularism and RE would be a fruitful endeavour.

1.1.2 A significant parabolic enquiry²¹

During the 2016/17 academic year, I started (as a reflective practitioner) to more intentionally curate lessons which required pupils to enquire into texts theologically and engage with the internal diversity within Christianity. Such enquiries drew upon the pedagogical model and resources of the newly published and widely distributed

²⁰ Bricolage refers to the process in which individuals utilise their agency to generate meaning, through engaging with, and assimilating, the ideas and resources around them (Turtle, 1995; Oswell, 2013).

²¹ This research is cross-disciplinary, bridging the departments of theology and education. With the standard practices across these different fields, I have opted to present much of this research in the present tense (College of Arts and Law), rather than the past tense (Social Sciences) as this allows me to more effectively reflect upon the development of my thinking. As this research is situated within and across each discipline, there is a fluidity in the chapters regarding that which links to theology, education and both.

Understanding Christianity resource (RE Today, 2016).²² One of these enquiries – considering what the Parables of the Lost Sheep, Coin and Prodigal Son in Luke 15 meant for Christians – was planned and then facilitated with my Year Five class. It was during these two lessons that I was completely taken aback. I observed how, in analysing the narratives and engaging with various interpretations, pupils put forward a range of readings – a few were literal, but the majority presented theological meanings from the texts, which at times were also ethical in nature.²³ In many cases, pupils had constructed their reading/s in a way which drew attention to symbolic and metaphorical language. This was in direct contrast to the relatively unchallenged view within RE literature, which holds that primary pupils are cognitively unable to interpret the parables of Jesus theologically or beyond a literal level (Goldman, 1964; 1965). Through agentively engaging with a number of interpretations in the classroom, a range of theological readings appropriate for the age of the children *had* emerged from across the class; I therefore started to wonder whether *present conceptions of primary parabolic enquiry could be challenged in the light of post-secular perceptions of the child, bricolage and pupil agency?* Research pursuing this would be fascinating to undertake to potentially dispel the common misconception within the RE community that *primary pupils cannot engage meaningfully with these texts.*

²² Published in 2016, the *Understanding Christianity* resource was created in response to the recommendations of the Ofsted (2010; 2013) and National Society reports (2014). The resource presents a pedagogical model which allows for rich theological enquiry into core concepts underpinning Christianity from Reception to Key Stage Three (ages 4-14), namely ‘God’, ‘Creation’, ‘Fall’, ‘People of God’, ‘Incarnation’, ‘Gospel’, ‘Salvation’ and ‘Kingdom of God’. Medium-term plans, and associated resources, aid practitioners in structuring enquiries which allow pupils to make sense of biblical texts and core beliefs, to ‘understand the impact’ of these beliefs in the lives of Christians and to ‘make connections’ between their learning and themselves (RE Today, 2016). The resource has had a significant impact upon the teaching of Christianity within English schools, and will be further considered in Chapter Five. It is hereafter referred to as *UC*.

²³ But in contrast to the weak ethical approach as identified by Ofsted (2010, p. 33) – i.e. not solely about ‘how people should behave...[without] reference to their religious significance’.

Further questions emerged as I reflected on the class's learning over the two lessons (Schön, 1991). To what extent were pupils aware of the diversity of interpretation across the class? It was true that pupils had been able to contemplate variant readings of the Parable of the Prodigal Son before presenting their own, but these presentations were individual written responses. Perhaps opportunities were missed for pupils to see and engage with the diversity of parabolic interpretation amongst their peers? Even if pupils were aware of the variety of interpretations, had they had a chance to consider *why* their classmates had different interpretations, or even reflect on *why* they interpreted the parable the way they did? The answer was no. Even *UC*, which offered opportunities for pupils to consider various readings of parables, did not sufficiently encourage pupils to consider why interpretive diversity existed. The more I reflected, the more I considered how important it was for pupils to understand a) that different people interpret texts differently and b) reasons why this might be, in order to navigate and flourish within contemporary post-secular society where a multitude of worldviews exist.

1.1.2.1 Positionality of the teacher in restricting parabolic enquiry

Another rumination came to the fore. I became increasingly cognizant, through encountering the work of Aldridge (2015), that my own bias and theological standpoint had coloured my view of successful teaching and learning over this sequence of lessons. Indeed, when marking their responses, I perceived that those who gave theological interpretations 'understood' the parable, yet those who presented a wholly ethical or literal reading as

‘misunderstanding’.²⁴ I reflected on the extent to which this unconscious bias (Hurford and Read, 2022) had affected my planning, questioning and assessment. A clear learning objective was offered for pupils to meet, that these parabolic texts can be read soteriologically (that is, about God’s saving act). The lesson plans were prescriptive in the light of this aim, with preordained learning activities employed at certain stages of the lesson when I had felt that pupils had grasped what I had wanted them to (e.g. that the Lost Sheep could represent sinners and the shepherd, God). As a consequence, my questioning and next-step learning activities were aimed towards consolidating a theological understanding; other opinions or readings, which could have been valued and followed by thought-provoking classroom dialogue around our different interpretations and why these might have emerged, were seen as potential diversions from the set course, or simply wrong.

I predicted that a similar situation manifests itself in RE classrooms across the country every week. Teachers pre-determine clear learning intentions for an enquiry, stipulating that successful learning has taken place if pupils leave parroting interpretations of biblical texts that the teacher has in mind.²⁵ I became apprehensive that this distinguishing between ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ interpretations hindered pupil agency and voice; the practitioners’ view became authoritative over those of pupils, whilst simultaneously limiting the number of interpretations considered in the classroom. This made me uneasy, and I knew was

²⁴ This presented some interesting professional reflections in the light of the Teachers’ Standards (DfE, 2013). In attempting to address a misconception, was I propagating one? This said, my perception here was informed by the Ofsted (2010) report which equated moral responses to superficial learning.

²⁵ These learning intentions are often shared with students prior to learning, which also influences pupil reasoning.

something that needed redressing in the light of post-secular conceptions of society and the child.

Further deliberations followed. I wondered on what grounds I was determining which readings of pupils were 'correct' or 'incorrect', and what right had I to do so? And how were other teachers – consciously or not – distinguishing between 'legitimate' or 'misguided' interpretations? With parabolic enquiry and views of 'successful' interpretation coloured by the positionality of individual practitioners, a discrepancy likely existed between pupil engagement with the parables in different classes.

From my perspective, my subjectivity had prevented rich, dialogic learning taking place in this parabolic enquiry, where a multitude of interpretations could have been invited, valued, shared and discussed. Although I was aiming for pupils to both enquire theologically into the parables and engage with the internal diversity within Christianity, I had assumed that all Christians joined me in reading the parables theologically; on further exploration, I realised that this was not the case (Hedrick, 2004; Levine, 2014; Zimmermann, 2015). If I was serious about preparing pupils to navigate and negotiate the diverse worldviews they will encounter in contemporary post-secular society, this required that pupils encounter a plethora of parabolic readings which exist – theological or otherwise.

1.1.3 The 'what' and 'why' of parabolic interpretation

At heart, these two lessons led me to consider that understanding the 'what' and the 'why' of diverse textual interpretations – in this instance, the parables – should be an

important facet of a subject committed to enabling pupil flourishing within contemporary society. Such enquiries would help pupils be cognizant of and account for the diversity of positionalities both nationally and globally, as well as appreciate how their own subjectivity influences their reception of texts.

Following these lessons, I quickly turned to ascertain the extent to which the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of textual diversity had been considered in the way that RE was currently theorised and practised. I noted that various conceptions of religious literacy²⁶ and the religiously literate pupil, which were beginning to take centre stage as an organising principle for RE, failed to include sufficient hermeneutical awareness of ‘why’ interpretive diversity existed (Prothero, 2007; Chipperton et al., 2016; Dinham and Francis, 2016). Furthermore, I found that research and practical exemplifications into the teaching of the parables in the primary school were sparse. Agreed syllabi appeared to have rested on the relatively unchallenged assumption of Goldman (1964; 1965) that primary pupils are unable to engage with parables ‘successfully’ to arrive at their single theological meaning (e.g. Brown, 1994; Berkshire SACRE, 1995; Redbridge SACRE, 2001), whilst the few curriculum resources which existed also assumed that the parables had one meaning that it was the role of the teacher to lead pupils towards (e.g. Truro and Exeter Diocesan Boards of Education, 2001c; Bowness et al., 2005). It seemed that pupils were not trusted to engage with parables and interpret them; the question ‘*How do you read it?*’ was not asked, with pupils instead being told in

²⁶ Religious literacy is a contested term. As I draw attention to in Chapter Four (Section 4.3), definitions of this term centre around religious literacy as an understanding of the nature, notions and impact of religion and belief in contemporary society, as well as an increasing cognizance of *why* plurality exists as truth claims are considered against personal experiences in different social and cultural contexts (Wright, 1993; Prothero, 2007; Moore, 2016; Dinham and Shaw, 2017; Smalley, 2018).

classrooms, ‘This is how you should read it’ (Briggs, 2017).²⁷ It was clear that the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of parabolic interpretation – including the perspectives and positionality of pupils – was not being given sufficient attention within RE. This required rectifying if we were, as a subject community, serious about helping pupils understand the internal diversity of Christianity as well as variant positionalities.

That insufficient attention was given to the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of parabolic interpretation (and wider texts in RE more generally) stayed with me as I started a new role as a diocesan RE adviser.²⁸ Although my interest and questions regarding parabolic enquiry in the primary school emerged out of my own experience and context (Dewey, 1910; 1938; Alexander, 2006a), it became apparent when working with teachers, pupils and advisors at a local and national level that this issue was not confined to my own experience. Of particular note was my conviction that the multi-disciplinary ‘balanced stool’ conception of religious literacy²⁹ (Chipperton et al., 2016; 2018a; Wright, 2018; Georgiou, 2019), which was gaining

²⁷ Pupils are seen here more as *empty vessels to fill with adult knowledge* rather than individuals who agentively construct meaning (Ridgely, 2012). This is considered in greater depth in Chapters Three, Four and Five.

²⁸ This is public information. As part of my role, I advise and support 137 schools across six local authorities. To ensure this research is ethically sound, confidentiality of participants has been taken seriously so that they are unidentifiable. Ethical aspects of this research thesis are discussed in Chapter Seven, particularly Section 7.7.

²⁹ Chipperton et al. (2018a, p. 1) define religious literacy as the ability, ‘to hold balanced and well-informed conversations about religion and belief’. They argue that holding these conversations require pupils to engage with three disciplines in equal measure: ‘Theology. This is about believing. It looks at where beliefs come from, how they have changed over time, how they are applied differently in different contexts and how they relate to each other’; ‘Human/social sciences. This is about living. It explores the diverse ways in which people practise their beliefs. It engages with the impact of beliefs on individuals, communities and societies’ and, ‘Philosophy. This is about thinking. It is about finding out how and whether things make sense. It deals with questions of morality and ethics. It takes seriously the nature of reality, knowledge and existence’ (Chipperton et al., 2018a, pp. 1-2).

significant traction within Church of England schools³⁰ and agreed syllabi³¹, could and should incorporate hermeneutics within the disciplines of theology and philosophy. If this was achieved, rich opportunities could start to emerge whereby pupils could engage with a myriad of parabolic interpretations (as part of the discipline of theology) before considering reasons why parables have been, and will continue to be, interpreted differently (philosophy). Such an addition would likewise contribute towards pupil understandings of worldviews, a concept which re-emerged within RE discussions (see Chapter Two, Section 2.5.1). I held that embedding this propositional change required research-informed practical exemplifications to support RE practitioners in facilitating attendant enquiries, of which none existed.

In contemplating a purposeful enquiry which would allow primary pupils to engage with the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of parabolic interpretation, I turned to parabolic scholarship which I had first encountered during my undergraduate theology degree. Here, I found a range of hermeneutical discussions and debates: *do the parables have one meaning or many? How have they been interpreted, and why do variant readings exist?* I held that drawing upon these discussions could inform a primary parabolic enquiry, one which provides an intentional space for pupils to engage with a *range of interpretations* and *hermeneutical questions* to consider why diverse readings exist. Such an enquiry could take seriously pupil perspectives and agency (following a post-secular perception of the child), asking pupils

³⁰ Such an aim/conception of RE is becoming normative in Church of England schools, not least as schools are required to evidence how their RE provision is balanced across the three disciplines of theology, philosophy and the human and social sciences in their SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) Inspection (CEEO, 2018; 2023). Furthermore, the most recent iterations of the *Church of England Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education* (2016; 2019) have stipulated religious literacy as a central aim of RE. The preceding *Statement* (2011) did not mention it at all.

³¹ For instance, Bedfordshire (RE Today, 2018) and Norfolk (Norfolk SACRE, 2019).

‘How do you read it?’, rather leading them in superficial teaching suggestions which are in substance little more than ‘Guess what’s inside the teacher’s head’ (Kohn, 2005). I proposed that such an enquiry would more effectively contribute to pupils’ religious literacy and ability to understand, and navigate, the plurality within a post-secular society than the limited parabolic enquiries currently on offer.

I decided to pursue this proposal through doctoral research. Such research would allow me an opportunity to re-engage with post-secular conceptions of society and the child, to explore issues and deliberations within parabolic scholarship, and to contemplate how parabolic enquiry has been, and should be, theorised and practised in the primary setting. Ultimately, this engagement with literature would allow me to curate, and trial, a post-secular primary parabolic enquiry designed to help pupils understand the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of parabolic interpretation. It is to an overview of this research I now turn.

1.2 The research questions

The purpose of the present research is to consider the implications of the post-secular paradigm on the teaching of the parables in the primary RE classroom. It is my contention that the concepts of post-secular society and the child problematize current theory and practice with regards to parabolic enquiry in the primary setting. I propose that such paradigms call the RE community to look afresh at textual engagement in the primary setting in a way which brings rich hermeneutical possibilities and questions to the fore. Despite a plethora of calls from within the RE community that pupils should engage with the diversity of religion and belief in contemporary society (Ofsted, 2013; Chipperton et al.,

2018a; CoRE, 2018; CEEQ, 2019; Chater, 2020), there remains a lack of research and practical exemplifications to support practitioners in facilitating such enquiries.

In an attempt to redress this state of play, the following research question (RQ) is explored:

RQ: What is an appropriate parabolic enquiry for post-secular RE in the primary RE classroom?

This main RQ is complemented by three sub-questions:

RQi: How can primary pupils enquire into parables in a way which draws attention to the diversity of interpretation?

RQii: How might post-secular conceptions of the child, which stress their agency, affect the pedagogies employed in the classroom?

RQiii: How can pupils become more hermeneutically aware, developing reasoned answers to the question, 'Why do different people interpret a parable differently?'

In an attempt to answer these questions, I created and trialled a sequence of learning activities (approximately two and a half hours, led by myself in the role of classroom teacher to echo normal lessons) with Upper Key Stage Two pupils.³² The aim of these activities was for pupils to engage with different interpretations of a parable, to consider hermeneutical questions as to why variant readings exist, and to reflect on why they themselves hold the interpretation they do. To this end, the learning activities:

³² Years Five and Six – nine to eleven years old. Hereafter, UKS2. Other Key Stages will also be abbreviated to KS. These include: Key Stage One (KS1) – five to seven years old; Lower Key Stage Two (LKS2) – seven to nine years old; Key Stage Three (KS3) – eleven to fourteen years old; Key Stage Four (KS4) – fourteen to sixteen years old, and Key Stage Five (KS5) – sixteen to eighteen years old.

- focus on two open enquiry questions: ‘What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?’ and ‘Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?’;
- allow pupils to engage with a number of interpretations of the parable and wider hermeneutical questions, as informed by a literature review into parabolic scholarship; and
- present opportunities for pupils to exercise their agency – how *are they* constructing/justifying their views in their engagement with the lesson content?

1.3 The value of this educational research

This research provides a much-needed and timely contribution to the RE community. Whilst previous research has considered how parables might be presented in a secular and plural society (Truro and Exeter Diocesan Boards of Education, 2001c; Copley et al., 2004a), investigating the implications of post-secularism on classroom enquiries into a biblical narrative marks a key departure from existing literature. Indeed, a post-secular consideration of the parables in primary RE has never been undertaken before; as such, this research presents an inaugural contribution in this area. I hold that conceptions of post-secular society and the child can fruitfully inform the purpose of, and attendant pedagogies, in RE. If we are serious as a RE community in ensuring that pupils understand the socio-cultural reality of religion and belief in contemporary society in order to flourish within it, then intentional curriculum opportunities which allow pupils to understand the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of textual interpretation, and its diversity, is paramount. I believe that the post-secular paradigm could enrich such enquiries. I hope that the present research thesis can

prompt advisers, curriculum designers, practitioners and researchers to be more attentive towards the potential usefulness of post-secular paradigms in how RE is perceived and practised. My own background as a theologian, teacher, RE adviser and researcher purposefully informs this endeavour.

A central aim of this research is to curate, and trial, a parabolic enquiry which is informed by literature on post-secular society, pupil agency and parabolic scholarship. This research-informed enquiry is significant in four further aspects. Firstly, in drawing upon parabolic scholarship, the curated enquiries open up wider hermeneutical questions for pupils to engage with, in a way which has yet to be explored within existing research. In particular, it asks pupils to not only to engage with multiple readings of a parable, but also consider *why they and others might have arrived at their interpretation/s of the text*. This is an innovative step. If effective, this research would challenge the current view espoused within RE literature and curriculum documents that primary pupils are unable to engage purposefully with such questions. Consequently, it would present an argument for including hermeneutical questions within parabolic enquiry – and textual enquiry more widely – within current conceptions of religious literacy and the religiously literate pupil.

Secondly, if the learning enquiries prove purposeful, they will offer a practical exemplification of a post-secular parabolic enquiry for advisors, practitioners and curriculum designers to draw upon. Such exemplification would help primary RE teachers in all state schools provide knowledge-rich RE as articulated in Ofsted's RE research review³³ (2021b),

³³ In contributing to 'substantive', 'disciplinary' and 'personal' knowledge; considered further in Chapter Four, Section 4.3.2.

as well as helping church school teachers develop pupils' religious literacy more efficaciously in line with the *Statement of Entitlement* (CEEQ, 2019) and *SIAMS Framework* (CEEQ, 2023). This would help bridge the present and infuriating gap between the pedagogical manifestos of educationalists, commissions and subject associations which declare the importance of understanding the diversity of religion and belief in contemporary society, whilst presenting little practical guidance or curriculum ideas to support classroom practitioners. Offering a practical exemplification, along with its rationale and setting in research, makes available an UKS2 enquiry for RE teachers to use which can stimulate practitioner reflection upon how the parables have or could be enquired into within their settings. Furthermore, the enquiry could be adapted and amended for different classes and age-phases, and applied to wider textual enquiry in RE.

Thirdly, this research considers the implications of a post-secular perception of the child on the pedagogies employed in the primary RE classroom. The curated enquiries will employ approaches which afford pupils greater agency in their learning. I will consider whether these learning activities help students construct an informed view on the 'what' and 'why' of parabolic interpretation, or whether the activities are too 'open' with little clarity. Research such as this has not been undertaken before, and will yield fresh insights into how pupils engage with parables and their variant readings.

Finally, I hope that this research challenges the reductionist use of parables in RE. Too prevalent are narrow enquiries which are scaffolded towards a certain way of engaging with and reading these texts. Inherent within these enquiries are notions of 'correct' and 'incorrect' readings which are pre-determined by the subjectivity of the curriculum designer

and/or practitioner. I hope this research thesis will make a compelling case for the value of a deeper and broader encounter between pupils and parables in primary RE. I am excited about the potential of this research to radically reorient the voice and agency of pupils within our RE classrooms, and to encourage practitioners, advisers and curriculum designers to be more attentive towards the ways pupils construct knowledge and meaning through engaging with a diverse array of interpretations.

1.4 Outline of the thesis

To answer my RQs, I begin with a critical literature review into post-secular society and the child respectively (Chapters Two and Three). My assertions arising from my engagement with such literature will then inform my envisioning of post-secular RE (Chapter Four); this conception holds enquiry into diversity, and pupil agency, as essential components of high-quality RE. To develop a post-secular parabolic enquiry, I next review interpretive debates within parabolic scholarship before considering how parables have been enquired into and ‘taught’ in primary RE since 1988 (Chapter Five). Arguing that current curriculum exemplifications do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to engage with hermeneutical questions arising from parabolic scholarship, I detail my design of two theory-informed parabolic enquiries which do so (Chapter Six) and the research method pertaining to their trialling (Chapter Seven). The effectiveness of these learning enquiries are then considered through thematic analysis (Chapters Eight and Nine) before closing with some concluding observations and recommendations (Chapter Ten).

CHAPTER TWO

2 POST-SECULAR SOCIETY

‘[I]t’s quite interesting to see how [other interpreters] think...It just made me really think about the different times, the different cultures, the different backgrounds and experiences that lead up to similarities, differences...and unique people thinking different things’ (Pupil CA)³⁴

2.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a critical engagement with Western literature on ‘post-secular’ society in order to identify present issues and future opportunities for how RE is theorised as a subject area and practised within classroom settings. Following a literature review on ‘post-secular’ society (Section 2.2), I will examine research on the socio-cultural reality of religion and belief to arrive at a working definition of post-secular (non-) religiosity (Section 2.3). The views of Habermas and his notion of ‘epistemic ability’ will then be considered (Section 2.4), before contemplating how the RE community’s recent deliberations on ‘worldviews’ accords with my argument that the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of diversity needs greater attention within the subject (Section 2.5). My conclusion will re-iterate the call for RE to more purposefully allow pupils to understand the complex and diverse landscape of contemporary religion and belief. Such an educational endeavour requires clear theorising, associated pedagogical deliberations and quality practical exemplification – all of which are crucially needed, yet sparse, in the RE community (particularly in primary). This chapter constitutes a significant step in enabling me to conceptualise a post-secular RE (Chapter Four) from which I will design and trial two post-secular parabolic enquiries (Chapters Five through Nine). Such

³⁴ Focus Group C1, lines 666-667, 677-679, 683, Appendix Twenty-Seven.

research offers a vital contribution to scholarship and practice in RE, presenting a theoretical framework and related curriculum materials which help pupils more efficaciously engage with the diversity of religion and belief. As Pupil CA states above, it is important to provide students with curricular opportunities which help them recognise reasons why ‘unique people’ think ‘different things’.³⁵

2.2 What is a ‘post-secular’ society?

The twenty-first century has seen a burgeoning awareness amongst social scientists that the secularization theory, which predicted that modernity would bring the end of religion in governance and social life, has not come to fruition (Francis and Knott, 2011; Berger, 2014; Fordahl, 2017). Rather than witnessing a ‘zero-sum game between the ‘religious’ and the ‘secular’ (Graham, 2013, p. 62), religious belief and practice remains prevalent and visible; it has not met its ultimate decline as societies modernise and embrace ‘secular discourse’ (Berger, 2014). In fact, it appears that ‘modern societies are not becoming straightforwardly secular and that religion is playing a significant and ever-changing role in public life’ (Berg-Sørensen, 2013, p. 1). Mindful of this, substantial scholarly attention has turned towards understanding the nature and role of religion and belief in contemporary British society and beyond (for instance: Woodhead and Catto, 2012; AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Research Programme, 2015 [2007-2013]; Guesnet et al., 2017). Some within the RE community have started to engage with such research in deliberating the move to a ‘religion and worldviews’ curriculum (Cooling et al., 2020; Flanagan, 2020b; Hutchings et al., 2021).³⁶ I contend that

³⁵ Focus Group C1, line 683, Appendix Twenty-Seven.

³⁶ Considered in Section 2.5.

understanding – and subsequently (re)presenting to pupils – the *actual* landscape of religion and belief in society is crucial to help pupils flourish within the diverse world they are part (Dinham, 2021).

Emerging within such sociological literature is the notion of a ‘post-secular’ society, particularly in reference to European countries.³⁷ Although the term is seen sporadically within publications during the twentieth century (Greeley, 1966; Neuhaus, 1982; Tschannen, 1992), it is from the late 1990s that the post-secular has received ‘extensive interest’ (Beckford, 2012, p. 2). In reviewing this post-secular literature, Beckford (2012, p. 2) notes how the concept ‘quickly acquired diverse and divergent meanings’. Beckford categorises the use of the term within six broad, and often overlapping, positions within the literature, shown in Table 2.1.

³⁷ Much literature refers to post-secularism as a European phenomenon, where religious affiliation has decreased significantly since World War II (Casanova, 2006; Boeve, 2008; Habermas, 2008; Ziebertz and Riegel, 2010; Francis and Knott, 2011; Schneider, 2013). Habermas (2008) also includes Australia, Canada and New Zealand within this designation.

Positions within 'post-secular' literature	A synopsis of each position	Key Theorists
Group 1: Secularization Deniers and Doubters	The secularization thesis was an incorrect and defective assessment of society. The notion of a 'post-secular' society would allow us to more correctly recognise, explore and cultivate modern and 'new forms of religiosity' (p. 3).	(Sievernich, 2003; Jacobsen and Jacobsen, 2008; Morozov, 2008)
Group 2: Building on the Secular	Acknowledging the assumptions and errors of the secularization thesis, we can purposefully revise our sociological enquiries to contemplate the place, and nature, of religion and belief in contemporary society.	(King, 2003; Harrington, 2007; Boeve, 2008; Knott, 2010)
Group 3: Reenchantment of Culture	Artistic and creative sensibilities, expressed through mediums such as novels and films, are 'moving away from secular themes' (p. 6) to explore religion and religious themes.	(McLure, 2007; Bradley et al., 2010; Huggan, 2010)
Group 4: Public Resurgence of Religion	Contrary to the narrative of secularization, religion has re-emerged in the public sphere with an increased profile and influence.	(Bosetti and Eder, 2006; Beaumont, 2010; Crockett, 2010)
Group 5: Politics, Philosophy, and Theology	Primarily associated with the views of Habermas (2006; 2008), 'post-secular societies', which have seen the re-emergence of religion in the public sphere, should reconsider how questions of 'shared citizenship and cultural difference' (Habermas, 2008, p. 9) are approached. In particular, religious and non-religious voices should have equal place within public discourse.	(Habermas, 2006; 2008)
Group 6: A Plague on All Your Houses	Notions of 'post-secularism' are spurious, unfounded and should be dismissed.	(Dalferth, 2010; Kong, 2010; Smith and Whistler, 2010)

Table 2.1: an overview of Beckford's (2012) six positions emerging from literature on 'post-secularism'

The 'post-secular' is a contested notion. In analysing and synthesising the literature, including that published after Beckford's review,³⁸ I have identified a number of key questions, positions and disagreements which have informed my own position on the concept:

- Does the post-secular present a 'revision' or an 'abandonment' of the secularization thesis? And are scholarly presentations based on the *empirical reality* of contemporary religion, belief and attitudes in European societies and others (Ziebertz and Riegel, 2010; Wexler and Hotam, 2015) or its *perceived characteristics* (Lahav, 2015)?

³⁸ Since Beckford's overview, ruminations of the post-secular have emerged across a wider range of disciplinary fields, including: art (Arad, 2022), education (Lewin, 2017a; Casson and Cooling, 2020; Rissanen, 2020), law (Lombaard et al., 2019), literary criticism (Sutton, 2017), social care (Furness et al., 2013), sociolinguistics (Lytra, 2020), tourism (Nilsson and Tesfahuney, 2016), teacher professionalism (Bryan, 2012) and urban geography (Lynch, 2016). Such attention has been attributed to the popularisation of the term by Habermas (Furani, 2015; Lombaard et al., 2019). Interest remains most acute within the disciplines of theology, sociology and religious studies.

- Is the 'post-secular' a proposed normative concept, postulating how diverse and pluralistic societies *should* be conceived (with related implications for governance and citizens) (Casanova, 2006; Habermas, 2008)? Or does it simply describe the renewed interest in/influence of religion and belief within political and popular ruminations (McLure, 2007; Berg-Sørensen, 2013)?
- Perhaps the term refers to the 'scholarly turn' towards religion and belief in academia (Wexler and Hotam, 2015, p. 7; Fordahl, 2017), evolving as a new paradigm in 'critical and social scientific theories of religion' (Fordahl, 2017, p. 559). Such a paradigm aims at understanding the diverse and complex ways in which religiosity and non-religiosity is understood, lived and embodied (Wexler and Hotam, 2015; Fordahl, 2017).

Whilst many deliberations on the 'post-secular' often constitute a cocktail of stances to these questions, there is a clear division between two positions. For some, the 'post-secular' refers to the return of religion and religiosity into social and political spheres considered progressively 'secular' by advocates of the secularization thesis (Gorski et al., 2012; Hotam and Wexler, 2013; Watson, 2013; Luby, 2019). For others, the notion best describes a revision of the secularization thesis, in an acknowledgement that religion was ever-present and never really left (Francis and Knott, 2011; Woodhead, 2012a; Davie, 2017; Lewin, 2017b). At the heart of this discord is whether the post-secular refers to some new happening, or if it constitutes a new assessment of what was present all along (Harrington, 2007; Corrigan, 2015; Davie, 2017).³⁹ Personally, I hold a both/and position. What I consider most important is that the concept of the post-secular can help us more efficaciously understand the socio-cultural reality of contemporary religion and belief (Wexler and Hotam, 2015; Fordahl, 2017) and, in so doing, reassess the purpose and provision of RE (Chapters Four through Six). Indeed, understanding the actual – rather than the imagined (Dinham and Shaw, 2020) – landscape of religion and belief in society has implications for

³⁹ Some, including Beckford himself, have criticised use of the notion as over-stating, or over-postulating, societal shifts (Beckford, 2012; Köhrsen, 2012). Jensen (2020, p. 190) perceives no utility in using the 'post-secular' as 'a framework for re-thinking about RE'. This thesis strives to demonstrate the opposite, that there is merit in postulating and practising post-secular RE.

governments, citizens and educators.⁴⁰ I will now consider the religion and belief landscape further.

2.3 Diversity of religion and belief

In this section, I explore how the concept of the post-secular helps us to understand the diversity of the religion and belief landscape in Britain and other nations.⁴¹ After critically considering a number of key aspects, I conclude this section by offering my view on what characterises post-secular religiosity.

2.3.1 Lived religion: a challenge to the religious/secular dichotomy

The concept of the post-secular has prompted a number of academics outside of the RE community to investigate the socio-cultural reality of religion and belief in ‘post-secular societies’ (Boeve, 2008; Knott, 2010; Francis and Knott, 2011; Lahav, 2015). A predominant thread within such literature is that the dichotomy drawn by the secularization thesis between ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ is erroneous.⁴² As Francis and Knott elucidate:

⁴⁰ These two positions resonate with, and link, the second (‘Building on the Secular’) and fifth (‘Politics, Philosophy, and Theology’) groups identified by Beckford (2012) respectively (Table 2.1).

⁴¹ See Footnote 37, p. 22.

⁴² Although the term ‘secular’ emerged within Western medieval Christianity to distinguish between vocations in the church (religious) and those outside (secular), the term is now broadly used to delineate between ‘religious institutions, their traditions, beliefs and practices, and those who to a greater or lesser extent adhere to them, and ‘secular’ as all that falls outside this definition’ (Francis and Knott, 2011, pp. 2-3). ‘Secular’ is frequently used to describe spheres such as law, politics and public life, which are often considered to be ‘distinct’ and ‘independent’ from religion and religious spheres, as well as those who are non-religious (Berg-Sørensen, 2013, p. 1; McDougall, 2019). Within this thesis, the use of the term ‘secular’ refers primarily to the latter understanding.

In contemporary accounts of 'religion', especially within discussions of the secularization thesis, the concepts of 'religion' and 'secular' are assumed to be oppositional epistemological categories separated by an impermeable boundary. Institutions, values, ideas, places and people are assumed to fall into either one or the other category – church and state; faith and reason; belief and science. (Francis and Knott, 2011, p. 2)

Investigating religion and belief in the British context, Woodhead (2013; 2016a; 2017) has become a vocal critic of the religious/secular dichotomy and related categorizations such as those identified by Francis and Knott (2011). For her, observations of contemporary religiosity and non-religiosity do not present a clear and simple division between those who live in either a religious or a secular manner; rather, they expose a fuzzy, super-diverse picture. Individuals may state that they are Christian, Jewish, Muslim, of no religion etc. in a survey, yet 'defy the norms' of what such adherents are supposedly meant to believe and act – '[t]hey may believe in God, but say they are not religious; they may say they are Catholic but not believe in God; they may say they are Jewish but not influenced by religion – and so on' (Woodhead, 2016a, p. 43). Woodhead (2013, p. 139) argues that delineating between the 'false alternatives' of 'religious' and 'secular' does not do 'justice to the contemporary situation'. We need to move beyond these 'mutually exclusive' options in order to better understand the reality of lived belief (Woodhead, 2013, p. 150). Woodhead and her research has traversed into the world of RE, stimulating reflection upon the representation of religion and belief in the classroom (for instance: CoRE, 2018; Cooling et al., 2020; Dinham, 2021). Her insights into societal variance make her a key conversation partner in exploring my RQs on interpretive diversity.

It is here that Boeve (2012) offers a pertinent rumination for my developing thought. In agreement that the stark binary between 'religious' and 'secular' is specious⁴³, Boeve asserts that we should see the present religion and belief landscape as a:

plural field of a multitude of positions, which are related to each other, which possibly influence each other, learn from each other, question each other, conflict, even repudiate and fight. (Boeve, 2012, p. 145)

Within such plurality, previously espoused conceptions of 'religious' and 'secular' are blurred as they engage and entangle within lived (non-) religiosities (Martin and Catto, 2012).

Others further emphasise the intricate relationship between religiosities and secularities.⁴⁴ For Kaufmann (2009, pp. 68-69), not only does 'post-secularism' deepen 'our awareness of the ideological, cultural, and historical valences' of the terms 'religious' and 'secular', it also aids a transition from 'too stark a binary opposition...towards models based on co-existence and co-creation'. Indeed, religiosities and secularities within 'post-secular' societies have been highlighted elsewhere as: 'relational, multiple and complex' (Nilsson and Tesfahuney, 2016; Taves, 2018); 'dialectical' and 'negotiated', not necessarily in opposition (Ratti, 2013, p. 16; Knott, 2014, p. 125) and as exerting 'a mutual influence on one another in a multidimensional manner' (Lahav, 2015, p. 356). As Graham aptly states:

⁴³ That is, we can no longer position life stances 'on a continuum between 'practising Christian' and 'convinced atheist'' (Boeve, 2012, p. 145).

⁴⁴ Secularities refers to the myriad of expressions which are not underpinned by religion (Casanova, 2011; Burchardt and Wohlrab-Sahr, 2013).

[w]e are...witnessing fluid and shifting boundaries between categories of belief and non-belief...It seems that the current situation, particularly in the West, is one of simultaneous religious decline, mutation and resurgence. (Graham, 2013, p. 3)

These ruminations contribute significantly to our understanding of lived belief and practice. Certainly, they require the RE community to critically reflect on how to best (re)present lived religion and belief in the RE curriculum so that pupils progressively, and accurately, understand the belief landscape they are a part.

2.3.2 A new relationship between 'religion' and 'secular'

It is clear that binary positions between 'religious' and 'secular' are increasingly perceived as specious. For me, a question emerges: *how can we better understand the intricate relationship between 'religion' and 'secular' to make sense of lived (non-) religiosities in society?* Berger (2014), a former advocate of the secularization thesis, presents an interesting way forward. He suggests that the relationship between 'religion' and 'secular' would be better described as 'both/and' rather than 'either/or'. He claims that individuals embrace religious and secular discourse, actions etc. at different times, places and contexts. In his view, one might drive a car or perform an operation without reference to religion (that is, adopting a secular mindset), whilst their religiosity would come to the fore when receiving mid-week communion. Finding this suggestion convincing at first, I now agree with Ammerman (2014) that this 'code-switching' between a religious or secular mindset is a distinction not always held by individuals. In exploring 'lived religion' and 'the stories people tell' about themselves, Ammerman identifies how individuals often weave layers of spirituality into the fabric of everyday life. In many cases, locations, events or encounters

are perceived as religious and secular simultaneously *as multiple narratives* – including personal and institutional – and *metanarratives* interlink. Ammerman (2014, pp. 102, 107) states that this can be seen when a Muslim woman wears a hijab under laboratory goggles, or when a surgeon prays that God might guide their hands.

Taves (2018) shares a similar view to Ammerman (2014), yet purposefully moves the conversation forward through contemplating the experiences of those who consider themselves non-religious. Taves employs the term ‘lived meaning’ to inclusively describe how we as individuals – whether self-labelled as religious, non-religious or other – construct and apply our ‘global meaning system’⁴⁵ within the myriad of contextual encounters and experiences we face. Within a pluralistic society, one’s ‘system’ emerges through an engagement with, and dynamic interplay between, religious and secular viewpoints. Whether situations are perceived as ‘traumatic’ or ‘ecstatic’, ‘mundane’ or ‘highly significant’, ‘ordinary’ or ‘extra-ordinary’, Taves (2018, p. 18) holds we create meaning through navigating our ‘social relations’ and the ‘normative practices’ of public institutions we may be a part (work, school etc.). Drawing attention to the formation of positionality through everyday experiences and networks is valuable in understanding the diversity of positionalities in society.

⁴⁵ Taves (2018) holds that an individuals’ ‘global meaning system’ is formed of core beliefs pertaining to six aspects: ‘ultimate reality’, origins, knowledge, human nature, the purpose of life and purposeful living.

2.3.3 Multiple Positionalities

In challenging the false dichotomy between ‘religion’ and ‘secular’, Berger, Ammerman and Taves make fruitful contributions towards helping us make sense of lived (non-) religiosities in society. Indeed, in identifying the intricate and negotiated relationship between the ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ in individual’s ‘global meaning systems’, an understanding of society emerges in which the complexity, diversity and multiplicity of positionalities are acknowledged. I wish to further explore what has led to the heterogeneity of positionalities in contemporary post-secular societies such as Britain; what lies behind ‘simultaneous religious decline, mutation and resurgence’ (Graham, 2013, p. 3)? The analysis of social scientists draws attention to two factors: a ‘qualitative transformation’ of religiosity (Turner, 2012, p. 143) and a personal quest for meaning. Engaging with this research is important for high-quality RE; my analysis below contributes to the growing problematisation of inaccurate and monolithic presentations of religion and belief found in too many classrooms (e.g. CoRE, 2018; Holt, 2022)⁴⁶. Further understanding the factors which have led to kaleidoscopic positionalities in society holds great potential in helping practitioners and pupils make sense of lived religion and belief. These factors are now contemplated.

⁴⁶ Considered in Section 2.5 and Chapter Five, Section 5.6.

2.3.3.1 Religion in decline?

Prominent within such analyses of the contemporary religion and belief landscape in the West is the observation that institutional religion is in decline (Giordan and Pace, 2012; Woodhead, 2017). An increasing number of people are distancing themselves from organised religious groups, in part due to the perception that they expound rigid truth claims in an expectation of adherence and acceptance (Beckford, 2012; Giordan and Pace, 2012). This decline has been described not as a 'quantitative erosion' of religiosity per se, but as a 'qualitative transformation' (Turner, 2012, p. 143).

The nature of this 'qualitative transformation' has received much scholarly analysis and speculation. For many (Giordan and Pace, 2012; Radford, 2012; Jaco, 2014; Lahav, 2015; Lytra, 2020), what most characterises religiosity in contemporary society is the priority placed on subjective inner truth over the truth claims espoused by religious institutions. As Giordan and Pace elucidate:

objective truth, so dear to institutions, especially religious ones, gives way to subjective authenticity, which becomes the yard-stick to measure the vital world in which the subject lives. (Giordan and Pace, 2012, p. 2)

Such a view resonates with that of Jaco (2014, p. 2), who contends that modernity has seen a 'hermeneutic of trust' replaced with a 'hermeneutic of suspicion'. As the authority of religious institutions are being challenged, 'human experience' is increasingly regarded as a key principle upon which to construct a belief system and life-stance (Lahav, 2015, p. 358).

2.3.3.2 Personal quest for meaning

Gräb (2010) contends that the qualitative shift in lived religiosities within societies such as Britain centres upon personal quests for meaning. In a 'post-secular' society, where many voices and truth claims are shared in the public square,⁴⁷ people are forming their own spiritual identities. In so doing, 'various syncretisms' (Gräb, 2010, p. 121) are appearing in which individuals construct a bespoke spirituality which provides a meaningful framework for their experiences and preferences (Vattimo and Girard, 2006; Turner, 2012). Beckford (1992; 2004) employs the term 'pick and mix' to describe how individuals select appealing items within the 'supermarket of faith' to amalgamate an individual and social identity which suits their commitment and interests. Such selection may include aspects from institutional or organised religious groups, but equally might not (see also Boeve, 2008). Although Woodhead (2016a) rightly acknowledges the boundary of such an analogy,⁴⁸ a growing number of scholars observe how individuals assemble an intensely personal spirituality from their subjective experiences, networks and the truth claims they encounter (Hervieu-Léger, 1999; Turner, 2012; Middleton and Yarwood, 2013; Lynch, 2016; Nilsson and Tesfahuney, 2016). This agentic assemblage has been termed 'bricolage' – the process of consciously (and subconsciously) constructing a bespoke (and often unsystematic) spiritual identity which allows one to make sense of their experiences (Hervieu-Léger, 1999; Oswell, 2013).

⁴⁷ Due, in part, to globalisation and the advent of social media (Turner, 2012).

⁴⁸ It is not a free and equal offer for all; individuals are limited in what they can 'pick and mix' through the truth claims they have encountered, restricted by the 'constraints of ethnicity, class, education, and the knowledge and networks to which they give access' (Woodhead, 2016a, p. 45).

2.3.4 What characterises post-secular religiosity?

So how might we describe and characterise post-secular religiosity? In charting some key Western literature, I contend that the challenge to the secularization thesis' specious dichotomy between 'religious' and 'secular' has allowed sociologists to closely scrutinise the socio-cultural reality of religion and belief in societies such as Britain. Such explorations have exposed the complexity, diversity and kaleidoscopic character of lived religiosities. Rather than selecting what was considered to be an 'off-the-shelf' religious or secular life-stance (Woodhead, 2013), individuals are curating a tailored identity through negotiating their subjective experiences, the myriad of truth claims they encounter and their relational networks (Bryan, 2012; Lynch, 2016; Golo et al., 2019). For some, the tenets and practices of religious institutions may contribute to this identity formation, but these are often selectively chosen to suit one's self (Boeve, 2008; Lytra, 2020). As a result of these self-constructions, 'a plurality of truths' exist (Jaco, 2014, p. 2). It is important to note that such plurality and identity formation also applies to those who would describe themselves as following no religion. Many sociologists – including Lee (2015), Woodhead (2013; 2016b), Taves (2018) and Bullivant et al. (2019) – are beginning to discover the ways in which many of an atheistic persuasion are forming their own multi-faceted identities to make sense of significant life questions and their existence. Within post-secular societies, it is therefore appropriate to acknowledge the presence of diverse *religiosities* and *secularities*.

For the purposes of this thesis, a working definition of 'post-secular (non-) religiosity' is offered: *in an acknowledgement that religious/secular binaries proffered by the secularization thesis are specious, post-secular (non-) religiosity refers to the constructed*

*and bespoke nature of spirituality, which individuals curate as they negotiate truth claims, personal experiences and their relational networks.*⁴⁹ *This spirituality emerges through a complex interplay between the religious and the secular, leading to a plurality of positionalities in society.*⁵⁰ The presence (and awareness) of such societal diversity raises questions and implications for governance, citizens and, crucially for this research thesis, education. It is such questions that Habermas – who Beckford identifies as the leading proponent of the ‘Politics, Philosophy and Theology’ position on the post-secular (Group 5, Table 2.1) – wrestles with. Habermas’ views are now considered.

2.4 Habermas’ conception of the ‘post-secular’

Although ideas and notions of the ‘post-secular’ were receiving ‘extensive interest’ from the late 1990s (Beckford, 2012, p. 2), Habermas is widely credited with popularising the term within the social sciences and humanities (Beckford, 2012; Fordahl, 2017; Lombaard et al., 2019). For Habermas (2008, p. 17), ‘post-secular societies’ refer to the ‘affluent societies of Europe or countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand where people’s religious ties have steadily or rather quite dramatically lapsed in the post-World War II period’.⁵¹ Yet, in contrast to the secularization narrative that religion would increasingly become irrelevant

⁴⁹ Cush’s (2023, p. 54) reflections calibrate tightly here when she states that identity is formed in ‘a dialogical relationship with...context’.

⁵⁰ I have used the term ‘spirituality’ as an inclusive term which refers to recognising and exploring one’s identity in the world; how one makes sense of and interacts with their environment and experiences (Hay and Nye, 2006; Bellous et al., 2009). The use of the term ‘spiritual’ is also key educationally. Section 78 of the Education Act 2002 stipulates that all maintained schools must promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of all pupils. The case is strongly made by Bill Moore (2023) that these four link; spirituality does not stand separate from the other areas but ties closely to our considerations of the ‘moral’, ‘social’ and ‘cultural’.

⁵¹ As mentioned in Footnote 37, p. 22.

and absent within the public sphere, Habermas (2008, p. 19) posits that these societies are adjusting to the 'continued existence of religious communities in an increasingly secularized environment'. Religion is still present in a significant way, maintaining a 'public influence and relevance' (2008, p. 21).

Habermas holds that this adjustment is evidenced through a 'change of consciousness' of citizens, which has emerged due to the prevalence and increased visibility of religion. Increasing plurality, the burgeoning of social media and internet use, and events such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks have all contributed towards a growing awareness of the sheer diversity of views within these societies, including those of a religious angle. According to Habermas, this shift in societal consciousness leads citizens to ask a pertinent question:

How should we see ourselves as members of a post-secular society and what must we reciprocally expect from one another in order to ensure that in firmly entrenched nation states, social relations remain civil despite the growth of a plurality of cultures and religious worldviews? (Habermas, 2008, p. 21)

At heart, the question is underpinned by the twin issues of 'shared citizenship and cultural difference' (2008, p. 27). Certainly, the freedom of speech allowed within 'post-secular' societies – enhanced by the myriad of technological avenues for self-expression – empowers a plethora of communities and individuals to share, declare and debate their views on societal issues. Religious organisations⁵² are voices amongst many, seeking to 'attain influence on public opinion and will formation by making relevant contributions to key issues' (2008, p. 20). As such, the public arena is replete with a myriad of positionalities and truth claims.

⁵² As are non-religious organisations.

2.4.1 Epistemic Ability

Habermas (2006; 2008) contends that the existence of diverse positionalities, coupled with the prevalence of religiosity (including new, emerging forms), raises implications for societies such as Britain. He criticises the status quo in which religious reasons offered within the public forum require translation to a perceived common secular language, one which is supposedly shared and understood by those not holding a religious outlook. In consequence, this places an 'undue mental and psychological burden' for those who are religious, who constantly have to 'translate' their theological discourse into secular language in an attempt to be understood (2006, p. 9). This contravenes the state's responsibility to ensure that all views are given 'equal voice', which forms 'the very basis of mutual recognition which is constitutive for shared citizenship' (2008, p. 29).

As a corrective, Habermas (2006) declares a need for an 'epistemic ability' of both religious and secular citizens. In other words, both are required to be reflexive upon their own beliefs and discourse, and how it could be understood by others, in order to live cohesively in society with those of different positionalities. Within this, it would also be incumbent upon the non-religious to 'translate' their reasons and language into that which could be understood by those who are religious, rather than assuming there is a common secular language to which all should comply. As Habermas elucidates:

the insight by secular citizens that they live in a post-secular society that is epistemically adjusted to the continued existence of religious communities first requires a change in mentality that is no less cognitively exacting than the adaption of religious awareness to the challenges of an ever more secularized environment. (Habermas, 2006, p. 15)

Habermas regards such a shift as necessary in redressing the asymmetrical burden shouldered by those who are religious, promoting the legitimacy 'of insight coming from people within religious traditions' (McDougall, 2019, p. 333). No longer is it acceptable to assume that public discourse should be 'framed by reason', excluding the theological (Bowie, 2012, p. 197; Dillon, 2012).

2.4.2 Receptions of Habermas

The reception of Habermas' post-secular overture has been mixed. Whilst some have received his proposals warmly and further teased out their implications (for instance, Ferrara, 2009; Bowie, 2012; Rissanen, 2020; Dinham, 2021),⁵³ there are many who have taken his views to task (Harrington, 2007; Toft et al., 2011; Beckford, 2012; Dillon, 2012; Ghatak and Abel, 2013; Martin, 2014; Corrigan, 2015; Winandy, 2015).⁵⁴ Acknowledging these concerns and holding them unwarranted in my subsequent appraisals of Habermas' views (2006; 2008), I do share the reservation of Toft et al. (2011) and Dillon (2012) that Habermas is inattentive to the complexity of contemporary (non-) religiosity. Habermas portrays the view that individuals are either 'religious' or 'secular', a dichotomy previously identified as increasingly untenable following research into lived (non-) religiosities (Ammerman, 2014; Berger, 2014; Taves, 2018). Consequently, his 'descriptive account'

⁵³ Indeed, Habermas' declarations that the religious and the secular should have space for equal and productive discourse have informed many governments' decisions following the 9/11 attacks to aide dialogue with those of a religious angle (Gardels, 2008; McGhee, 2013).

⁵⁴ Denigrations of Habermas' position focus upon: a concern that his view of religion is functional and reductionist (Harrington, 2007; Ghatak and Abel, 2013); his exclusion of 'fundamentalists' to shared public discourse (Beckford, 2012); a lack of clarity with regards to what the 'return of religion' signifies and his empirical basis for such an assertion (Beckford, 2012; Corrigan, 2015), and the view that all public discourse should remain secular (Rawls, 1997).

(2008, pp. 19-21) of post-secular societies is found wanting; the heterogeneity of societies such as Britain is not adequately appreciated.

This criticism aside, I hold Habermas' call for citizens to have an epistemic ability valuable, albeit with revisions in the light of post-secular (non-) religiosity. With the plurality of positionalities present across British society – including those of a religious angle – societal cohesion is enhanced if individuals are reflexive upon their beliefs and discourse in order to engage dialogically with others. Epistemic ability would be further enriched by an understanding that we have all constructed our unique spiritual identity through our life encounters (Bryan, 2012; Woodhead, 2016a; Golo et al., 2019). A citizenry who are cognizant of different views in society, and recognise why such diversity exists, is imperative in attaining a balance between 'shared citizenship and cultural difference' that Habermas (2008, p. 9) argues so passionately for. Education has a key part to play here. With purposeful intentionality, schools can promote and develop such an 'inclusive citizenship' (Rissanen, 2020, p. 147) through their provision – powerfully so in the crucible of the RE classroom. The considerations above are crucial in informing the path I am taking in this research. My understanding of the 'post-secular' will animate the conceptualising (Chapter Four) and enacting (Chapters Five to Nine) of a post-secular RE which is well-calibrated to develop pupils' epistemic ability as knowledgeable, reflexive citizens within a pluralistic public space. An application of the post-secular to RE in this manner has not been undertaken before; my hope is that doing so in this research thesis will make a positive (and much needed) contribution to the RE community's thinking around knowledge-rich RE.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ As articulated by Ofsted (2021) – considered in Chapter Four, Section 4.3.2.

2.4.3 Epistemic ability: a working definition

Before conceptualising and enacting post-secular RE in Chapters Four through Nine, it is important to offer my own working definition of the term *epistemic ability*. *Epistemic ability refers to the capability of individuals to understand, appreciate, appraise and co-exist harmoniously with others, aided through reflexivity upon one's own positionality and how this can be brought into shared discourse. Such an ability requires an understanding of the complex and diverse nature of post-secular (non-) religiosities, and the plurality of positionalities present in twenty-first century Britain.*

2.5 A new direction for RE? The 'worldviews' paradigm

Through an engagement with Habermas' view of 'post-secular' societies, a working definition of epistemic ability has been offered. Of course, to proceed with the view that RE can contribute significantly to pupils' epistemic ability requires that a purposeful question is considered: *what impact would such an aim have on how RE is currently theorised and practised?* Certainly, taking stock of the complexity and diversity of lived (non-) religiosities implicates curriculum content, understandings of progression, pedagogies, the representation of religion and belief, practitioner subject knowledge and more besides. Key also is the question of how to help primary pupils recognise, and be reflexive upon, their own positionality and bring this thinking to enrich the reasoning taking place in the RE classroom. Chapters Four and Five will consider implications as it pertains to parabolic enquiry. In the final part of Chapter Two, I critically consider a potential paradigm shift

within the RE community which may be useful in thinking about the development of epistemic ability – the concept of ‘worldviews’.

2.5.1 The concept of ‘worldviews’

The concept of worldviews has dominated discussions within the RE community since 2018 (Chater, 2020; Parker, 2022). The catalyst for these intense deliberations was the publication of the CoRE’s final report, *Religion and Worldviews: The Way Forward* (2018). Following two years of evidence gathering from various stakeholders within RE, the report proffered eleven recommendations which it declared would underpin and support a ‘new vision’ for the subject, one which all pupils are entitled to receive. Central to these recommendations was the call that the subject should be reframed and renamed, shedding ‘religious education’ to become ‘Religion and Worldviews’.

The concept of worldview, which punctuates the CoRE report, is defined in the following manner:

A worldview is a person’s way of understanding, experiencing and responding to the world. It can be described as a philosophy of life or an approach to life. This includes how a person understands the nature of reality and their own place in the world. A person’s worldview is likely to influence and be influenced by their beliefs, values, behaviours, experiences, identities and commitments. (CoRE, 2018, p. 4)

According to the commissioners, a ‘shift in language from ‘religion’ to ‘worldview’ signifies the greater attention that needs to be paid to individual lived experience, the complex, plural and diverse nature of worldviews at both institutional and individual levels’ (2018, p.

30). The report argues that RE curricula have been inattentive to such diversity, and thus have inadequately prepared pupils to understand and navigate the modern world. The panacea presented by the report is that pupils are entitled to receive, within their educational experience, rich opportunities to explore worldviews: the concept of, examples of organised views of the world, and how worldviews are embodied and expressed by individuals and communities at different times and places. Through such exploration, the report claims that pupils would also develop, and become reflexive upon, their own worldview. Put more explicitly:

Through understanding how worldviews are formed and expressed at both individual and communal levels, the ways in which they have changed over time, and their influence on the actions of individuals, groups and institutions, young people come to a more refined understanding of their own worldview – whatever this happens to be – as well as those of others. (CoRE, 2018, p. 5)

The *Commission's* conception of worldview accords with my definition of post-secular (non-) religiosity; individuals and communities curate bespoke spiritualities as they negotiate truth claims, personal experiences and their relational networks.⁵⁶ I therefore share a concern with the CoRE report that, if the RE community is serious about enabling pupils to flourish within contemporary society, their educational experience should help them understand the socio-cultural reality of belief and practice emerging through

⁵⁶ I am also pleased that the understanding of worldview in CoRE stresses that a person's positionality can and does change through interaction with their environment as identified through post-secular literature (Hervieu-Léger, 1999; Turner, 2012; Middleton and Yarwood, 2013; Lynch, 2016; Nilsson and Tesfahuney, 2016); this avoids a Geertzian (1957) understanding of worldviews as providing a fixed and contained lens through which we view and interact with the world. Care needs to be taken so that practitioners on the chalkface do not employ the term curricularly using this latter view.

bricolage.⁵⁷ This entails that monolithic presentations of religion and belief are challenged as misleading. Moreover, I contend that pupils' epistemic ability would be enhanced through reflecting on how their own (and others') worldview 'is likely to influence and be influenced by their beliefs, values, behaviours, experiences, identities and commitments' (2018, p. 4). To achieve this, it is incumbent upon the RE community to provide structured curricular opportunities which enable pupils to: become aware that they have lens through which they view the world; consider how their worldview has emerged (often agentively through making sense of encounters, experiences and relational networks), and to consider the impact of their worldview upon how they perceive and act within the world. Such steps would contribute significantly to pupils' ability to understand the complex and diverse nature of post-secular (non-) religiosities in contemporary society, as well as their capability to be reflexive on their own views and how it can be brought into dialogue with others (epistemic ability).

2.5.2 Receptions of 'worldviews' within the RE community

Scholarly and practitioner ruminations on the *Commission's* proposals swiftly followed its publication, encompassing positive appraisals of what a 'worldview' paradigm might mean for curriculum aims and content (Freathy and John, 2019; Bowie, 2020b; Chater, 2020; Cooling, 2020; Cooling et al., 2020; Shaw, 2020), teaching and learning (Flanagan, 2020a; Larkin et al., 2020) and teacher reflexivity/positionality (Flanagan, 2019; Missous, 2020). Amongst these ruminations also exist deep concerns pertaining to a lack of conceptual

⁵⁷ Although many curriculum subjects can contribute towards this understanding, I agree that this 'study takes place mainly through RE' (CoRE, 2018, p. 5).

clarity around ‘worldviews’ (Hutchings et al., 2021), insufficient attention to pedagogy within the CoRE report (Cooling et al., 2020; Hutchings et al., 2021; Barnes, 2022) and whether the concept of ‘worldview’ is appropriate or accurate at all (Moulin-Stožek, 2020; Barnes, 2022). Two particularly fierce castigations hold that the concept of ‘worldviews’ dilutes the prospect of a knowledge-rich subject (Smith, 2020) or denotes nothing more than a ‘retreat into the subjective’ (Lundie, 2020). Whilst holding my own reservations about the concept of worldview – primarily on the pedagogical challenge this presents in primary settings, with limited curriculum time and class teachers who are in the main non-specialists⁵⁸ – I think it marks a positive step in placing the socio-cultural reality of religion and belief (with all its complexity and diversity) to the forefront of curriculum thinking.⁵⁹ The appropriate next-step for the RE community is to address the unresolved questions regarding the ‘what’, ‘how’, ‘where’ and ‘when’ of the teaching of worldviews in the classroom, alongside the creation of practical exemplifications to support practitioners. This research makes a valuable and much-needed contribution here.

2.5.3 Worldviews and textual enquiry

The analysis thus far has drawn attention to how ruminations on the post-secular has allowed the complex and diverse nature of (non-) religiosities within contemporary society to be more clearly understood. I have argued that both the presence and awareness of the

⁵⁸ I also worry that the debated nature of worldviews at the time of writing means that there is little consistency theoretically or practically. This pertains to both the academic world looking into RE and the RE community itself, which in turn is leading to teacher confusion.

⁵⁹ Significantly, Ofsted’s (2021b) view of knowledge-rich RE has been shaped by CoRE’s proposals. In Chapter Four (Section 4.3.2), I will explicate how my working definition of epistemic ability resonates well with Ofsted’s conception of high-quality RE.

diverse religion and belief landscape raises pertinent questions for the RE community. In particular, the question of '*How we can develop pupils' epistemic ability?*' leads to critical reflections on how successfully we are currently enabling pupils to understand the 'what' and the 'why' of diversity with regards to matters of religion and belief. As I shall consider in Chapters Four and Five, the RE community still has a way to go.

Whilst curriculum designers and practitioners continue grappling with the theoretical and practical implications of a 'Religion and Worldviews' curriculum for enquiries within RE, I hold that the time is right to look afresh at textual enquiry in a way which brings rich hermeneutical possibilities and questions to the fore. Indeed, this is a vital time for this piece of research. Not only can this work contribute significantly to the RE community's understanding of how pupils *can* engage with interpretive diversity of a parable in the primary school,⁶⁰ it also brings much needed theory-informed practical exemplifications for teachers to do this important work on the chalkface. Teachers and pupils need to be aware that texts can be (and are) interpreted differently and to explore reasons why this might be the case. I agree with Bowie (2020) that drawing on sacred text scholarship in the teaching of texts holds great utility in helping pupils understand how worldviews work – how they are shaped and how they impact one's engagement with a text. Furthermore, curating purposeful enquiries in which pupils can consider *why they interpret the text in the way they do* will support reflexivity on their own positionality and worldview (Thiselton, 2009; Cooling, 2020). It is here that I am in agreement with Larkin et al.:

⁶⁰ As I will make explicit in Chapter Five, RE is haunted by the view that primary pupils are unable to engage meaningfully with the parables (Section 5.6.1).

...that RE should help each pupil bring their own personal worldview to consciousness...Thereby, they will better understand their own interpretation of, and engagement with, RE curriculum content [including texts], and they will be able to engage more deeply and in more genuine dialogue with others. (Larkin et al., 2020, p. 42)

This 'genuine dialogue' encapsulates the heart of epistemic ability. In order to contribute to the RE community's thinking here, I will contemplate what a classroom and curriculum which takes seriously this 'genuine dialogue' might look like in Chapter Four (informed by an exploration, in Chapter Three, of pupils as active agents). I will then explore the utility of parabolic scholarship in allowing pupils to consider the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity of parables in Chapter Five, before curating and trialling theory-informed post-secular parabolic enquiries (Chapters Six through Nine).

2.6 Conclusion

Engaging with a selection of key Western literature on 'post-secular' society within this chapter has provided a necessary foundation from which to address my RQs. I have utilised the post-secular as a purposeful frame to make sense of the religion and belief landscape in Britain, a landscape replete with diversity (Dinham, 2021). A synthesis of sociological research informed my emerging conception of *post-secular (non-) religiosities*: individuals are curating a bespoke spirituality through negotiating truth claims, personal experiences and relational networks. This process of 'bricolage' helps explain the plurality of positionalities existing in contemporary society (Hervieu-Léger, 1999; Oswell, 2013). With this understanding, I then built upon Habermas' (2006) notion of epistemic ability to argue that post-secularism should inform a rationale for RE which enables pupils to be

knowledgeable, reflexive citizens who can flourish within a pluralistic public space. Mindful that a post-secular application to RE in this manner is timely, necessary and underexplored, my developing understanding within this chapter will inform subsequent conceptualising (Chapter Four) and enacting (Chapters Five to Nine) of a post-secular RE. Such research is required to help pupils more efficaciously understand the diverse religion and belief landscape of which they are a part; recent thinking around 'worldviews' in RE has made purposeful strides here, but associated pedagogical thinking remains under-theorised and under-resourced. Before embarking on my post-secular conceptualising and enacting, it is important to first explore pupil agency.

CHAPTER THREE

3 THE POST-SECULAR CHILD

‘I just think like that is **important to ask about what you think**, not just like get straight on to something...’Cos like most of the time you just get [?] straight on with it – do this, do that and like you have to just...get on with it and do, like, what...the teacher thinks...But [in this trial lesson] erm **you actually get like time to think about, and then...you understand it a bit more...**’ (Pupil CD)⁶¹

‘I agree with that a lot...because like **I actually found it really useful that you gave us time to think about what we wanted. Not like just the teach[er] saying, ‘You have to do this’** and then like just think what the teacher would want us to, like, think about. It’s just hard that way’ (Pupil CE)⁶²

3.1 Introduction

Within this research thesis, I am exploring an appropriate post-secular hermeneutic for enquiring into the parables in primary RE. My analytical engagement with existing literature on post-secular society in the previous chapter was a fruitful start to this endeavour. Through engaging with some key scholarly positions, I concluded that an aim of RE should be to develop pupils’ epistemic ability. I drew upon Habermas’ (2006; 2008) view that social cohesion would be enriched if individuals were reflexive upon their own beliefs and discourse in order to engage dialogically with others; I also developed his notion of epistemic ability to be more attentive to the plurality of spiritual identities present in contemporary society through applying my working definition of post-secular (non-) religiosity. I argued that such a move in RE is necessary to allow pupils to more efficaciously *understand, appreciate, appraise and co-exist harmoniously with others* and make sense of

⁶¹ Focus Group C2, lines 505-510, Appendix Twenty-Seven.

⁶² Focus Group C2, lines 514, 526-529, Appendix Twenty-Seven.

the *plurality of positionalities present in twenty-first century Britain*.⁶³ In order to inform the creation of a parabolic enquiry to trial in primary classroom settings, one which aims to develop pupils' epistemic ability through considering the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity (RQi and RQiii), I will next explore pupil agency. Developing my understanding of what agency entails, how pupils exercise it within their learning, and the factors which enable and constrain such agentic action, will support pedagogical and methodological decisions within this empirical research (Chapters Four, Six and Seven).

After charting the shift in perceptions of the child from passive recipients to active agents (Section 3.2), I survey some of the key literature exploring how children agentively construct meaning using the various resources available to them (Section 3.3). Identifying the congruence between the perception of children as agentic bricoleurs and my definition of post-secular (non-) religiosity proffered in Chapter Two, I then contemplate pupil agency within the contextual site of the classroom (Section 3.4). Finally, I relate the discussions of pupil agency within this chapter to Davis' (2014) notion of the post-secular child (Section 3.5). I conclude that a post-secular perception of the child, which acknowledges their agency, lights the way toward a richer vision for RE. Such a vision allows for a 'much more expansive encounter' between pupils and parabolic texts than presently occurs within primary RE, as an acknowledgement of the 'textured processes' of pupil learning coalesces with a recognition of pupils as agents whose voices, experiences and positionalities are taken seriously in the RE classroom (Davis, 2014, p. 21).

⁶³ p. 39.

This chapter marks a significant stage in the development of my thinking as I pursue my RQs. My conclusions contribute towards my forthcoming theorising (Chapter Four) and enacting (Chapters Six through Nine) of a post-secular parabolic enquiry which synthesises epistemic ability, post-secular (non-) religiosity, pupil agency and a post-secular perception of the child.⁶⁴ Such a synthesis has not been undertaken before within scholarship, and brings to the fore important and critical analysis. This move is necessary to redress the shallow parabolic enquiries undertaken in primary RE which grant insufficient attention to *diverse interpretations (and related hermeneutical questions)* and to *pupils as agents* who bring their own views, experiences and positionalities to their engagement with biblical texts. As Pupils CD and CE above show, granting time for students exercise their agency through self-discovery in this manner can enrich their understanding of religion and belief.

3.2 Perceptions of the child: passive recipients or active agents?

The concepts of the ‘child’ and ‘childhood’ are contested within Western European, North American and Australian scholarship, with debates frequently emerging in multi-disciplinary contexts (Ryan, 2008; Adams, 2014). Within these deliberations, the concepts are increasingly viewed less as a ‘natural life-phase’ but as a ‘social and cultural fabrication’ (Davis, 2014, pp. 28-29) which vary ‘across and within cultures over time’ (Adams, 2014, p. 163; see also Strhan et al., 2017). Such a development is useful, drawing attention toward the situated (and subjective) nature of perceptions of the child. Indeed, it supports me as a

⁶⁴ Addressing RQii: How might post-secular conceptions of the child, which stress their agency, affect the pedagogies employed in the classroom?

researcher to acknowledge and critically analyse how shifting conceptions have influenced, and been influenced by, particular visions of an educated citizenry.

Significantly, philosophising over the concept of the child has routinely been appropriated by governments and interested others with an 'idealised' state in mind (Cunningham, 1996). In Britain, at the start of the twentieth century, a Victorian yearning for a population which was simultaneously Christian *and* economically productive led to a perception of children as 'human becomings', with childhood regarded as a 'developmental' stage (Phillips and Alderson, 2002, p. 6; Danby and Farrell, 2004). This view framed 'the child...as an incomplete version of an adult' whose education should inculcate particular beliefs, values, knowledge and skills (Danby and Farrell, 2004, p. 39). These perceptions are evident in the name and aspirations of the subject 'religious instruction' prevalent during the period, replete with hopes that pupils would leave education with sound biblical understanding ready to proclaim Christ crucified (Hertfordshire County Council, 1931; Council of Christian Education, 1934; Middlesbrough Council Education Committee, 1935; Institute of Christian Education, 1945; Cambridgeshire Education Committee, 1949).

To ensure the success of this Christian, economically productive society, the government posed key interventions into education. This 'governmentality', as Rose (1996, p. 2) notes, comprised 'a body of critical reflections on the problems of governing persons that would...satisfy the demands of social order'. New sciences, such as eugenics and psychology, professed new practices that would address problem behaviours in children and produce citizens that were of greater use to societal needs (Cunningham, 1996, p. 165). These sciences and their 'various techniques' were used in order to subjugate and ensure

children were 'sorted, regulated, normalised and made to behave in particular ways' (Foucault, 1977; 1994, p. 88; Allan, 2013, p. 24). Behaviourist educational theories, which aim to direct and manage behaviour through constant feedback, were the norm (Thorndike, 1898; Watson, 1913; Skinner, 1953). Such governmentality, in my view, was problematic; viewing children merely as 'passive recipient[s] of an adult culture' (Hyde et al., 2010, p. 1) did not value pupils as capable human beings in their own right and stymied opportunities for students to exercise their autonomy within their learning. A further consequence of this passive view of children was that they became a 'muted group' (Hardman, 1973; Davis, 2014, p. 19). It has been noted that although there is a plethora of literature *about* children in the early twentieth century, there is a distinct lack of literature *on* or *from* the perspectives of children (Cunningham, 1996, p. 2; Montgomery, 2009, pp. 34-38).

3.2.1 Children as active agents

From the 1950s in particular, changes in parent-child relations, consumer habits, perceptions of children's rights and social and psychological research led to an acknowledgement that children 'are competent interpreters of their everyday worlds' (Danby and Farrell, 2004, p. 35; Cunningham, 1996; Oswell, 2013; Davis, 2014). Consequently, children were increasingly perceived less as 'human becomings' but as 'human beings' in their own right (Adams, 2014, p. 164). This development mirrored the movement in educational theory from behaviourism to constructivism, which recognised that pupils actively construct meaning from their own experiences (Piaget, 1954; Bruner,

1961; Vygotsky, 1978).⁶⁵ The resultant shift in the perception of pupils from passive vessels to competent agents marked a significant and essential development within educational thinking; pupils were increasingly viewed as capable agents whose experience and voice should be valued within the classroom. This direction of travel over the twentieth century, in which perceptions and experiences of children moved from ‘powerlessness’ to agency (Cunningham, 1996, p. 185), is vitally important to continue within contemporary educational endeavours. As an under-theorized and under-researched area – including in RE – my research thesis aims to understand the impact of an enquiry which recognises, and champions, pupils as agentive hermeneuts (Chapters Four, Six, Eight and Nine). Too often, students have been perceived in RE ‘as passive individuals to be instructed, students reacting to a stimulus, or learners to be crammed with ‘religious education knowledge’ (Parker, 2021, p. 278). Theorising and enacting a RE which takes pupil agency seriously makes a much needed contribution to RE scholarship and practice.

Pleasingly, the agency of children has started to receive considerable attention in recent years (Hyde et al., 2010; Ridgely, 2012; Oswell, 2013; Adams, 2014; Gurdal and Sorbring, 2018; Stoecklin and Fattore, 2018; Lawrence, 2019; Kirby, 2020; Stenalt and Lassesen, 2022). A review of this literature brings to the fore numerous understandings of agency, including the capability of children to: make choices and decisions volitionally (Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015; Paganelli, 2017); ‘influence their own learning’ (Hyde et al., 2010, p. 1); interpret their world (Danby and Farrell, 2004) and construct meaning (Fattore et al., 2009;

⁶⁵ These developments in educational thinking, at least in part, informed calls to move away from a subject theorised and practised as ‘religious instruction’ to ‘religious education’ (Commission on Religious Education in Schools, 1970; Schools Council Working Paper 36, 1971; Copley, 2008).

Ridgely, 2012; Adams, 2014; Rappa and Tang, 2017). In categorising these emerging understandings, Clarke et al. (2016, p. 29) usefully identify how the ‘locus of agentive action’ is placed differently within the disciplines of sociology and psychology. Put more explicitly:

The sociological lens conceptualizes agency as a function of social structures within which individuals are embedded, whereas, psychological traditions conceptualize agency as a self-regulatory capacity of an individual. (Clarke et al., 2016, p. 29)

In reality, agency is multi-faceted, accommodating both ‘social and cognitive processes’ (Clarke et al., 2016, p. 29; Rappa and Tang, 2017; Esser, 2018; Häggström, 2022; Stenalt and Lassesen, 2022). Interesting studies are emerging which identify the way in which agency is ‘not simply an individual character trait or activity’ (van Lier, 2008, p. 1) but ‘constrained and enabled by sociocultural practices’ (Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015, p. 4; see also Monk et al., 2013; Deed et al., 2014; Rappa and Tang, 2017; Sorbring and Kuczynski, 2018).

These scholarly works are important for my present research focus;⁶⁶ perceiving pupils as agents (rather than passive recipients), who construct meaning through their experience in the classroom, will inform my view of apposite pedagogies employed within a primary parabolic enquiry aimed at developing pupils’ epistemic ability. What will also emerge as I consider post-secularity and agency (Sections 3.3 – 3.4), the child (Section 3.5), RE (Chapter Four) and parabolic enquiry (Chapters Five and Six) is the reciprocal and connected nature of agency, pedagogy and epistemic ability. Of course, researchers must be aware of, and reflect upon, how their own lived realities and experiences can colour their research endeavours. As such, I must be reflective throughout this research on how my own, situated

⁶⁶ Chapter One, Section 1.2.

perception of pupils as agents influences, and is influenced by, my view of effective RE (Adams, 2014; Davis, 2014; Strhan et al., 2017).

Approaching children's agency from an educational perspective within this research – which recognises the complex interplay between the 'social and cognitive processes' (Clarke et al., 2016, p. 29) involved – continues the important transition of perceptions of the child from 'powerlessness' to agency (Cunningham, 1996, p. 185). Theorising and trialling a parabolic enquiry in the primary setting which takes pupil agency seriously, viewed through the lens of post-secularity, will develop my understanding of how students can exercise their agency in the RE classroom. Such research makes a vital contribution to our understanding of how pupils can engage with questions of religion and belief in RE, and is necessary with the present sparsity of research on pupil agency in the subject.⁶⁷

Before considering pupil agency within the classroom (Section 3.4) and primary RE (Chapter Four), I will next engage with literature which explores how children exercise their agency to construct meaning. Reviewing scholarly positions will help me comprehend children's agency and its enactment, in turn informing my conceptualisation, trialling and analysis of a post-secular parabolic enquiry as I pursue my RQs.

⁶⁷ Such sparsity might not be down to a lack of classroom-based research undertaken by teachers or researchers, but due to complex ethical issues regarding the examination of pupil agency. Absence might also partly be due to variation in the terms used to describe pupil agentive action between academia and practitioners on the chalkface; whilst the former refers to 'pupil agency', the latter may consider agentive action within aspects ranging from learning environment to pedagogy without cognisance of, or reference to, the term.

3.3 Children's agency in meaning-making and links to post-secular (non-) religiosity

It has been useful to engage with the research of those enquiring into how children construct meaning. For Oswell (2013, p. 59) and Larkins (2019), meaning-making occurs through a process of 'creative bricolage' in which children agentively generate meaning through navigating the resources available to them. These resources include the relational networks to which they belong, physical objects they encounter and their prior experiences. Kuczynski and De Moi (2015, pp. 331-332) insightfully ponder the resources available to children, categorising them as 'individual' (such as one's cognitive abilities, possessions and previous experiences), 'relational' (the relationships which one can draw upon to support their actions and goals) and 'cultural' ('the rights, entitlements, and constraints conveyed to individuals by the laws, customs and practices of a culture').⁶⁸ I find Kuczynski and De Moi's framework useful; not only does it broaden my understanding of the myriad of factors which influence children's agentive action, it also brings attention once again to the 'social and cognitive processes' (Clarke et al., 2016, p. 29) involved in agency. Furthermore, it reminds us that such resources will differ per child, situated as they are within a particular place, time and context. Any investigation into the agency and meaning making of children cannot be disassociated from contextual considerations such as available resources, relationships and the site of enquiry (Hemming and Madge, 2011; Ingold, 2018).⁶⁹

Significantly, the agentive bricolage children employ in the construction of meaning resonates with my definition of post-secular (non-) religiosity offered in the previous

⁶⁸ See also Gurdal and Sorbring (2018, p. 2).

⁶⁹ Contextual aspects pertaining to classroom agency are considered further on pp. 61-66.

chapter: *post-secular (non-) religiosity refers to the constructed and bespoke nature of spirituality, which individuals curate as they negotiate truth claims, personal experiences and their relational networks*. This congruence gives rise to a question – is it the case that children likewise draw upon their ‘individual’, ‘relational’ and ‘cultural’ resources to construct a spiritual position which helps them make sense of the world (Kuczynski and De Mol, 2015)? In her review of literature on children and religion, Ridgely (2012) answers affirmatively. She (2012, p. 236) notes the increasing acknowledgement that children ‘negotiate a religiously diverse world’, using their relationships and the marketplace of ideas in order to generate meaning. Ridgely elucidates:

[C]hildren have always sorted through the networks of support and influence in their lives to find meaningful ways to express their...beliefs and to develop practices that synthesize...teachings with their own interpretations and needs. (Ridgely, 2012, p. 245)

Other studies reinforce Ridgely’s assertion, noting how children and young people agentively curate a spiritual identity as they encounter truth claims and ways of being within a pluralistic contemporary society; such encounters may occur through media, reading, education, peers and wider family, as well as overarching intellectual movements such as consumerism, post-modernism and scientism (Hemming and Madge, 2011; Golo et al., 2019; Larkins, 2019; Cooling et al., 2020; Csinos, 2020). As considered in the previous chapter, such encounters are restricted by the ‘constraints of ethnicity, class, education, and the knowledge and networks to which they give access’ (Woodhead, 2016a, p. 45). Again, context is a key factor, with each child having access to a unique array of ‘individual’, ‘relational’ and ‘cultural’ resources (Kuczynski and De Mol, 2015) to draw upon in enacting

their ‘religious and spiritual agency’ within identity construction (Hemming and Madge, 2011).

For some, acknowledging children’s agentic construction of their spiritual identities – as opposed to ‘passive recipient[s] of an adult culture’ (Hyde et al., 2010, p. 1) – implicates how children and young people should be perceived. Oswell (2013, pp. 274-275) insists that children should be seen as co-producers of knowledge, ‘in ways which...radically articulate and reorient the domains of certainty and authority’. Ridgely (2012, p. 242) follows a similar vein, arguing that through constructing ‘their own religious worlds’ children ‘transform rather than simply maintain’ religious traditions. From my perspective, the notion of children as ‘human becomings’⁷⁰ (Phillips and Alderson, 2002, p. 6) is once more undermined as children reinterpret religious (and non-religious) symbols, stories and practices for themselves, as opposed to uncritically adopting views from perceived authorities such as adults or institutional religion (Hemming and Madge, 2011).

I contend that recognising children as agents, who actively construct their spiritual identities, raises pertinent questions for teaching and learning in RE. Certainly, calls abound for research which is more attentive towards both children’s spiritual agency and their perspectives (Hemming and Madge, 2011; Ridgely, 2012); exploring related questions within primary RE in this present enquiry makes a vital contribution to scholarship in this under-researched area, providing an insight into how primary pupils engage with an array of hermeneutical questions in which their views are valued (Chapters Eight and Nine). These

⁷⁰ I agree with Ingold’s (2018, p. 33) castigation of the phrase ‘human becomings’ – it implies that the younger the child, the less human they are.

insights are proffered via my conceptualisation of post-secular RE (Chapter Four) which is informed by – and propounds a synergy between – my developing views of pupil agency, post-secular (non-) religiosity and epistemic ability.⁷¹ Of course, such engagement in this research takes place within specific contextual sites of the primary classroom, a context which must be critically analysed in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of pupil agency and meaning-making (Hemming and Madge, 2011; Kuczynski and De Mol, 2015; Ingold, 2018). It is to a consideration of agency in the classroom I now turn.

3.4 Children's agency within the classroom⁷²

The agency of pupils within educational settings is increasingly acknowledged and examined. A significant proportion of research on pupil agency to date has focussed upon either student voice in whole school issues (Goodman and Eren, 2013; Susinos and Haya, 2014; Cook-Sather, 2020) or student enquiry in further education (Czerniewicz et al., 2009; Jaarsma, 2011; Williams, 2015; Sutton, 2017; Jääskelä et al., 2021; Stenalt and Lassesen, 2022; Hartnett et al., 2023; Williams, 2023). Studies which consider agency within the classroom in state schooling are sparse; the limited investigations which exist focus predominantly upon the secondary school rather than primary settings (Monk et al., 2013; Deed et al., 2014; Clarke et al., 2016; Rappa and Tang, 2017; Kirk et al., 2018; Stroupe et al., 2018; Koivuhovi et al., 2019; Wedin and Aho, 2019; Grazia et al., 2021; Hansen, 2022;

⁷¹ The concept of agency ties closely to the concept of citizenship (Sirkko et al., 2019). Agency thus features centrally within my envisioning of RE (Chapter Four) which develops Habermas' (2006; 2008) view of epistemic ability as a necessary trait of citizens within a pluralistic society (Chapter One, Section 2.4.2).

⁷² The agency of children is a broad area, and I do not have scope to analyse all positions in depth. In the literature review which follows, I select key theorists and ideas to engage with that are most pertinent to my RQs.

Kimanen, 2023). This said, it is pleasing to see a growing number of studies which consider the agency of primary-aged pupils in the classroom (Ayton, 2012; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015; Sirkko et al., 2019; Dyson, 2020; Kirby, 2020; Klemp, 2020; Janes, 2021; Häggström, 2022; Kim, 2022; Lim and Nguyen, 2023). Whilst the majority of these classroom-based investigations are concerned with how pupils exercise their agency within their learning generally, a few have examined how agency is ‘constrained and enabled’ (Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015, p. 4) within different subjects, including science (Clarke et al., 2016; Stroupe et al., 2018; Wedin and Aho, 2019; Kim, 2022), mathematics (Klemp, 2020; Hansen, 2022), music (Monk et al., 2013), language (Lim and Nguyen, 2023) and RE (Kimanen, 2023)⁷³. In the proceeding sections, I will explore how pupils enact their agency in the primary classroom (and, in Chapter Four, within RE). This will purposefully inform the creation of a parabolic enquiry to trial and methods employed to ascertain its impact, so that I can evaluate pupil engagement with the parable and a myriad of hermeneutical issues.

3.4.1 Avoiding a binary view of agency

Any attempt to locate agency in the classroom needs to take account of ‘where’, ‘when’ and ‘how’ it might manifest (van Lier, 2008). Viewed as the capability of pupils to construct meaning, interpret their world, and make volitional decisions within their learning, this agency might emerge in a plethora of ways at various times (Danby and Farrell, 2004; Hyde et al., 2010; Oswell, 2013; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015; Paganelli, 2017; Rappa and Tang, 2017).

⁷³ Albeit pleasing to encounter an article on agency in secondary RE, I hold the conception of agency offered here to be underdeveloped and too narrow.

Care needs to be taken, therefore, not to reduce the complexity of agency into ‘dichotomies, or binary oppositions’ (van Lier, 2008, p. 3). It would be inappropriate, for instance, to ascribe agency to those who are vocal in the classroom, and a lack thereof to their silent peers (Fisher, 2011; Goodman and Eren, 2013; Stroupe et al., 2018; Kinsella et al., 2019); such a conception would falsely reject quiet engagement as a valid form of agentic action and meaning making.⁷⁴ I am in agreement with van Lier (2008), Hempel-Jorgensen (2015) and Kinsella et al. (2019) that there are a myriad of ways in which pupils might be ‘active’ or ‘passive’ within the classroom; researchers investigating agency need to be open to the learning potential of a range of agentic enactments.

Acknowledging that pupils will exercise their agency within the classroom in different ways is critical for this research (Brown, 2009; Kirby, 2020). It is incumbent upon myself, as a researcher interested in agency, to consider how I might identify and understand varied expressions of pupil agency and avoid binary thinking. Furthermore, in attempting to recognise and analyse the agentic actions of pupils, I should take care to avoid overarching generalisations. Grajczonek (2010; 2011), Stern (2015) and Briggs (2017) offer pertinent thoughts here, each castigating a tendency of researchers within educational literature to categorize children as a homogenous unit. Such a perception thwarts ways in which pupil voice, capabilities and uniqueness are considered in classroom environments (Madge, 2006; Hyde et al., 2010). Moreover, I contend that such a reductionist generalisation is an abuse of power in itself, as the distinctive voice and actions of each child are depreciated in an attempt to provide a neat typology. Such a tendency must be contested, with researchers

⁷⁴ See Kinsella et al. (2019, p. 55): ‘any singular notion of agency would fail to fully capture the complex nature of student participation in classroom interactions’.

being attentive to the manifold and diffuse ways in which agency is enacted by different pupils. An in-depth consideration of how I attempt to identify and analyse pupil agency in the present research will be offered in Chapter Seven (Section 7.4).

Taking forward the understanding that each pupil expresses their agency differently as a result of their own, unique array of ‘individual’, ‘relational’ and ‘cultural’ resources (Kuczynski and De Mol, 2015) leads to another pertinent question: is pupil agency ‘stable and dispositional, or is it emergent and able to be subjected to disruption?’ (Clarke et al., 2016, p. 35). In other words, do pupils exercise their agency in a broadly consistent manner across all lessons, or is it enacted differently in different times and places? I maintain that, to a large degree, the latter is the case. I have observed in my own teaching experience that pupil agency can be affected by a variety of changing factors, including the pupil’s emotional state, confidence and interest in the subject and task, their perception of the teacher, the social dynamic of peers on a table, the time of day, the weather outside and more besides.⁷⁵ However, I have also noticed pupils approaching their learning in a similar way across the curriculum, informed in part by their preferred style of working in a classroom. My own reflections here challenge the either/or slant of Clarke et al.’s (2016, p. 35) question, suggesting instead that agency is best understood as *both* stable/dispositional *and* enacted differently at different times. The notion of ‘iterative agency’ is useful here (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Mahmood, 2005; Biesta and Tedder, 2006; Kirby, 2020); pupils draw upon their experiences and available resources to achieve a goal, pragmatically pursuing success in different, new and innovative ways if necessary. Again, attention is drawn to the cognitive

⁷⁵ Including one’s self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977a; Koivuhovi et al., 2019).

and social aspects of pupil agency, with context playing a significant part (van Lier, 2008; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015; Clarke et al., 2016; Sorbring and Kuczynski, 2018; Kinsella et al., 2019; Wedin and Aho, 2019). Biesta and Tedder (2006, p. 18) encapsulate the importance of context well: agency is not the ‘possession’ of a pupil in the classroom, but ‘something that is achieved in and through the engagement with a particular temporal-relational situation...by-means-of-an-environment rather than simply in an environment’. My ‘ecological’ view of agency⁷⁶ recognises the contextual, dynamic (Jääskelä et al., 2021), dialogical (Wedin and Aho, 2019), relational (Ingold, 1999; Kinsella et al., 2019; Kirby, 2020; Häggström, 2022) and often dialectical (Rainio and Hilppö, 2017) aspects of agency.

3.4.2 Pupil agency in classrooms: contextual factors

With the significance of contextual factors upon pupil agency in the classroom, it is important to consider these further. Table 3.1 represents this thesis’ synthesis and analysis of existing scholarship; the contextual factors have emerged and been titled around important aspects that I have identified within my own experience as a research-engaged practitioner:

⁷⁶ The notion of which was introduced by Costall (2000).

Contextual factor	Overview of factor	Key theorists
The embedded practices of the classroom	Agency in the classroom is enacted, mediated and constrained within the ‘sociocultural practices’ of the learning environment (Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015, p. 4). Pupils adapt their agentive actions as they become more familiar with the conventions of, and expectations within, a classroom; such familiarity occurs over time, and is not instantaneous. Certainly, many teachers could tell anecdotally how silent new classes are; it is through regular contact over several weeks that pupils become cognizant of, and test, the parameters of their ability to act.	(Brown, 2009; Deed et al., 2014; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015; Clarke et al., 2016; Stoecklin and Fattore, 2018; Kinsella et al., 2019; Dyson, 2020; Kirby, 2020; Grazia et al., 2021)
The teacher	The ways in which pupils engage with others and the subject matter within the classroom environment is due largely to the pedagogical decisions of the teacher. The subjectivities and standpoint of practitioners as to what effective learning is, and how it is enabled, is key in determining how they manage the classroom (seating plans etc.), authorize and direct conversations, co-ordinate timings and facilitate pupil engagement with the subject matter. These pedagogical choices will likely be influenced by the teacher’s perception of children; that is, the extent to which they view pupils as ‘human becoming[s]’ (Danby and Farrell, 2004, p. 39) and thus ‘passive receiver[s] of an adult culture’ (Hyde et al., 2010, p. 1), or as ‘human beings’ (Adams, 2014, p. 164) who can adeptly interpret the world. Agency will be enabled or inhibited as a direct consequence of these perceptions.	(Danby and Farrell, 2004; Hyde et al., 2010; Fisher, 2011; Adams, 2014; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015; Sirkko et al., 2019; Robertson et al., 2020; Grazia et al., 2021; Kim, 2022)
Modelling of agency to pupils	Personal experience and a growing body of literature attest to the significance of modelling agency to pupils. This might occur through ‘thinking out loud’, showing past examples, or working through an enquiry on the board. Again, this needs embedding over a substantial period with regular, effective teacher feedback; it takes time for pupils to become familiar with particular learning strategies and secure in leading their own enquiries. Teachers are often reminded of teething problems which occur when introducing new strategies to pupils in the classroom.	(Flavell, 1979; Hyde et al., 2010; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015; Wigfield et al., 2015; Koivuhovi et al., 2019; Larkin et al., 2020)
Classroom relationships	Pupils exercise their agency in the classroom through social relationships. Such relationships (and their perceptions of those to which they are in relation) are drawn upon in order to explore an activity which is considered meaningful and/or to achieve a goal. This can be learning oriented (i.e. following the enquiry/tasks within the lesson) or otherwise (for example, appearing on task or avoiding the task to communicate with a peer).	(Oswell, 2013; Deed et al., 2014; Raithelhuber, 2016; Kustatscher, 2017; Stjernqvist et al., 2019; Kirby, 2020; Grazia et al., 2021)
Power relations	Within the classroom, agency is ‘embedded within relations of power’ (Rappa and Tang, 2017, p. 674). There are numerous aspects to be considered regarding power and agency, including: the extent to which pupils conform to teacher expectations in order to please them; the authoritative position of the teacher due to their control of resources within the classroom and greater knowledge; pupil views regarding respect, and submission to, those in	(Gordon et al., 2000; Mahmood, 2005; Ayton, 2012; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015; Kuczynski and De Mol, 2015; Rappa and Tang, 2017; Gurdal and Sorbring, 2018; Dyson, 2020; Kirby, 2020)

	authority (i.e. the teacher), and the ability of children to resist against (or exploit) hierarchical power structures of the school (Granberg and Olsson, 2015; Hansen, 2022).	
The task	The task set within the lesson also influences how pupils approach it agentively. Some tasks may offer more opportunities for creative reasoning and decision-making (Granberg and Olsson, 2015; Hansen, 2022), whilst others may be narrower and more prescribed.	(Granberg and Olsson, 2015; Hansen, 2022)

Table 3.1: my overview of contextual factors influencing pupil agency, from literature and experience

In reflecting upon the myriad of contextual factors impacting upon pupil agency, I consider Deed et al.'s (2014, p. 67) notion of 'complex interplay' apt; the factors identified in Table 3.1 entwine and interrelate within each classroom, influencing how pupils pursue meaningful activities to achieve a goal (Oswell, 2013; Kuczynski and De Mol, 2015; Ingold, 2018; Larkins, 2019; Kirby, 2020). Indeed, pupils' agentic pursuits may manifest differently in each classroom due to their situated nature with their own unique array of 'individual', 'relational' and 'cultural' resources (Kuczynski and De Mol, 2015; Gurdal and Sorbring, 2018). Any attempt of researchers to investigate pupil agency must, therefore, acknowledge and consider contextual factors (Hemming and Madge, 2011). Moreover, it is imperative that such ruminations include the emplaced position and positionality of the researcher (Carr, 2006). I am mindful that my emerging understanding of pupil agency presented within this chapter will influence how I identify and analyse it. Such personal, contextual and pragmatic considerations will be considered in Chapters Six (Section 6.3) and Seven (Section 7.4) where I reflect upon epistemology, ontology and my approach to understanding pupil agency within the parabolic enquiries respectively. Certainly, more research (of which this thesis contributes to) is required to understand the factors which support and stymie pupil agency in primary schools (Jääskelä et al., 2020).

Finally, it is important to consider the contextual factor of *the subject*. A growing number of educationalists in England are making the distinction between two different types of knowledge within each curriculum discipline – *substantive* and *disciplinary* knowledge (Young et al., 2014; Christodoulou, 2016; Sherrington, 2017; Counsell, 2018). Substantive knowledge refers to the body of knowledge within that discipline to be taught, whilst disciplinary knowledge acknowledges 'each discipline as a tradition of enquiry with its own

distinctive pursuit of truth' (Counsell, 2018). In the subject of history, for instance, units are often planned and sequenced around an engagement with an enquiry or 'puzzling key question' (Byrom, 2014, p. 6; see also Ofsted, 2021a).⁷⁷ Each enquiry is structured so that pupils acquire substantive knowledge (of dates, places, contexts etc.) alongside/through utilising and contemplating the processes relating to the discipline of 'history' such as 'using source materials, making judgements, sifting through evidence and drawing conclusions' (Doull et al., 2019, p. 5; Russell, 2016; Nichol, 2017). In science, similar distinctions are seen as facts and concepts are explored by pupils through consideration of scientific methods, investigations and the soundness of conclusions (Counsell, 2018). Within their learning journeys in each discipline, pupils are not only engaging with the substantive knowledge deemed to be key within that subject, but are also pursuing investigations by following the disciplinary processes of a 'historian' or 'scientist'. I contend that disciplinarity, which drives 'how' classroom enquiries are undertaken within particular subjects, is a contextual factor which 'channel[s]' and 'constrain[s]' how pupils exercise their agency (Sorbring and Kuczynski, 2018, p. 2).⁷⁸ How I perceive disciplinarity within post-secular RE will be outlined in Chapter Four.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Such as 'Columbus: Was he a hero?' or 'Who were the Vikings?' (The Historical Association, 2019).

⁷⁸ Although outside the scope of this research, it would be interesting for researchers to explore further the ways in which the disciplinarity of subjects offers pupils 'different ways of being agentic' (Biesta and Tedder, 2006, p. 21).

⁷⁹ Chapter Four, Section 4.8.2.

3.4.3 A working definition of pupil agency

In pursuing my RQs, I have critically and reflectively reviewed literature to further understand pupil agency within the classroom. This review has drawn attention to a number of key aspects, including: a myriad of contextual factors which enable and constrain agency; that pupils iteratively utilise the resources available to them to pursue a meaningful activity, and the responsibility of researchers interested in investigating agency to avoid binary thinking. Before pondering post-secularity and perceptions of the child, I shall proffer a working definition of pupil agency to make clear my understanding of the concept within this research:

Pupil agency refers to the capability of pupils to construct meaning and pursue lines of enquiry through an engagement with the subject matter and others, which in turn is enabled and mediated within the social environment.

In formulating such a definition, I have recognised and incorporated both ‘social and cognitive processes’ of pupil agency (Clarke et al., 2016, p. 29). This is seen through my acknowledgement that students *construct meaning and pursue lines of enquiry* when/in engaging with curricular content (cognitive), but recognising that this happens in particular environments – here the classroom – alongside other individuals and resources in a shared space influenced by a myriad of factors (social; see Table 3.1).

Engagement with literature has also allowed me to consider how children agentively draw upon their available resources in a process of ‘creative bricolage’ to construct meaning, both for their spiritual lives and within the classroom (Oswell, 2013, p. 59; Kuczynski and De Mol, 2015; Larkins, 2019). Indeed, it is significant that the agentive bricolage of children in their

construction of meaning resonates with my definition of post-secular (non-) religiosity proffered in the previous chapter.⁸⁰ Identifying this golden thread between my separate literature reviews on post-secular society *and* pupil agency is a key development within this research; synthesising these separate strands will inform a post-secular parabolic enquiry, the trialling and conclusions of which make a new contribution to scholarship. Before I outline the implications post-secularity and pupil agency has for RE (Chapter Four), I offer a closing discussion on post-secularity and the child.

3.5 The child and post-secularity

Charting a shift in Western thinking from viewing children as *passive and dependent* to *competent agents*, Davis (2014) proposes that the time is ripe to contemplate the concept of the 'post-secular child'. In essence, Davis argues that the post-secular turn necessitates that existing ideologies and taxonomies of the 'child' are made suspect. As he elucidates:

[The post-secular is] a necessary phase in a larger narrative of political and social transformation destined to emancipate the child from every diminished or circumscribed account of his status and possibilities, including those directly emergent from the enlightened mission of popular education itself. (Davis, 2014, p. 21)

Core to his argument is the view that, in challenging the secularisation thesis, notions of the post-secular have drawn attention to questions of 'identity-formation' and 'pluralist engagement with the other' (2014, p. 20). This has implications for education, particularly RE; a post-secular conception of RE gives 'pedagogical shape to a much more expansive

⁸⁰ Post-secular (non-) religiosity refers to the constructed and bespoke nature of spirituality, which individuals curate as they negotiate truth claims, personal experiences and their relational networks.

encounter with the languages of faith, truth and *meaning-making* [italics my own]' (2014, p. 21). Such an 'expansive encounter' rejects the 'performative calculus of educational rationality and output-driven industrial effectiveness', with its 'dominant and determinant models of the juvenile learner and the battery of metrics within which... 'development' and 'attainment' are commonly standardised and constrained' (2014, p. 21). Instead, such an encounter recognises the 'textured processes' of children's formation of identity and meaning in their engagement with religion, belief and pluralism in the classroom, with pupils becoming reflexive protagonists in 'an enriched appreciation of...[their] own learning' (2014, p. 21).

Davis' argument resonates strongly with my own. In Chapter Two, I likewise made the case that notions of the post-secular call the RE community to be more attentive towards questions of identity formation (post-secular (non-) religiosities) and the role that the subject should play in helping pupils to *understand, appreciate, appraise and co-exist harmoniously with others* (epistemic ability). Furthermore, both myself and Davis agree that the post-secular invites an appreciation of the pupil as an agent, one who can be reflexive within their RE learning upon their own positionality within rich enquiries into religion and belief. Such enquiries would not be constrained by narrow conceptions of children as passive recipients, nor by circumscribed and limited views of success or development (Hyde et al., 2010). Certainly, this links to a prevalent concern across English education at present; the intense focus on pupil knowledge acquisition, curriculum coverage and school accountability is creating classroom cultures where pupils are seen as objects who need to make expected progress against pre-determined outcomes (Adams, 2014; Biesta, 2015; Christodoulou, 2016; Ingold, 2018; Myatt, 2018; Kirby, 2020; Tierney, 2020). Freire's (1998)

notion of ‘banking education’ is a relevant criticism here, the metaphor suggesting that ‘teachers deposit knowledge in students’ heads and then test them on their ability to regurgitate what teachers have said’ (Bahou, 2012, p.233).⁸¹ I am in agreement with Davis (2014) that such a dehumanising vision of education should be challenged.

Whilst asserting this, I am cognizant of the challenges that practitioners seeking to establish and manage agency-rich classrooms may encounter. Teachers striving to create such spaces may experience what Hertz (Moses et al., 2020, p. 219) describes as walking a pedagogical ‘tightrope’ between ‘mayhem’ (which may ensue in more open enquiries where pupils more volitionally pursue enquiries in their own ways, for instance)⁸² and ‘rigidity’ (e.g. to keep the enquiry focused and to time). I would add to this ‘tightrope’ walk the winds of test-based and teacher accountability as well as school performance and comparability measures, a side effect of which ‘is the promotion of children’s conformity and minimizing [of] experimentation, alternative pedagogies and risk-taking’ (Kirby, 2020, p. 17).⁸³ From my own experience in primary settings, I have observed first-hand how agency has been sacrificed on the altar of SATs results, as pedagogies enacted by practitioners become more didactic in an attempt to cover content quickly. We need more research to demonstrate how teachers can walk this ‘tightrope’ with their own agency, dignity and tact; research *and*

⁸¹ My impression from reading the Early Career Framework (DfE, 2019a) and ITT (Initial Teacher Training) Core Content (DfE, 2019b) – key documents which en flesh the Teachers’ Standards (2013) to direct the professional training and support of new teachers in England – is that the focus constellates around Ofsted’s (2019) view that high-quality education is mainly about pupils ‘knowing and remembering more’. Any reference to pupil agency (under this or related nomenclature) is markedly absent. The emphasis on knowledge acquisition in English education has led to these documents being over-focussed on ‘the acquisition of core academic knowledge and skills, and socialisation into behaviours considered appropriate for such learning’ (Kirby, 2020, p. 17).

⁸² See also Lim and Nguyen (2023, p. 422) who draw attention to students’ ‘dilemma of choice’ when they can proceed via a number of routes to achieve a learning outcome.

⁸³ See also Sahlberg (2015).

practical exemplifications which demonstrate and resource how teachers can draw on a repertoire of pedagogical tools to ‘position students as active agents of meaning making...while attending to curriculum outcomes’ (Kim, 2022, p. 1930).⁸⁴ The conceptualisation (Chapter Four), enacting and analysis (Chapters Six through Nine) of a post-secular RE which takes pupil agency seriously in this present research thesis aims to help teachers see the crucial importance of walking this ‘tightrope’ (that is, see the importance of pupil agency) and provide support to navigate it well.

I contend that the post-secular enables a broader vision for RE. It calls us as practitioners to acknowledge that pupils to ‘come to the table’ in their RE learning – they are present as agents who deserve a recognised place, protagonists who bring their own experiences and positionality to their engagement with the subject matter, individuals whose voice should be valued. Such a vision draws attention to the ‘textured processes’ of pupil learning and the formation of spiritual identity (for pupils themselves and for others in diverse, contemporary society) (Davis, 2014, p. 21), and views pupils as producers, rather than merely recipients, of knowledge (Ridgely, 2012; Oswell, 2013; Davis, 2014; Ingold, 2018). In the next section, this vision for ‘post-secular RE’ is considered in greater depth. Such thinking will support me in answering my RQs, which focus around enabling a ‘much more expansive encounter’ (Davis, 2014, p. 21) between pupils and parables than is presently the case in primary RE.

⁸⁴ And not only positioning, but *developing* ‘students’ agency...as part of the intended curriculum’ (Kim, 2022, p. 1927).

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter marks another important step as I ponder an appropriate hermeneutic for enquiring into the parables in primary RE. Through engaging with some of the key literature on the agency of children, I am defining pupil agency for this research as:

the capability of pupils to construct meaning and pursue lines of enquiry through an engagement with the subject matter and others, which in turn is enabled and mediated within the social environment.

Such a definition is informed by a number of aspects explored in this chapter, including: the multi-faceted nature of agency, involving both ‘social and cognitive processes’ (Clarke et al., 2016, p. 29); that pupils iteratively utilise the ‘individual’, ‘relational’ and ‘cultural’ resources available to them to pursue a meaningful activity (Kuczynski and De Mol, 2015); an acknowledgement that agency is enabled and constrained by a myriad of contextual factors (Deed et al., 2014), and that such a definition influences, and is influenced by, my own positionality and vision for RE (Adams, 2014; Davis, 2014; Strhan et al., 2017). Furthermore, my engagement with scholarship highlighted the responsibility of researchers interested in investigating agency to avoid binary thinking (for instance, ascribing agency to vocal pupils and a deficiency to quieter peers) (van Lier, 2008; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015; Kinsella et al., 2019) and the need to consider contextual factors within a social environment (Hemming and Madge, 2011; Wedin and Aho, 2019). Developing my understanding of what agency entails, how it is enacted by pupils in the classroom, and the factors influencing it will support subsequent pedagogical and methodological thinking as I pursue my RQs.

I closed the chapter by relating discussions of pupil agency to Davis' (2014) notion of the post-secular child. I argued that a post-secular perception of the child lights the way toward a richer vision for RE, one which, in recognising pupils as reflexive protagonists within primary RE, opens the door to a 'much more expansive encounter' (Davis, 2014, p. 21) between pupils and parabolic texts than presently occurs within primary RE. Envisioning what this encounter might look like – as I synthesise my understanding of post-secular (non-) religiosity, epistemic ability, pupil agency and a post-secular perception of the child – is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

4 POST-SECULAR RE

‘...it’s opened my eyes a bit today...[t]hat you-you actually probably should always be looking at other points of view [in RE]. You know, whether all people view things as being the same...it’s really opened my eyes to the fact that that’s a key thing. That yes these religious texts exist...but actually not everybody will interpret them in the same way...and yeah that very definitely needs to be incorporated I think into the RE curriculum as-as a whole.’ (Teacher B)⁸⁵

4.1 Introduction

Central to this research is my contention – emerging out of my experience as a teacher, adviser and researcher – that RE must help pupils become cognisant that people interpret biblical texts differently *and* to consider why this diversity exists. Through reviewing some key Western literature on post-secular society in Chapter Two (e.g. Habermas, 2008; Beckford, 2012; Woodhead, 2016a), I argued that the plurality of positionalities existing in societies – as individuals agentively curate their own bespoke spiritual identities – requires an epistemic ability of pupils in order to understand, navigate and flourish within the modern world. My working definition of epistemic ability, which is core to this thesis, is:

the capability of individuals to understand, appreciate, appraise and co-exist harmoniously with others, aided through reflexivity upon one’s own positionality and how this can be brought into shared discourse. Such an ability requires an understanding of the complex and diverse nature of post-secular (non-) religiosities, and the plurality of positionalities present in twenty-first century Britain.

⁸⁵ Teacher B Interview Two, lines 783-784, 1070-1076, Appendix Twenty-Seven.

In this chapter, I proffer my own conception of post-secular RE. This theorisation synergistically draws together my analytical engagement with literature in Chapters Two and Three, addressing two key questions:

- 1) *What would RE look like if post-secular (non-) religiosity, epistemic ability, pupil agency and a post-secular perception of the child were taken seriously?*
- 2) *And what would this mean for the curation of a parabolic enquiry which enables a 'more expansive encounter'⁸⁶ (Davis, 2014, p. 21) with these narratives than presently occurs, one which allows pupils to consider the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity?*

In pursuing these questions, my conceptualisation envisions a post-secular RE well-calibrated to develop pupils' epistemic ability as knowledgeable, reflexive citizens within a pluralistic public space. I will actualise my view on how epistemic ability can be developed in the crucible of the classroom through a RE offer where pupils are recognised as agentic constructors of meaning (Chapter Three). I begin by rooting such deliberations contextually through considering religious literacy (Sections 4.2 and 4.3) and adopting Biesta's (2015; 2017) domains of education as a purposeful frame (Section 4.4). I then consider the representation of religion and belief (Section 4.5), pupils as reflexive protagonists (Section 4.6), dialogic learning (Section 4.7) and textual enquiry (4.8).⁸⁷ In moving towards a richer parabolic encounter to trial (enacting my conception of post-secular RE), I conclude that pursuing epistemic ability as an aim for RE requires that hermeneutics more efficaciously underpin biblical text enquiry, leading to a review of parabolic scholarship and existing curriculum materials in Chapter Five.

⁸⁶ Davis' phrase is hereafter paraphrased as a 'richer' encounter.

⁸⁷ As we will see, a number of key dialogue partners are particularly influential in my conceptualisation of a post-secular RE – Aldridge (2015), Bowie (2018), Philipson and Wegerif (2020) and Ricoeur (1992).

Not only will critically evaluating the theoretical and pedagogical implications of post-secularity support me in answering my RQs, such envisioning charts new territory. I propose that post-secularity calls the RE community to look afresh at textual enquiry in the primary setting in a way which brings rich hermeneutical possibilities and questions to the fore. Such a consideration has not been undertaken before. These deliberations make a valuable contribution towards discussions on purpose and attendant pedagogies within the subject community which must be more attentive towards issues of diversity in primary RE. This is echoed in Teacher B's comment above that reasoning through plurality, difference and diversity should be a habitual part of RE curricula.

4.2 Contextual considerations

In Chapter Two, I critically engaged with Habermas' (2008) views on post-secularity. Habermas maintains that an increased awareness of contemporary society, replete with a myriad of positionalities, has led citizens to consider how to live cohesively and harmoniously amidst such diversity. His response – which has influenced my own standpoint – is that citizens require an epistemic ability to navigate the question of 'shared citizenship and cultural difference' (Habermas, 2008, p. 9); put more explicitly, social cohesion is enhanced if individuals are reflexive upon their beliefs and discourse and able to engage in dialogue with others. Although Habermas proffers a normative perspective for political theory, I will explore an application of epistemic ability to RE, albeit a broader understanding which takes account of empirical sociological studies and their challenge to the religious/secular dichotomy which Habermas fails to consider (Francis and Knott, 2011; Boeve, 2012; Woodhead, 2016a; Taves, 2018; Skeie, 2020).

It is important to acknowledge that this application does not take place in a vacuum. Rather, such an application is contextual, emerging within and pertaining to the subject of RE within English education. Education in England, over the last decade, has seen intense discussions around curriculum design, leading subject communities and practitioners to acutely consider ‘why’, ‘what’, ‘when’, ‘how’ and retention of the curriculum offer (Young et al., 2014; Sherrington, 2017; Counsell, 2018; Myatt, 2018; Ofsted, 2019). Within the RE community, such deliberations are leading to discourse and practice which is increasingly framing itself around notions of religious literacy and disciplinarity (Chipperton et al., 2018a; CoRE, 2018; Biesta et al., 2019; CEE0, 2019; Kueh, 2020; Ofsted, 2021b). Furthermore, RE in England draws upon a rich history of pedagogical discussion which inform debates regarding effective teaching and learning within the subject (von Brömssen and Nixon, 2020). The situated nature of this research is important to be cognisant of as I pursue an informed response to my RQs; this will ensure the research’s relevance and thus potential impact. A consideration of how and why emerging notions of religious literacy provide a purposeful frame for my own conception of post-secular RE, and a related parabolic enquiry, will now be undertaken.

4.3 Religious Literacy

An increasing understanding of contemporary religion and belief in society, and an awareness of practitioner confusion regarding the purpose/s of RE, has led many in the RE community to reconsider the aims and intent of the subject (Conroy et al., 2013; All Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education, 2016; Chipperton et al., 2016; Georgiou and Wright, 2017; Dinham, 2021). Manoeuvring onto centre stage is religious literacy, ‘both as

an aim for religious education and as an organising principle for curriculum, pedagogy and assessment’ (Biesta et al., 2019, p. 3; see also Parker, 2020; Shaw, 2020). Certainly, I have noted a shift in curriculum conversations in recent years as questions of content, knowledge, skills and pedagogy are coalescing in an attempt to ensure pupils become more religiously literate.

Despite its increasing prevalence in RE discussions⁸⁸ (All Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education, 2016; Castelli and Chater, 2017; Biesta et al., 2019; Georgiou, 2019), it becomes swiftly evident when reviewing emerging definitions and conceptualisations of religious literacy across a range of publications – each approaching via policy, academic, diocesan lens etc. – that the term is widely contested. Table 4.1 illustrates a number of frequently cited definitions of religious literacy and their resonance to my conception of epistemic ability:

⁸⁸ Although the view pertains that all subjects can contribute to religious literacy, it is acknowledged that RE contributes most significantly (Carr, 2007; Georgiou, 2019; Parker, 2020).

Theorist	Definition of religious literacy	Aspects which link to my conception of epistemic ability	Limitations with regards to developing epistemic ability
Wright, A. (1993) <i>Religious Education in the Secondary School: Prospects for Religious Literacy</i> . London: David Fulton.	'[T]he ability, and inability, to reflect, communicate and act in an informed, intelligent and sensitive manner towards the phenomenon of religion' (Wright, 1993, p. 47)	- Wright (2000; 2016) holds it important for pupils to engage with different viewpoints and hold informed conversations. I agree that enquiries towards shared questions, which allow pupils to consider a myriad of perspectives, should be a core part of pupils' curriculum entitlement in RE - Being religiously literate goes beyond the amassing of facts about religion and belief	For Wright (2016, p. 233), religious literacy 'refers to the capacity to exercise judgemental rationality vis-à-vis the ultimate order of things and our place within it: the capacity to pursue ultimate truth and live increasingly truthful lives <i>sub specie aeternitatis</i>'. Wright's (2008) critical realist stance is predicated on the grounds that there is an 'ultimate order of things' that we should consider, even though we cannot see this clearly. I contend that to construct lines of enquiry in RE with this presupposition would betray the diversity of voices and worldviews in our RE classrooms, as well as narrow enquiry.
Prothero, S. (2007) <i>Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know - and Doesn't</i> . New York: HarperOne.	'[T]he ability to understand and use in one's day-to-day life the basic building blocks of religious traditions – their key terms, symbols, doctrines, practices, sayings, characters, metaphors and narratives' (Prothero, 2007, p. 15)	Argues for the importance of substantive knowledge in being religiously literate and being able to understand, and participate fully, in society	Prothero's view of the knowledge required to be religiously literate has been heavily, and rightly, criticised (Gallagher, 2009; Littau, 2015; Kjørven, 2016; Richardson, 2017). Not only does Prothero present world religions as monolithic and neatly categorised entities which are reducible to specific facts, but his emphasis on the 'what' of religion supplants any consideration of 'how' and 'why' of religiosity (Gallagher, 2009; Kjørven, 2016; Richardson, 2017; Biesta et al., 2019).⁸⁹ At heart, these castigations centre on the fact that 'there is much more to religious literacy than the ability to demonstrate basic...knowledge' of religions (Kjørven, 2016, p. 170).

⁸⁹ As Gallagher (2009, p.208) argues, to be religiously literate one needs to be aware of how religious people use knowledge to 'orient themselves in the world'.

Moore, D. L. (2016) 'Diminishing religious literacy: methodological assumptions and analytical frameworks for promoting the public understanding of religion' in Dinham, A. and Francis, M. (eds.). <i>Religious literacy in policy and practice</i> . Bristol: Policy Press, pp. 27-38.	'[T]he ability to discern and analyze the fundamental intersections of religion and social/political/cultural life through multiple lenses' (Moore, 2016, p. 31).	Moore stresses the importance of understanding 'symbols, doctrines, practices' etc. that Prothero (2007, p. 11) alludes to, but also the way that 'manifestations of several of the world's religious traditions...arose out of and continue to be shaped by particular social, historical and cultural contexts' (Moore, 2016, p. 31). Acknowledging context as a factor in accounting for diverse positionalities resonates with my conception of post-secular (non-) religiosity.	Moore does not account adequately for the importance of pupil reflexivity within religious literacy, nor the importance of pupils understanding the complex and diverse nature of post-secular (non-) religiosities
Smalley, P. (2018) 'Reflections on the progress of developing religiously literate citizens in England', <i>RE Today</i> (no. 1), pp. 58-63.	'[T]he ability to interact fluently with the ideas and customs of any religious group commonly found in our local or global society by having a conceptual understanding of religion, such that one can identify and appreciate the reciprocal influence of these groups on public policy, government, society, culture and indeed daily life' (Smalley, 2018, p. 60).	As with Moore, Smalley holds that religious literacy entails an awareness of internal diversity of religious traditions as well as the factors which lead to such plurality. Smalley is also in accordance with Moore in arguing that religious literacy is integral to an inclusive and harmonious society.	The same criticism as that directed towards Moore's conception of religious literacy
Chipperton et al. (2018a) <i>Key principles of a balanced curriculum in RE</i> . The Church of England Education Office [website online]. ⁹⁰	The ability 'to hold balanced and well-informed conversations about religion and belief' (Chipperton et al., 2018a, p. 1).	See below (Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2)	

Table 4.1: an overview of frequently cited definitions of religious literacy and their resonance with epistemic ability

⁹⁰ Available at: [https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-03/Key principles of a balanced curriculum in RE 0.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-03/Key%20principles%20of%20a%20balanced%20curriculum%20in%20RE%200.pdf) (Accessed: 30 July 2019).

Reflecting upon these emerging definitions of religious literacy has been fruitful. Each of the positions considered resonate, in some way, with my definition of epistemic ability. Prothero (2007), Moore (2016) and Smalley (2018) stress *knowledge* as essential for religious literacy and, in turn, harmonious living with others; the latter two also draw attention to an understanding of the diversity of religious expression and the influence of context. Andrew Wright's (1993, p. 47) view of religious literacy, that pupils 'communicate and act in an informed, intelligent and sensitive manner towards the phenomenon of religion', also has its merits. In particular, I agree that informed conversations about religion and belief require a consideration of different perspectives. However, none of the conceptions of religious literacy considered so far provide a sufficient frame for epistemic ability. None of the definitions adequately consider *the reflexivity of pupils upon their own positionality and how this can be brought into shared discourse, nor the importance of pupils understanding the complex and diverse nature of post-secular (non-) religiosities*.⁹¹ Both aspects are central to my emerging conception of post-secular RE.

4.3.1 Epistemic ability and the 'balanced RE' approach

The conceptualisation of religious literacy most apposite for my understanding of epistemic ability is the 'balanced RE' framework proffered by Chipperton et al. (2018a). Defining religious literacy as the ability to 'to hold balanced and well-informed conversations about religion and belief' (2018a, p. 1), the authors argue that such dialogue requires engagement with three disciplines in equal measure:

⁹¹ From my working definition of epistemic ability, Chapter One, Section 2.4.3, p. 39.

Theology – ‘This is about believing. It looks at where beliefs come from, how they have changed over time, how they are applied differently in different contexts and how they relate to each other’.

Human/social sciences – ‘This is about living. It explores the diverse ways in which people practise their beliefs. It engages with the impact of beliefs on individuals, communities and societies’.

Philosophy – ‘This is about thinking. It is about finding out how and whether things make sense. It deals with questions of morality and ethics. It takes seriously the nature of reality, knowledge and existence’ (Chipperton et al., 2018a, pp. 1-2).

Situating this research within the ‘balanced RE’ framework is useful for several reasons. Firstly, I am heartened by the importance placed on pupils understanding the diversity of beliefs and practices within this conceptualisation; this accords with my view of epistemic ability, that pupils need to understand that a *plurality of positionalities [are] present in twenty-first century Britain*. Particularly pertinent for my research on parabolic enquiry is the framework’s call, within the discipline of theology, for pupils to consider ‘where beliefs come from, how they have changed over time’ and ‘how they are applied differently in different contexts’ (Chipperton et al., 2018a, p. 1). This emphasis aligns with my own, that pupils need to understand that diverse readings of biblical texts exist.

Secondly, holding ‘balanced and well-informed conversations about religion and belief’ (Chipperton et al., 2018a, p. 1) requires substantive knowledge. This resonates with my definition of epistemic ability, as I hold that subject knowledge in RE underpins *the capability of individuals to understand, appreciate, appraise and co-exist harmoniously with others*.⁹² Moreover, being able to hold such conversations requires that pupils engage

⁹² It is significant to note that the ‘balanced RE’ framework does not stipulate the subject knowledge to be taught; it is incumbent upon each school to determine the substantive knowledge they regard as most important for pupils to encounter in order to be religiously literate within their context, guided by locally agreed syllabi if the school is maintained by the local authority.

competently and respectfully in dialogue (*shared discourse*). Indeed, such conversations are stymied if pupils lack accurate and requisite subject knowledge and/or are unreceptive to, or uninterested in, the views of others (Habermas, 2006).

Thirdly, situating this research within the ‘balanced RE’ framework increases the value and potential receptivity of my conclusions as it is a model increasingly adopted by schools. Uptake in Church of England schools has largely been due to the requirement that they evidence how their RE provision is balanced across the three disciplines within a SIAMS inspection (CEEQ, 2018; 2019; 2023). A number of influential practitioners and an agreed syllabus have also promoted the ‘balanced RE’ approach more widely (Myatt, 2018; Norfolk SACRE, 2019; Hutton and Cox, 2021). Situating this research and its conclusions within the ‘balanced RE’ model will allow a significant number of schools to reflect more pertinently on parabolic enquiry in their settings within their existing subject intents.⁹³ It also overlaps well with the knowledge-rich approach advocated by Ofsted (2021b).⁹⁴

⁹³ Religious literacy as an aim for RE is not without criticism. For some, the aim of ‘a balanced and well-informed conversation’ merely plasters over a multitude of perennial issues about the identity and content of English RE, adding a further layer of complexity as aspects of contention are reframed in ‘alternate terminology’ (Lewis, 2018; Biesta et al., 2019, pp. 27-28). Questions remain as to which and how many religions and beliefs should be studied in order to be deemed ‘religiously literate’, which knowledge is important and who decides (Moore, 2016; Lewis, 2018; Biesta et al., 2019; Smith, 2019). On reflection, the ‘balanced RE’ framework helps rather than hinders my envisioning of post-secular RE, particularly as it draws attention to the need to take seriously the quest *to understand, appreciate, appraise and co-exist harmoniously with others* in the light of pluralism. With the plurality of positionalities present in society as individuals construct their spiritual identity through a complex interplay between the religious and the secular, I hold that Shaw’s (2020) reframing to ‘religion and worldview literacy’ is more accurate and inclusive of the broad range of religiosities and non-religiosities.

⁹⁴ See Footnote 96 (p. 85) and Section 4.8.2, 4.8.2.1.

4.3.2 Epistemic ability and revisions to the ‘balanced RE’ approach

Despite the synergy between Chipperton et al.’s (2018a) disciplinary model and my definition of epistemic ability, I hold that a number of amendments to the ‘balanced RE’ approach are required in the light of post-secularity. Crucially, missing from the framework is a consideration that pupils need to go beyond ‘how...[beliefs] have changed over time...[and] applied differently in different contexts’ (Chipperton et al., 2018a, p. 1) to also explore *why*. Engaging with hermeneutical questions – such as why variant readings exist – would support pupil understanding of *the complex and diverse nature of post-secular (non-) religiosities*. Students could then more efficaciously make sense of *the plurality of positionalities present in twenty-first century Britain*, including those they might subsequently encounter outside of the finite RE classroom/curriculum.

Further, I contend that religious literacy within post-secular RE entails *not only* an awareness of the interpretive diversity of biblical texts and attendant questions of hermeneutics, but *also* that pupils reflect on the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of *their reading* of the text. Here I agree with Kjørven (2016, p. 185), who maintains that ‘religious literacy cannot be grasped without acknowledging and understanding the constitutive role of the reader’. *Reflexivity upon one’s own positionality* is central to my view of epistemic ability. Such reflexivity is absent from explications of the ‘balanced RE’ framework (Chipperton et al., 2018a; 2018b), and inclusion would help pupils more effectively hold ‘balanced and well-informed conversations about religion and belief’ through acknowledging their own

positionality within the dialogue.⁹⁵ Additionally, exploration of hermeneutical questions which consider why biblical texts are read differently – including the role of the reader – would enrich the three types of knowledge advocated by Ofsted’s (2021b) RE research review.⁹⁶ Pupils can develop their knowledge of biblical texts (substantive knowledge), using tools, methods and questions from the discipline of biblical scholarship (disciplinary knowledge), which includes reflexivity upon one’s own place and positionality in the act of reading (personal knowledge). This tripartite framing could prove purposeful in designing a post-secular parabolic enquiry which develops pupils’ epistemic ability as knowledgeable, reflexive citizens within a pluralistic public space (see Section 4.8). These forthcoming ruminations contribute to the theorising of how pupils build and integrate these three types of knowledge in RE, which remain nationally at an embryonic stage (Cooling et al., 2020; Lewin and Orchard, 2021; Ofsted, 2021b).

Such amendments to the ‘balanced RE’ framework make it a suitable foundation from which to theoretically and pedagogically apply my Habermasian-informed (albeit expanded)⁹⁷ rationale of epistemic ability. Developing students’ religious literacy so they can *engage in purposeful dialogue* – holding ‘balanced and well-informed conversations about religion and belief’ (Chipperton et al., 2018a, p. 1) – is key within this application. An

⁹⁵ This advancement positions one who is religiously literate as a reflexive protagonist in their RE learning, as opposed to a passive recipient of content (Freebody and Luke, 2003; Davis, 2014; Roche, 2022).

⁹⁶ These three types of knowledge are ‘substantive’, ‘disciplinary’ and ‘personal’. **Substantive knowledge** refers to knowledge about religious and non-religious traditions in contemporary society (‘the what’). This includes developing an accurate understanding about beliefs, concepts and narratives which animate community and individual living. **Disciplinary knowledge** is about a growing understanding of the methods/tools used to generate this substantive knowledge within academic disciplines relating to RE (e.g. theology, philosophy, human and social sciences). This helps pupils recognise different ways in which religion and belief can be understood, and the merits and limitations of such approaches (‘the how’). **Personal knowledge** refers to a developing awareness of pupils that they are not neutral. They bring to the classroom their own beliefs and assumptions which influence how they engage with RE content and questions.

⁹⁷ Chapter One, Section 2.4.2.

aptitude for dialogue is necessary to help pupils understand and ‘engage well with’ religion and belief (Dinham, 2021, p. 4) in ‘a genuine commitment to understand each other’ (Luby, 2021, p. 155).⁹⁸ Such a move accords with Habermas’ (2006; 2008) notion of epistemic ability, where citizens need to engage in reflective discourse to live well together.⁹⁹ With notions of citizenship tying closely to notions of agency (Sirkko et al., 2019), my forthcoming conceptualisation of post-secular RE will explicitly position pupils as agentive hermeneuts (Section 4.6.1) within a subject geared towards the development of epistemic ability as an essential component of religious literacy.

Developing the ‘balanced RE’ framework via this Habermasian lens opens rich opportunities where pupils can explore a myriad of parabolic interpretations and hermeneutical questions asked of the text (as part of the discipline of theology) whilst also considering reasons why parables are interpreted differently (philosophy). This research thesis envisions and trials such an enquiry in primary RE. It is my hope that, if the learning enquiries prove purposeful, the conclusions will prompt advisors, practitioners and curriculum designers to re-evaluate the ability of primary pupils to engage hermeneutically with the parables. Moreover, such conclusions will be supplemented with a practical exemplification which teachers can adapt and amend for use within their own settings as they facilitate a richer encounter with a parabolic text.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ I acknowledge also that skills of oracy and engaging in dialogue are also key. Dialogue to enrich epistemic ability; epistemic ability to enrich dialogue.

⁹⁹ Chapter One, Section 2.4.1.

¹⁰⁰ There are some clear resonances between the understanding of religious literacy I am advocating in this thesis with notions of biblical literacy. Although multiple perceptions of biblical literacy and its import exist (Dillon, 2015; Edwards, 2015; Hine, 2015), a number of understandings constellate around two positions. One position holds that that citizens in Western societies (such as the United Kingdom and United States) should have a knowledge of biblical stories, characters, phrases and themes in order to understand aspects including Western culture, laws, literature, language, history, politics and popular entertainment (Bible Literacy Project,

4.4 Biesta's domains of education

In envisioning a post-secular RE and associated parabolic enquiry directed towards developing pupils' epistemic ability, I draw on Biesta's (2015; 2017) threefold domains of education. For Biesta (2015, p. 77), education always 'functions in relation to...three domains':

- *qualification*, 'the transmission and acquisition of knowledge, skills and dispositions';
- *socialization*, introducing pupils to 'traditions and ways of being and doing', and
- *subjectification*, 'the way in which children and young people come to exist as subjects of initiative and responsibility rather than as objects of the actions of others'.

2005; 2006; Beal, 2010; Bible Society, 2014). This stance is reflected in the textbook *Biblical Literacy* (Orme, 2017) published for Key Stage 3 students, in which 'key' knowledge (which varies per publication considered) is presented for students to improve their knowledge of the bible's contents. Another position seen across literature (Stack-Nelson, 2014; Blyth, 2015; Myles, 2015; Bowie and Coles, 2018) on biblical literacy contends that simply amassing a body of knowledge of 'what' the bible includes is insufficient. More important is having and skilfully exercising an understanding of how and why different people engage with biblical texts and ideas in the way they do (Blyth, 2015; Myles, 2015; Bowie and Coles, 2018). Such deliberation will help students recognise the impact of context (such as how the text was first produced, interpreted and then read by different people in different contexts) and lead to an appreciation of why people draw on biblical texts yet arrive at differing stances on particular issues (Bowie and Coles, 2018).

The second position calibrates strongly to my present research interest in enabling pupils to explore the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity of a parable of Jesus. My inquiry therefore relates to the development of biblical literacy in a manner advocated by Stack-Nelson (2014) and Bowie and Coles (2018). Indeed, I share their reservation that limited and inaccurate biblical understandings are developed through those holding the first position of biblical literacy above which, in presenting 'key' knowledge, often present biblical stories as having a single meaning (e.g. Beal, 2010). In my research thesis, however, I am focussing on 'religious' rather than 'biblical' literacy. My reasons for this are three-fold: 1) biblical literacy informs the wider aim of RE of religious literacy. Pupil understanding of how and why different people engage with biblical texts (including an understanding of the text itself) will enable pupils to more efficaciously hold 'balanced and well-informed conversations about religion and belief' (Chipperton et al., 2018a, p. 1); 2) religious literacy is a term that RE practitioners are more conversant with than biblical literacy. This framing will therefore help teachers see the value of this research for their RE curriculum offer in a way that biblical literacy would not, and 3) situating within the broader frame of religious literacy will help me later make the case (Chapter Ten, Section 10.5, pp. 428-429) for the potential value of this hermeneutical RE I have envisioned and exemplified for student encounters with sacred texts from Islam and Judaism.

These three domains do not exist in isolation; they are interrelated within ‘educational endeavours’ directed towards a particular purpose (Biesta, 2017, p. 28). This interaction might manifest as ‘synergy’ – as decisions regarding the what, why and how of knowledge acquisition implicate all three domains – or as ‘conflict’, with pragmatic ‘trade-offs’ existing as practitioners decide to focus more on certain domains depending on ‘what it is we are seeking to achieve’ (Biesta, 2015, pp. 78-79).

Certainly, Biesta’s (2015; 2017) domains of qualification, socialization and subjectification provide a useful framework from which to contemplate post-secular RE and attendant enquiries.¹⁰¹ Reflecting on how my conceptualisation and enactment holds these three domains in ‘synergy’ and/or ‘conflict’ will also be useful, particularly with regards to the pragmatic decisions I make within a parabolic enquiry curated to answer my RQs (Biesta, 2015, p. 79). Before proceeding to consider how my vision of post-secular RE impacts upon the representation of religion (Section 4.5), pupils as reflexive protagonists (Section 4.6), dialogic learning (Section 4.7) and textual enquiry (Section 4.8), it is important to note that my conceptualisation is informed by my positionality, experience and focussed engagement with the literature. A few others have advanced their own vision for post-secular RE, emphasising different directions for the subject to travel. In their own way, these scholars stress the utility of the subject in allowing pupils to engage with diverse positionalities present in the public sphere (Bowie et al., 2012b; Biesta et al., 2019; Casson and Cooling, 2020), with some offering questions or amendments to purpose and pedagogy within RE (Carr, 2012; Castelli, 2012; Skeie, 2020; Thalén, 2020; von Brömssen and Nixon, 2020). With

¹⁰¹ Indeed, Biesta’s dimension of subjectification identifies the centrality of pupil agency within education in a way that other curriculum frameworks do not (e.g. Levinson, 1999; Fadel et al., 2015).

the breadth of positions across these scholars and the fact that, in many instances, the paradigm is alluded to in passing without significant development or consideration, I will not outline how my vision resonates with or departs from these positions. My focus will be on presenting a coherent vision of post-secular RE as informed by existing literature. Others within the RE community may engage with literature on the post-secular and arrive at different conclusions to mine.¹⁰² This is welcomed. I hope that my conceptualisation of post-secular parabolic enquiry – which marks an original, and needed, contribution to scholarship – will stimulate further deliberation and dialogue regarding post-secularism, textual enquiry and hermeneutics in primary RE. It is to a consideration of my vision for post-secular RE I now turn.

4.5 Representation of religion and belief

To develop epistemic ability, it is imperative that pupils engage with the socio-cultural reality of lived religion and belief in RE, replete with diverse positionalities and viewpoints. It is therefore crucial to consider how religion and belief is (re)presented in RE. In what follows, I make the case that we must move away from monolithic representations (Section 4.5.1) and embrace hermeneutical approaches (Section 4.5.2).

¹⁰² And this is perhaps expected more in RE compared with other subjects due to differences in views regarding aims and purposes for the subject as a result of different starting points and positionalities.

4.5.1 Against monolithic representations

As discussed in Chapter Two, empirical research into lived religion and belief in Western societies has led many sociologists to challenge the religious/secular binary proffered by the secularisation thesis as specious (Francis and Knott, 2011; Boeve, 2012; Woodhead, 2013). My engagement with a range of key literature, which acknowledged the complex interplay between religiosities and secularities within an individual's construction of their spiritual identity, informed my definition of post-secular (non-) religiosity¹⁰³ (Kaufmann, 2009; Martin and Catto, 2012; Ammerman, 2014; Lahav, 2015; Nilsson and Tesfahuney, 2016; Taves, 2018). With the plurality existing in contemporary society – as each individual's identity is crafted and shaped through encounters within their environment – I hold that a critical question emerges for the RE community to consider: how can we enable pupils to understand the *complex and diverse nature of post-secular (non-) religiosities, and the plurality of positionalities present in twenty-first century Britain?*

To achieve this, representations of religion and belief in the RE curriculum must go beyond monolithic and essentialized presentations. On the one hand, representations need to transcend portrayals which place lived religion and belief within separate, simple categories of either 'religious' or 'secular'. To continue to exclusively¹⁰⁴ present such a binary is

¹⁰³ In an acknowledgement that religious/secular binaries proffered by the secularization thesis are specious, post-secular (non-) religiosity refers to the constructed and bespoke nature of spirituality, which individuals curate as they negotiate truth claims, personal experiences and their relational networks. This spirituality emerges through a complex interplay between the religious and the secular, leading to a plurality of positionalities in society.

¹⁰⁴ I use the word 'exclusively' as there may be merit in using such categories at the earliest stages of a pupils' RE before they can be problematised later in primary/secondary (Lewin, 2021; Ofsted, 2021b). I agree with Dinham (2021, p. 14) that religious literacy 'resides in an improved quality of conversation about the category of religion and belief, which...[over students' RE experience] irons out all of the muddled binaries and assumptions'.

misleading and therefore no longer tenable (Watson, 2013; Lewin, 2017a); it is 'deficient in taking into account the lived, experienced and personal levels' of belief (Åhs et al., 2019, p. 218). On the other hand, representations of religion and belief as fixed or bounded 'monolithic entities' (Revell, 2008, p. 228) must be challenged. These presentations do not capture the complexity and diversity of the 'real' religion and belief landscape (Åhs et al., 2019; Dinham and Shaw, 2020; Ofsted, 2021b), painting them instead as stereotypical and 'ahistorical, instead of historically contingent and changing phenomena in the lives of individuals' (Åhs et al., 2019, p. 212). Although I agree with Cush (2020, p. 151) that the problematization of monolithic presentations of religion and belief, instigated by the post-secular, constitutes 'an important development' in RE thinking, I acknowledge that we have a lot of critical reflection to undertake as RE practitioners. CoRE's final report (2018), which has stimulated intense reflection amongst the subject community, is one of a long line of attestations which call for the complexity, diversity and plurality of religion and belief to be taken seriously in RE (e.g. Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004; Chater and Erricker, 2013; Ofsted, 2013; Barnes, 2014; Butler-Sloss, 2016); it also continues the frustrating trend of declaring this very point without adequate attention to how this might implicate pedagogy on the chalkface. Indeed, there is a glaring sparsity of research and practical exemplifications to support practitioners in facilitating enquiries which enable pupils to understand the socio-cultural reality of religion and belief. This dearth of support for RE teachers, and subsequent curriculum experience of pupils, is a key driver of this research thesis. I hope the creation and trialling of a parabolic enquiry, which avoids monolithic representations, enables pupils to have a richer encounter (Davis, 2014) with these narratives than currently exist.

4.5.2 Hermeneutics

I contend that richer encounters with religion and belief are enabled through engaging with hermeneutics. Although not new (Wright, 1996; Jackson, 1997), hermeneutical approaches in RE have gained traction and more concentrated deliberation recently, particularly through the work of Robert Bowie (2016; 2020b), Trevor Cooling (2020) and David Aldridge (2015; 2018). Hermeneutics is defined as ‘the art or science of interpretation, concerned with meaning and significance’ (Bowie et al., 2020b). Hermeneutical cogitation often focuses upon ‘human understanding itself as inherently interpretive’ (Panjwani and Revell, 2018, p. 271), but finds its most direct and considered application in the engagement and reception of texts (Jauss, 1982; Gadamer, 2004; Thiselton, 2009). I hold that a hermeneutical approach in RE, which brings to the fore important questions pertaining to *how* texts are read and *why* different interpretations exist, holds significant potential in developing pupils’ epistemic ability. Whilst the basic thrust of this potential is offered below, my view of what hermeneutical approaches might specifically mean for textual and parabolic enquiry will be considered in Section 4.8 and Chapter Five respectively.

Those advocating hermeneutical approaches within RE – myself included – are critical of approaches in the subject which present religion in an essentialized manner. Table 4.2 overviews some of the key denigrations from related literature.

Approach in RE	Criticisms	Key critics
World religions	The world religions approach essentializes religion and belief into monolithic, fixed and timeless entities. As such, it fails to reflect the socio-cultural reality of belief with its diversity and fluid nature.	(Panjwani and Revell, 2018; Åhs et al., 2019; Cooling, 2020; Cooling et al., 2020; Pollefeyt and Richards, 2020; Ofsted, 2021b)
Critical realism	Critical realist approaches can unhelpfully present religiosity as a narrow commitment to propositional terms/truth claims. This reductionism frames enquiries ‘as a matter of true versus false knowledge...[which implies] a transparency of religion, either in terms of religious belief or in terms of its lifeworlds, belying the complexity of religiosity’ (Strhan, 2012, p. 131).	(Strhan, 2012; Franck, 2015; Lewin, 2017a; Bowie and Coles, 2018; Hannam, 2018)
Socio-ethical	Approaches exist within the subject which use religion and belief instrumentally as a means to inculcate Western liberal values. In the process, truth claims of various worldviews are equalised in an attempt to promote community cohesion. A case in point is the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus’ (2007) ‘disposition-based approach’. In this approach, twenty-four ‘dispositions’ or ‘virtues’ act as the focus of units, with pupils enquiring into religious texts and stories in order to ascertain what these stories can teach about virtuous living (Birmingham SACRE, 2007; Felderhof and Thompson, 2014). Although the approach has been credited as an effective model, being ‘consistent with a post-liberal model that reintegrates moral education into religious education’ (Barnes, 2014, p. 230), there is indeed a risk that on the chalkface pupils will merely engage with religious traditions with the view to reflect upon certain dispositions, and will not be given the opportunity to analyse the often competing truth claims of religions.	(Revell, 2008; Aldridge, 2011; Bowie, 2012; Carr, 2012; Chater and Erricker, 2013; Barnes, 2014; Pollefeyt and Richards, 2020)

Table 4.2: an overview of some of the key criticisms of approaches to the subject from theorists advocating hermeneutical approaches in RE

Central to the criticisms in Table 4.2 are that such approaches do ‘not engage adequately with the real religion and belief landscape’ replete with diversity (Cooling et al., 2020, p. 109). All fall short in allowing pupils to encounter and progressively understand the complex and diverse nature of spiritualities present in society, as expressed in my definition of post-secular (non-) religiosity (Chapter Two).

Indeed, I contend that hermeneutical approaches are useful in developing pupils' epistemic ability in RE. At heart, hermeneutics follows the premise that 'everything is a matter of interpretation' (Caputo, 2018, p. 8; Cooling, 2020; Pollefeyt, 2020a).¹⁰⁵ In so doing, it rejects essentialized presentations of religion and belief as misleading, instead inviting pupils to consider a range of authentic expressions of lived religion and belief which recent sociological research (Chapter Two) has identified as complex and diverse in its very nature (Francis and Knott, 2011; Lahav, 2015; Woodhead, 2017; Taves, 2018; Cooling et al., 2020). Encountering authentic expressions can bring to light the 'complex relationship' between the religious and the secular in the lives of individuals (Shaw, 2020, p. 155). Additionally, enquiry into this diversity should go further than merely considering diverse views (for instance, on concepts – such as salvation, God or dharma – or texts); when done well, it presses forward to ask the critical question of *why* diverse ideas exist (Wenell, 2012; Clements, 2014; Panjwani and Revell, 2018). Allowing pupils to engage with a range of perspectives alongside hermeneutical questions will more effectively allow pupils to understand *the complex and diverse nature of post-secular (non-) religiosities, and the plurality of positionalities present in twenty-first century Britain*. Certainly, religion and belief within a hermeneutical approach is not presented as monolithic – neither as an essentialized and timeless entity nor bracketed within neat categories of 'religious' or 'secular' – but as contextual, particular, complex, lived and diverse (Panjwani and Revell, 2018; Freathy and John, 2019; Pollefeyt, 2020a).

¹⁰⁵ This aligns with my ontological and epistemological positionality (see Chapter Six, Section 6.3).

Furthermore, hermeneutical approaches call pupils *and* teachers to be reflexive *upon their own positionality*. Neither students nor practitioners approach the subject matter with a ‘helicopter perspective’ (Pollefeyt, 2020a, p. 3); all engage with classroom enquiries into religion and belief with their own positionality, shaped by their experiences, beliefs and relationships. Core to developing the epistemic ability of pupils is providing opportunities for them to reflect how their positionality influences their encounter with curriculum content (such as *their* reception of texts), as well as space to consider those factors which have influenced their worldview. Considering the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of diverse, authentic expressions of religion and belief can purposefully springboard into such personal reflection, enriching one’s personal knowledge (Ofsted, 2021b). For RE practitioners, it is important that they critically reflect upon how their own positionality influences a myriad of decisions they make in the classroom, including: the subject matter chosen for the lesson; the activities planned and initiated through which pupils are to engage with this content; their perception of successful learning/progress in the light of this engagement; their use of questioning, used to re-inforce, prompt to or further ‘correct’ understanding and more besides. This personal and professional contemplation may bring to light unquestioned assumptions and support teachers in acknowledging the classroom as a ‘hermeneutical space’ (Pollefeyt, 2020b). From my perspective, such a space is a crucible where epistemic ability is developed; here teacher and pupils can think deeply about biblical texts, diverse readings and rich interpretive questions, including how they themselves engage with the text.

Conceiving the classroom as a ‘hermeneutical space’ (Pollefeyt, 2020b) enables one to reflect more purposefully on the ‘textured processes’ (Davis, 2014, p. 21) involved in

teaching and learning in the classroom.¹⁰⁶ Bowie asserts that three facets sit centrally within a ‘hermeneutical realisation in RE’:

1. that all learners are...hermeneuts as they are inextricably connected in their own journeys, with their own experiences, working assumptions or commitments;
2. that religious traditions offer practices in discernment and are not simply deposits of that which has been found or that which is professed, and these practices of discernment are an essential element of study in the curriculum;
3. that teachers and educationalists are...hermeneuts in how they represent or even more fundamentally, frame religion and belief, for example as either concepts and cognitive propositions held up by fragments from sacred texts for deployment to win some argument, or as liturgies of life that facilitate a life of search and following.
(Bowie, 2018, p. 243)

I agree with Bowie (2018, p. 243) that there is ‘a hermeneutical realisation at the heart of RE waiting to be fully appreciated’. Allowing pupils to engage with the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of diversity should be central to a post-secular RE aimed at developing pupils’ epistemic ability. However, hermeneutical approaches require further thinking and practical exemplification, particularly in primary settings (Cooling, 2020). This investigation into hermeneutics has developed my own thinking, and will inform the theorisation and curation of a post-secular parabolic enquiry which aims to give ‘pedagogical shape to a much more expansive encounter with the languages of faith, truth and *meaning-making* (italics my own)’ (Davis, 2014, p. 21). Such an encounter takes seriously the pupil as a hermeneutical agent. A consideration of pupils as reflexive protagonists follows.

¹⁰⁶ Hannam and Biesta (2019) have raised concerns regarding a hermeneutical push in RE. I agree with Cooling (2020, p. 8) that ‘their representation of a hermeneutical approach as instructional, all about understanding the content delivered by the teacher, is flawed’. They fail to account for the hermeneutical interaction which occurs between student, teacher and the subject matter (Aldridge, 2018).

4.6 Pupils as reflexive protagonists

This chapter presents my vision of a post-secular RE which takes *post-secular (non-) religiosity, epistemic ability, pupil agency and a post-secular perception of the child seriously*. In Chapter Three, I argued that the post-secular invites an appreciation of pupils as agents, protagonists who bring their own positionality to their enquiries into religion and belief, individuals whose voice should be valued. In what follows, I consider a number of pedagogical implications taking forward such an appreciation would have, with a particular focus on pupils as hermeneutical agents. This deliberation will ultimately inform the curation of a parabolic enquiry, aimed at enabling pupils to have a richer encounter with these narratives than presently exists in primary RE.

4.6.1 Pupils as hermeneutical agents

My analytical engagement with literature in Chapters Two and Three enriched my understanding of pupils as active, meaning-making agents who each have their own positionality and spiritual identity. In teasing out the pedagogical implications such a perception demands for post-secular RE, the recognition of pupil positionality and agency is central. This applies, firstly, to practitioners; teachers must acknowledge that pupils are not empty, neutral vessels to be filled with knowledge, but agents who bring their own views, perspectives and positionalities to the classroom (Hyde et al., 2010; Bowie, 2018; Pollefeyt and Richards, 2020). Secondly, pupils' epistemic ability is underpinned by *an awareness of their own positionality* – what it is, how it has been shaped, and how it influences (and is influenced by) their enquiries into religion and belief (Larkin et al., 2020). Epistemic ability is

developed as pupils become more reflexive on themselves as individuals who – consciously and/or sub-consciously – have curated and are creating their own bespoke spiritual identity (Smith, 2005; Vattimo and Girard, 2006; Turner, 2012; Golo et al., 2019).¹⁰⁷

An acknowledgement of pupils as hermeneutical agents – from both teachers and pupils – is a linchpin of my pedagogical ruminating which follows in Table 4.3; this table presents what I consider to be the key aspects of a post-secular RE which takes their agency as hermeneuts seriously.

¹⁰⁷ It is worth mentioning here that RE is a significant contributor to pupils' epistemic ability, but not exclusively. Other curriculum subjects, the vision and values of the school and pupil experiences outside of school life also impact upon one's epistemic ability. Due to the myriad of contributing factors, epistemic ability will look different for each pupil.

Pedagogical aspect	Approaches within my envisioning of a post-secular RE which acknowledge pupils as hermeneutical agents	Approaches which do not adequately acknowledge pupils as hermeneutical agents	Key theorists
Pupils are recognised as interpreters – producers of knowledge; their agency is acknowledged and valued	Pupils are recognised as hermeneuts – interpreters and constructors of knowledge and meaning. Each pupil is acknowledged as agentively forming their unique spiritual identity as they negotiate truth claims, personal experiences and their relational networks. In constructing their own identity, pupils exemplify post-secular (non-) religiosity as part of the real religion and belief landscape. Hermeneutical approaches are employed in RE which recognise pupils' positionalities. The teacher provides intentional space and support for students to reflect upon, construct and share their views. An emphasis is placed 'on understanding being about a dialogue between the pupil and the subject matter rather than simply the acquisition of information' (Cooling et al., 2020, p. 10). Furthermore, pupils are viewed as capable agents who construct meaning, and pursue lines of enquiry, through an engagement with the subject matter and others. The pedagogical choices of the practitioner grants space and appropriate scaffolding for pupils to exercise their agency educationally.	Pupils are viewed only as recipients of knowledge; their perspectives, positionalities and interpretive nature are not recognised. Children are considered incomplete with nothing to contribute to the classroom enquiry; they are expected to be present and learn the knowledge which the teacher-as-expert imparts to them – 'passive recipient[s] of an adult culture' (Hyde et al., 2010, p. 1).	(Freire, 1997; Smith, 2005; Hyde et al., 2010; Ridgely, 2012; Davis, 2014; Rappa and Tang, 2017; Woodhead, 2017; Altmeyer, 2018; Ingold, 2018; Taves, 2018; Åhs et al., 2019; Casson and Cooling, 2020; Cooling et al., 2020; Parker, 2021; Kim, 2022)
The teacher facilitates a shared enquiry	In the light of post-secularism, RE grants space for dialogue and engagement with authentic expressions of religion and belief, in a way in which the teacher and pupils enquire together. This shared enquiry, in which the teacher is facilitator and co-enquirer, 'offers pupils [and practitioner] confirmation of their intrinsic value as human beings who have experience and insight to bring to the learning process' (Bellchambers, 2011, p. 50). All are acknowledged to be hermeneutical agents who volitionally construct meaning.	Didactic approaches which fail to acknowledge that pupils are agents with their own views and experiences to share. Consequently, pupils are not granted space to share their perspectives nor have ownership of the enquiry.	(Bellchambers, 2011; Erricker et al., 2011; Aldridge, 2015; Gates, 2015; Bowie, 2016; Ubani, 2018; Alexander, 2020; Kim, 2022)

	This is not to suggest that the ‘teacher as facilitator’ position denigrates the expertise of the practitioner. Teachers should use their expertise, authority and ‘pedagogical repertoire’ (Alexander, 2020) to ‘position students as active agents of meaning making...while attending to curriculum outcomes’ (Kim, 2022, p. 1930).		
Pupils are given space to reflect on their own positionality	A key aspect of my definition of epistemic ability is that the capability of pupils to understand, appreciate, appraise and co-exist harmoniously with others is aided by <i>reflexivity upon one’s own positionality</i>. As such, frequent opportunities should be granted in RE for pupils to reflect upon their own positionality: what it is, what has shaped it and how it influences – and is influenced by – their engagement with subject content. Over time, pupils become more deeply cognizant ‘about the role that pre-understanding and interpretation play in how we as humans understand knowledge’ (Cooling et al., 2020, p. 56). Such reflection is enabled and enriched through examining authentic expressions of religion and belief. By encountering views which differ from one’s own, pupils can become aware of and consider their own perspectives. As Larkin et al. (2020, p. 62) aptly state, ‘pupils explore their own beliefs to become better at learning about religions and worldviews and vice versa’. In addition, such thinking can allow pupils to understand the <i>complex and diverse nature of post-secular (non-) religiosities</i> and thus more efficaciously <i>understand, appreciate, appraise and co-exist harmoniously with others</i>.	No space is given for pupils to reflect upon their own positionality, nor how their subjectivity influences – or is influenced by – their enquiry. Teaching and learning in RE focuses on the beliefs of others only, approached falsely in the view that we can approach enquiries into religion and belief objectively – in a non-biased, neutral way.	(Habermas, 2008; Davis, 2014; Jackson, 2014; Pett, 2018; Freathy and John, 2019; Cooling et al., 2020; Larkin et al., 2020; Pollefeyt, 2020b)

Table 4.3: an overview of the key pedagogical implications which recognising pupils’ as hermeneutical agents has for post-secular RE

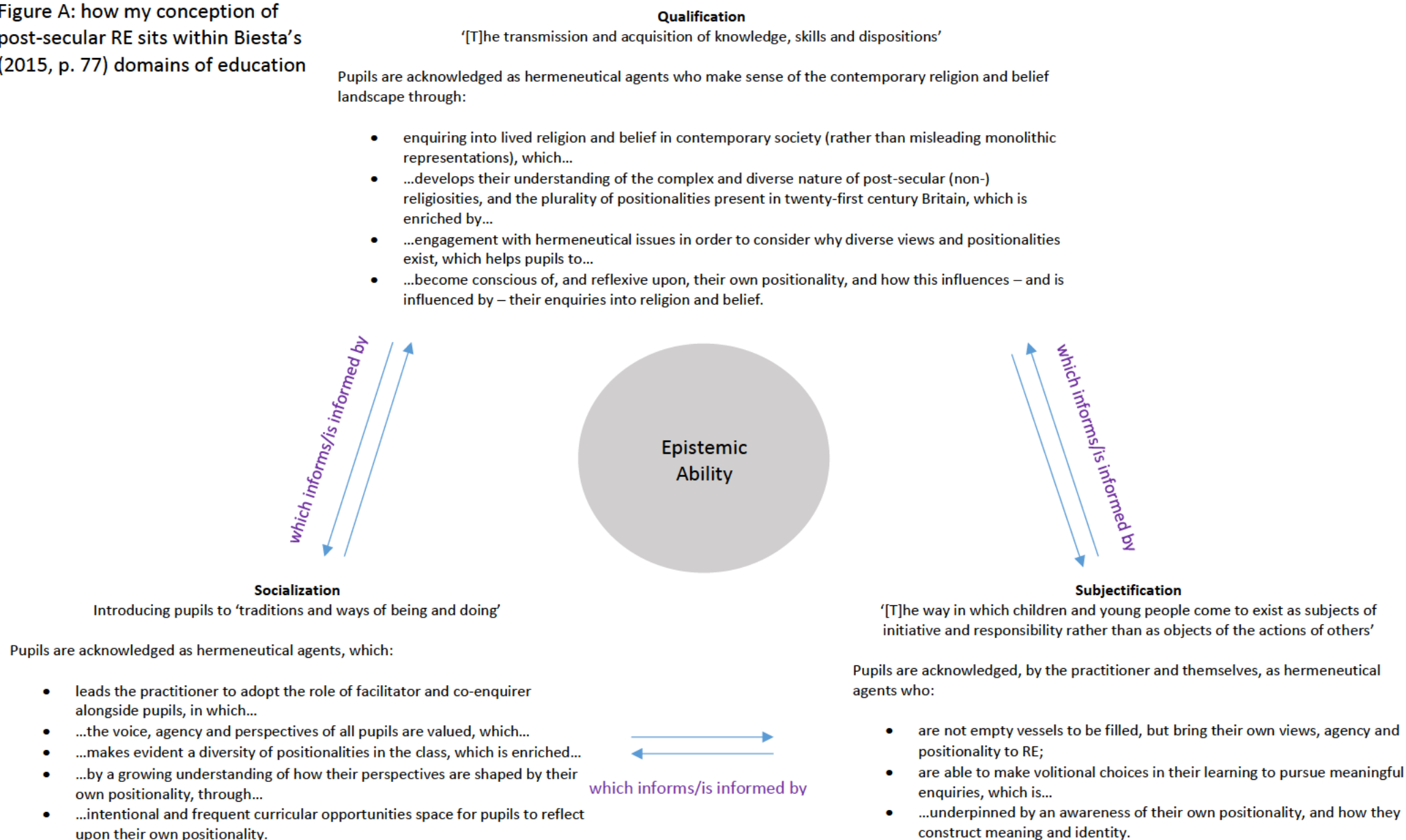
My envisioning of post-secular RE holds the pedagogical approaches outlined in Table 4.3 as interlaced. The positioning of students as hermeneutical agents influences all aspects of teaching and learning; rich opportunities for pupils' understanding of themselves and others would be missed if a practitioner recognised pupil positionality and agency yet did not tailor the intended or enacted curriculum toward this. Following my consideration of pupil agency in Chapter Three, it is important to note that such a 'hermeneutical space' (Pollefeyt, 2020b), in which pupils can exercise their agency as hermeneuts in RE within a shared enquiry, is mediated and enabled through the intentionality and skill of the practitioner as well as wider contextual factors.¹⁰⁸

4.6.2 Post-secular RE and Biesta's domains: preliminary considerations

Before proceeding to consider dialogic learning and textual enquiry, it is worth pausing to consider how my vision of post-secular RE proffered so far sits within Biesta's (2015; 2017) domains of education. As noted in Section 4.4, Biesta (2017, p. 28) contends that education always operates in relation to the three domains of qualification, socialization and subjectification, which are interrelated within 'educational endeavours' towards a particular purpose. Figure A presents my thoughts as to how each domain is implicated by a post-secular RE aimed at developing pupils' epistemic ability.

¹⁰⁸ Chapter Three, Section 3.4.2, Table 3.1, pp. 63-64.

Figure A: how my conception of post-secular RE sits within Biesta's (2015, p. 77) domains of education



As can be seen in Figure A, there exists a synergy between each domain as *post-secular (non-) religiosity* and *pupils as hermeneutical agents* are taken seriously. I hold this synergy to hold great potential in developing pupils' epistemic ability, a crucial endeavour which allows students to understand, navigate, be reflexive and flourish within contemporary society replete with diverse positionalities. This conceptualisation of post-secular RE presents an original contribution to scholarship and the RE community which I hope – through its enactment (trialling and practical exemplification) – will enrich deliberations on how the subject is theorised and practised.

I remain mindful that a key aspect underpinning this conception is pupil cognisance of their own positionality. Although self-awareness of pupils has long been espoused within the RE community (Grimmitt, 1987; Jackson, 1997; Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004), how primary-aged pupils can identify their own worldview and contemplate what has influenced it remains an area requiring further research, championing and practical exemplification to support practitioners in providing such intentional curricular opportunities. Allowing pupils to reflect upon their positionality is no mean feat; one's worldview is often formed by 'deeply-held, unquestioned beliefs and taken-for-granted ways of behaving' (Cooling et al., 2020, p. 28), 'may or may not be clear, coherent...or consciously held' (Larkin et al., 2020, p. 41) and is evolving (Bullivant et al., 2019; Golo et al., 2019; Larkin et al., 2020). Some, including Barnes (2022), even question whether primary-aged pupils are even cognitively capable of reflexively considering their own or others' positionality. Au fait with these standpoints, I maintain that effective RE allows pupils to consider how their unique positionality influences – and is influenced by – their enquiries

into religion and belief.¹⁰⁹ My post-secular parabolic enquiry will approach this pedagogical challenge in the primary setting through drawing upon the theoretical bases of post-secular (non-) religiosity and pupil agency (see Chapter Six, Sections 6.6 – 6.8) considered thus far.

4.7 Dialogic Learning

Dialogic learning is a key pedagogical tool in developing pupils' epistemic ability. With my argument that RE has a significant – but as yet unfulfilled – role in allowing students to understand, navigate and flourish within the modern world replete with diversity, it is critical that pupils are equipped to have 'balanced and well-informed conversations about religion and belief' (Chipperton et al., 2018a, p. 1). So far in this chapter, I have asserted the importance of accurate and authentic representations of religion and belief (Section 4.5) and pupils as reflexive protagonists (Section 4.6) within my vision of a post-secular RE directed towards the development of pupils' epistemic ability. I will now advocate the instrumental place of dialogic learning as a pedagogical tool towards such an end.¹¹⁰

But first, what is to be understood by 'dialogue'? Pondering the Greek roots of *dia-* ('through' or 'across') and *-logos* ('discourse', 'speech' or 'reason'), Phillipson and Wegerif (2020, p. 32) note how dialogue encompasses more than an interaction between two individuals. The more meaningful question to consider when envisioning dialogic learning in post-secular RE is 'what is it that people are speaking or reasoning across or through?'

¹⁰⁹ This has clear resonances with Ofsted's (2021b) 'personal knowledge'.

¹¹⁰ There are many useful introductions to dialogic learning (e.g. Skidmore and Murakami, 2016; Alexander, 2020; Manalo, 2020) which detail its utility more broadly; I am focussing on why I perceive it to be efficacious for the development of epistemic ability.

(Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020, pp. 32-33). In clarifying my own position, I draw upon the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer (1975/2004)¹¹¹, Ricoeur (1990/1992)¹¹², Barnes (2002) and Aldridge (2015). Rich enquiries in post-secular RE enable pupils to encounter a myriad of views within a shared enquiry; these include those presented within the subject matter and those of others (e.g. peers and the teacher) (Aldridge, 2015). In so doing, pupils experience alterity – positionalities which differ from their own. This experience is key. Encountering different standpoints can – and should – be used catalytically to allow pupils to reason ‘across the difference between perspectives’ (Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020, p. 33). Epistemic ability would develop as students grow in *understanding* and *appreciation* of others’ views and *why* such difference exists. Not only does dialogue allow different perspectives to emerge within a shared enquiry, it also allows pupils to:

acknowledge and respond to other perspectives; to seek to understand them, to be sensitive to the differences between them and one’s own understandings; and to use these differences as a resource to generate new perspectives and to achieve richer understandings of ideas and of other people. (Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020, p. 33)

Through a Ricoeurian lens, it is by encountering others that one understands oneself better (Ricoeur, 1992). This virtuous, hermeneutical spiral is increasingly recognised and advocated within RE literature; dialogue across difference allows pupils to understand others, which enriches understanding of self, and vice versa (Boeve, 2012; Freathy and Freathy, 2013; Jackson, 2014; Aldridge, 2015; Larkin et al., 2020). Put more explicitly, encountering alterity within a dialogic space allows pupils to:

¹¹¹ *Truth and Method* was originally published by Sheed & Ward (London) in English in 1975. This offered a translation of Gadamer’s 1960 work. I consult the 2004 publication from Continuum (second, revised edition).

¹¹² Originally published in French in 1990, I consult the first English translation (1992) by Kathleen Blamey.

- become aware of their own positionality and contemplate their own views;
- consider how to best articulate their views to be understood by others (a significant conceptual task in its own right); and
- attempt to respond 'to others sufficiently to be able to seek clarification, articulate difference and...[refine] perceptions of self and other' (Castelli, 2012, p. 209)

Such dialogue is a necessary part of developing pupils' epistemic ability. Through encountering difference within a shared enquiry, pupils can be *reflexive upon one's own positionality* and attempt to communicate their perspective within *shared discourse*. Not only is pupil understanding of self and other enriched as they 'question, listen, reflect, reason...[and] discuss' (Alexander, 2006b, p. 5) ideas, such reflexive discourse is a purposeful springboard into harmonious co-existence with others.

4.7.1 Aldridge's 'Educational Triangle'

This conception of dialogic learning (with emphases on reflexivity and shared discourse) resonates strongly with Habermas' (2006; 2008) conception of epistemic ability and my own. The notion points towards multi-dimensional relational, hermeneutical events in the RE classroom, an understanding of which I am indebted to the educational triangle of Aldridge (2015). This is shown in Figure B.

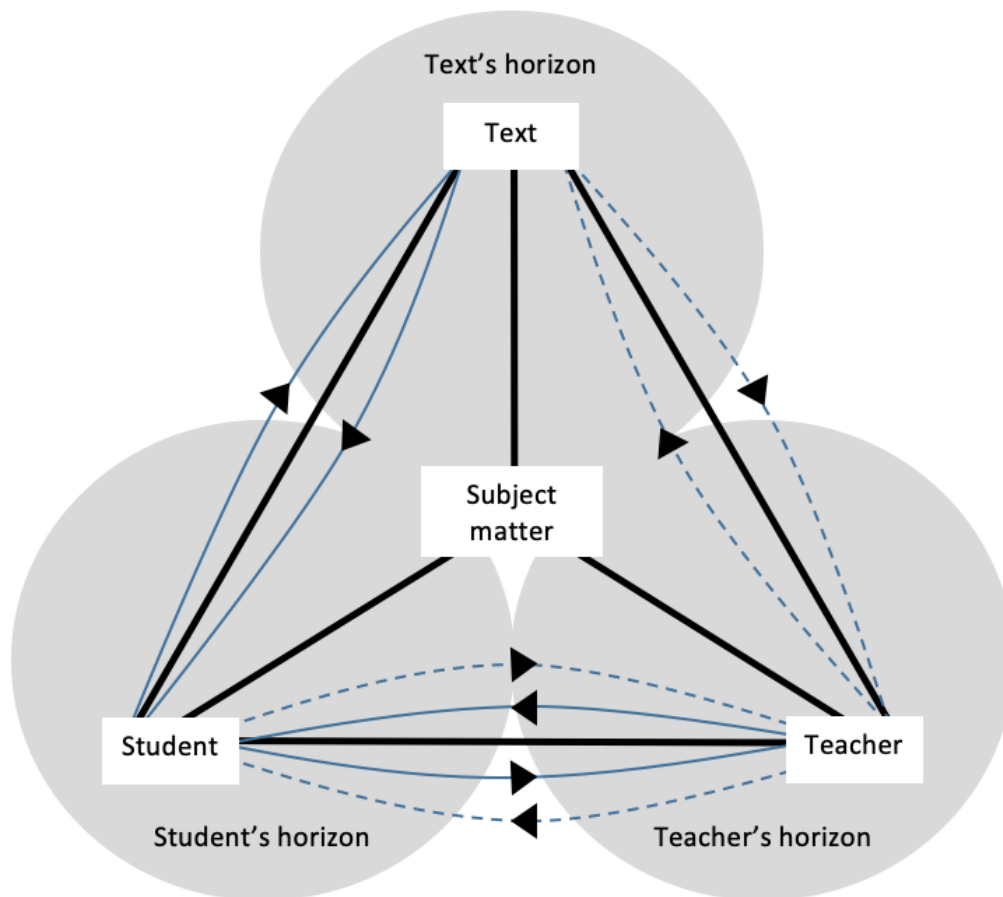


Figure B: Aldridge's (2015) 'Educational Triangle'

Drawing on the philosophical hermeneutics of Heidegger and Gadamer – particularly the latter's 'fusion of horizons' (Gadamer, 2004) – Aldridge (2015) holds that understanding takes place in the RE classroom through a dialogical interaction between text¹¹³, teacher and student. Within learning enquiries, both teacher and student bring their understanding of the text into dialogue, in which both parties seek to understand the other. The horizons between the student and text, teacher and text, and student and teacher all lead to an event where the latter each project 'his or her anticipatory understanding, and finds it

¹¹³ Aldridge (2015, p. 120) specifies that this is not necessarily a text per se, but rather denotes 'collectively the object of study, lesson stimulus or content – whatever, in short, is placed directly before the student by the teacher'.

transformed, in the to-and-fro of classroom interaction' (p. 122). This mutual 'belonging' to the subject matter leads student and teacher to arrive at a new orientation 'towards the world in a related way' (p. 125); a 'unified ontological movement has occurred' in which the 'interests' of each horizon is 'taken seriously' (pp. 127-128).¹¹⁴

Broadening Aldridge's educational triangle to encompass student-student interactions allows his conception to be beneficial for my own envisioning of post-secular RE directed towards the development of epistemic ability.¹¹⁵ Firstly, the dialogical interactions which occur, as practitioner and pupils engage with the subject matter and each other, allow all to encounter *a plurality of positionalities*. Not only is such an encounter with alterity critical in allowing pupils to *understand* others and the reality of *complex and diverse* perspectives, it stimulates reflection *upon one's own positionality* (Ricoeur, 1992; Jackson, 2014; Freathy and Davis, 2018; Larkin et al., 2020). It helps students understand that there is no neutral position; their positionality enables and colours their personal dialogue with the subject matter and others (Gadamer, 2004; Cooling et al., 2020; Larkin et al., 2020). Secondly, dialogical interaction requires pupils and practitioner to bring their positionality and experiences into *shared discourse*. All within the classroom can utilise language so that it has a dual function, 'to understand and to be understood by other members of the group'

¹¹⁴ This my copy of Aldridge's 'educational triangle' which he presents on p. 121. The dialogical interaction between text, teacher and student are represented by the black lines from which the subject matter emerges. The solid and dotted blue lines emanating between student-text and teacher-text respectively pertain to the hermeneutical circle in play here (i.e. their understanding of the horizon of the text). The dialogic situation of the learning event is shown through the use of the same blue lines between student-teacher. Here, both bring their understanding of the text and each other in the 'to-and-fro of classroom interaction' (2015, p. 122) in an attempt to understand each other.

¹¹⁵ The absence of the student-student interaction within this 'diagrammatic depiction' and subsequent pedagogical ruminating is a limitation Aldridge (2015, p. 129) himself acknowledges.

(Ipgrave, 2013b, p. 43).¹¹⁶ Such conscious use of language to communicate with others links closely to Habermas' (2006; 2008) conception of epistemic ability. Thirdly, speaking and reasoning across/through diversity within a shared enquiry also acknowledges pupils as hermeneutical agents (Hyde et al., 2010; Davis, 2014; Bowie, 2018; Kirby, 2020; Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020). Pupils are viewed (and, hopefully, view themselves and each other) as protagonists in their learning with valuable perspectives and experiences to share (Davis, 2014; Jackson, 2014). In relating to and seeking to understand others, pupils will develop their epistemic ability as they agentively negotiate truth claims, personal experiences and their relational networks within the classroom (Buber, 1958; Hervieu-Léger, 1999; Ridgely, 2012; Oswell, 2013; Adams, 2014; Lynch, 2016; Ingold, 2018).

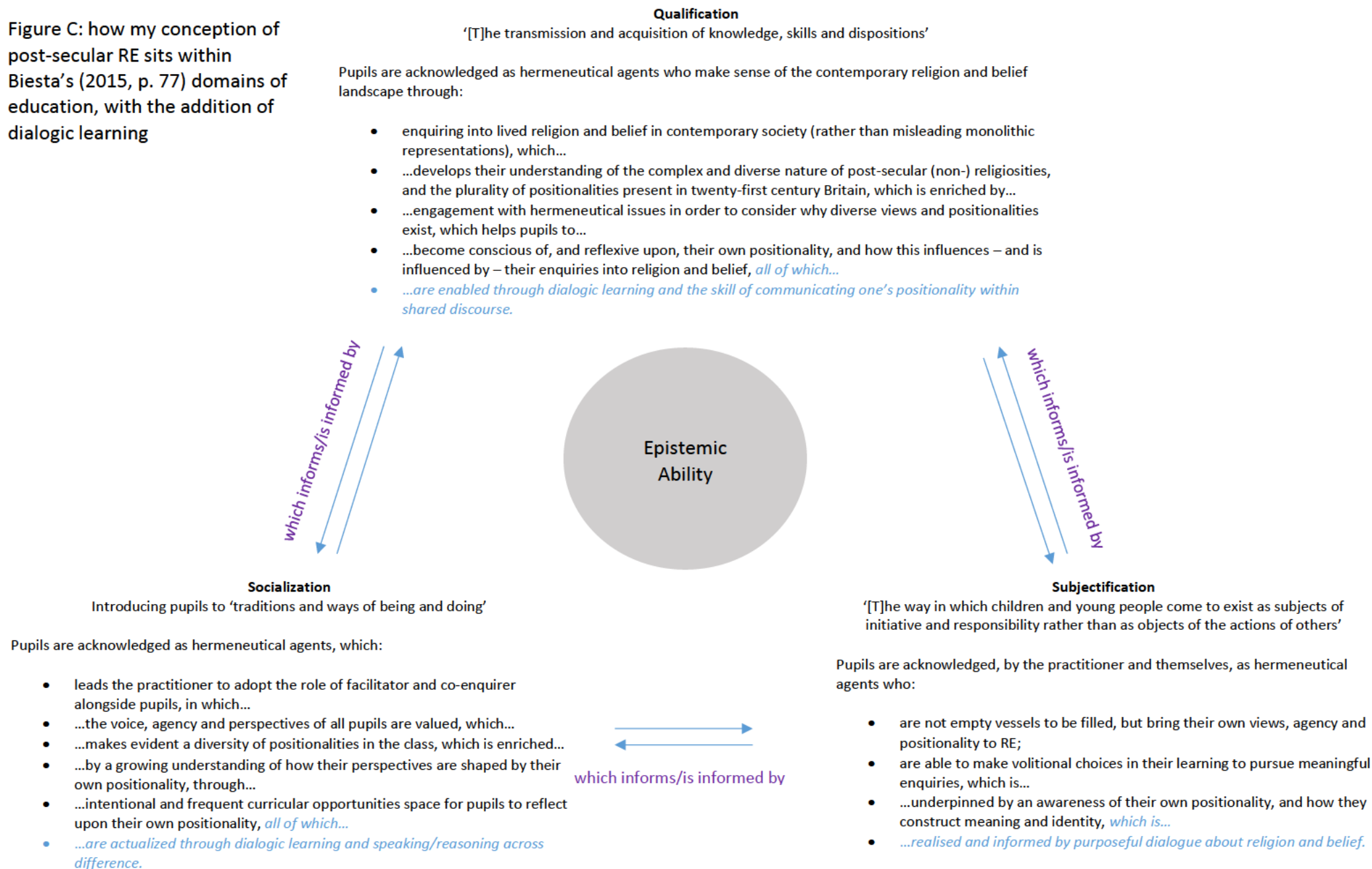
4.7.2 Wider ruminations on dialogic learning

Purposeful dialogue, as conceptualised above, does not occur by happenstance; it requires a plethora of constituent parts to coalesce so that pupils' epistemic ability can be developed (see Appendix One). Enabling this hermeneutical, co-operative space where pupils and practitioner engage with their own and others' perspectives is apposite for post-secular RE (Castelli, 2012; Alexander, 2015; Biesta et al., 2019). Speaking and reasoning across/through diversity grants rich opportunities for pupils to develop their epistemic ability, equipping pupils to understand, live well and harmoniously with others, 'preparing them for future encounters with difference' (Ipgrave, 2003, p. 137). Furthermore, through providing this 'reflexive engagement with plurality' (Shaw, 2022), dialogic learning champions agency

¹¹⁶ Although Ipgrave (2013b) observed this dual functionality of language within interviews, I contend this use of language is also employed in the classroom.

through a ‘pedagogical and epistemic stance that together foreground and explicitly signal the empowerment of the student as speaker, thinker, reasoner, learner and evaluator’ (Alexander, 2020, p. 119). Figure C presents a revised overview of how each of Biesta’s (2015) domains are enriched by dialogic learning as conceptualised above; additions are italicised in blue.

Figure C: how my conception of post-secular RE sits within Biesta's (2015, p. 77) domains of education, with the addition of dialogic learning



This understanding of post-secular RE – enhanced by a championing of dialogic learning as a pedagogical tool – will purposefully inform a parabolic enquiry designed to allow pupils to consider the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretive diversity. Further pedagogical considerations pertaining to dialogic learning within this parabolic enquiry will be detailed in Chapter Six. Next, I turn to the final aspect to be considered within my own conception of post-secular RE – textual enquiry.

4.8 Textual Enquiry

Within this chapter, I have so far reflected deeply upon two questions:

- 1) What would RE look like if post-secular (non-) religiosity, epistemic ability, pupil agency and a post-secular perception of the child was taken seriously?*
- 2) And what would this mean for the curation of a parabolic enquiry which enables a ‘more expansive encounter’ (Davis, 2014, p. 21) with these narratives than presently occurs, one which allows pupils to consider the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretive diversity?*

Following consideration of the representation of religion and belief (Section 4.5), pupils as reflexive protagonists (Section 4.6) and dialogic learning (Section 4.7), I conclude this chapter with a deliberation on how my vision for post-secular RE implicates textual enquiry. I will argue that post-secularism – and the need to develop pupils’ epistemic ability – calls the RE community to look afresh at textual enquiry in the primary setting in a way which brings rich hermeneutical possibilities and questions to the fore. This key thinking will act as a springboard for an analysis of parabolic scholarship and related curriculum resources in

Chapter Five, and ultimately inform the curation and trial of a parabolic enquiry for UKS2 pupils (Chapters Six–Nine).

4.8.1 Textual enquiry and the development of epistemic ability

Within the contemporary post-secular religion and belief landscape replete with diversity (Chapter Two), it is critical that pupils, through the enacted curriculum in RE, progressively understand that there are (and will continue to be) diverse interpretations of texts and come to terms with factors behind such variance. It is my argument that this growing recognition will support pupils' epistemic ability; engaging with the 'what' and 'why' of interpretation will help students *understand, appreciate, appraise and co-exist harmoniously with others*. Such engagement can play a significant part in helping pupils to understand, navigate and flourish within the modern world.

However, I have been perennially concerned, when exploring publications and curriculum exemplifications in RE as a teacher, researcher and adviser, by the presence of paltry enquiries which seriously limit engagement with biblical texts. I am not alone in this concern; Table 4.4 outlines some of the key denigrations directed towards poor textual enquiry in RE.

Limiting examples of textual enquiry in RE		Key theorists
Exclusivism	Assumes that there is a 'right' interpretation; ergo, others are 'wrong'. As such, it fails to acknowledge that there are diverse interpretations. Furthermore, it raises the question of power – who says this is the 'right' interpretation and on what grounds?	(Pollefeyt and Richards, 2020)
Predetermination	Predetermination has strong links to exclusivism. Here biblical texts are used within theme or topic-based RE 'as the instrument of the curriculum, relegated to a position where its role is to prove or validate the content' (Carswell, 2018b, p. 216). Texts are selected and utilized by practitioners on the basis that they link to the theme of the unit; as the theme is known by pupils, 'what the passage means defaults to that assumed by the theme' (Carswell, 2018b, p. 217). As a result of this, opportunities for pupils to consider their own interpretations and a wider range of hermeneutical, interpretive issues are stymied. Perhaps predetermination is influenced by the 'current educational obsession with outcomes and assessment' (Carswell, 2018a, p. 296) in which enquiries operate within narrow boundaries of 'successful reading' in an attempt to evidence understanding and progress. This is a complex and significant area which I shall further contemplate with regards to parabolic enquiry in Chapter Five.	(Pollefeyt and Bieringer, 2005; Davis, 2014; Aldridge, 2015; Briggs, 2017; Carswell, 2018a; 2018b)
Instrumental use of texts	Biblical texts are used instrumentally as a vehicle to promote particular values. In so doing, engagement with interpretations from within the religious tradition in which the text is used are often absent. I contend that helping pupils to live well with one another is better enabled through them understanding the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity, rather than through meagre enquiries which reduce rich texts to a value to takeaway.	(Aldridge, 2011; Chater and Erricker, 2013; Watson, 2013)
Fragmentation	Texts can be used in a fragmentary manner, such as proof texting, where excerpts are employed (sometimes out of context) to back up or make a particular point. Such practice neglects the rich hermeneutical possibilities of the subject matter, notably how different people 'may engage with texts in different ways' (Bowie and Coles, 2018, p. 1).	(Bowie and Coles, 2018)

Table 4.4: an overview of some of the key denigrations of poor textual enquiry in RE

In a post-secular RE directed towards the development of pupils' epistemic ability, all of the practices above are problematic. Urgently required is an intentional move away from misleading encounters with biblical text which essentially tell pupils how they should read it; these are superficial enquiries which are in substance little more than 'Guess what's inside the teacher's head?' (Kohn, 2005).¹¹⁷ Instead, biblical text enquiries would be enriched by richer encounters (Davis, 2014) than presently occur, ones which allow pupils to consider the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity. Such enquiries would take seriously pupil agency and positionality, enabling pupils to engage with a myriad of readings and interpretive issues and reason through the question '*How do you read it?*'.

4.8.2 Disciplinarity in RE: epistemic ability and hermeneutical approaches to text

How best theorise and enable these richer encounters (Davis, 2014) with biblical texts in post-secular RE? As previously mentioned,¹¹⁸ curriculum deliberations in England are increasingly focussed upon subject-specific substantive and disciplinary knowledge (Young et al., 2014; Russell, 2016; Nichol, 2017; Chipperton et al., 2018a; Counsell, 2018; Doull et al., 2019; Bowie et al., 2020b); following Ofsted's RE research review (2021b), discourse within the RE subject community has also centred upon personal knowledge. These three types of knowledge are best seen as synergistically interlinked, not separate. With the development of my argument regarding substantive¹¹⁹ and personal knowledge, as

¹¹⁷ Such encounters may also be indicative of the impact of accountability and comparability in English education. Teachers may feel time-pressed to 'cover' a curriculum in a way which demonstrates that pupils know and remember more (Ofsted, 2019; Kirby, 2020).

¹¹⁸ Chapter Three, Section 3.4.2; Chapter Four, Section 4.3.2.

¹¹⁹ That is, that the substance of the RE curriculum pupils engage with should help them to progressively understand the real religion and belief landscape (Dinham and Shaw, 2020).

pertaining to epistemic ability, proffered in Sections 4.5 – 4.7, I now turn towards disciplinary knowledge. Specifically, I argue that the discipline of hermeneutics (as derived from biblical scholarship) holds rich potential to develop pupils’ epistemic ability. Not only is hermeneutics seen as a discipline in its own right (Aldridge, 2015; Bowie, 2016), it can also enrich the disciplines of theology and philosophy present within the widely used ‘balanced RE’ framework (Chipperton et al., 2018a).¹²⁰ My thinking here will ultimately inform a parabolic enquiry trialled with UKS2 pupils, a timely and needed piece of empirical research which utilises a research-informed, disciplinary approach which the Ofsted (2021b) research review calls for.

4.8.2.1 The discipline of biblical hermeneutics

Recent years have seen numerous voices in the RE community advocate the utility of biblical text scholarship within the subject (Carswell, 2018b; CoRE, 2018; Bowie et al., 2020b; Ofsted, 2021b). Uniting them is the call that biblical texts can be handled ‘hermeneutically’ (Bowie et al., 2020b, p. 3). Simply put, a biblical text (the substantive content) can be enquired into using ‘interpretive tools’, methods and questions specific to the discipline of hermeneutics (Ofsted, 2021b, para. 108). Just as pupils learn to reason as historians in history (Russell, 2016; Doull et al., 2019) and as scientists in science (Counsell, 2018), pupils can develop their reasoning (and disciplinary knowledge), over time, as biblical text scholars (Bowie et al., 2020b; Ofsted, 2021b). Certainly, drawing upon the tradition of enquiry within biblical text scholarship could be useful in helping pupils to consider the

¹²⁰ Overviewed in Section 4.3.2.

‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretive diversity. With my present interest in parabolic enquiries, it will be fruitful to consider some key aspects of biblical hermeneutics within parabolic scholarship and their potential efficacy within post-secular RE.

To begin such consideration, I turn to Gadamer’s (2004) ‘fusion of horizons’, a conception which has significantly influenced my thinking. For Gadamer, understanding takes place between the meeting of two horizons – the *horizon of the text* and the *horizon of the reader*. The horizon of the text refers to the text itself; its words, structure, and aspects pertaining to its own situated-ness such as authorial intent and the context from which it emerged (its historical horizon). However, texts are inert until read. When we approach texts in an attempt to make sense of them and their historical horizon, we are unable to do so with a *tabula rasa*; we are historically and culturally conditioned beings. Our prejudices, prior understandings and experiences – our horizon as readers – constitute an enabling and limiting ‘element in the act of understanding’ (Gadamer, 2004, p. 301). With meaning being constructed within this text-reader dialogue, Gadamer stresses that the horizon of both text and reader should be taken seriously; we should attempt to see the historical horizon of a text ‘in its own terms’, whilst being attentive to the ways our unique ‘historically effected consciousness’ colours how we interpret texts and our attempts to understand the historical conditions from which the text emerged and its original purpose/s (Gadamer, 2004, p. 302). Unless we are aware of the ‘efficacy of history...in all understanding...[a] deformation of knowledge’ occurs (Gadamer, 2004, p. 300).

I contend that biblical text enquiries which attend earnestly to each horizon bears rich potential in helping pupils progressively understand the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretive

diversity. Indeed, such enquiries would transcend those picayune occurrences in which either the text or pupils are side-lined as only one horizon is ascribed value (Aldridge, 2015; Briggs, 2017). Instead, it takes seriously the world of the text *as well as* the agency and positionality of pupils in meaning-making. Pursuing Gadamer's horizons further within biblical text scholarship, I am drawn towards the classification of specifically New Testament scholarship outlined by Gooder (2008); she categorises interpretative endeavours according to whether they focus on aspects *behind*, *within* or *in front* of the text. Table 4.5 outlines some of the main aspects pertaining to each focus, drawing on wider literature.

Focus of interpretation		Types of criticism (Gooder, 2008)	Key theorists
Behind the text	Those looking <i>behind the text</i> are interested in exploring the historical horizon out of which a text emerged – ‘the journey taken from the original event to the text reaching its final form’ (Gooder, 2008, p. xix). Areas of exploration include: • authorship and authorial intent • historical context • reliability of the text and sources drawn upon • the community the text was written for • the setting	Historical criticism, social science criticism, form criticism, source criticism, redaction criticism	(Ricoeur, 1981; Vanhoozer, 2005; Gooder, 2008)
Within the text	Those enquiring <i>within the text</i> wish to ‘understand better the final form of the text’ (Gooder, 2008, p. xix). Such explorations are less interested in the historical horizon of the text or the reader. Focus is placed, within such literary approaches, on aspects such as vocabulary, composition/structure, genre of text and devices employed.	Textual criticism, translation theory, canonical criticism, rhetorical criticism, narrative criticism, structural criticism, poststructural criticism	(Gooder, 2008)
In front of the text	<i>In front of the text</i> considerations strive to ‘understand the way in which the context of the...reader affects interpretation’ (Gooder, 2008, p. xviii).	Reception history, theological interpretation, reader-response criticism, feminist criticism, queer criticism, liberation criticism, socio-political criticism, black criticism, postcolonial criticism, Asian criticism, ecological criticism	(Vanhoozer, 2005; Gooder, 2008)

Table 4.5: an overview of the behind, within and in front of the text interpretive approaches

I propose that exploring hermeneutical issues *behind* (horizon of the text) and *in front of* the text (horizon of the reader) will help pupils to more efficaciously understand the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretive diversity.¹²¹ It will support students’ awareness of the significance of both text and reader in interpretation, and open the doors to rich hermeneutical thinking as the text-reader dialogue is critically examined. Such examination would include how different individuals and communities have interpreted biblical texts, as well as opportunities for pupils to reflexively consider their personal horizon and *how they read the text*. The potential merits of focusing on the text-reader dialogue has started to fruitfully inform both rumination (Carswell, 2018b; Panjwani and Revell, 2018; Pett and Cooling, 2018; Bowie et al., 2020b) and practical exemplification (RE Today, 2016) in RE. Certainly, such moves are purposeful in helping students to understand the concept and impact of worldviews (Bowie, 2020b; Section 2.5). Although these are significant and positive moves in developing pupils’ epistemic ability, I shall argue (Chapter Five) that opportunities remain missed in primary curriculum materials to allow pupils to consider the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of diverse parabolic readings. Furthermore, questions remain as to what age and stage is appropriate into introduce pupils to various hermeneutical issues within biblical text scholarship within a progressive primary curriculum. This is an area requiring further research and thinking as a RE community. My research makes an important contribution here, which I hope will prompt further deliberation.

¹²¹ With closer ties to Gadamer’s (2004) fusion of horizons, I shall focus on behind (historical-critical approaches) and in front (reader-response) in this research thesis; interpretive endeavours pertaining to ‘within’ the text have a limited application this particular post-secular parabolic enquiry aimed at developing epistemic ability. These hermeneutical approaches will be considered in greater detail with regards to parabolic scholarship in Chapter Five.

4.8.2.2 Aldridge, Biesta and the discipline of biblical scholarship

It is fruitful, at this juncture, to return to my literature-informed understanding of dialogic learning outlined in Section 4.7. I have noted a synopticity between the discipline of biblical text scholarship and Aldridge's (2015) educational triangle (Figure B) – both draw on the hermeneutical insights of Gadamer to raise pertinent questions regarding the text-reader dialogue. My analysis of biblical text scholarship (Table 4.5) has enriched my understanding of the *text's horizon* within Aldridge's diagrammatic depiction; biblical text enquiries in primary RE should progressively allow pupils to consider aspects *behind* these narratives. This integrative development of thought enriches my view of dialogic learning within post-secular RE: epistemic ability would be developed as students agentively reason across/through hermeneutical issues pertaining to the text-reader dialogue as emerging from the discipline of biblical text scholarship (Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020). Such enquiries would provide a richer encounter (Davis, 2014) with biblical texts (such as the parables) than the paltry, transmission-based examples identified in Table 4.4 (Ingold, 2018). In so doing, these encounters would contribute meaningfully towards pupils' developing substantive, disciplinary and personal knowledge (Ofsted, 2021b).¹²²

Additionally, drawing more intentionally upon biblical text scholarship would not only advance pupils' epistemic ability, but also enrich the increasingly used 'balanced RE' framework aimed at developing students' religious literacy (Chipperton et al., 2018a). In

¹²² Indeed, in Chapter Three (Section 3.4.2), I pondered agency and the contextual factor of the subject. I agree with Stroupe et al. (2018) that disciplinarity and agency are closely linked; pupils will more likely engage with disciplinary practices if their voice and agency is valued. In acknowledging pupils as *agentive hermeneuts*, RE can further develop students' ability as *agentive hermeneuts*; agency here is both a 'process' and a 'goal' (Stenalt and Lassen, 2022, p. 653) towards religious literacy and epistemic ability.

Section 4.3.2, I proposed that the inclusion of more explicitly hermeneutical questions within this disciplinary framework would more purposefully allow pupils to understand the ‘what’ *and* ‘why’ of interpretive textual diversity. Drawing these hermeneutical questions from biblical scholarship would be profitable toward such an end. Pupils would be able to more efficaciously hold ‘balanced and well-informed conversations about religion and belief’ (Chipperton et al., 2018a) through exercising – and exploring – their agency as they wrestle with a rich array of hermeneutical issues (Biesta and Tedder, 2006; Sorbring and Kuczynski, 2018). Post-secular textual enquiries, so conceived, would contribute more significantly to pupils’ understanding of society and self through exploring issues of diversity which are not yet present within the ‘balanced RE’ framework. Following my development of thought here, I am now ready, in Figure D, to share my own view of how post-secular textual enquiries in RE are understood around Biesta’s (2015) domains of education; additions are again italicised and in blue.

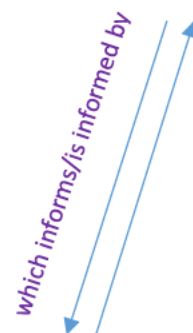
Figure D: how my conception of post-secular RE sits within Biesta's (2015, p. 77) domains of education, with my additions following an engagement with biblical text scholarship

Qualification

'[T]he transmission and acquisition of knowledge, skills and dispositions'

Pupils are acknowledged as hermeneutical agents who make sense of the contemporary religion and belief landscape through:

- enquiring into lived religion and belief in contemporary society (rather than misleading monolithic representations), which...
- ...develops their understanding of the complex and diverse nature of post-secular (non-) religiosities, and the plurality of positionalities present in twenty-first century Britain, which is enriched by...
- ...engagement with hermeneutical issues (*including those drawn from biblical text scholarship*) in order to consider why diverse views and positionalities exist, which helps pupils to...
- ...become conscious of, and reflexive upon, their own positionality, and how this influences – and is influenced by – their enquiries into religion and belief, all of which...
- ...are enabled through dialogic learning and the skill of communicating one's positionality within shared discourse.

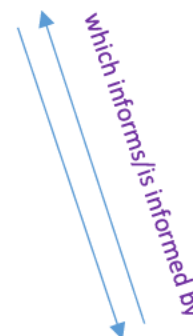
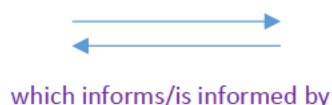
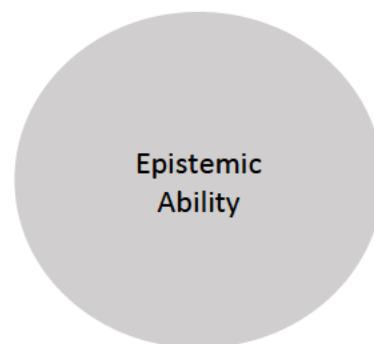


Socialization

Introducing pupils to 'traditions and ways of being and doing'

Pupils are acknowledged as hermeneutical agents, which:

- leads the practitioner to adopt the role of facilitator and co-enquirer alongside pupils, in which...
- ...the voice, agency and perspectives of all pupils are valued, which...
- ...makes evident a diversity of positionalities in the class, which is enriched...
- ...by a growing understanding of how their perspectives are shaped by their own positionality, through...
- ...intentional and frequent curricular opportunities space for pupils to reflect upon their own positionality, all of which...
- ...are actualized through dialogic learning and *engagement with hermeneutical issues (e.g. from the discipline of biblical text scholarship) to inform speaking/reasoning across difference.*



Subjectification

'[T]he way in which children and young people come to exist as subjects of initiative and responsibility rather than as objects of the actions of others'

Pupils are acknowledged, by the practitioner and themselves, as hermeneutical agents who:

- are not empty vessels to be filled, but bring their own views, agency and positionality to RE;
- are able to make volitional choices in their learning to pursue meaningful enquiries, which is...
- ...underpinned by an awareness of their own positionality, and how they construct meaning and identity, which is...
- ...realised and informed by purposeful dialogue about religion and belief and engagement with hermeneutical issues.

4.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, my critical evaluation led to the development of a novel vision of post-secular RE. This new development followed analytic deliberation upon two questions:

- 1) *What would RE look like if post-secular (non-) religiosity, epistemic ability, pupil agency and a post-secular perception of the child were taken seriously?*
- 2) *And what would this mean for the curation of a parabolic enquiry which enables a 'more expansive encounter' (Davis, 2014, p. 21) with these narratives than presently occurs, one which allows pupils to consider the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity?*

Pursuing these questions led me to contemplate four key areas: the representation of religion and belief (Section 4.5), pupils as reflexive protagonists (Section 4.6), dialogic learning (Section 4.7) and textual enquiry (Section 4.8). Although my developing vision of post-secular RE is more comprehensively described through Biesta's (2015) domains in Figure D, my key arguments are:

- representations of religion and belief should allow pupils to progressively understand the 'real' religion and belief landscape, rather than one 'imagined' and inaccurately taught through essentialized and monolithic representations (Dinham and Shaw, 2020);
- hermeneutical approaches hold promise in allowing pupils to understand the complex and diverse nature of post-secular (non-) religiosities and the plurality of positionalities present in society, and more efficaciously consider the 'what' and 'why' of the interpretive diversity of biblical texts. Considering questions of hermeneutics (and acknowledging students as hermeneutical, meaning-making agents) can purposefully enable pupils to become increasingly conscious of, and reflexive upon, their own positionality, including how this influences – and is influenced by – their enquiries into religion and belief;
- dialogic learning is an effective pedagogical tool to develop pupils' epistemic ability. In taking the horizons of the text, teacher and students' seriously in the classroom, a plurality of perspectives and positionalities can emerge which pupils can speak/reason across and through (Aldridge, 2015; Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020). Through encountering alterity (via different interpretations of the text presented by the practitioner and emerging from the class), such dialogic learning also supports

students in becoming cognisant of and communicating one's positionality (Ricoeur, 1992; Habermas, 2006; 2008); and

- such hermeneutical, dialogic learning is enriched by drawing upon biblical scholarship. Allowing pupils to progressively engage with questions *behind* and *in front* of the text will support pupils in understanding the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity (Gooder, 2008).

I contend that embracing a more hermeneutical approach, as proffered within this chapter, can enable a richer encounter (Davis, 2014) with parabolic texts than presently exist in the primary setting. Pupils' epistemic ability can develop in the crucible of the classroom through intentional dialogic reasoning where the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity is taken seriously. This far surpasses paltry, transmission-based instances where parables are presented by the teacher as holding a single meaning which pupils have successfully understood if they parrot (Ingold, 2018). Furthermore, pursuing a more hermeneutical approach enriches the 'balanced RE' (Chipperton et al., 2018a, p. 1) framework of religious literacy around which many schools design their RE curriculum, allowing pupils to more efficaciously hold 'balanced and well-informed conversations about religion and belief'.

This chapter has allowed me to make significant progress towards answering my RQs. I have applied my own understanding of epistemic ability to RE, one which synergistically draws together this notion and post-secular (non-) religiosity, pupil agency and a post-secular perception of the child. In so doing, purposeful steps have been taken towards considering an appropriate hermeneutic for enquiring into the parables in the primary classroom. I hold that such thinking makes an important contribution to the RE community. We must look afresh at parabolic enquiry (and biblical text enquiry more broadly) in primary RE in a way which brings rich hermeneutical possibilities and questions to the fore; this will

support pupils in making sense of and navigating the modern world. My envisioning of post-secular RE proffers a potential direction for primary parabolic enquiries, one which goes deeper into questions of interpretation and diversity, as well as substantive, disciplinary and personal knowledge (Ofsted, 2021b).

Continuing this journey, I will next systematically review parabolic scholarship and some of the key guidance and exemplifications pertaining to these narratives on offer to primary practitioners. This will help me to understand significant and specific *behind* and *in front* of text issues pertaining to the parables, and the extent to which primary pupils are developing as agentive, skilful and scholarly handlers and enquirers of parabolic texts (Ofsted, 2021b). Such deliberation will inform the curation of a parabolic enquiry to be trialled with UKS2 pupils (Chapter Six).

CHAPTER FIVE

5 TOWARD A POST-SECULAR PARABOLIC ENQUIRY: AN ANALYSIS OF PARABOLIC SCHOLARSHIP AND CURRICULUM MATERIALS

‘They [pupils] were really taking in what all of your sheets around the room were saying...using the first lesson to help their responses as well. And thinking of, well now they know what the parable actually is, **why would...people think about it in a different way?**’ (Teacher C)¹²³

5.1 Introduction

In pursuing an answer to my RQs, the previous chapters have enabled me to realize and proffer a vision of post-secular RE which takes post-secular (non-) religiosity, epistemic ability, pupil agency and a post-secular perception of the child seriously. As part of this envisioning, I have argued that a richer encounter (Davis, 2014, p. 21) with biblical texts – in this case, the parables – is required. Such an encounter (commented upon by Teacher C above) would allow pupils to consider the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretive diversity, contributing significantly to their epistemic ability. I proposed, in Chapter Four, that this hermeneutical, dialogic learning would be enriched by drawing upon biblical text scholarship.¹²⁴ I am focusing on parables as they are biblical texts which:

- offer fertile ground as narratives where a number of hermeneutical issues within interpretation can be explored (Thiselton, 2009, p. 35), and
- are taught widely in primary RE

¹²³ Teacher C Interview Two, lines 500-503, Appendix Twenty-Seven.

¹²⁴ As a means to develop pupils’ substantive, disciplinary and personal knowledge (Ofsted, 2021b).

Exploring a range of key (predominantly Western) parabolic literature will help me identify key hermeneutical issues that biblical scholars deliberate upon.¹²⁵ I can use these hermeneutical issues to inform the design (Chapters Six and Seven) and enactment (Chapters Eight and Nine) of a post-secular parabolic enquiry well-calibrated towards the development of students' epistemic ability. This chapter is structured as followed:

- after justifying my focus upon two interpretive approaches within parabolic scholarship (Section 5.2), I then explore a number of significant *behind* the text issues via historical criticism (Section 5.3), and *in front* of the text issues via reader-response criticism (Section 5.4);
- I next advance the utility of reception history in post-secular primary parabolic enquiries (Section 5.5), proposing that pupils' epistemic ability can be developed through engaging with diverse interpretations and the rich hermeneutical questions which a history of interpretation can raise; and
- following this proposition, I will appreciate and appraise key guidance and exemplifications pertaining to the parables on offer to primary practitioners since 1988 (Section 5.6).

I conclude that, too often, available enquiries present the parables in an exclusivist (Pollefeyt and Richards, 2020), predetermined (Pollefeyt and Bieringer, 2005; Davis, 2014; Aldridge, 2015; Briggs, 2017; Carswell, 2018a; 2018b) and/or instrumental manner (Aldridge, 2011; Chater and Erricker, 2013; Watson, 2013). In an attempt to move beyond

¹²⁵ With the vast breadth of rumination in parabolic literature, it is not possible to comment upon every aspect of interpretive offerings. I focus on the key theologians and ideas I perceive most applicable to a post-secular parabolic enquiry.

these paltry, transmission-based enquiries (Ingold, 2018), I assert that drawing on *behind* and *in front* of the text issues within parabolic scholarship, via reception history, would enable a more scholarly encounter with these narratives than currently exist in primary RE, contributing efficaciously towards students' epistemic ability (Section 5.6.8). This chapter thus forms a crucial step in answering my RQs as I consider *an appropriate post-secular hermeneutic for enquiries into parables in the primary classroom*.

5.2 Different approaches to reading parables

I begin by offering a definition of a parable. Although a plethora of definitions abound, a common one cited in modern New Testament scholarship is that of Dodd:

At its simplest the parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought. (Dodd, 1980, p. 16)

Perhaps it is this 'sufficient doubt' which lies behind the fraught history of parabolic interpretation. It is clear from over-viewing some of the key literature within Western parabolic scholarship that the parables of Jesus, and their interpretations, have been wrestled with, pondered over, criticised and rejected (Jülicher, 1910; Jeremias, 1963; Tolbert, 1979; Crossan, 1980; Dodd, 1980; Snodgrass, 2008; Blomberg, 2012; Zimmermann, 2015). At heart, these ruminations revolve around questions of meaning and interpretation: how should, could and/or do we read these narratives within the synoptic Gospels? What meanings might these texts bear? Can they be misinterpreted and, if so, according to what

(or whose) criteria? Certainly, the parables have attracted an abundant constellation of hermeneutical issues worth exploring (Thiselton, 2009, p. 35).

Within this chapter, I shall focus on two interpretive approaches – those which are interested in *behind* the text issues via historical criticism¹²⁶, and *in front* of the text issues via reader-response¹²⁷ criticism (Gooder, 2008). Whilst there are a range of critical approaches that can be pursued when engaging with the parables, my reasons for being selective are three-fold:

- hermeneutical questions emerging from historical and reader-response criticism comprise some of the most significant and discussed aspects within parabolic scholarship. Identifying key interpretive issues both *behind* and *in front* of the parables from these approaches can inform my enactment of post-secular RE in a manner well-calibrated to Gadamer's (2004) concept of the text-reader dialogue (Chapter Four, Section 4.8.2.1);
- many hermeneutical questions arising from historical and reader-response criticism coalesce within endeavours exploring reception history. Exploring each approach will therefore allow me to more efficaciously argue for the potential utility of reception history in developing pupils' epistemic ability; and
- whilst ideological approaches – such as feminist, queer and ecological criticism – may enrich parabolic enquiries in RE, I contend that the issues raised through historical and reader-response criticism are the most appropriate and purposeful for developing pupils' epistemic ability in the primary phase.

Such analysis is essential to postulate a richer encounter with the parables than presently occurs in primary RE (Section 5.6; Chapter Six). Applying insights from parabolic rumination can help primary-aged pupils move away from paltry, pre-determined encounters and

¹²⁶ Historical-critical approaches explore the historical context from which texts emerge as a means to inform interpretation (Gooder, 2008; Knight, 2010; Thiselton, 2019; Green, 2020); see Section 5.3.

¹²⁷ Reader-response approaches consider how and why different readers interpret texts differently (Tolbert, 1979; Bailey, 2008; Gooder, 2008; Thiselton, 2009; Zimmermann, 2015); see Section 5.4.

instead enter into scholarly discussions, reasoning through the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretive diversity.

5.3 Significant *behind* the text issues emerging from historical-critical approaches in parabolic scholarship

Historical-critical approaches within parabolic scholarship comprise a diverse range of methods which seek to interpret these narratives through exploring the historical contexts and horizons from which they emerged (Gooder, 2008; Knight, 2010; Thiselton, 2019; Green, 2020). Within such approaches, understanding *behind* the text issues (such as the cultural and social world of the original hearers/readers and authorial intent of the Evangelists) are perceived to hold, in various degrees, the hermeneutical key to interpreting the parables (Gooder, 2008). Consequently, those employing such methods often maintain that there are intended, objective and/or discernible meanings to these texts, whether understood as Jesus’ intention, that of the Evangelists or that perceived by original audiences (Jeremias, 1963; Dodd, 1980; Aichele et al., 2009; Green, 2020).

In Christian history, historical-critical approaches to the parables are relatively new. Before the nineteenth century, allegorization was a central feature of parabolic scholarship; events and characters within the parables were often seen as representing or symbolising ‘spiritual realities’ (Burnett, 2020, p. 170). Augustine of Hippo’s (2019, pp. 45-46) interpretation of the PGS is a clear example. The wounded man (Adam and humanity), has fallen away from heavenly bliss (Jerusalem) and left half-dead by thieves (the devil and sin). Whilst the priest and Levite (the Old Testament Law) offered no support, a Samaritan (Jesus) bandages the

man's wounds (sins) and, now supported upon horseback (belief in the incarnation), is accompanied by the Samaritan to an inn (the church) to repair under a trusted innkeeper (the apostle Paul). Indeed, commentators using this approach exercised free reign and theological creativity to postulate various allegorical interpretations of the parables (Snodgrass, 2008; Parris, 2009).

In the twentieth century, allegorical readings were heavily challenged (Snodgrass, 2008; Blomberg, 2012).¹²⁸ Advancing this criticism was Jülicher (1910/1963), considered by many the father of modern parable scholarship (Tolbert, 1979; Thiselton, 2009). For Jülicher, misinterpretation occurred when theologians of many persuasions (including the Evangelists) distorted parabolic narratives through confusing similes for metaphors. In contrast to allegorical readings which accorded several spiritual points of reference, Jülicher held that Jesus primarily employed a parable to teach a single, generalized moral truth, one easy for his first-century audience to understand in their particular circumstances. The PGS, therefore, had nothing to do with Adam, Christ or Paul; it was simply an example story about loving one's neighbour (Jülicher, 1963, pp. 585-598). What was required, in Jülicher's view, was critical scholarship which would pare back the allegorical embellishing of the Evangelists and others to reveal Jesus' parables as originally spoken and intended.

Influenced by Jülicher's thesis, the subsequent decades of parabolic scholarship witnessed a paradigm shift predominated by a search for the 'historical Jesus' and the socio-historical settings in which the parables were originally given and received (Parris, 2009). Notable

¹²⁸ There remain advocates of allegorical interpretations of the parables (see Hultgren, 2000; Blomberg, 2004; Snodgrass, 2008).

contributions followed from Dodd (1935/1980), Jeremias (1963) and Crossan (1973).

Despite their broad agreement with Jülicher that the parables are not allegorical, they rejected his claim that Jesus used them to merely give ethical instruction. For them, ‘the parabolic intentionality of Jesus’ (Crossan, 1973, p. 39) linked to eschatology. Put more specifically, the parables both illustrate and invite participation within ‘the mystery of the Kingdom of God’ (Dodd, 1980, p. 28), yet exactly what this meant and the immanency of this kingdom was understood differently by each scholar.

5.3.1 Historical criticism in the twenty-first century

A commitment to historical criticism has firmly remained within parabolic scholarship into the twenty-first century. It becomes swiftly apparent when reviewing these historical-critical approaches that there are a wide range of hermeneutical issues emerging and ‘competing views about how to interpret the first-century evidence’ (Gooder, 2008, p. 12). Table 5.1 presents a critical engagement with a selection key interpretive issues and standpoints emerging from a more comprehensive review (Appendix Two).

Hermeneutical standpoints within historical-critical parabolic scholarship	Examples (and personal reflections) from parabolic scholarship
The parables as social commentary and challenge	- Some argue that Jesus' parables are specific stories about the Kingdom of God which offer 'social challenge and transformation' (Oakman, 2008, p. 296; van Eck, 2009). This 'kingdom' is in contrast to the Pax Romana, one which describes an alternative way of life which appealed to Jesus' majority peasant listeners; a 'kingdom' without oppression or exploitation under a ruling class (see also Herzog, 1994; Moxnes, 2003). In this view, 'Jesus' historical activity was essentially about politics and the restructuring of society, and not about religion or theology' (Oakman, 2008, p. 296). - There are some key hermeneutical questions raised here. Although I feel that the parables as originally told by Jesus may have had clear resonances to politics and proffered an alternative kingdom to that of Rome, to claim that 'Jesus' historical activity...[was] not about religion or theology' (Oakman, 2008, p. 296) goes too far. Certainly, if the parables are about the Kingdom of God then this necessarily raises theological questions, both for original hearers as it did for the Evangelists (Dodd, 1980).
Evangelistic redaction: abuse or meaningful use?	- A number of hermeneutical endeavours focus on the parables as presented by the Evangelists of the synoptic gospels (e.g. Tolbert, 1979; Myers, 2002; Schottroff, 2006; Snodgrass, 2012a). The redactional¹²⁹ work of these authors placed these oral narratives into a literary context with 'framing texts' (Schottroff, 2006, p. 99) such as introductory narratives, conclusions and/or interpretations. The PGS (Luke 10: 25-37), for instance, is embedded within a conversation between Jesus and 'an expert in the law' regarding 'What must be done to inherit eternal life?'. Likewise, in the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13: 1-23; Mark 4: 1-20; Luke 8: 1-15), the Evangelists introduce the context by stating that a crowd gathered around Jesus, and conclude with Jesus' exposition of the parabolic allegory to his close disciples. - Some view critically and reject the redactional hands of the Evangelists (Jülicher, 1910; Crossan, 1973; Hedrick, 2004; Oakman, 2008; van Eck, 2009; Levine, 2014). For these commentators, the framing texts added by the gospel writers 'pertain...to later layers of the tradition and should be bracketed in studying the historical Jesus' (Crossan, 1973, p. 39). Such layers include theological, allegorical and anachronistic stratum which irresponsibly contort the original parables of Jesus (Jeremias, 1963; Hedrick, 2004; Oakman, 2008; van Eck, 2009). - Others hold it fruitful to consider how and why the parables have been presented by the Evangelists in the way they have (Tolbert, 1979; Dodd, 1980; Myers, 2002; Schottroff, 2006; Snodgrass, 2008). Contemplating the agendas, themes and compositional works of the synoptic gospel authors give us an insight into the understanding of Jesus' kerygma and person amongst the early Christian communities

¹²⁹ My use of the term 'redaction' refers to the themes and agendas of each author, as opposed to questions of source or synoptic relationship.

	(Tolbert, 1979; Myers, 2002; Goodacre, 2008; Blomberg, 2012; Zimmermann, 2015). For instance, we see the Markan author(s) place many parables within close proximity to significant events within this Gospel, using them as a basis for echoes and foreshadowing (Malbon, 1993; Williams, 2013). • It is important to recognise the debate in parabolic scholarship on whether Evangelistic redaction stymies or supports our understanding of the parables. My question is: why is this often posited as an either/or rather than a both/and? I maintain it is enriching to consider both how parables would have resonated with the first listeners <i>and</i> how the early (and later) Christian communities have received and responded to them.
<i>Sitz im Leben</i>	• <i>Sitz im Leben</i> ('setting in life') refers to an approach employed by a number of scholars to consider the first-century setting and the respective issues and experiences for/of those living within this time and place (Jeremias, 1963; Dodd, 1980). It is used as a means to postulate what the likely interpretation of original listeners may have been. • Although holding this a fruitful endeavor, I am uncertain about those restrictive views which hold that if an interpretation is one not likely shared by Jesus' first-century audience, it should be rejected (van Eck, 2009; Blomberg, 2012; Levine, 2014). Snodgrass' (2012a, p. 178) position is a case in point here when he states that, 'context is the determiner of meaning...Any interpretation that does not breathe the air of first-century Judaism cannot be a legitimate hearing of Jesus' intent or a legitimate use of Jesus' parables'. Yes, considering the <i>Sitz im Leben</i> is useful, but to hold this as a litmus test for determining 'successful' or 'unsuccessful' interpretation perhaps inappropriately boxes in, prescribes and limits interpretive endeavours. This litmus test is also slightly undermined when taking into account that the context of first-century Judea and Galilee is a shifting field of understanding.
The parables as theological texts	• Although some pursuing historical-critical approaches to the parables maintain that theological meanings are outside Jesus' original intent (Jülicher, 1910; Hedrick, 2004; Oakman, 2008; van Eck, 2009), others disagree (Jeremias, 1963; Dodd, 1980; Snodgrass, 2008; Zimmermann, 2015). • Snodgrass (2008, p.20), for instance, holds that the parables are 'theocentric'; original hearers or readers – through their knowledge and experience of Judaism – would have understood stock metaphors within the parables (such as 'father', 'master', 'shepherd', 'king') as referring to God. Consequently, Jesus' parables would have been understood by his first-century audience theologically.

Table 5.1: a range of key interpretive issues and standpoints within historical-critical parabolic scholarship

My analysis of historical-critical approaches in parabolic scholarship identifies some important hermeneutical questions pertaining to the historical contexts and horizons from which these texts emerged. This said, it is clear that there exists scholarly divergence on a number of issues, including whether:

- the parables are theological, ethical and/or other
- Evangelistic redaction is enriching or a violent distortion
- the parables hold one single meaning which can actually be uncovered

Scholars employing historical-critical methods each approach parables with different emphases and assumptions which informs their interpretive work. This is significant to acknowledge when postulating a post-secular parabolic enquiry in the primary school which helps pupils make sense of the interpretive diversity present in society. Such a richer enquiry might include:

- pondering the first-century context of original listeners and postulating why Jesus told this parable ('parables as social commentary and challenge' and '*Sitz im Leben*');
- considering redactional work of the synoptic Evangelists. For instance: do framing texts help or hinder interpretive endeavours? Are there authorial intents in play? Is it worth being mindful of the wider gospel in which a particular parable is a part, or could/should we read the text in isolation? ('Evangelistic redaction: abuse or meaningful use?');
- exploring the meaning of some of the vocabulary used (such as characters and locations) and their potential significance for original listeners/readers. This includes deliberating whether or not stock metaphors (e.g. 'father', 'shepherd') are employed to refer to God ('parables as theological texts'); and
- in view of the common assertion within historical-critical approaches that the parables have a single, original meaning (Zimmermann, 2015), granting pupils' the opportunity to reflexively consider the value and limitations of historical-critical approaches around this assumption.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ For instance, pupils could critically consider whether the *original* meaning of these narratives are 'recoverable and, if recoverable, better than any other meaning' (Gooder, 2008, p. xx).

Engaging with this branch of parabolic scholarship has significantly developed my thinking as I pursue my RQs. I propose that enabling pupils to explore such *behind* the text issues within a trialled parabolic enquiry will develop their epistemic ability as they become *more hermeneutically aware, developing reasoned answers to the question, 'Why do different people interpret a parable differently?'* (RQiii). In turn, pupils can become more familiar with these narratives and more appreciative of the ways in which understandings of the horizon of the text (including their own) influences interpretation (Gadamer, 2004). Next, I will explore *in front* of the text issues (via reader-response criticism) to appreciate wider hermeneutical aspects pertaining to parabolic interpretation, including why those pursuing historical-critical enquiries often present different views.

5.4 Significant *in front* of the text issues emerging from reader-response approaches in parabolic scholarship

Whilst historical-critical approaches strive to understand the parables through exploring the historical contexts from which they emerged (Gooder, 2008; Knight, 2010; Thiselton, 2019; Green, 2020), reader-response approaches – which have gathered momentum since the 1970s/80s – are interested in how different readers interpret these narratives and what might account for the diversity of readings (Tolbert, 1979; Bailey, 2008; Gooder, 2008; Thiselton, 2009; Zimmermann, 2015). One substantial scholarly position accounting for interpretive diversity is the view that parabolic narratives are polyvalent (Tolbert, 1979; Shillington, 1997; Bailey, 2008; Thiselton, 2009; Zimmermann, 2015). Polyvalence ‘describes an innate ambiguity found in all narrative, a feature facilitating multiple responses (or meanings) from readers’ (Hedrick, 2004, p. 13). Whilst remaining mindful of the historical

horizons of the parables (i.e. that of Jesus and the Evangelists), many scholars assert that these narratives by their nature cannot be restricted to one meaning; the parabolic form is one that is essentially 'open' (Tolbert, 1979; Shillington, 1997; Thiselton, 2009; Zimmermann, 2015).

Taking the notion of polyvalency further, Ellen Davis (2019, p. 218) compares biblical narratives such as the parables to a multi-faceted gem: they shine 'variously as light is cast upon it [them] at different levels of intensity and from different angles'. For Davis, what is seen is due, in large part, to the positionality of the reader. Here I return to Gadamer's (2004) 'fusion of horizons'.¹³¹ Each of us, when making sense of a text and its historical horizon, do so from our own historically and culturally influenced horizon; our prior understandings, experiences and prejudices constitute both an enabling and limiting 'element in the act of understanding' (Gadamer, 2004, p. 301). Our positionality informs and colours interpretive endeavours, a key factor in how (and why) texts are interpreted differently.

This *in front* of the text factor, which focuses on the 'reader' aspect of the text-reader dialogue, attracts much attention in parabolic scholarship. Those interested in reader-response issues hold that parabolic meaning is not exclusively tied to its historical horizon, but is co-determined by the historically effected consciousness of the interpreter (Tolbert, 1979; Levine, 2014; Joynes, 2020). As discussed in Chapter Two, one's positionality is shaped over time by personal experiences, relational networks and encounters with truth claims

¹³¹ See Chapter Four, Section 4.8.2.1.

(Francis and Knott, 2011; Lahav, 2015; Woodhead, 2017; Taves, 2018; Cooling et al., 2020). Cultural contexts also inform¹³² interpretation and ‘influence the types of questions put to the text’ (Ukpong, 1996, p. 191).¹³³ When an individual’s positionality changes over time, so often does their reading of a text (Zimmermann, 2015; Green, 2020). Certainly, it is right to recognise that there exists a plethora of interpretations of the parables, each informed by the commitments, context and presuppositions of each individual and communities of readers (Smit, 1994; Shillington, 1997).

Gadamer’s (2004) ‘fusion of horizons’ also addresses a question emerging in Section 5.3: why do those pursuing so-called ‘objective’ historical-critical enquiries often arrive at different parabolic interpretations and varied understandings of the contexts from which they emerged? Taking a Gadamerian perspective renders the task of understanding any original meaning and the historical horizon fraught; such constructions are a hermeneutical act, one co-determined ‘by the historical situation of the interpreter’ (Gadamer, 2004, p. 296). We are unable to put ourselves objectively in the position of the speaker, author or listeners and provide a ‘definite view into the past’ (Fowl, 2020, p. 210). Our historically effected consciousness shapes our construction of the parable’s historical horizon which therefore explains, in large part, why parabolic scholars proffer different views regarding context and meaning. This is not to say that exploring *behind* the text issues should be

¹³² I use the word ‘inform’ intentionally, as context should not be over-inflated *as a face at the bottom of a well*. Through an Ingoldian (2018) lens, interpretation occurs in and through an environment rather than as mere transmission.

¹³³ Criticising Eurocentric interpretations, Ukpong (1996, p. 190) identified that West African peasant farmers read the rich man not as God in the commonly titled ‘Parable of the Unjust Steward’, but rather as an example to be admired as one who ‘acted on the behalf of the exploited’. This reading related more to their day-to-day experience. Levine (2014, p. 51) also observes how the cause of Prodigal Son’s fall ‘is a matter of cultural understanding’; for instance, readers in the United Kingdom tend to cite ‘personal irresponsibility’ whereas Russian readers often blame famine.

annulled (Gooder, 2008); we should endeavour to perceive a parable's historical horizon 'in its own terms', whilst being attentive to the ways our positionality colours such speculation (Gadamer, 2004). In sum, the horizons of the text and reader – and the dialogical interaction between them both – should be recognised when considering how and why different people interpret the parables differently.

5.4.1 Reflecting on the reader: can a text mean anything we want?

Before contemplating how reader-response scholarship might inform a post-secular parabolic enquiry, I wish to reflect upon two key questions: can one arrive at a wrong interpretation? And can a text mean anything we want? These are important to deliberate upon; even more so as these are rich hermeneutical questions not currently explored in primary RE (Table 5.7, pp. 180-181). Just as I am unsettled by those positions in parabolic scholarship which focus too much upon the horizon of the text to the neglect of the reader (e.g. Oakman, 2008; van Eck, 2009), I am likewise wary of those standpoints which castigate all historical-critical endeavours as unnecessary on the grounds that it is the reader alone who determines meaning (Janzen, 2021). Gadamer (2004) calls us to take both horizons seriously in our interpretive work. Nevertheless, it remains the case that a wealth of readings surround the parables, and many have ruminated further upon conscientious interpretation. Table 5.2 outlines a range of key positions in parabolic scholarship.

Key questions regarding conscientious interpretation of the parables	Analysis of key positions
Can one arrive at a wrong interpretation?	In acknowledging the place of reader subjectivities in parabolic interpretation, a question must be asked: can one arrive at a 'wrong' interpretation? The openness of the parabolic form, conjoined with reader subjectivities, can lead to 'an unlimited number' of interpretations (Blomberg, 2012, p. 175). Is this state of affairs 'viable', as Blomberg (2012, p. 175) asks, or does it 'constitute anarchy' (Tolbert, 1979, p. 65)? Various concerns are placed forward in agreement with the latter. Firstly, it is held that readers can arrive at interpretations that are wildly at odds with the parabolic text; conclusions can be drawn which are arbitrary, irrelevant and have little link to the narrative (Zimmermann, 2015). Secondly, there is a concern that readers and/or communities can abuse them to support any conclusion and/or purpose that they see fit (Hedrick, 2004; Bailey, 2008; Snodgrass, 2008). Such a criticism, I feel, can be applied presently to the work of Stiller (2005). In his <i>Preaching Parables to Postmoderns</i>, he aims to present these New Testament narratives in ways which satisfies post-modern sentiments; homilies on the parables, he contends, should avoid links to meta-narratives (to which post-moderns are sceptical), provoke existential thoughts and be community-focussed. Although the parables may have much to say to a post-modern audience, I feel that reducing them solely to meanings which appeal to modern day existential questions violates the integrity of the texts. However, when pondering whether one can arrive at a 'right' or 'wrong' interpretation, it is critical to ask <i>who decides</i> and on <i>what grounds</i>? Certainly, this applies to my denigration of Stiller's views; although I hold his presentations of the parables perplexing, others may decide that his readings and suggested use of these narratives are perfectly legitimate and of value. In seeking to add clarity to interpretations which are 'viable' (Blomberg, 2012, p. 175) or 'responsible' (Thiselton, 2009), a number of limiting factors have been discussed within parabolic scholarship. These are detailed next.
Limiting factors: how to ensure readings are responsible?	In the light of fears that parables can be distorted to mean whatever the reader desires, certain limiting factors have been considered within parabolic scholarship. Whilst acknowledging that the parables are open-ended, measures have been offered to ensure that interpretations do not drift 'off into arbitrariness' (Zimmermann, 2015, p. 170). Three key limiting factors emerged within the literature consulted: i) considering the socio-historical context, ii) evaluating the interpretation alongside the wider teachings and ministry of Jesus, and iii) redactional criticism.

	<u>Considering the socio-historic context</u> On the first point, there are many who hold that the defining factor guiding responsible interpretation is the socio-historical context of the parable. For those that support this view, the argument runs that if an interpretation would likely not make sense to the original first-century audiences, then it should be disregarded (Schottroff, 2006; Bailey, 2008; van Eck, 2009; Blomberg, 2012; Levine, 2014). Ergo, knowledge of the narrative's historical horizon is of fundamental importance, as it helps 'clarify the dynamics of its plot' (Hedrick, 2004, p. 42) as well as limits the amount of viable readings of the parabolic text (Crossan, 1980; van Eck, 2009; Levine, 2014). Indeed, I am in broad agreement with Schottroff's (2006, p. 27) view that, 'there must be a connection between the content in the first context (the time of Jesus or of the Gospels) and the second context (the present time of the interpreters)'. Both contexts, in this view, would therefore be in dialogue as per Gadamer's 'fusion of horizons', resulting in an informed (but not a particular) reading. However, as previously considered, constructing a parable's historical horizon with certainty is a fraught task and one which is postulated from within one's own horizon (Gadamer, 2004); nevertheless, there is value in ascertaining this context as best as possible and considering the extent to which one's reading might reasonably correspond (Luz, 1994). <u>Evaluating the interpretation alongside the wider teachings and ministry of Jesus</u> Secondly, there is the view that any reading of a parable must be evaluated against the wider teaching of Jesus (Luz, 1994; Snodgrass, 2012a; Fosarelli and Gorman, 2020). Snodgrass (2012a, pp. 179-180) expands: 'a principle that should guide us is that any teaching derived from a parable must be verified by non-parabolic material...Jesus did not offer one message in parables and a different one in non-parabolic material'. This can be a useful 'limiting factor'. If one interpreted a parable as meaning that we should aspire to be wealthy, insular individuals, contrasting this with Jesus' wider kerygma would question the validity of this interpretation. For Bailey (2008), this criteria is used to reject Marxist and postmodern readings. However, if readings of the parables are being evaluated alongside wider biblical material and 'the main contours of the Christian tradition' (Fosarelli and Gorman, 2020, pp. 333-334), the diversity of belief within Christianity leads me to ask <i>which aspects of the biblical material and Christian tradition are being drawn on (or neglected) to validate one's interpretation?</i> The bible presents, at times, differing views on a range of subjects, is interpreted differently by different Christians and the Gospels themselves 'carry similar, yet different, data about the one figure of Jesus' (Shillington, 1997, p. 5). Whilst comparing one's reading of the parables against wider biblical material is useful, it is important to be mindful that such a task is not as clear cut as it might first appear.

Redaction of the Evangelists

Thirdly, another limiting factor offered within the literature is the redactional hands of the Evangelists (Tolbert, 1979; Schottroff, 2006; Snodgrass, 2008; Blomberg, 2012). Those who advocate this position maintain that the framing texts, authorial intent and positioning of the parables within the gospel texts aid our interpretative endeavours. For Snodgrass (2008), there is a certain ambiguity within the parables which can leave the parables open to a wide (mis)interpretation. Through indicating the referent, outlining the context and offering explanations, the Evangelists narrow the possible interpretations that can responsibly be made from the parables. Schottroff (2006) follows a similar line to Snodgrass, yet she focuses on the metaphoric language of the parables. According to Schottroff (2006, p. 112), the literary context in which the Evangelists have placed the parabolic narratives are 'indispensable'. She (2006, p. 99) elucidates: 'the decision whether and how a metaphor in the Jesus tradition ought to be read can only be made in relation to the text, that is, through interpretation of the text in question within its literary and social-historical context'. For Schottroff, the framing texts and an understanding of the authorial intent of the Evangelists aide feasible interpretation. Indeed, a central concern for Schottroff is the misinterpretation that occurs when the parables are isolated from the framing texts and presented alone. Here is a directed criticism towards those who seek to dispose of Evangelistic redaction in an attempt to identify the original parable as told by Jesus (e.g. Jülicher, 1910; Crossan, 1973). Isolated from the framing texts, Schottroff is concerned that crucial literary aspects of the parables are no longer considered which may lead to proof-texting or readings which do not correspond to the biblical (con)text. It is of use to turn to Snodgrass' ruminations here:

'[I]f we take the parables out of the context of the gospel narratives, we place them in another context, however hidden or unrecognised. They cannot be hung in empty space. The reader will place them in some context: contexts of social oppression, subverting traditional worldviews, psychological frameworks, feminist theology, the reader's kind of church, or something. Taken out of their contexts they are indeed polyvalent, for one has no control over what they might mean. Further, if we take them out of the contexts in the Gospels and place them elsewhere, what Jesus is lurking behind our moves and how was that Jesus found?' (Snodgrass, 2012a, p. 179)

Certainly, removing the parables from their literary context of the Gospels may cause them to float abstracted from their historical horizon, which may impoverish the text-reader dialogue as espoused by Gadamer. Blomberg (2012, p. 26) reiterates this warning, stating that, 'removing the parables from their contexts in the canonical Gospels allows other interpreters to take them as having little or nothing to do with God's kingdom or

	any other referent outside the stories themselves'. Whilst some criticize the Evangelists of narrowing or distorting the parables (see Table 5.1), the standpoints above stress how their redaction provides a useful aide in interpretation and allows us to preserve the 'integrity' of these narratives through more informed reading within their literary settings and respective authorial intents (Tolbert, 1979, p. 71).
Thiselton's <i>responsible hermeneutics</i>	Drawing on the work of Gadamer (2004) and Ricoeur (1992), Thiselton (2009) puts forward a notion of <i>responsible hermeneutics</i> when it comes to approaching texts. Here, one should pursue two activities, a <i>hermeneutic of retrieval</i> whereby the reader ponders the intended meaning of the text through considering its historical horizon and the narrative itself, and a <i>hermeneutic of suspicion</i> where the reader examines their own interests and positionality which they bring to the text. In taking both horizons of the text and the reader seriously, the interpretations arrived at (as a result of one's pre-understandings) become more <i>responsible</i> as they are informed and constrained by one's understanding of the text's historical horizon. Within such hermeneutical dialogue, a text – in Thiselton's (2005) view – cannot be contrived to mean simply anything which the reader would like it to (contra Barthes, 1967). There is not a free reign hermeneutical license; historical criticism can provide 'necessary constraint and discipline in the interpretation of parables' and helps prevent 'wild, irresponsible interpretation' (Thiselton, 2009, pp. 50, 52).

Table 5.2: an overview of key positions regarding conscientious interpretation of the parables

Critically reviewing reader-response approaches and constellating hermeneutical questions within parabolic scholarship has expanded my own understanding of the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretive diversity. Adding to the *behind* the text aspects that might fruitfully inform a richer, post-secular parabolic enquiry in the primary school (Section 5.3.1), the following *in front* of the text deliberations may also contribute significantly to students’ epistemic ability:

- the polyvalency of the parables – do/can they have more than one meaning?
- the extent to which meaning/s are found within the text or determined by readers
- the role of positionality in interpretive acts
- what might guide *responsible* reading? To what degree do/should framing texts, titles and historical context guide our interpretations? Can parables mean anything we want?
- encountering diverse, authentic interpretations from different times and places. Why might these people have read the text this way? How sound do we think these interpretations are? How do we read these texts?
- can interpretations be wrong? And, if so, on what grounds?

In Chapter Four, I proffered a vision of post-secular RE focused around the development of epistemic ability. This vision postulated that epistemic ability would be developed as students agentively reason across/through hermeneutical issues pertaining to the text-reader dialogue present within biblical scholarship (Aldridge, 2015; Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020). My subsequent review into *behind* and *in front* of issues within parabolic scholarship has drawn into focus an array of hermeneutical aspects which might inform a richer encounter with parables than presently exist in the primary setting. Indeed, such a move will more efficaciously enable students to appreciate and understand the interpretive diversity of parabolic texts. Continuing my formulation of an appropriate post-secular hermeneutic for parabolic enquiry in the primary classroom (my main RQ), I conclude my

analytical review of parabolic scholarship through considering the utility of reception history.

5.5 Reception history

Reception history of the Bible considers how particular texts, themes, images and ideas have been understood and utilized by readers throughout history in different contexts (Lyons, 2010; Beal, 2011). Biblical reception history owes its genesis to Hans Robert Jauss (1970). Building on Gadamer's (2004) dialogical view of meaning-making, Jauss asserted that interpretative endeavours are also influenced by particular receptions and traditions of reading that text which are dominant in a particular context. Through proffering a historical application of reader-response, Jauss' reception history allows us to walk credibly in a manner which takes both historical-criticism and reader-response of the parables seriously (Gooder, 2008; Beal, 2011; Evans, 2014; Mambrol, 2016). Beginning with the hypothetical first reception of the parables (be this Jesus' or the synoptic Evangelists' audience) – where we can consider a myriad of *behind* the text issues – we can then analyse how successive readers encounter and interpret these narratives within their particular social, political, historical and ideological circumstances (Mayordomo-Marin, 1998; Lyons, 2010; Beal, 2011; Evans, 2014; Joynes, 2020).¹³⁴ Viewing parabolic interpretation through such a 'reception-historical approach' allows us to embark upon rich deliberation on how and why different people at different times arrive at certain readings (Knight, 2010; Evans, 2014; Joynes, 2020).

¹³⁴ Lyon (2010, p. 213) makes a salient point here, that our '[s]ince our knowledge of context is limited and text and response are always partial, any explanations offered are exercises in plausibility'.

Further contemplating how people interpret texts, Jauss (1975) also introduced the idea of ‘summit-dialogue’. This concept was employed as a means to acknowledge, and identify, particular readings of a text which have defined or shaped how it has been subsequently approached. Surveying the jutting landscape of Western parabolic interpretation through time reveals a number of dominant interpretative methods and paradigm shifts (Snodgrass, 2008; Parris, 2009): the prevalence of allegorical readings from the church fathers to the nineteenth-century (e.g. Augustine, 2019); Jülicher’s (1910) critique of allegorization and his appeal to search for the historical Jesus and the single moral truth of his parables; contemplating the *Sitz im Leben* and theology of the early church (Jeremias, 1963; Dodd, 1980), and subsequent approaches which stress the reader’s role in interpretation (Tolbert, 1979; Jauss, 1982; Gadamer, 2004). An example of the history of influence within parabolic scholarship is that those wishing to introduce allegory into their reading in the West ‘must fight against what has been accepted as exegetical convention since Jülicher’ (Parris, 2009, p. 136).¹³⁵ Although the majority of the populace are not au fait with the internal dialogues present within – nor active contributors to – parabolic scholarship, it remains that traditions of reading the parables shape how they are interpreted today. A Jaussian lens enriches our understanding of how, in our particular contextual circumstances, we encounter, participate in and shape a tradition of reading the parables of Jesus (Punt, 2000; Fowl, 2013; Evans, 2014; Thiselton, 2019).

Reception history expands the two-way dialogue between text-reader into a triologue with the history of the text’s reception (Parris, 2009). Although conducting a ‘summit-dialogue’

¹³⁵ E.g. Barr (1966) and Blomberg (2012).

offers abundant hermeneutical resources to help pupils consider interpretation and its diversity (Section 5.5.1), any attempt to determine these significant historical readings is itself a subjective act (Punt, 2000; Parris, 2009; Evans, 2014; Joynes, 2020). As Evans (2014, p. 180) notes, ‘the selection of reception involves categorical and value judgements about any one reader’s tradition and their value within or relation to a “canon of exemplary commentators”’. Any compilation will privilege certain readings and history of influence, emerging from the very tradition in which the compiler ‘lives and reads’ (Evans, 2014, p. 226).¹³⁶ Moreover, the available histories of parabolic interpretation may reflect the ‘interests and thoughts of the powerful in the church and in society’ (Cormie, 1991, p. 190); marginal readings of parables feature rarely within scholarly work (Joynes, 2020, p. 158).

5.5.1 Reception history and post-secular RE

I propose that reception history is a utile branch of parabolic scholarship to draw upon in developing pupils’ epistemic ability within RE. The history of interpretation is a valuable ‘hermeneutical resource’, presenting a ‘rich treasury of biblical interpretation and application in a wide diversity of historical situations’ (Parris, 2009, p. 301). Through encountering a range of parabolic readings selected from history, opportunities exist for pupils to:

- encounter interpretations from a number of ‘historical vantage points’ (Evans, 2014, p. 128), enabling pupils to grow in awareness that the parables have been and are interpreted differently by different people;

¹³⁶ Parris (2009, p. 176) also cautions against viewing the contours of parabolic interpretation as being ‘sharply defined’ throughout the history of reception; the tradition of interpretation is difficult to trace, akin to ‘a serpentine path, with twists, turns, and dead ends’ rather than ‘a steady march towards a higher, “truer” understanding of a text or the past’.

- raise and critically consider reasons why this interpretive diversity exists through pondering both *behind* and *in front* of the text hermeneutical issues which coalesce within reception history; and
- in ruminating upon the historical and dialogical nature of textual interpretation, be reflexive upon their own positionality and place within the continuing history of interpretation (Parris, 2009; Katho, 2020).

The riches of reception history contribute meaningfully, in my view, towards an appropriate hermeneutic to enquire into the parables in post-secular primary RE (my main RQ). They can inform a richer encounter (Davis, 2014) where pupils can appreciate and appraise, in a more informed manner, parabolic readings of the past, present (e.g. their own and that of peers in their class) and those they may encounter in the future (Jauss, 1970; Gadamer, 2004; Breed, 2014; Ingold, 2018; Davis, 2019). In Chapter Six, I will curate a post-secular parabolic enquiry to practically exemplify and enact my vision for post-secular RE (Chapter Four). With my interest in reception history and RQs, I will be ‘privileging plurality’ (Evans, 2014, p. 229) within this enquiry to help pupils reason hermeneutically across/through difference (Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020). I am mindful that my selection of interpretations for pupils to encounter will be a subjective act (Punt, 2000; Parris, 2009; Evans, 2014; Joynes, 2020); this cannot be avoided, and I will justify my choices through following the broadly accepted contours of paradigm shifts within the Western parabolic history of interpretation (Snodgrass, 2008; Parris, 2009).¹³⁷ Before designing this post-secular parabolic enquiry, I will systemically consider key guidance and exemplifications pertaining to the parables on offer to primary practitioners since 1988. Such an analysis will present the context for my research thesis, drawing attention to why the expansive encounter I am envisioning for primary pupils is essential.

¹³⁷ Chapter Six, Section 6.7, pp. 221-223.

5.6 A critical review of parabolic enquiries in the primary school

Within this research thesis, I have argued that RE must contribute more efficaciously to pupils' epistemic ability so they can understand, negotiate and flourish within a post-secular society replete with a diversity of positionalities and beliefs. Following my focussed review into parabolic scholarship, I propose that drawing upon reception history within parabolic enquiries might significantly serve such an end. Encountering a diverse range of readings – and an associated array of hermeneutical questions – can stimulate dialogic reasoning which develops students' understanding of the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity.

From my experience as a teacher, advisor and researcher, I am mindful of the sparsity of support and exemplification available to help primary practitioners do this important work. In the remainder of this chapter, my review of such literature (from 1988 to the present)¹³⁸ will highlight that exemplifications on offer too often present the parables in an instrumental (Aldridge, 2011; Chater and Erricker, 2013; Watson, 2013), predetermined (Pollefeyt and Bieringer, 2005; Davis, 2014; Aldridge, 2015; Briggs, 2017; Carswell, 2018a; 2018b) and/or exclusivist manner (Pollefeyt and Richards, 2020). Despite some utile approaches and thinking (such as RE Today, 2016; Bowie et al., 2020a), opportunities for primary pupils to enquire into the diversity of parabolic interpretation are rare. Drawing attention to the regrettable absence of rich hermeneutical thinking within primary parabolic enquiries will further stress why this research is timely and necessary. In Chapter Six, I will

¹³⁸ I deliberated over this time frame. I eventually decided that from 1988 is useful as it focuses the review to: a) demonstrate that paltry parabolic enquiries have been occurring for the past thirty years; b) understand the context and key documents which have impacted upon biblical enquiry in RE and c) show the direction of travel of parabolic enquiries.

present my curation of a parabolic enquiry to trial, one which constitutes a much needed theory-informed practical exemplification which takes post-secular (non-) religiosity, epistemic ability, pupil agency, a post-secular perception of the child and hermeneutical questions raised within my review of parabolic scholarship seriously. It is my hope that this charting of new territory within primary RE will provide both inspiration and resource to practitioners and advisers looking to contribute significantly to pupils' religious literacy (Chipperton et al., 2018a) and the development of the three types of knowledge advocated by Ofsted's (2021b) RE research review.

5.6.1 Parables in the primary school (1988-2013)

In the 1990s, the RE community was responding to two significant developments in the subject. The first was Grimmitt's *Religious Education and Human Development* (1987). Grimmitt proposed that the educational interaction between pupils and spiritual traditions of the world should enable pupils to learn *about* and *from* religion in order to become active participants in the wider community through socialisation. The second was the *Education Reform Act 1988* which, amongst other things, made the establishment of SACREs mandatory. The Act also stipulated that the locally agreed syllabi SACREs create 'shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (1988, Section 8.3). Continuing without a National Curriculum designation (and therefore the high profile, funding, national attainment targets and programmes of study which other subjects were receiving), much ink was spilled in an attempt to help SACREs create strong agreed syllabi framed around Grimmitt's thinking (swiftly appropriated as

‘attainment targets’)¹³⁹ and compliant with the recent Education Act (Copley, 2008).

Principle amongst these publications was the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority’s¹⁴⁰ (1994a; 1994b; 1994c) model syllabuses for RE. Although holding no statutory weight, these syllabuses influenced and provided consistency across a number of agreed syllabi (Copley, 2008).

In order to understand how the parables were enquired into between 1988-2013,¹⁴¹ Table 5.3 presents a focused analysis of a range of agreed syllabi, subject reports and wider guidance published to support SACREs and RE practitioners in teaching these narratives.¹⁴² I also include guidance aimed at secondary schools to ascertain the perceived progression in engaging with the parables and perception of what pupils could, and could not, ably accomplish in each Key Stage. Noticeably, parables were (and still are) often used in classrooms due to the common view that they are an easy vehicle to convey the Christian message in a simple way. However, clarification as to why they are used and why seen as beneficial for learning is open to debate.

¹³⁹ Specifically, Attainment Target 1 (AT1) of ‘learning about religion’ and Attainment Target 2 (AT2) of ‘learning from religion’.

¹⁴⁰ Hereafter SCAA.

¹⁴¹ This timeframe has been chosen as it was Ofsted’s 2013 report, which noted key weaknesses in the subject, which stimulated the design of two resources I will soon analyse in depth (Sections 5.6.2 – 5.6.7). This publication therefore acts as a way marker in the development of the teaching of Christianity – commenting both on the commonplace weak practice and offering recommendations pertaining to better enquiries.

¹⁴² A more comprehensive overview (showing merits and demerits of each publication) is found in Appendix Three.

Key aspects of parabolic enquiries	Typical nature of approach	Consulted curriculum materials
The parables as linking to morals or values only	A number of publications promote parabolic enquiries that focus on the moral(s) that these texts teach (Rankin et al., 1989; Brown, 1994; Berkshire SACRE, 1995; Ofsted, 1995; Redbridge SACRE, 2001). For instance, both Rankin et al. (1989) and Redbridge SACRE (2001) advise that the Parable of the Lost/Prodigal Son be enquired into in Key Stage One as a means for pupils to think about forgiveness in their own lives.	(Rankin et al., 1989; Brown, 1994; Berkshire SACRE, 1995; Ofsted, 1995; Redbridge SACRE, 2001)
The parables as linking to theological beliefs	These curriculum materials place emphasis on parabolic meaning having something to do with God, such as 'God's relationship with people' (Staffordshire County Council, 1992, p. 45), the Kingdom of God (SCAA, 1994a, p. 7; Lewisham SACRE, 1996), salvation (SCAA, 1994c, p. 29) or 'humans as God's steward' (Birmingham SACRE, 1995, p. 34). Two later publications (Truro and Exeter Diocesan Boards of Education, 2001c; Copley et al., 2004b) denigrated biblical enquiries in schools which did not focus on theology. The arguments of both materials stressed that pupils should consider what biblical texts might mean for Christians, but the associated exemplifications offer each parable as communicating a single theological meaning.	(Staffordshire County Council, 1992; Copley and Copley, 1993; Copley, 1994; SCAA, 1994a; 1994c; Birmingham SACRE, 1995; Lewisham SACRE, 1996; Truro and Exeter Diocesan Boards of Education, 2001c; Copley et al., 2004b; Brooke, 2011)
Contextual parabolic information deemed necessary for pupils to consider	A proportion of literature resonated with the position of Copley (1994, p. 28) that parables should be 'understood against its original context or religious background and not just torn out of it'. These publications recommended that teachers explore the following parabolic contextual factors/questions with pupils: • Why did Jesus tell this parable? (Brown, 1994; Camden SACRE, 1998; Hertfordshire SACRE, 2001; Truro and Exeter Diocesan Boards of Education, 2001; Brooke, 2011); • What impact might this parable have had on Jesus' listeners? (Brown, 1994; Hertfordshire SACRE, 2001; Redbridge SACRE, 2001; Truro and Exeter Diocesan Boards of Education, 2001); • 'Events in Jesus' life as told in the Gospel stories and put into a historical context...teaching about the Kingdom of God in parables' (Lewisham SACRE, 1996, p. 13; see also Copley et al., 2004, p. 19); and • Unpicking vocabulary and stock metaphors that would have been familiar to original audience (Truro and Exeter Diocesan Boards of Education, 2001; Brooke, 2011)	(Brown, 1994; Copley, 1994; Lewisham SACRE, 1996; Camden SACRE, 1998; Hertfordshire SACRE, 2001; Redbridge SACRE, 2001; Truro and Exeter Diocesan Boards of Education, 2001c; Copley et al., 2004b; Brooke, 2011)
Parables as having a distinct literary form	Explicitly stated as requiring consideration within KS2 (Staffordshire County Council, 1992, p. 45).	(Staffordshire County Council, 1992)
Parables as having a single meaning	It was common to find exemplifications which stated that a parable has a single meaning to communicate and therefore teach to pupils. For instance, the Lewisham Agreed Syllabus (1996) specifies that the parables of the Prodigal Son and Lost Sheep both teach about God, and the Good Samaritan about love. The Parables Project (Truro and Exeter Diocesan Boards	(Newcastle SACRE, 1991; Birmingham SACRE, 1995; Lewisham SACRE, 1996; Wolverhampton SACRE, 1996;

	of Education, 2001c, p. 7; 2001a; 2001b; 2001d) materials include three KS2 enquiries which aim to help pupils consider what the parables ‘might mean or could mean for modern hearers [read Christians]’; in practice, the three exemplars proffer a single, theological meaning for the teacher to lead pupils towards.	Camden SACRE, 1998; Hertfordshire SACRE, 2001; Redbridge SACRE, 2001; Truro and Exeter Diocesan Boards of Education, 2001c; 2001a; 2001b; 2001d)
Parables as polyvalent	Two publications recognised that different people interpret that parables differently. One is from Rankin et al. (1989), the other Margaret Cooling (1991). Cooling (1991, p. 71) states, ‘[e]ncourage them [pupils] to suggest a variety of interpretations. Children might like to ask some Christians how they interpret the story’. Cooling also acknowledges different interpretations exist amongst Christians (e.g. symbolic, historical, theological). However, no examples of diverse readings are given and it is left ‘to teachers to decide at what age they introduce the issue of interpretation to their children’ (p. 9).	(Rankin et al., 1989; Cooling, 1991)
Opportunities for pupils to interpret the parables in their own way/consider their own interpretation	Two agreed syllabi reviewed employed the SCAA’s phrasing that a skill to be developed over school education is ‘the ability to suggest meanings of religious texts’ (SCAA, 1994b, p. 7; Berkshire SACRE, 1995, p. 3; Lewisham SACRE, 1996, p. ix). Nothing further is added as to what might inform the development of such a skill.	(SCAA, 1994b; Berkshire SACRE, 1995; Lewisham SACRE, 1996)
Interpretive diversity of parables seen as accessible in secondary/tertiary education only	Two SCAA Model Syllabi (1994a; 1994b) advised that: • KS3 is appropriate for pupils to learn that ‘Christians interpret the Bible in a variety of ways...Literal, allegorical, devotional and theological interpretations’ (SCAA, 1994a, p. 8; 1994b, p. 43); and • KS4 is appropriate for students to engage with the fact that Christians interpret the Bible in a ‘variety of ways...[including] literal, allegorical, typological and critical approaches’ (p. 9; SCAA, 1994b, p. 59). These documents’ influence upon agreed syllabi can be seen in two examples: ○ Only in KS4 is it indicated that it is appropriate for pupils to consider that texts are ‘interpreted differently within faiths’ (Lewisham SACRE, 1996, p. 197); and ○ Post-16 is considered appropriate to explore different ‘ways of interpreting sacred texts’ (Camden SACRE, 1998, p. 18).	(Read et al., 1992; SCAA, 1994a; 1994b; Lewisham SACRE, 1996; Camden SACRE, 1998; Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004)

	Furthermore, non-statutory guidance (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004) holds conflicting advice. Whilst stating that religious texts <i>transmit</i> meaning (p. 28) and have something definite to say about 'God, the world and human life' (p. 27), the guidance does suggest that 'different traditions' may hold different interpretations of texts (p. 37) which secondary pupils could explore.	

Table 5.3: an overview of a range of key guidance on teaching the parables in RE between 1988 and 2013

What strikes me from this review of curriculum materials during this period is that parabolic enquiries typically direct pupils towards a single meaning or value.¹⁴³ The parables are presented in an instrumental (Aldridge, 2011; Chater and Erricker, 2013; Watson, 2013), predetermined (Pollefeyt and Bieringer, 2005; Davis, 2014; Aldridge, 2015; Briggs, 2017; Carswell, 2018a; 2018b) and/or exclusivist (Pollefeyt and Richards, 2020) manner.¹⁴⁴ Not only do these enquiries encourage picayune parabolic encounters where pupils had no opportunity to consider their own or diverse interpretations¹⁴⁵, they drive a narrow theology as texts are presented to pupils as bearing a single idea to takeaway. Perhaps practitioner understandings of Grimmitt's (1987) 'learning from religion' led to Jesus' parables being used in many schools 'to explore personal feelings or to decide how people should behave' (Ofsted, 2010, p. 33).

Additionally, this review also exposed the view that primary pupils *are not able to meaningfully engage with the parables*. This is most clearly seen in Read et al.'s (1992, p. 37) declaration that detailed study of texts, such as the parables, are best reserved for post-KS4 as 'varieties of interpretation...are beyond the understanding of younger children'. This sense of simply 'enjoying...[a parable] as a story for the pleasure it gives and the impression it leaves' (Read et al., 1992, pp. 49-50) and no more in the primary phase shows the

¹⁴³ It should be noted that it became much harder to source agreed syllabi from the University library post-2001. This may be due, in part, to the increase of agreed syllabi being published online with no links kept active. With this gap in the literature review, the Ofsted (2010) subject report is useful as it highlights that typical practice as detailed in Table 5.3 remained prevalent. Ofsted (2010, p. 33) found: 'The primary schools in particular were often uncertain about whether Christian material should be investigated in its own right, as part of understanding the religion, or whether it should be used to consider moral or social themes out of the context of the religion. For example, it was common for teachers to use Jesus's parables to explore personal feelings or to decide how people should behave and not to make any reference to their religious significance. As a result, they lost the opportunity to extend pupils' understanding of Christian beliefs'.

¹⁴⁴ See Chapter Four, Section 4.8.1 (Table 4.4).

¹⁴⁵ With the exception of Margaret Cooling's (1991) guidance.

enduring influence of Goldman's (1964; 1965) clarion call to delay serious parabolic enquiry until secondary schooling.¹⁴⁶ Even of the recommendations for parabolic enquiry in the secondary school, interpretive diversity falls along the neat contours of different *types* of approaches (such as literal, devotional, allegorical) in KS3/4 (SCAA, 1994a; 1994b) or KS5 (Camden, 1998) with little focus on nuance, complexity or *why* different people read the parables differently. Certainly, one detects a growing frustration amongst literature towards the end of the period that enquiry into biblical texts needs to surpass narrow, instrumental uses to account for the ways that Christians read them (Truro and Exeter Diocesan Boards of Education, 2001c; Copley et al., 2004a; Stern, 2006; Ofsted, 2010; 2013; Conroy et al., 2013; The National Society, 2014). This dissatisfaction stimulated the creation of two resources which are used by a critical mass of schools today – *Understanding Christianity* (RE Today, 2016) and *Emmanuel Project* (Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, 2020). It is to an appreciation and appraisal of these resources I now turn.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ For Goldman (1964; 1965), the application of Piaget's cognitive-development theory explained why primary-aged pupils were not 'understanding' the parables of Jesus. Pupils of this age are simply unable to grasp the metaphorical and abstract language present in the parables, becoming instead fixed on literal and often mistaken interpretations. 'There must be many', Goldman (1964, p. 223) declared, 'for whom the freshness, pungency and simplicity of Christ's parables are lost for ever because they were taught them far too soon, and they crystallised misconceptions of their meaning, never penetrating to further insights'. Enquiry into the parables (and Christian teaching generally) should therefore, for Goldman, be delayed until the secondary school. Here, a proper 'understanding and appreciation develops' (1965, p. 71) as pupils can start to understand symbolic and abstract language and apply this to their own existential questions. Goldman's work was immediately embraced by agreed syllabi and national reports (West Riding Council Education Department, 1966; Lancashire Education Committee, 1968; Commission on Religious Education in Schools, 1970; Department for Education and Science, 1971; Gearon, 2013). The Bible was perceived as an adult book which primary-aged pupils could not understand; ergo, its use in the classroom declined (McGrady, 1983; Copley, 2008; Gearon, 2013). Certainly, this viewpoint has curtailed the use of primary religious texts and opportunities for pupils to enquire theologically into them until relatively recently, with the advent of *Understanding Christianity* (RE Today, 2016) (Alves, 1968; Copley et al., 2004a; Copley, 2008; Conroy et al., 2013; Carrette, 2017). Instead, the primary curriculum has often been dominated by thematic units (an evolved form of Goldman's 'Life-themes'), which has traditionally focussed on the child's experience as a basis to explore general themes of human experience (Kay, 1996). It perhaps comes as no surprise that, with the sparsity of parables in the primary setting, studies into the use and teaching of the parables have been markedly absent from the literature.

¹⁴⁷ It is not possible to analyse all curriculum materials on the parables. I have therefore selected resources which are used by a large number of schools nationally (particularly church schools where my trialling takes

5.6.2 Understanding Christianity

In response to numerous reports that pupils' understanding of Christianity was poor (Copley et al., 2004a; Ofsted, 2010; 2013; Conroy et al., 2013; The National Society, 2014), a number of organisations and individuals (predominantly) within the Church of England¹⁴⁸ supported the creation of a resource which would help develop students' understanding of Christianity from Reception¹⁴⁹ to KS3. Key within this endeavour was 'extending pupils' ability to think theologically and engage in theological enquiry as part of learning in their RE' (The National Society, 2014, p. 10). Published in 2016, the *UC* resource (RE Today, 2016) is currently used by over seven thousand church and non-church schools in England.¹⁵⁰ The resource draws upon narrative theology by introducing eight core concepts¹⁵¹ which pupils encounter within a spiral curriculum to understand the 'big story of the bible' (RE Today, 2016).

In developing a tripartite model of enquiry – 'Making sense of the text', 'Understanding the impact' and 'Making connections' – the resource designers drew upon a range of theologians, including Thiselton (2009) and Gooder (2008). The synergy of their *responsible hermeneutics* and identification of *behind/within/in front of the text* approaches respectively influence an approach to theological enquiry which drives pupil engagement

place) and guidance materials which have been disseminated by well-regarded educationalists in the RE community.

¹⁴⁸ <https://www.understandingchristianity.org.uk/the-project/acknowledgements/>

¹⁴⁹ Four to five years of age.

¹⁵⁰ As stated on resource webpage (October 31st 2023): <https://www.understandingchristianity.org.uk>.

¹⁵¹ God, creation, fall, people of God, incarnation, gospel, salvation and kingdom of God.

with biblical texts (Pett and Cooling, 2018).¹⁵² This reveals itself most powerfully in the concern to ensure that pupils embark upon two scholarly pursuits:

The first is to rigorous textual scrutiny in the quest to retrieve the meaning of the text as constructed by the author and by the Christian community in its subsequent reflection on that text (the hermeneutics of retrieval). The second is to rigorous reflection on the contemporary context so that the influence of the pre-understandings of different readers is discerned and the significance and application, if any, of the retrieved meaning for those readers is carefully reflected upon (hermeneutics of suspicion). (Pett and Cooling, 2018, p. 6)

In taking the horizons of text and reader seriously (through contemplating questions *behind, within and in front* of the text),¹⁵³ the resource aims to empower students to act as agentive hermeneuts who, in participating ‘in an interpretive cycle for themselves...understand how and why Christians interpret their texts differently at different times and in different contexts’ (Pett and Cooling, 2018, p. 8).

5.6.3 An analysis of *UC* materials

The resource’s aim to help pupils understand ‘how’ and ‘why’ Christians interpret biblical texts differently resonates strongly with my present research thesis. I am therefore interested to see how this aim informs the *UC* materials. Shortly, I will analyse the parabolic

¹⁵² Thiselton and Gooder’s approaches have been previously considered in Chapter Five, Section 5.4.1 and Chapter Four, Section 4.8.2.1 respectively.

¹⁵³ Specifically (RE Today, 2016, p. 42): ‘Behind the text: These are matters around authorship, sources, context, the community for whom the text was written and the reliability of the text’; ‘Within the text: These are matters around understanding the words themselves in context – what do these texts mean?’, and ‘In front of the text: This concerns the relationship between the text and the reader, whether teacher, pupil, Christian, Hindu or atheist, and how our modern (or post-modern) context affects how we interpret the text’. Interestingly, when I consult the same literature the resource creators cite in informing this behind/within/in front typology (Gooder, 2008; Ipgrave, 2013a), I read interpretation to be an *in front* of the text issue, rather than a *within* issue; see Chapter Four, Section 4.8.2.1.

exemplifications offered within the resource (Section 5.6.4); before doing so, I will consider the end-of-phase outcomes.

Most relevant to the teaching of the parables are the first two enquiry steps pertaining to 'text' and 'impact'; once pupils have enquired into the meaning(s) of biblical texts in stage one, pupils move on to stage two, 'examining ways in which Christians respond to biblical texts and teachings' (RE Today, 2016, p. 36). Table 5.4 shows the end-of-phase outcomes for both enquiry stages.

End-of-phase outcome	End of KS1	End of LKS2	End of UKS2	End of KS3
Making sense of the text	Give clear, simple accounts of what the texts mean to Christians	Offer suggestions about what texts might mean and give examples of what the texts studied mean to some Christians	Taking account of the context(s), suggest meanings for biblical texts studied, and compare their ideas with ways in which Christians interpret biblical texts, showing awareness of different interpretations	Apply different methods of interpretation to texts to show how Christians make sense of the Bible
Understanding the impact	Give at least three examples of ways in which Christians use Bible concepts, stories and texts to guide their beliefs, in their individual lives and in their church communities	Make simple links between Bible texts and concepts studied and how Christians live in their whole lives and in their church communities	Make clear connections between Bible texts and concepts studied with what Christians believe, how Christians worship and how Christians behave in their whole lives, their church communities, and in the wider world Show how Christians put their beliefs into practice in different ways: for example, in different denominations	Give reasons and examples to explain how and why Christians respond to Bible texts and the concepts studied, and are influenced by them, as individuals, in church communities, and in the wider world Explain why Christians apply texts differently

Table 5.4: an overview of relevant end-of-phase outcomes in the *UC* (2016, pp. 36-37) resource which link to parabolic enquiry

It is important to contemplate the outcomes and progressions here. With regard to the 'Making sense of the text' outcomes, one can identify an emphasis that pupils are to engage more significantly with the diversity of interpretation as they progress through the Key Stages. Moving away from simplistic conclusions 'of what the texts mean' (KS1), pupils progress to suggesting what texts 'might mean', with reference to their meaning for 'some Christians' (LKS2). In UKS2, there is an expectation that pupils should take account of context as they acknowledge various interpretations, before being able to '[a]pply different methods of interpretation' (RE Today, 2016a, p. 37) in KS3.¹⁵⁴

With regard to the 'Understanding the impact' outcomes, there seems to be little difference between the end-of-phase outcomes for KS1 and LKS2, where pupils are to make simple links between Christian belief and practice. The first notable difference emerges in UKS2 – pupils should make connections between biblical texts and how they impact Christian lives individually, within their church communities *as well as* 'in the wider world'. In addition, it is only in Years Five and Six that pupils using this resource are to engage explicitly with the diversity of Christian belief and practice.¹⁵⁵ Within the 'Understanding the impact' outcomes for KS3, pupils are to contemplate 'how' and 'why' the commitments and contexts of Christians influence their interpretations and 'why Christians apply texts differently'.

¹⁵⁴ The resource guidance does not make clear for practitioners what these 'different methods' are.

¹⁵⁵ In my view, the suggestion that 'different denominations' are investigated to identify varying belief and practice in Christendom needs to be taken cautiously by practitioners. One must avoid 'stereotyping' these denominations (e.g. all Roman Catholics/Methodists/Anglicans believe and do this). Indeed, there is a substantial breadth within these denominations, and the representation of these within the classroom needs to remain faithful to this diversity in order to avoid harmful reductionism.

5.6.4 Parabolic enquiries within *UC*

I am keen to explore how these end-of-phase outcomes and approach to theological enquiry inform the parabolic enquiries provided in the resource. These are detailed in Table 5.5.

UC unit		Teaching and learning suggestions
Foundation Stage	Unit F2: Incarnation (Digging Deeper) <i>What makes every single person unique and precious? (p. 9)</i>	• Hide ten gold chocolate coins. Hide the tenth inside something. When the first nine are found, ask where the tenth is. Direct children to the last coin using 'hot' and 'cold' directions. • Tell Jesus' story about the Lost Coin from Luke 15: 8-10. Why did the woman want the coin so badly? • It was precious to her. Tom and Tessa's mum says the story reminds her that people are precious to God too, and he cares what happens to them.
	Unit F3: Salvation (Digging Deeper) <i>How can we help others when they need it? (p. 7)</i>	• Silently act out the story [of the Good Samaritan]... • Focus on: Who is the hero in this Christian story? What does the story teach about helping? Jesus told the story to someone who needed to understand that anyone 'in need' was someone we should try to help.
KS1	Unit 1.1: God (Core) <i>What do Christians believe God is like? (p. 2)</i>	• ...tell the story of the Lost Son...[use] 'I wonder' questions • Use drama (for example, hot-seating or thought-tapping theatre) to explore the differing perspectives and feelings of the father and both sons. Ask pupils to talk about their responses to the story: favourite character, most important moment, surprises, anything that made them laugh/smile or cry/sad. Draw out the forgiveness and love shown by the father. Wonder: What might this teach Christians about God? Is God like a father? How? • Have a discussion using dialogic talk...to help the class work out the meanings behind the Lost Son. It is important that dialogic talk is employed so that pupils are involved in the process of working out the parable's [hidden] meaning rather than merely being told it. • Ask the pupils to make 'hidden meaning boxes'. Pupils should show the literal story of the Lost Son on the outside of a box, but put the hidden meaning inside the box ready to be found by anyone who opens it...Share some of the hidden meanings of the parable that the pupils have found. Draw out that for Christians this parable teaches that God is loving and forgiving, like a parent.
	Unit 1.4: Gospel (Digging Deeper) <i>What is the good news Jesus brings? (p. 5)</i>	• 'The Pearl of Great Price': Matthew 13:45–46. Use this short parable of Jesus. A man who loved pearls found one that he thought was the best in the world. He sold everything to get it, and he was delighted. Use a meditation script...to get pupils to think for themselves about the things that really matter most in life. Christians think of God as the One who matters most, but anyone can get distracted from what they most care about by little things. Draw (into oyster shells?) some symbols of what matters most.

LKS2	Unit 2A.4: Gospel (Digging Deeper) <i>What kind of world did Jesus want?</i> (pp. 4-5)	• [Making sense of the text] • Share Luke 10:25–29 with the pupils. Recall learning from KS1 about parables as stories with a ‘hidden meaning’ (see Unit 1.1). Ask pupils to talk in pairs or fours about what they think the ‘hidden meaning’ of this story might be. Collect their ideas as first thoughts. They will learn about some ‘hidden meanings’ Christians learn from Jesus’ story. • Pose the question ‘And who is your neighbour?’ Pupils can show their responses by writing ‘ME’ in the middle of a set of concentric circles and the name of a ‘neighbour’ in each of the others. • Look at an image of someone being a ‘Good Samaritan’ in a modern situation (for example, helping a homeless person), and discuss what pupils can see happening. Then show a range of images: for example, policeman, burglar, nurse, someone in handcuffs — pupils sort out who they expect to be the ‘goodies’ and ‘baddies’. • Read Jesus’ reply to the expert in the law (Luke 10:30–37). Ask pupils what answer they think the expert in the Law is expecting? Why? Ask why they think Jesus told this story. • Use drama to explore the story from the point of view of the different characters. Hot-seat the characters, including the man who was beaten up. Explain that Jesus was talking to many people who did not like Samaritans at all — they would have been shocked to find out that he was the character who eventually looked after the man. Look back at the images of goodies, baddies and someone being a ‘Good Samaritan’ in the modern era. How shocked would pupils be if the robber was being the Good Samaritan in the picture? Why? Relate this to how shocking people at the time would have found the idea of a Good Samaritan. The people at the time would probably have expected Jesus to say his neighbour was a Jewish person near to them. We expect to admire the priest and the Levite; gauge pupils’ opinions on whether we actually admire them in the end (probably not). We do end up admiring the Samaritan — what qualities make us admire him? • Think, pair, share what Jesus might want people to learn from this story. Have a look at the suggested nine ideas on Resource Sheet 1* [see below]: some are more likely meanings than others. Recap who Luke 10:27 says people should love (God and neighbour). It might be difficult or dangerous to love a neighbour, but people should still do it. The Samaritan’s kindness and love towards others can be seen as like God’s kindness and love for people. Talk about those for whom Jesus’ teaching is ‘good news’ and why, and about what kind of world Jesus wanted (p. 4) • [Understanding the Impact] • Explain that there are a number of Christian charities set up with the word ‘Samaritan’ in the title — ask pupils their opinion on why this is. • Go back to the person beaten up in the Good Samaritan story: what kind of neighbour did he need? Who are the ‘beaten up’ people in the world today? What do they need? Who is being their neighbour? Pupils will have looked at Christian charities earlier, but they should know that it is not only Christians who help others! (p. 5)

		* Gospel Resource Sheet 1: What was the message of Jesus' story of The Good Samaritan? (p. 2 of Gospel resources) Here are some suggestions. Which ones do pupils think are more likely? Which ones are less likely?! Try a diamond 9 — or triangle 6, or triangle 3, depending on the responses of your pupils. A simple start would be to give two options - one likely, one unlikely - and get pupils to decide on the more important message. You could then add in each one, accepting one and rejecting the other, until you arrive at the most important message. • Anyone who needs help is your neighbour. • Never walk alone. • Learn kung fu. • Loving people is very important. • If you're in need, you don't mind where your help comes from. • You show you love God by loving other people. • Keep your eyes open for robbers! • God loves people, whoever they are. • Your enemies may need help some time – and you must help them!
UKS2	Unit 2B.5: Gospel (Core) <i>What would Jesus do?</i> (p. 2)	• Start with a fun design challenge: can the pupils in groups of three use 12 kebab sticks and some masking tape to create the tallest possible Bible stand? Give half the class sand trays from Reception, the other half modelling clay for the base. Which is easier? Read the parable: imagine the scene from inside the story. Ask pupils what they think the story is about and why. What did the wise and foolish builders learn? If it is not a manual for builders, why did Jesus tell this story? Jesus is clear that his words give foundations for living — and without them, people will get swept away. This unit explores the kinds of things that form these foundations for living [e.g. Sermon on the Mount].
	Unit 2B.8: Kingdom of God (Core)	• Jesus told lots of stories that start: 'The Kingdom of Heaven is like ...' Use two of these with the class and explore their meanings carefully. What is the Kingdom of God? • The Feast: Luke 14:12–24. Read or tell this story to the class. Ask pupils to respond with any comments, feelings, ideas, questions. What do they think: who was Jesus talking to, why did he tell this story, and what do they think

<i>What kind of king is Jesus?</i> (p. 2)	Jesus meant? Give some prompts for pupils to make decisions about the meaning of the parable: Is the feast Heaven, or is it a banquet on Earth? Is the man giving the feast similar to God, or to Jesus? Why do the rich and successful people make excuses? When Jesus came to Earth, it was not the priests or the holy, religious people who welcomed him, but the common people and the outsiders: how does this connect to the parable? Was Jesus teaching that everyone is welcome if they want to be part of his Kingdom? Is Heaven more like a feast or a party than anything else? How would the different people in his audience feel about the story? Compare their ideas with some commentaries (see Resources)....[From resources] The Bible Gateway site has some resources that explain Bible texts: search for a text and then click the blue 'STUDY THIS' button. There are some free commentaries — mostly Protestant (for example, Matthew Henry Commentary, IVP New Testament Commentary). These give some short explanations, for example, for the parable of the feast: www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+14% 3A12-24&version=MSG (p. 7) • The Tenants in the Vineyard: Matthew 21:33–46. Read or tell the story to the class, pointing out that Jesus had enemies: he is sometimes presented as a figure so innocuous that no one would bother to crucify him. Tell them it's a bit of a mystery story, but they will get five clues to help them work out what it means. Ask threes to write a short paragraph to explain the meaning. Clues (print these on to cards): a) In the Old Testament, the people of God in the nation of Israel are compared to God's vineyard. b) In John's Gospel, Jesus is called the Son of God. c) The chief priests were Jesus' enemies — they were jealous because he was so popular, and disagreed with him about religion. d) The Old Testament called the Prophets 'Servants of the Lord'. e) The chief priests arrested Jesus and he was killed a few days later. • Get each group of three pupils to share their idea of what the parable really means with two other groups. • If these are 'parables of the Kingdom', what kind of king is Jesus? Ask pupils for their suggestions. See Resource Sheet 1 for ideas.
Unit 2B.8: Kingdom of God (Digging Deeper) <i>What kind of king is Jesus?</i> (p. 4)	• The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21–35). Read the opening verses (21-22) and then ask pupils in pairs to draft a very quick story that illustrates Jesus' point. What kind of story do they expect Jesus to tell? Then tell or read the story. Discuss how effective Jesus' story is. What message would his followers have taken from this story? • This parable is well suited to drama: the emotions and action of the parable could be listed as questioning, fear, begging, relief, ungratefulness, hatred, outrage. Begin by getting pupils to think about how to portray these in body language and drama. Put the class in groups of about six, and give them either a script to work from or

		guidance on how to improvise this parable. After suitable practice time, see the performances of each group. How has acting this out affected their reading and responses to the story? • Different interpretations. The plain meaning of the story is that if you have been forgiven, then you should forgive others, but does this parable mean Christians should always forgive? Not all Christians see this parable in exactly the same way. Ask the pupils to present ideas and arguments to say: how likely is it that Jesus' story means: ○ that God is loving and forgives all wrongs, if people turn from evil and trust him? ○ that because people have been forgiven so generously by God, they should be generous in forgiving others? ○ that Christian parents should forgive their children if they are mean, cheating, lying or unkind? ○ that Christians should never fight back if they are attacked, but forgive instead? ○ that a criminal who says sorry can become a church minister? ○ that everyone will end up in heaven, because God will forgive all wrongs? • that there is a price to pay for being unforgiving? • One specific way to explore this is to ask pupils to rate different items as 'easy or hard to forgive' on a scale of 1 to 10, and consider if Jesus would forgive all these things (see Resource Sheet 4). • Return to the key question: if Jesus is a king, what kind of king is he?
KS3	N/A	• There are no parabolic enquiries in KS3¹⁵⁶

Table 5.5: parabolic enquiries within the *UC* resource

¹⁵⁶ I can only postulate as to why no parabolic enquiries occur at KS3 in this resource. Does it suggest that parables are held as simple texts for younger pupils to engage with to understand Christian belief? And/or perhaps that they are considered of insufficient merit for secondary-aged students to explore due to the perception that they have already learnt these texts in primary school?

UC is widely held to be the pinnacle of resources in promoting theological and hermeneutical enquiry into biblical texts, explaining in part why a significant number of schools implement them (CEEEO, 2019; Cooling, 2023). I am therefore interested to compare the parabolic enquiries in *UC* with my recommendations for parabolic enquiries in Sections 5.3.1 (*behind* the text issues) and 5.4.1 (*in front* of the text issues).

5.6.4.1 Behind the text

Following my engagement with parabolic scholarship earlier in this chapter, I argued that parabolic enquiries in the primary school would improve if they enabled pupils to reason through a number of *behind the text* hermeneutical issues. These included: the *Sitz im Leben*; the intent(s) of Jesus and the synoptic Evangelists; Evangelistic redaction; vocabulary, and the value and limitations in trying to arrive at any original meaning. Within the *UC* resources, enquiries post-KS1 invite pupils to consider contextual information¹⁵⁷ and use this to postulate why Jesus told this parable and the response he hoped for from listeners. For instance, in the UKS2 Kingdom of God Core unit, pupils encounter *The Parable of the Feast* (Luke 14: 12–24). Students learn that Jesus was not welcomed by religious leaders of the day but ‘common people and...outsiders’ (p. 2); pupils use this contextual information to contemplate why Jesus told this story. What is missing in these exemplifications is any mention of Evangelistic redaction or reflection upon the challenges in discerning Jesus’ (or the Evangelists’) intention in explicating the parable. Consequently, primary pupils are not given an opportunity within this resource to consider a) key hermeneutical questions within

¹⁵⁷ Which is further detailed for teachers within each unit (see Appendix Four for an overview).

parabolic scholarship regarding their redaction for, and reception within, early Christian communities after Jesus' death (e.g. Tolbert, 1979; Myers, 2002; Schottroff, 2006; Snodgrass, 2012a) or b) whether we can actually retrieve an original meaning and the value (or otherwise) of doing so (Gooder, 2008). Such opportunities would help pupils enter into more scholarly discussions of biblical texts, enriching their epistemic ability as they engage with core reasons why different people interpret parables differently. The absence of a parabolic enquiry in KS3 means that opportunities to consider 'different methods of interpretation' (RE Today, 2016) with these narratives are sadly absent.

5.6.4.2 *In front of the text*

In terms of my *in front of the text* recommendations, I advanced the view that pupils' epistemic ability would be enriched through considering aspects such as: the role of positionality in interpretive acts; a range of diverse, authentic interpretations as a means to contemplate 'why' different people interpret the parables differently; what might guide *responsible* readings, and to what extent meaning is determined by readers (or is meaning solely located within the text)? On the one hand, the KS2 *UC* resources make clear that the parables attract interpretive diversity. Different interpretations are provided in three of the units (LKS2: Gospel – Digging Deeper; UKS2: Kingdom of God – Core and Digging Deeper) for pupils to reason across and through. This helps pupils appreciate that these narratives are interpreted differently by different people. Pupil reasoning is further enriched by giving them opportunity to evaluate and justify their own views as to the merit of these readings.

The use of a red herring (i.e. the meaning of the PGS is to ‘Learn kung fu’)¹⁵⁸ helps pupils consider what constitutes *responsible* readings of the text. Out of these three units, only one affords students the opportunity to encounter *authentic* interpretations from real interpreters (UKS2 Kingdom of God – Core). This means that wider opportunities for pupils to encounter authentic Christian interpretations from outside the class are lost.

On the other hand, there is no explicit consideration of positionality in these materials. This is a surprising finding, particularly with the resources’ emphasis upon helping students discern the ‘influence of the pre-understandings of different readers’ (Pett and Cooling, 2018, p. 6) in interpretation. Despite the resource creators’ and advisers’ desire that pupils become ‘virtuous readers’ (RE Today, 2016, p. 41) who consider both horizons of the text *and* reader in the interpretive act, not enough has been done in the *UC* resources to help pupils consider the place and impact of positionality of the reader in interpreting the parables. This has been recognised elsewhere (Cooling et al., 2020, p. 68). There are two key impacts of this omission. First, the attempt to help pupils understand *why* different people interpret the parables differently is stymied (thus impacting their epistemic ability). Second, opportunities for students to reflexively consider *why they themselves interpret the parable in the manner they do* – which would contribute richly to pupils’ personal knowledge (Ofsted, 2021b) – are missed. It would be a simple move to encourage such reflection on positionality. In KS1 God (Core) and UKS2 Kingdom of God (Core) units, for instance, pupils are invited to reflect on their own ideas and feelings about a parable; allowing time for pupils to express their views would provide alterity in the class to come to the fore, a rich

¹⁵⁸ LKS2 Gospel – Digging Deeper.

resource for then considering why we encounter these narratives differently. Such a move would require explicit attention drawn to the value of reflexivity upon positionality in biblical enquiry for teachers; nowhere in the mandatory *UC* training or the Teacher Handbook is Thiselton's (2009) *responsible hermeneutics* mentioned.

5.6.5 Some final reflections on *UC*

There is much to commend in the *UC* resources. It has made significant strides in helping students engage hermeneutically with biblical texts, and has been highly influential in my own thinking and practice as a teacher, adviser and researcher. As (arguably) the strongest resource for parabolic enquiry in the primary setting (and most widely used), my research thesis and subsequent justifications must be in dialogue with this. Certainly, both *UC*'s approach and my own envisioning of a post-secular parabolic enquiry draw on Thiselton (2009), Gooder (2008) and similar grounding. I hope that my research can complement and further develop the work of the resources to introduce even richer parabolic enquiries in the primary setting. Applying my recommendations from reception history (Section 5.5.1) may well be a driver here, ensuring primary parabolic enquiries are more appropriate for post-secular RE and the development of substantive, disciplinary and personal knowledge (Ofsted, 2021b).

Before moving on to consider further guidance available for teachers, I proffer three final reflections on parabolic enquiries in the *UC* resource. I wonder:

- **how many primary pupils *actually* get to undertake the rich hermeneutical thinking available in the *UC* resource’s parabolic exemplifications.** The two parabolic enquiries which allow pupils to most clearly and effectively reason through different interpretations are ‘*Digging Deeper*’ units (LKS2 God; UKS2 Kingdom of God). Finite curriculum time in which RE leaders need to be selective in the range of concepts they choose to explore (rarely do schools have time to explore all eight concepts), compounded by the fact that these ‘*Digging Deeper*’ units are often used only when the ‘*Core*’ units have been explored, mean that proportionally few schools implement these two units;
- **whether the use of concepts within the resource leads to pre-determinism (Carswell, 2018a).** In other words, to what extent does the particular concept explored within the unit explicitly or implicitly influence how these narratives are read? This is most acutely seen in the KS1 God unit (‘What do Christians believe God is like?’), where pupils are to ‘talk about their responses to the story [of the Lost Son]’ before the teacher directs the class’ reflections to *what the story might tell Christians about God as forgiving and loving* (p. 2). Through the resource, the parables are explored in units as having something to do with the concepts of incarnation, God, salvation, Kingdom of God and gospel. There will always be a contextual frame for enquiring into the parables – teaching and learning does not happen in a vacuum – but it is important to ponder the impact of concept-based approaches in RE; and
- **about the utility of *UC*’s progression model of engaging with biblical – specifically parabolic – texts.** What age and stage is appropriate to introduce pupils to various hermeneutical issues within biblical text scholarship within a progressive primary curriculum is an under-researched area. *UC* advances a particular model – moving from a simple meaning to more complex, nuanced and diverse readings across primary education – but no formal research to my knowledge has been undertaken which considers whether or not this is well-calibrated to what primary pupils are able to do.¹⁵⁹ In *UC*, it is assumed that it is from KS3 that pupils can engage with the questions of ‘how’ and ‘why’ Christians interpret texts differently (RE Today, 2016, p. 37). My research will develop our understanding of what UKS2 pupils are capable of engaging meaningfully with in a scholarly, hermeneutical, dialogic parabolic enquiry; perhaps UKS2 can engage with questions of ‘how’ and ‘why’?

5.6.6 Emmanuel Project

Likewise responding to the finding that pupils’ understanding of Christianity was weak (Ofsted, 2010; 2013; The National Society, 2014), the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and

¹⁵⁹ Certainly, this area was not explored as part of the *UC* Evaluation Study (Shillitoe, 2020).

Ipswich¹⁶⁰ created *The Emmanuel Project*¹⁶¹ (Diocese of Suffolk, 2023) in 2016. Including forty-nine units (twenty of which are on Christianity), the resource aims to develop pupils' religious literacy through a concept-based approach which helps pupils deeply understand the belief and practice of religious and non-religious people in the world (Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, 2020, pp. 3-4). It aims to do this through employing a five-step enquiry cycle of 'engage', 'enquire', 'explore', 'evaluate' and 'express'. In terms of Christianity, this cycle allows pupils to learn about Christian concepts and explore them through biblical 'Text or Narrative', Christian 'Community Practice' and Christian 'Living'. All resources were updated in 2020 to meet the requirements of the Church of England *Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education* (CEEEO, 2019). The resource is embedded within the Suffolk Agreed Syllabus (Suffolk SACRE, 2022) and has been purchased by a growing number of schools nationally.¹⁶²

I have identified six units containing parabolic enquiries in *EP*. A summary of these enquiries are shown in Table 5.6 (the full enquiries can be found in Appendix Five), with analysis following:

¹⁶⁰ Since becoming the Diocese of Suffolk.

¹⁶¹ Hereafter, *EP*.

¹⁶² Specifically, 428 schools as of November 6th 2023 (phone conversation with Diocese). It is uncertain how many schools teach the Christianity units, as in many cases the world faith units in *EP* are used to complement the Christianity units in *UC*.

<i>EP unit</i>	Teaching and learning suggestions
KS1: What did Jesus teach about God in his parables?	Presentation of parables to pupils • ‘Jesus’ parables usually teach something about what God is like or about what people are like, but what do the children in this class think it teaches people? There may be lots of different possibilities!’ (p. 5) • ‘Christians say Jesus told parables so his followers would think carefully about what God is like and ask questions.’ (p. 6) • In a further teacher’s note, a clear meaning for the Parable of the Prodigal Son is advanced; it ‘features a father welcoming home a wayward son. Jesus understood God as the best of all possible fathers, a model for human fathers; he did not intend those with poor experiences of fathering to use these as a lens through which to view God.’ (p. 8) Aspects of parabolic enquiry • Pupils given the opportunity to ponder, ‘What did Jesus teach about God in THIS parable’ [the Parable of the Lost Sheep] (p. 6) as well as consider a question they want to ask about the story (p. 7) • A reception from a Christian artist considered (John Freeman): ‘What do you think the artist wants to pass on about what the shepherd is like?’ (p. 7) • ‘Imagine you are the little white bird in the painting; your job is to tell us what Jesus wanted us to know about God. Finish the sentence: The shepherd in Jesus’ story is God is a bit like that.’ (p. 7) • Parables presented as linking to God e.g. ‘On Sunday Tom and Tessa’s vicar will stand in the church pulpit and teach everyone what God is like. He will use the parable to help. Which words about the Good Samaritan do you think will help him say what God is like?’ (p. 11)
LKS2: How do Christians show reconciliation?	• ‘Investigate the story of the Lost (Prodigal) son...Explain that Jesus told parables to help his followers learn more about God; they are like mystery stories with lots of special meanings in them.’ (p. 8) • After pupils have heard the story, they then ponder ‘Can we all learn something from a Christian story like the Lost Son?’ (p. 8). Students then consider an artist’s reception of the text – either Rembrandt’s ‘The Return of the Prodigal Son’ or Frank Wesley’s ‘Forgiving Father’ (p. 8). Another reception is later considered through the sculpture ‘Reconciliation’ by Margaret Adams Parker (p. 9). • On the one hand, a view expressed in this resource that this parable is all about ‘reconciliation’ (pp. 8-10). On the other hand, there are a range of questions which invite pupils to ruminate more widely: ‘Is this a story about God – if so, where is God in the story? Is it a story for Christians, if so, what does it tell Christians? Is it a story for everyone, if so, what does it tell you?’ (p. 8)

LKS2: What do Christians mean when they talk about the Kingdom of God?	• <i>‘What clues do Jesus’ parables give about what the Kingdom of God is like? Be a Bible detective: God’s kingdom is a place where Start with your ideas from the ‘Sheep and Goats’ parable. Now, what else can you find out from these short parables?</i> ○ the parable of the Mustard Seed - Matthew 13 v.31-32 ○ the parable of the Yeast - Matthew 13 v.33 ○ the parable of the Pearl of Great Price – Matthew 13 v.45 ○ the parable of the Hidden Treasure - Matthew 13 v.44’ (p. 9)
LKS2: Why are good stewardship and generous giving important for every Christian?	• Teacher notes express a clear, single meaning of the Parable of the Talents (pp. 3, 8) • Pupils consider the Parable of the Talents: ‘What might a Christian learn from the story? THINK: What do you think the story is saying to Christians about God and about being a good steward? What might a Christian learn from the story? Who could you ask to check your ideas?’ (p. 9)
UKS2: How do the ‘Heroes of Faith’ encourage Christians today?	• This unit focusses on faith and how Christians intentionally develop this. ‘[J]ust like a mustard seed, faith can grow big and bring benefit to uncountable numbers. Jesus explained this in a parable. Find it in Matthew 13 v.31-32 in the Bible / on www.biblegateway.com or in a Bible storybook...You could also watch ‘Grace Kids’ as they explain Jesus’ Parable of the Mustard seed taught people to pray and put their trust in God when they were in trouble, as they did a mustard seed of faith would begin to grow. https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xeyh5z’ (p. 11)
UKS2: When Christians need real wisdom where do they look for it?	• A clear single interpretation of parables for teachers: ‘Wise or Foolish Parables: Jesus’ ‘Sermon on the Mount’ (Matthew 5-8) summarises real wisdom in practical, but controversial ways, as Jesus gave his own views on established ways of interpreting Jewish scriptures. He said that those who built their lives on his words would be like a ‘Wise man who built his house on rock’. The opposite of wisdom is foolishness, which is a wrong understanding of life. Jesus told several parables on this theme, including the parable of a Rich Fool (Luke 12 v.13-21) which is a warning about putting our trust or faith in the wrong things (here, money and possessions). The fool has missed the point of life – he does not realise that his soul is on loan from God, who can require it back whenever he likes. The fool thinks that the aim of life is ‘to be happy’, however he interprets that, and he thinks he can gain happiness by doing what he wants and by accumulating possessions. The wise person recognises their limitations, trusts in God and understands that there is more to life than may be seen on the surface.’ (p. 4) • Explore the parable with students, explaining that: ‘[t]he parable is not really about builders, but wisdom and listening. Jesus had been teaching his disciples about God and how to live, passing on God’s wisdom. What he said is found in the ‘Sermon on the Mount’, just before the parable. None of his teaching would be any good if the disciples just ignored what had been said.’ (p. 13)

Table 5.6: parabolic enquiries within the *EP* resource

5.6.6.1 *Behind the text*

Within the *EP* resources, the parables are described as ‘stories with meanings...[which draw on] Palestinian life and culture’ (KS1, p. 3); these narratives were told by Jesus ‘to help his followers learn more about God and his kingdom’ (KS1, p. 5). The enquiries therefore direct pupils to consider what the meaning of certain parables are via this lens, in a manner which is driven, enabled and limited by the unit question in play. For instance, the parables of the Lost Sheep, Prodigal Son and Good Samaritan are all explored in KS1 to ascertain Christian belief in ‘what God is like’ (p. 6). Likewise, in a LKS2 unit, the Parable of the Prodigal Son is presented exclusively as a story about reconciliation. There exists a sense that pupils are pursuing a single meaning which Jesus intended his followers to hear, yet pupils are to do this interpretive work without any reference to ‘Palestinian life and culture’ (KS1, p. 3) acknowledged in the teacher notes. The first-century context of original listeners is not explored, nor are questions of authorial intent(s) of the synoptic Evangelists. There is one mention of Evangelistic redaction when the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders is explained as finding its context in the previously occurring Sermon on the Mount (UKS2 Wisdom). This ensures the parable is not explored in a fragmented manner (Bowie and Coles, 2018).

5.6.6.2 *In front of the text*

With regards to *in front* of the text issues, there are missed opportunities and absences. There is no acknowledgement of diverse views, and the real-life receptions offered (e.g. in KS1 and LKS2 How do Christians show reconciliation?) stand in isolation and are used to

exemplify the particular, single reading encouraged through the unit title. There is nothing on positionality, the role of the reader in interpretation, responsible interpretation or the polyvalency of the parables. Those commendable instances where pupils are to consider their own ideas about a parable (e.g. in KS1) are not capitalized upon, and pupils are subsequently directed to the single, pre-determined reading proffered in the resource. Opportunities which allow pupils to ruminate more widely upon meaning and interpretation in LKS2¹⁶³ need further development to help pupils reflexively consider different ideas and receptions of a parable if epistemic ability is to be developed in a significant manner. I do like the phraseology in the LKS2 stewardship unit of ‘What *might* a Christian learn’ [emphasis my own] from the Parable of the Tenants (p .9). Comparing their ideas with real-life Christians would, if implemented, provide authentic interpretations for pupils to reason through.

5.6.7 Some final reflections on *EP*

Responding to the concern that pupils’ understanding of Christianity needed improving (Ofsted, 2010; 2013; The National Society, 2014), the concept-based approach of *EP* ensures that units are theologically grounded and therefore focus pupil enquiry on Christian belief. In doing so, the focus per unit on a concept both directs and limits how pupils encounter the parables; in *EP*’s case, often to a single meaning. This pre-determinism (Carswell, 2018a) and exclusivism (Pollefeyt and Richards, 2020) mean that students, in schools following these plans, do not get the opportunity to think about the ‘what’ or ‘why’ of diverse readings of

¹⁶³ ‘Is this a story about God – if so, where is God in the story? Is it a story for Christians, if so, what does it tell Christians? Is it a story for everyone, if so, what does it tell you?’ (LKS2 How do Christians show reconciliation?, p. 8).

these narratives. Lacking is the opportunity to engage with alterity (Ricoeur, 1992; Jackson, 2014; Freathy and Davis, 2018; Larkin et al., 2020). Doing so could open up more scholarly enquiries, where pupils can reason across/through (Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020) various interpretations and reflect upon their own and others' positionality in the act of interpretation. This more hermeneutical approach would enable students' to develop their substantive, disciplinary and personal knowledge (Ofsted, 2021b). Certainly, within *EP*'s parabolic enquiries I cannot detect any progression in pupils becoming more scholarly with these narratives. This is in contradistinction to *UC*'s approach which deepens pupils' interpretive endeavours from Reception to KS2. The parabolic enquiries in *UC* contribute more effectively to students' epistemic ability than those in *EP*.

5.6.8 Wider materials related to parabolic enquiry

Although *UC* and *EP* are two significant resources used in a critical mass of schools, there are further curriculum materials providing guidance on parabolic enquiries. Those consulted are shown in Table 5.7,¹⁶⁴ compared against my recommendations for a post-secular parabolic enquiry in the first half of the chapter.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ A more comprehensive review of these publications can be found in Appendix Six.

¹⁶⁵ With the multi-faceted nature of some of my recommendations, the table box has been shaded if it aligns with this recommendation in full or in part. Further analysis of these published materials against my recommendations for a richer parabolic enquiry follow the table.

Hermeneutical focus	(Georgiou and Seymour, 2023)			
	(Ostler, 2022)			
	(Lane, 2022)			
	(Holt, 2022)			
	(Ofsted, 2021b)			
	(Hutton and Cox, 2021)			
	(Ruggero, 2020)			
	(Pett, 2020)			
	(Jenkins, 2020)			
	(Diocese of Suffolk, 2020)			
	(Bowie et al., 2020a; Bowie et al., 2020b)			
	(Bible Society, 2019a; 2019b)			
	(Carswell, 2018a; 2018b)			
	(Wintersgill, 2017)			
Behind the text (Section 5.3.1)	(Moseley and Takolia, n.d.)			
	(Brooks, 2017)			
	(Diocese of Lichfield, 2017)			
	(RE Today, 2016)			
	(Freathy, 2016)			
	(Bowie, 2016)			
	(Appleton and Jack, 2016)			
	(Moss, 2015)			
	(Earl, 2015)			
	(Feiderhof and Thompson, 2014)			
	Pondering the first-century context of original listeners and postulating why Jesus told this parable (parables as social commentary and challenge and <i>Sitz im Leben</i>)			
	Considering redactional work of the synoptic Evangelists. For instance: do framing texts help or hinder interpretive endeavours? Are there authorial intents in play? Is it worth being mindful of the wider gospel in which a particular parable is a part, or could/should we read the text in isolation? (Evangelistic redaction: abuse or meaningful use?)			
	Exploring the meaning of some of the vocabulary used (such as characters and locations) and their potential significance for original listeners/readers. This includes deliberating whether or not stock metaphors (e.g. 'father', 'shepherd') are employed to refer to God (parables as theological texts)			
	In view of the common assertion within historical-critical approaches that the parables have a single, original meaning (Zimmermann, 2015), granting pupils' the opportunity to reflexively consider the value and limitations of historical-critical approaches around this assumption			

In front of the text (Section 5.4.1)	The polyvalency of the parables – do/can they have more than one meaning?																								
	The extent to which meaning/s are found within the text or determined by readers																								
	The role of positionality in interpretive acts																								
	What might guide <i>responsible</i> reading? To what degree do/should framing texts, titles and historical context guide our interpretations? Can parables mean anything we want?																								
	Encountering diverse, authentic interpretations from different times and places. Why might these people have read the text this way? How sound do we think these interpretations are? How do we read these texts?																								
	Can interpretations be wrong? And, if so, on what grounds?																								
Reception history (Section 5.5.1)	Encounter interpretations from a number of ‘historical vantage points’ (Evans, 2014, p. 128), enabling pupils to grow in awareness that the parables have been and are interpreted differently by different people																								
	Raise and critically consider reasons why this interpretive diversity exists through pondering both <i>behind</i> and <i>in front</i> of the text hermeneutical issues which coalesce within reception history																								
	In ruminating upon the historical and dialogical nature of textual interpretation, be reflexive upon their own positionality and place within the continuing history of interpretation (Parris, 2009; Katho, 2020)																								
Primary (P), secondary (S), both (B) or not stated (N)		B	B	P	B	B	P	B	B	S	P	B	P/B	S	S	P	B	S	S	S	B	S	P	P	B
Type of publication: blog (B); book/book chapter (BO); curriculum exemplars (C); guidance document (G); national report (N), research report (R) or subject article (S)		BO	G	BO	C	S	C/G	C	C	S	C	G	S	C/G	R	C	B	C	B	BO	R	BO	B	S	G

Table 5.7: an analysis of a range of key publications linked to parabolic enquiry, and the extent to which they align with my recommendations

What does a survey of recent support and guidance for practitioners reveal? Certainly, a critical mass of materials draw upon facets of *behind* the text issues as a means to direct pupils towards uncovering a single (uncontested) meaning Jesus meant to communicate (Felderhof and Thompson, 2014; Appleton and Jack, 2016; Freathy, 2016; Brooks, 2017; Diocese of Lichfield, 2017; Holt, 2022; Lane, 2022; Ostler, 2022; Moseley and Takolia, n.d.). This exclusivist (Pollefeyt and Richards, 2020), predetermined (Pollefeyt and Bieringer, 2005; Davis, 2014; Aldridge, 2015; Briggs, 2017; Carswell, 2018a; 2018b) and instrumental (Aldridge, 2011; Chater and Erricker, 2013; Watson, 2013) use of the parables is problematic. The restricted focus on *why Jesus told this parable* means that ‘the diversity, dynamism and contested nature’ of interpretation (Biesta et al., 2021, p. 96) is missed.¹⁶⁶ Instead, pupils are led towards Aesop-style conclusions with little opportunity to engage with alterity or offer their own views/questions (Carswell, 2018b).

This said, my review also identifies a positive direction of travel. There are an increasing amount of educationalists in the RE community advocating the utility of hermeneutical and scholarly approaches to biblical texts (Bowie, 2016; RE Today, 2016; 2019b; Bible Society, 2019a; Bowie et al., 2020a; Jenkins, 2020; Pett, 2020; Ruggiero, 2020; Hutton and Cox, 2021; Ofsted, 2021b; Georgiou and Seymour, 2023). These materials proffer a range of questions pertaining to the horizon of the text, and often (but not always) draw some attention to the role of positionality in interpretive acts. The emphasis on worldview, positionality and interpretation in curriculum design guidance produced for/by the REC (Pett, 2022; REC,

¹⁶⁶ See also McKain (2017) and Bowie and Coles (2018).

2023) may contribute richly to more hermeneutical and dialogical biblical text enquiry in the future.

My review of curriculum materials also exposes key absences. No materials draw upon reception history. None invite pupils to ponder the extent to which the original intention of Jesus is retrievable. Out of the curriculum exemplifications which help pupils engage with diverse interpretations (Freathy, 2016; RE Today, 2016; Bible Society, 2019a), no resource provides authentic interpretations from named interpreters for pupils to reason across/through (Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020). No materials invite pupils to think about their own positionality in interpreting the parables. Consequently, opportunities for pupils to develop their epistemic ability through considering the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of actual interpretive diversity (from a range of times and places) is presently non-existent. This stresses the need for my research. What is required is a richer, more scholarly parabolic enquiry to be trialled in the primary school. My research will exemplify, trial and ascertain the impact of a hermeneutical and dialogical encounter with the parables in primary classrooms. Such an enquiry will draw upon reception history as a means to develop pupils’ epistemic ability; this move will allow pupils to reason across/through a plethora of *behind* and *in front* of the text issues, enriched by encountering diverse, authentic interpretations (Parris, 2009; Evans, 2014; Katho, 2020). This has not been undertaken before in English RE.¹⁶⁷ This research therefore makes a crucial contribution to the RE community. For one, calls for more scholarly, hermeneutical RE in the primary phase are yet to be sufficiently exemplified (at least in published materials). Furthermore, no formal academic research has

¹⁶⁷ One piece of research on the teaching of the parables in primary schools has been undertaken in the Netherlands (Zee, 2007); see Chapter Six, Section 6.2.1.

been undertaken which explores the utility of hermeneutical approaches to the teaching of the parables. My attention now focuses on the design (Chapter Six), trial and analysis (Chapters Seven to Nine) of a rich post-secular parabolic encounter.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has enabled me to make significant strides towards answering my RQs. In the first half of the chapter (Sections 5.2 – 5.5), a focussed review of parabolic scholarship enabled me to identify key *behind* and *in front* of the text hermeneutical issues that could inform a richer, more scholarly parabolic enquiry in the primary school. What particularly came to the fore was the potential utility of reception history (Parris, 2009; Evans, 2014; Katho, 2020). Affording pupils the opportunity to encounter interpretations from a myriad of ‘historical vantage points’ (Evans, 2014, p. 128) might stimulate deep, reflexive reasoning about the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretive diversity of parabolic texts. Encouraging deliberation upon both the text and reader in interpretive acts, this approach could contribute significantly to students’ epistemic ability.

In the second half of the chapter (Section 5.6), I critically reviewed a range of key curriculum guidance and exemplification pertaining to parabolic enquiry for practitioners since 1988. What I found was concerning. A critical mass of exemplifications present the parables in an exclusivist (Pollefeyt and Richards, 2020), predetermined (Pollefeyt and Bieringer, 2005; Davis, 2014; Aldridge, 2015; Briggs, 2017; Carswell, 2018a; 2018b) and/or instrumental manner (Aldridge, 2011; Chater and Erricker, 2013; Watson, 2013). Consequently, rich hermeneutical thinking found in parabolic scholarship is absent. Too

many enquiries are typified by narrow, picayune encounters which direct students towards a single, uncontested meaning. These suffocate any opportunities for pupils to ponder their own interpretations or explore different readings that these biblical texts attract. Although the direction of travel in the RE community is positive – with a number of publications incorporating hermeneutical approaches exploring *behind* and *in front* of the text issues – important steps remain to be made. What is required is a primary exemplification to be curated and trialled within robust academic research, one which would explore the utility of a hermeneutical, dialogical and more scholarly encounter between pupils and the parables. Such an encounter is the focus of the next chapter, as I design a post-secular parabolic enquiry which takes post-secular (non-) religiosity, epistemic ability, pupil agency, a post-secular perception of the child and hermeneutical questions raised within my review of parabolic scholarship seriously.

CHAPTER SIX

6 A POST-SECULAR PARABOLIC ENQUIRY: PHILOSOPHICAL AND PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Introduction

Through a review of literature, and reflection upon my own experience as a teacher and adviser, a significant area of research has emerged. I propose that post-secularism calls the RE community to look afresh at parabolic enquiry in the primary setting, bringing rich hermeneutical possibilities and questions to the fore. Such enquiry in RE needs to be attentive to the interpretive diversity these narratives attract and related hermeneutical questions in a way not currently found in published curriculum materials. I have made the case that what is urgently required is a post-secular parabolic enquiry which takes post-secular (non-) religiosity, epistemic ability, pupil agency, a post-secular perception of the child and hermeneutical questions raised within parabolic scholarship seriously. This richer, more scholarly enquiry holds great potential in efficaciously developing pupils' substantive, disciplinary and personal knowledge (Ofsted, 2021b).

In this chapter, I design such a post-secular parabolic enquiry. After deliberation upon my research focus and its value for the RE community (Section 6.2), I turn to ontological, epistemological and methodological considerations (Sections 6.3 – 6.4). This philosophical reflection influences the curation of a post-secular parabolic enquiry (Sections 6.5 – 6.8) and its subsequent enactment (Chapters Seven through Nine). Two theory-informed learning enquiries are curated, each exemplifying a post-secular RE calibrated towards the development of pupils' epistemic ability.

6.2 My research questions

My research thesis has been directed towards answering my RQs. Originally presented in Chapter One (Section 1.2, pp. 14-16), it is worth returning to the main question and three sub-questions before designing the parabolic enquiry:

RQ: What is an appropriate parabolic enquiry for post-secular RE in the primary RE classroom?

RQi: How can primary pupils enquire into parables in a way which draws attention to the diversity of interpretation?

RQii: How might post-secular conceptions of the child, which stress their agency, affect the pedagogies employed in the classroom?

RQiii: How can pupils become more hermeneutically aware, developing reasoned answers to the question, 'Why do different people interpret a parable differently?'

To address my main question, I have deliberated critically upon post-secular society (Chapter Two), pupil agency (Chapter Three), post-secular RE (Chapter Four) and parabolic scholarship (Chapter Five). This reflexive engagement with literature has allowed me to envision a richer, more scholarly approach to the teaching of the parables; an appropriate post-secular hermeneutic. I am now ready to exemplify a post-secular parabolic enquiry, one which takes seriously post-secular (non-) religiosity, epistemic ability, pupil agency, a post-secular perception of the child and hermeneutical questions raised within parabolic scholarship.

6.2.1 The value of this research

Before explicating the ontological and epistemological framework which underpins my exemplification, enactment and analysis of a post-secular parabolic enquiry within this research thesis (Section 6.3), it is important to state the value of this research to scholarship, teachers and advisers of RE. Indeed, this research treads new ground as it builds upon and departs from existing enquiries into the use of parables in the primary setting. This research is shown in Table 6.1:

Study	Aims	Conclusions pertinent to my research	Research Methods
Biblos Project (Copley et al., 2004b)	‘To ascertain pupils’ knowledge of, and attitudes towards, the Bible as well as what factors they believe influenced these attitudes...we investigated the wider social and cultural context that may have shaped pupil attitudes’ (p. 4)	• Too often, the parables and other biblical narratives are presented as concerning secular-ethical and citizenship issues only • Pupils should have space to ‘theologise’ and think theologically about biblical texts • This requires engagement with the ‘historical, social, cultural and theological context in which the narratives were written’ (p. 9) • Pupils should engage with the ‘complexity and diversity’ of biblical interpretation (p. 9)	Questionnaires (Likert scales and open-ended questions) Semi-structured interviews Statistical analysis to identify correlating factors
Research into the effects of religious education in parables on 10- to 12-year-olds (Zee, 2007)	‘[W]e formulated the goals of our study as gaining insight into the effect of educational interventions (1) on the acquisition of religious ideas about a God who gives abundantly, as portrayed in two parables in the Gospel according to Matthew; (2) on the change of feelings associated with such religious ideas; and (3) the influence of feelings on the acquisition of religious ideas’ (p. 28)	Working within the context of the Netherlands, a ‘step-by-step’ approach to exploring the parables was undertaken over thirteen weeks. Pupils were to consider meanings of the parables through: becoming familiar with the parables for themselves; investigating their original contexts; linking the plot to the main referent, God, and finally contemplating the meaning for their own lives. Interestingly, Zee concluded that this approach ‘over-taxed’ pupils.	Questionnaires Classroom trials ‘Achievement Tests’ Individual ‘video-based stimulated recall’ pupil interviews Control group and two experimental groups (each >100 pupils) Statistical analysis to analyse links between attainment and feelings

The Parables Project (Truro and Exeter Diocesan Boards of Education, 2001c)	Three sequence of enquiries for Upper Key Stage Two pupils on three parables. These are planned to allow pupils to: • Consider the original context and hearers • Consider what the parables 'might mean or could mean for modern hearers' [read Christians] (p. 7) • Reflect on who they identify with in the story • 'reflect their significance for Christians today' (p. 7)	N/A	N/A

Table 6.1: an overview of studies/exemplifications into the use of parables in primary RE

The present research provides a valuable contribution to the RE community. My enquiry explores a synergy between significant and related areas of post-secularism, pupil agency and parabolic scholarship; too often, these domains are not brought together and remain in silos. A symbiosis of these areas allow this research to speak to questions of secularism and agency, as well as the specific strand of parabolic teaching with implications for biblical/reception scholarship too. This thesis problematizes the teaching of parables since 1988, and offers two curated and trialled learning enquiries using approaches considered apposite for post-secular RE (Sections 6.6 – 6.7). A post-secular consideration of the parables in primary RE has never been undertaken before, and this research makes the first contribution to this area of study. Previous research (Copley et al., 2004b; Zee, 2007) contemplated how to present the bible in classrooms in a secular and plural society. Investigating the implications of post-secularism on a classroom enquiry into a biblical narrative marks a key departure from existing literature.

Additionally, the research tabulated in Table 6.1 laments the absence of theological enquiry in parabolic engagement; religious educators are therefore called by these researchers to include enquiry into a parable's original context and what they might mean for Christians today. That pupils should engage with the 'complexity and diversity' (Copley et al., 2004b, p. 9) of biblical interpretation across Christianity is mentioned within these reports.¹⁶⁸ However, practical exemplifications to support primary RE teachers in achieving this have not been forthcoming. This was a particularly surprising omission from the textbooks and guidance which emerged from the Biblos Project for classroom use (Copley et

¹⁶⁸ As it is in subsequent publications in RE (The National Society, 2014; CoRE, 2018; CEEQ, 2019; Cooling et al., 2020).

al., 2003; Bowness et al., 2005). Despite the declaration that pupils should enquire into the diversity of biblical interpretation (Copley et al., 2004b), the authors failed to provide any examples for how this might proceed in the primary or secondary setting.¹⁶⁹ The present research aims to redress the current state of play and will trial, with a view to disseminating, a sequence of learning activities aimed at UKS2. Not only could these plans and associated resources provide a richer parabolic enquiry for this age-phase, but practitioners could re-apply the principles to enrich biblical enquiry (and wider aspects of RE teaching) in other age-phases.

Indeed, the activities created in this research require pupils to ‘theologise’ and consider the *Sitz im Leben* – a shared concern of Zee (2007), the Biblos (Copley et al., 2004b) and Parables (Truro and Exeter Diocesan Boards of Education, 2001c) projects – yet open up wider hermeneutical questions considered within parabolic scholarship (Chapter Five). This is an innovative step – pupils in the primary setting engaging with such questions has yet to be explored within existing research. Copley et al. (2004, p. 9) certainly alluded to the usefulness of Gadamer’s (2004) hermeneutical ‘fusion of horizons’ in allowing pupils to be active readers of the text (as opposed to passive recipients). However, their application over-emphasised the horizon of the text. This is evident in their assertion that pupils ‘need to understand how a text can cause them to re-examine their own values and to reflect upon their identity, the nature of their world and how they relate to it’ (Copley et al., 2004, p. 9).¹⁷⁰ My research builds theoretically and practically upon Copley et al.’s suggestion that

¹⁶⁹ It appears that in the authors’ concern that biblical text should be enquired into theologically, narrow and carefully scaffolded units are offered to teachers which stipulate the religious meaning of the text that the class should understand. As a consequence, diversity of interpretation is regrettably missed.

¹⁷⁰ Particularly problematic when the text is presented as having a single, incontestable meaning (see prior footnote).

Gadamer (2004) is a key dialogue partner, as I trial learning enquiries which have both space and intent for pupils to consider interpretive questions constellating around text *and reader*. Drawing on my literature-informed conception of pupil agency, my exemplifications will, as part of a dialogic, hermeneutical enquiry, invite students to reflexively consider ‘How do you read it?’. I hypothesise that this approach will make a significantly greater contribution to pupils’ epistemic ability and knowledge¹⁷¹ than current curriculum materials promote, which too often stipulate how the parables *should* be read (Chapter Five, Section 5.6).

This research will also consider the implications of a post-secular perception of the child on the pedagogies employed in the primary RE classroom. A curriculum intervention has been devised, one which trials strategies which help students exercise their agency in their enquiry into interpretive diversity. I will consider whether the learning activities supported pupils in constructing an informed view on the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of parabolic interpretation, or whether the activities were too ‘open’ with little clarity. Similar research has not occurred before, and could yield fresh insights into how pupils engage with parables and their variant readings.

6.3 Ontological and epistemological considerations

Before outlining the exemplification and research design¹⁷² for this parabolic enquiry, it is important to consider the ontological and epistemological framework underpinning it. As

¹⁷¹ Substantive, disciplinary and personal (Ofsted, 2021).

¹⁷² Chapter Seven.

Casson (2010, p. 84) rightly states, '[a]ll research makes assumptions about the nature of reality – ontology, and ways in which we can know that reality – epistemology'. A researcher's perception of what reality is, and of how humans interact with and understand this reality, will influence research at every level (Howell, 2013; Moses et al., 2015).

My ontological and epistemological assumptions have influenced all aspects of my research from 'conception to completion' (Moses et al., 2015, p. 196). It is therefore important to examine these assumptions, as they have inextricably intertwined with my RQs and methodology. Neglecting such introspection is inadvisable. I challenge the position that this reflexive consideration is a redundant distraction within empirical research (Carr, 2006; Elliott, 2006; Creswell, 2009; Wilson and Santoro, 2015). Research is informed, enabled, contextualized and strengthened through an acknowledgement of the researcher's ontological and epistemological standpoint (Hammersley, 2006; Rowbottom and Aiston, 2006; Golding, 2015).

Such reflection on my ontological and epistemological standpoint has not been easy. Through engaging with various voices on these philosophical issues, I found myself cogitating and wrestling with and within numerous debates. Certainly, I agree with Pring (2000) that there exists a 'false dualism' between ontological positions, in which all reality is seen to be either completely independent and external to us and so 'discovered' (realism), or conceived subjectively by all humans, leading to a plurality of 'constructions' (relativism). Such a dichotomy is fallacious: '[b]y choosing one, exclusive way of describing the world, it cannot capture the richness which is present in that non-technical everyday understanding of experience' (Pring, 2000, p. 248). In my view, questions about knowledge and the knower

are more complex than that which this false dichotomy would have us believe. It is better to hold a 'both/and' stance, as opposed to 'either/or'.

6.3.1 Gadamer's 'historically effected consciousness'

Of particular resonance here is Gadamer's (2004) 'historically effected consciousness'.¹⁷³ For Gadamer, we are unable to approach a situation with a *tabula rasa* as we are historically and culturally conditioned beings. Our prejudices, prior understandings and experiences constitute an enabling 'element in the act of understanding' (Gadamer, 2004, p. 301; Aldridge, 2015), thus rendering any 'view from nowhere' (Nagel, 1986) problematic. Gadamer proffers the concept of the 'fusion of horizons', in which understanding emerges as an individual, with their 'historically effected consciousness', engages with phenomena. This dialogic encounter is ontological – it is a 'unified process' involving the 'knower's own being' (Gadamer, 2004, pp. 307, 484). As we are all unique and interact within situations from our own 'horizons', we read, interpret or judge phenomenon in different ways (Smeyers, 2006; Preez, 2008; Howe, 2009; Santoro, 2015).

Due to our 'historically effected consciousness' enabling, colouring and limiting our understanding and judgements, Gadamer calls us to be attentive upon our positionality.¹⁷⁴ It is therefore imperative that, within this research, I am reflexive and transparent upon my own positionality as a researcher and the impact of this upon choices made within this

¹⁷³ Previously considered in relation to biblical interpretation (Chapter Four, Section 4.8.2.1, pp. 117-118).

¹⁷⁴ As Gadamer (2004, p. 300) notes, 'in all understanding, whether we are expressly aware of it or not, the efficacy of history is at work'. If unacknowledged, an 'actual deformation of knowledge' occurs (2004, p. 300).

enquiry (Carr, 2006). Indeed, my motivation for pursuing this research – and subsequent questions, literature reviews, methodology and conclusions – have no doubt been influenced by subjectivities shaped by a range of factors. This includes my teaching and advisory experience, my educational philosophy, my personal Christian beliefs, my view of the parables, my research interests and much more besides (Bridges and Smith, 2006; Ramaekers, 2006; Howell, 2013; Golding, 2015; Hansen et al., 2015; Ulmer et al., 2017). Acknowledging the situated nature of knowledge and the knower, as Gadamer proposes, is a key part of this research's ontological and epistemological framework.

The situated nature of the research, researcher and researched is critical to acknowledge from a social constructionist perspective. Through an interactive and syncretic process, humans construct meaning in order to make sense of our experiences and the world as we see it (Pring, 2000; Darlaston-Jones, 2007). Arriving at this understanding from our individual positionality, in a context shaped by 'cultural, historical, political, and social norms' (Darlaston-Jones, 2007, p. 19), leads to different and unique perspectives emerging. Simply put, rather than being passive receivers of truth and reality, we are each perceivers, conceivers and constructors of our own world (Ashworth, 2003; Darlaston-Jones, 2007). For the pupils and teachers who are the *researched*, they too bring their own positionality to the enquiry as shaped through their educational, cultural and wider formative experiences. My ontological and epistemological framework views them as agents who can make sense of, and articulate, their views and experiences. As their voices emerge, it would be apt to consider why they have reached the conclusions they have. Certainly, pupils undertake such deliberation themselves in the parabolic enquiry (Sections 6.8 and 6.9), as they ponder how their own and others' positionality impacts upon them as a reader/interpreter. Thought also

needs to be given to the situated nature of the *research*. The specific context of the enquiry – within both taught RE and classrooms – provides sites in which experiences, language and values coalesce in ‘selves, situation and subject’ (Howell, 2013, p. 186), allowing a myriad of perspectives to emerge within a shared encounter (Pring, 2000; Ramaekers, 2006; Darlaston-Jones, 2007; Howe, 2009; Schommer-Aikins et al., 2010). It is therefore essential that this research is attentive towards how knowledge is constructed within particular situations, albeit recognizing that investigating pupil learning in classrooms is complex due to a multiplicity of influencing factors, not all of which can be known or sufficiently recognised (this is discussed further in Chapter Seven, Section 7.4)¹⁷⁵.

6.3.2 Dewey’s pragmatic approach to educational research

Returning to Pring’s (2000) ‘false dualism’, acknowledging the situated nature of researcher, researched and research does not necessarily assume a purely relativistic standpoint. As we shall see in Chapters Eight and Nine, a plethora of ‘meaningful constructions’ have emerged within this research from pupils, teachers and I, with our understandings developing through an interactive and negotiated process as we made sense of our shared experience (Pring, 2000, p. 249). Although our sense-making was informed by our subjectivities (Gadamer, 2004), we all constructed meaning dialogically through an educational context with a common culture, language and concepts¹⁷⁶ (Pring,

¹⁷⁵ With regards to pupil agency.

¹⁷⁶ I agree with Stronach (2005) that there are no ‘pure’ concepts or language as such, and many terms within education (such as ‘children’, ‘pupils’ and ‘learners’) are often politically and culturally influenced. Although we cannot avoid this ‘complexity and contradiction’ (Stronach, 2005, p. 312), I feel it is important to a) acknowledge this multiplicity and b) make clear my understanding of key terms/concepts within this research so as to make my understanding and approach transparent.

2000; Davis, 2006; Ramaekers, 2006; Darlaston-Jones, 2007; Schommer-Aikins et al., 2010).

The pragmatist position of Dewey (1910; 1938) offers further support in challenging the false dichotomy between realism and relativism. Dewey posits that all enquiries aim to resolve problems that have presented themselves in experience; these issues have emerged in the interaction between agents and their environment. In order to redress identified issues, a hypothesis is formulated and tested in the particular situation to see if useful conclusions can be made (Hansen et al., 2015). With regards to the intervention's effectiveness:

A hypothesis is said to be true, on this view, not if it corresponds to an uncritical conception of external reality, but rather only if it resolves the dilemma or difficulty for which it was formulated. (Alexander, 2006a, p. 213)

Pragmatism thus exemplifies a form of transactional realism whereby the reality observed (i.e. the impact of a parabolic enquiry) is constructed dialogically between individuals and their environment (Biesta and Burbules, 2003; Åhs et al., 2019).

Dewey's pragmatism is a useful lens through which to view my research, as an issue has been identified from experience, hypotheses formed, enquiries tested and conclusions offered. Within this, theoretical conceptualisations are of use, but only to the extent in which they can help inform and illuminate practice (Bridges, 2003; Papastephanou, 2006; Howell, 2013; Hansen et al., 2015). A pragmatist approach raises questions around generalizability, as the conclusions drawn in a particular enquiry may not wholly apply or transfer to other contexts (Alexander, 2006a; Howell, 2013). This will be discussed more

comprehensively in Chapter Seven.¹⁷⁷

Dewey's pragmatist approach is useful in navigating the formidable and complex positions offered in methodological philosophies. Particular categories are presented within the literature which seek to formalize positions or approaches to educational research, such as grounded theory (Santoro, 2015), ethnography (Geertz, 1973; Casson, 2010), critical realism (Standish, 2014) and subtle realism (Hammersley, 1992). Although my research design and epistemological standpoint may draw upon aspects included within and across such categorisations, Dewey's pragmatism reminds me that it is in curating an appropriate enquiry which attempts to best answer my RQs which is of importance, rather than aligning with a particular methodological position (see also Rowbottom and Aiston, 2006). It is to a discussion of my methodology I now turn.

6.4 Methodology

Methodology refers to 'the theoretical rationale or... 'principles' that justify the research methods appropriate to a field of study' (Carr, 2006, p. 422). The research design should align with the nature of the investigation; that is, there should be a cogent link between the RQs, the design of the enquiry, the methods employed to collect data, the analysis and conclusions (Creswell, 2009). Moreover, the research design should be appropriate for the audience in mind.

¹⁷⁷ Section 7.6.

A number of RQs have emerged as a result of my experience as a teacher, adviser and researcher which I have taken purposeful steps to address through a critical engagement with existing literature (Chapters Two to Five). To answer these questions, two parabolic enquiries will be designed (Chapter Six), trialled and analysed (Chapters Seven through Nine). As such, the enquiry involves primary research as informed by my literature-based investigations into post-secularism and parabolic scholarship.

That the research has been designed to answer specific and situated questions resonates with the positions of Elliott (2006), Wilson and Santano (2015), Whitehouse (2018) and, as mentioned when considering my ontological and epistemological standpoint, Dewey (1910; 1938). This approach begins with RQs and pursues practices and methods considered be an effective way to answer these. This is in contrast to designing a study around a presupposition ‘that there is a method or group of methods that is necessary for discovering essential truths about the objects of inquiry’ (Elliott, 2006, p. 178).¹⁷⁸ Rather than utilising a ‘methodology-as-technique’ (Hammersley, 2006) or being confined to a particular philosophical view, my research design has emerged as an iterative, heuristic and formative endeavour in order to answer my lines of enquiry (Elliott, 2006; Wilson and Santoro, 2015).

As previously mentioned, this research design has been influenced by my ontological and epistemological standpoint, and it would be naïve to think otherwise (Hammersley, 2006; Golding, 2015). Underpinning research design are assumptions and aspects which require philosophical consideration (Hammersley, 2006). For instance, ascertaining the

¹⁷⁸ See also Hammersley (2006), Wilson and Santoro (2015) and Whitehouse (2018).

effectiveness of a new curriculum intervention raises questions as to what has been put in place, why it is considered important in the first place and how such 'effectiveness' is to be measured. Likewise, it would be of limited use to propose a philosophical argument for contemporary educational settings without due consideration of the day-to-day reality of practitioners within them. Studies are not either *empirical* or *philosophical*, but *philosophical-empirical* (Golding, 2015). Research in educational settings are situated endeavours, in which a dialogue should emerge between 'philosophical arguments and empirical observations to form and test conclusions about the "meaning and worth of possible pedagogical strategies, outcomes and contexts"' (Mejia, 2008, p. 162; Golding, 2015). Such dialogue is informed by my experiences and positionality (e.g. educational philosophy and experiences, views of high-quality RE, my own worldview).

As I proceed in this chapter, the design and situated nature of the research shall be explicated with both philosophical and empirical aspects in mind. In Section 6.5, I offer the rationale of the research and explain why the PGS has been chosen for the enquiry, before detailing the two lesson enquiries in turn (Sections 6.6-6.7). Following this, I will then consider the pedagogies utilised in the light of post-secularism (Section 6.8).

6.5 Rationale

The aim of the research is to create and trial a post-secular parabolic enquiry which enhances pupils' epistemic ability. Informed by my analytical engagement with existing literature on post-secularism, pupil agency and parabolic scholarship, the curated enquiries tread new ground in primary RE. They are designed as an enactment of my

conceptualisation of post-secular RE (Chapter Four) to enable a richer encounter (Davis, 2014) with the parables. Such an encounter will allow pupils to agentively and reflexively engage with a myriad of hermeneutical questions which constellate around these biblical texts. In so doing, the aspiration is that students can efficaciously consider the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretive diversity. As apt post-secular enquiries, they also hold the potential to contribute significantly to pupils’ substantive, disciplinary and personal knowledge (Ofsted, 2021b).

6.5.1 The Parable of the Good Samaritan

In devising this curricular intervention, the question emerged as to which parable to select for the learning enquiry. There are a plethora of parables found within the gospels, each having their own merits for using within this research. After deliberation, the PGS was chosen as most befitting for the following reasons:

- it is a common parable taught in the primary school. As such, many primary RE teachers will have experience of being taught it themselves when they were primary-aged and/or teaching it in their professional role. The aims and conclusions of this research will therefore resonate further with practitioners as they reflect on their own experience, practice and future possibilities;
- the PGS is frequently presented as a narrative communicating a single meaning (Copley et al., 2004b; Carr, 2007; Felderhof and Thompson, 2014; Freathy, 2016; RE Today, 2016; Diocese of Suffolk, 2020; Ostler, 2022). This research presents a spotlight into the ways that this text attracts interpretive diversity, and explores how this diversity can be used to good effect in developing pupils’ epistemic ability;
- the parable is an ideal narrative to stimulate dialogic learning.¹⁷⁹ Its dialogic, engaging and accessible nature means it provides fertile ground for a plethora of hermeneutical questions to emerge for pupils to reason across/through (Parris,

¹⁷⁹ Chapter Four, Section 4.7.

2009; Thiselton, 2009; Reznitskaya and Wilkinson, 2017; Alexander, 2020; Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020);¹⁸⁰ and

- as the parable has attracted a wide range of interpretations over Christian history, a number of authentic readings can be selected from different times and places. This alterity can be used as a catalyst for pupil reasoning on why different people interpret the narrative differently.

Although this enactment of post-secular textual enquiry focuses on a parable, if effective there may be rich applications to other texts used in RE.

I now turn to the design of a two-part parabolic enquiry. Learning Enquiry One (LE1) helps pupils to become familiar with the narrative before reasoning through a range of hermeneutical issues identified within parabolic scholarship (Section 6.6). Learning Enquiry Two (LE2) builds on pupils' deliberation here to consider *why* different people interpret these texts differently (Section 6.7).

6.6 Learning Enquiry One: 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?'

The first half of the learning sequence (approximately one hour) is focussed on the enquiry question, 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?'. An open question was selected to encourage and enable a broad range of potential answers. Enquiry questions such as 'What is the meaning of the Parable of the Good Samaritan?' were rejected as they could potentially narrow the enquiry; in the example just stated, it may

¹⁸⁰ Reznitskaya and Wilkinson (2017, pp. 71-72) offer three criteria in determining whether texts are utile for stimulating dialogic learning: that they are dialogic, accessible and engaging. Dialogic refers to a text which 'is rich in conceptual content and deals with issues that lend themselves to multiple interpretations, perspectives, explanations or opinions...is thought-provoking and invites several readings'. Accessible pertains to 'students [having] sufficient background knowledge to understand the topic and issues addressed'. Finally, engaging relates to pupils being able to 'identify with the characters portrayed and their life circumstances'.

lead pupils to assume that there is a single, uncontested meaning to identify. Using an open question enriches pupils' deliberations, as all aspects of the enquiry are framed within and contribute towards an exploration of this question. There are no predetermined stipulations of 'successful' vs 'unsuccessful' interpretation that limit many of the exemplifications identified in Chapter Five (Carswell, 2018a; Pollefeyt and Richards, 2020).¹⁸¹

A detailed overview of LE1, including activities, timings, rationales and links to my literature reviews is presented in Table 6.2.¹⁸² Clear and progressive steps are built into this and the subsequent enquiry, so as to scaffold and focus pupil thinking and not overtax working memory (Zee, 2007; Willingham, 2009; Sherrington, 2019). The enquiries are designed in view of my principle RQ, enacting a post-secular parabolic enquiry in the primary classroom. A further column has been added to this table to show how the enquiry is well-calibrated to answer my three sub-questions. For the sake of brevity, these are referred to as RQi, RQii and RQiii.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ I have been influenced by the work of Panjwani and Revell (2018) here. They draw attention to the benefit of constructing enquiry questions which 'reorients the answer to social actors, their uses of texts and tradition, the processes of meaning making and the broader social contexts in which these takes [sic] place' (p. 274). Such questions encourage exploration of the text-reader dialogue in a way which helps pupils see the complex nature of meaning-making and thus make sense of the 'internal diversity that seems to be a feature of all religions' (p. 275).

¹⁸² The complete lesson plans for both learning enquiries can be found in Appendix Seven.

¹⁸³ RQi: How can primary pupils enquire into parables in a way which draws attention to the diversity of interpretation?; RQii: How might post-secular conceptions of childhood, which stress their agency, affect the pedagogies employed in the classroom?; RQiii: How can pupils become more hermeneutically aware, developing reasoned answers to the question, 'Why do different people interpret a parable differently?'.

Learning activity	Rationale for activity	Links to literature review	Links to research question
Step 1: Ascertain prior knowledge/understanding (5-10 minutes)			
The enquiry question for this lesson is shared. Pupils discuss ‘What is a parable?’ with peers (pair or triad), before sharing ideas as a class. Following this, pupils are then asked whether they have heard of the PGS before, noting their current ideas pertaining what its meaning is/might be in their workbook (see Appendix Eight).	The first stage of the learning enquiry is to ascertain pupils’ prior knowledge and understanding of both what a parable is and the PGS. This is so both pupils and I (as the researcher) can consider, at the end of the enquiry, how thinking has been challenged and understanding developed from this starting point (Hattie, 2012; Tay, 2018). Pupils discuss the questions with others and then thoughts are shared as a class. In this way, a shared sense of what a parable is or could be is arrived at collectively, with these aspects noted down on a whiteboard for later reference. A word bank¹⁸⁴ was not placed on this pro forma as it was felt that it might influence and/or limit pupil responses. For instance, placing the term ‘moral’ or ‘Samaritan’ within a selective list of terms in the workbook may lead to pupils perceiving that these aspects are pivotal to the narrative’s meaning. Their subsequent responses to the sentence stem ‘I think meaning of the Parable of the Good Samaritan is/might be...’ may be swayed by this. To try and gather pupil’s authentic understanding at this stage, this scaffold was omitted. This said, a simple image of an event in the parable is included (Appendix Eight, first page of workbook). This is to support those pupils who have forgotten, or never encountered, the narrative so that they postulate a potential meaning of the parable. This initial thinking is then a resource which all pupils can reflexively return to later.	Genre of ‘parable’ is discussed (Dodd, 1980) [Chapter Five, Section 5.2]. Helping pupils to acknowledge their understandings of this parable at the start of the enquiry, to later exercise reflexivity over the development of their thinking and reasons why they interpret the parable the way they do (Ofsted, 2021b; cf. personal knowledge) [Chapter Four, Sections 4.3.2, 4.5.2].	RQii
Step Two: Pupil enquiry into the narrative – what is mentioned in the text? Which questions emerge? (10-15 minutes)			
Pupils are then invited to independently read the through the text twice, slowly. Learners are to select one, two or all of the following questions to consider whilst reading: - What stands out for me in this parable? - Are there any parts that don’t add up or make sense? Why not?	The aim of this pedagogic episode is for pupils to become familiar with the narrative, building a ‘situation model’ (Willingham, 2009). Specifically, a ‘situation model’ refers to a reader’s cognizance of the different aspects of the narrative and how they link; for example, this might include the type of text/s, character motivations, reasons for events, spatial and temporal aspects (Cain, 2010; Clarke et al., 2014). In this way, pupils can arrive at a coherent view of the parable as a whole, as opposed to a sequence of unrelated events (Clarke et al., 2014).	This step allows pupils to consider: the historical context/<i>Sitz im Leben</i> from which the text emerged (Jeremias, 1963; Dodd, 1980; van Eck, 2009; Willingham, 2009; Blomberg, 2012; Snodgrass, 2012b; Levine, 2014) [Chapter Five, Section 5.3];	RQi, ii, iii

¹⁸⁴ A word bank is a list of words used to support pupils in their spelling, writing, thinking and/or speaking.

What information might help us understand this text more? (E.g. Who/what is...?) Pupils will have access to highlighters and a writing implement to annotate the text with their thinking here. Three different coloured highlighters will be given to each pupil so they can easily distinguish between parts of the text highlighted for each question. This will be useful for the next stage within this step, as pupils then discuss their thoughts/questions emerging in a pair/triad.	As reading comprehension (building a ‘situation model’ from what is mentioned in the text) and inferencing (deducing aspects which are not explicitly mentioned in the text) is text-specific, it is crucial that pupils consider background knowledge that the narrative’s author assumes the reader has as well as vocabulary (Smith, 2010; Willingham and Lovette, 2014; Daugaard et al., 2017; Hirsch, 2017; Myatt, 2018; Willingham, 2018; Nation, 2019; O’Reilly et al., 2019). Through questions emerging from pupils’ reading of the parable, vocabulary (such as ‘Law’, ‘priest’, ‘Levite’), the historical context/<i>Sitz im Leben</i> and wider background information (e.g. road from Jerusalem to Jericho) will be discussed (Willingham, 2009; Daugaard et al., 2017; Nation, 2019; O’Reilly et al., 2019). Pupils hear the narrative as a whole first, before scrutinising the narrative using the three set questions (Hirsch, 2017). Asking pupils to scrutinise the text without encountering it in its totality would limit the task, as learners would less likely see each aspect of the text within a coherent narrative (Cain, 2010; Clarke et al., 2014). Allowing pupils to then discuss their ruminations with peers, and then share as a class, enables a wide array of questions, vocabulary and contextual aspects to be considered.	- links/relationships/meanings that the author assumes the reader will have knowledge of when approaching the text (e.g. of ‘Samaritan’, road from Jerusalem to Jericho) (Hedrick, 2004; Schottroff, 2006; Willingham, 2009; van Eck, 2016; Myatt, 2018) [Chapter Five, Section 5.3]; and - aspects which stand out for them as readers (Tolbert, 1979; Ukpong, 1996; Levine, 2014; Zimmermann, 2015) [Chapter Five, Section 5.4].	
Pupils share their thoughts/questions with a pair/triad, before thoughts are shared as a class.	Pupils are also asked to read the text twice, slowly. This allows: 1) pupils to focus on one/two questions at a time, so not to over-burden working memory (Willingham, 2009), and 2) a more coherent ‘situation model’ to emerge. Constructing a ‘situation model’ is a ‘dynamic process...it involves an interaction between the information provided by the author in the text, the reader’s linguistic, pragmatic and world knowledge, and their current memory for the text’ (Cain, 2010, p. 76). Hermeneutically speaking, the same text is not read the same twice; a fusion occurs between the text and the reader’s being leading to a new ‘orientation’ towards the subject matter (Gadamer, 2004, p. 295; Aldridge, 2015, p. 125). In other words, when pupils encounter the text initially they will be developing their ‘situation model’, and perception, of the narrative. When read a second time, pupils will approach the text with a more coherent ‘situation model’ of the text, with the narrative now being perceived within, or challenging or clarifying, this model. This lays the foundation for subsequent hermeneutical reasoning.		

Step Three: Card sort and group discussion (25-35 minutes)

In groups of three/four, pupils will receive twenty-four cards containing hermeneutical issues (over three separate rounds as ‘bronze’, ‘silver’ and ‘gold’ cards) from which they are to discuss, debate, group and evaluate in the light of the enquiry question. The steps are as follows: Step 1: Place the eight bronze cards face down in a pile in the middle of your table. Step 2: The first player selects the top card and reads it out to the group. As a group, decide which label the card best links to and place it underneath (the labels are ‘meaning’, ‘context’, ‘people’ and ‘us’). <i>Challenge: Can you create your own labels to group cards by? You can change the labels as more cards are revealed.¹⁸⁵</i> Step 3: The player to the left takes a card and repeats Step 2. Decide which label it would be best placed under.	This task introduces pupils to a range of hermeneutical issues pertaining to this parable. It is designed to help students answer the enquiry question, ‘What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?’ in an informed way.¹⁸⁶ With a commitment to a post-secular conception of pupils as agents, the card sort allows pupils to engage with the statements in a way of their choosing. This step of the learning enquiry has been carefully structured in an attempt to stimulate, challenge and support pupil thinking. Significant aspects of this are explicated below. <u>Modelling</u> In order for pupils to grasp the intent of the enquiry and how it might be undertaken, the task will first be modelled on the board (Bandura, 1977b; Haston, 2007). Through using five statements relating to animals,¹⁸⁷ I will encounter the cards one by one, deciding on a label to which the card refers (‘classification’, ‘fact’ or ‘opinion’) and placing them on the interactive whiteboard. In order to make known my thought process, I will verbalise my reasoning (such as decisions I made or contestable aspects – e.g. ‘Should I place the ‘lions are carnivores’ card under ‘classification’ or ‘fact’?’). This modelling exemplifies the approach to this dialogic activity, and an instruction sheet provides a point of reference for pupils (Appendix Nine). Furthermore, four headings under which the cards could be categorised are provided (‘meaning’, ‘context’, ‘people’ and ‘us’). These will be provided as a starting place and support for pupils during this task; they could adopt these headings, or create their own if they feel other headings are more apt.	The cards (Table 6.3) draw upon a range of hermeneutical questions which emerged from the literature review into parabolic scholarship (Chapter Five, Sections 5.3, 5.4). The different colours in Table 6.3 denote, broadly speaking, statements which link to certain questions and debates within parabolic scholarship. Specifically: • blue statements link to questions within the ‘one meaning or polyvalent’ debate; • those in green provide different interpretations; • orange cards contain historical and contextual information; • red cards offer hermeneutical aspects such as the title of the parable and reader-response; • those in black pertain to redactional issues; and • the grey statement is one which, although not falling specifically under a particular category, is	RQi, ii, iii

¹⁸⁵ In an initial trial before this lesson sequence was used in schools, I identified that learners were reliant on the labels I used when modelling the activity or struggled to think of them independently. Labels are given to scaffold pupil thinking here, with the option (phrased as a ‘challenge’) for pupils to decide on and use different ones.

¹⁸⁶ Although difficult to qualify, I regard an ‘informed response’ as one where pupils can reflexively answer the enquiry question in a manner that shows some level of hermeneutical awareness.

¹⁸⁷ Specifically (and contemplated in this order): ‘sea lions are often used in shows displaying tricks’; ‘elephants are majestic creatures’; ‘lions are carnivores’; ‘whales can be spotted all around the world’ and ‘pandas have the funniest sneeze’.

Step 4: Repeat until you have run out of bronze cards. Ask an adult for the silver cards and continue. Step 5: When you have finished the silver cards, ask for the gold set. Step 6: Let your teacher know when you have placed all of the cards. Step 7: Take the sharpies and ‘affinity map’ – write thoughts, links, questions and interpretations on the sheet, using arrows to denote links between the cards and/or labels. Each member of the group will have a different coloured pen (and will create a key with initial) so that the contribution of each pupil can be shown.	<u>Sequencing</u> A sequential and gradual encounter with hermeneutical issues are here enabled through devising three separate tiers of cards. Presented as ‘bronze’, ‘silver’ and ‘gold’ cards, this pedagogical strategy is employed for three reasons. First, it helps pupils engage with hermeneutical issues in an order of increasing complexity. The sets (shown in Table 6.3) have been designed so that pupils develop their understanding of simpler hermeneutical issues as a means to then meaningfully engage with related and more cognitively difficult ones. Second, the sense of competition it stimulates encourages pupils to reason through them at an appropriately quick pace. Thirdly, it avoids overtaxing pupils’ working memory as not all twenty-four cards are available at once. <u>Group work</u> A collaborative enquiry will allow pupils to consider these hermeneutical questions together, so engaging in dialogic learning. Through a co-operative process, new understandings can emerge as ‘ideas and ways of thinking other than...[their] own’ are considered as pupils are given opportunities to ‘question, listen, reflect...discuss, argue’ ideas with their peers (Alexander, 2006b, p. 5; Baumfield, 2010). This is certainly useful for this research’s post-secular framing, as peer discussion and debate can assist pupils in grasping ‘that understanding text is subjective and that words, sentences and passages can be processed and understood differently’ (Clarke et al., 2014, p. 49). Moreover, pupils’ ‘situation models’ can be challenged or disrupted by encountering contrasting views of others, leading to a re-evaluation of their view of the narrative which emerged in Step Two. Pupils’ awareness of parabolic interpretation is developed as the narrative, and attendant hermeneutic questions, are explored through discussion with others (Feucht and Bendixen, 2010; Smith, 2010). The parabolic text, as well as information pertaining to contextual factors, will still be available in their workbooks for pupils to consult should they wish. I am mindful that group work is not always easy. It requires rapport, motivation, accountability, a clear understanding of the task – and more besides – to be effective. I hope to address these challenges by a) inviting the class teacher to decide pupil groups, and b) providing clear modelling and instruction of the task	considered useful for the prompting of pupil discussion in a way which complements the statements on the other cards. It is important to note that not all hermeneutical issues raised in my recommendations (Chapter Five, Sections 5.3.1, 5.4.1, 5.5.1) have been included. With the finite time of a learning enquiry, I deemed it unwise to include them all. I have selected those which I feel most useful for primary pupils to consider in developing their epistemic ability.	

	at hand. Triads or quartets are optimal for this type of work. They allow pupils to engage with a focussed plurality of perspectives and mitigate against students feeling that they can leave the work to peers, which some may choose to do in larger groups (Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020). <u>Affinity Mapping</u> ‘Affinity mapping’ gives space for pupils to write their thoughts, raise questions, challenge ideas, and make connections to comment upon (e.g. on links they identify between cards, between cards and the labels under which they have been organised, between cards and comments made by their peers etc.). This activity grants pupils an opportunity to enter into a dialectic between the text, themselves, hermeneutical issues and their peers to explore, on many levels, aspects which could be considered under the enquiry question, ‘What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?’. Deep thinking is encouraged through making connections and building on, and at times challenging, their ‘situation model’ of the text (Zee, 2007; Willingham, 2009; Clarke et al., 2014). Pupils are each given a different coloured pen to use during this task. Not only does this allow me, as researcher, to identify and track their thinking both during and after the lesson, it encourages all pupils to attend to the task as their contributions (or lack of) are visibly shown. This is not to say that the amount of contributions is necessarily important; rather, a frequent problem in collaborative work is that some pupils often choose to ‘coast’, leaving others to complete the work whilst they disengage.		
Step Four: Reflection and space to answer the enquiry question (10-15 minutes)			
Finally, pupils are to write responses to the following questions/statement: • What have you learnt about the Parable of the Good Samaritan from doing this activity? • Which card/s made you think the most? Why? • In your opinion, what should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?	Space is here given for pupils to reflect on and express their thinking across this enquiry. This will also allow myself, as a researcher, to see what pupils feel they have learnt, considered and wrestled with as they have enquired into the parable through the activities. As in Step One, words from the parable are not included on the pro forma so as not to influence pupil views. Of particular interest is pupils’ response to the overarching enquiry question, ‘What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?’; the first learning enquiry has been curated to allow pupils to construct an informed response to this question.	The development of personal knowledge through reflexivity (Ofsted, 2021b) [Chapter Four, Sections 4.3.2, 4.5.2].	RQi, ii, iii

• Have you changed your answer from the start of the lesson? If so, in what way/s? What changed your thinking? • Are there any further questions you would ask about this parable? Why do you think these questions are important? • This activity made me think because...			

Table 6.2: a detailed overview of LE1

Card set	Cards	
Bronze	The parable has only one meaning. It is...	The parable has more than one meaning.
	Jesus was trying to teach that we should treat everybody as our neighbour. It's about loving and caring.	The meaning of the parable is that we can't have good without evil. The Samaritan could only help because the man was robbed.
	The Samaritans and Jewish people did not get on. They disagreed passionately about the right way to follow God.	Levites and Priests were considered to be very holy and knowledgeable about Jewish religion. They were looked up to as examples to follow.
	The Samaritan would not have been considered as a neighbour to Jewish people.	This parable could be retold using different characters today.
Silver	This parable can have more than one meaning.	Each character and place represents something. The Good Samaritan is Jesus, who saves 'broken and sinful humans' on life's 'road'. The robber is the devil.
	The road between Jerusalem and Jericho was known as a dangerous one to travel along. Thieves wandered the road frequently.	This parable only makes sense if we read the rest of Luke's Gospel as well. If you read a random chapter in the middle of a book, you don't get the full story.
	The Samaritan should have left the beaten man like the holy people before him.	The title of the parable makes us think of the 'Good Samaritan' only. It should have a different title.
	An atheist would get a different meaning from this parable than a Christian.	We need to think about what Jesus' original followers would have thought about this parable for it to make sense to us.
Gold	A parable can mean whatever you want it to mean.	If the meaning of the parable is to 'love your enemies', Jesus would have told the story of the 'Good Jew' helping the wounded Samaritan. Jesus gave the example of the Samaritan for a reason.
	Priests were not allowed to touch dead bodies. They were following their religion by avoiding the man they thought might be dead.	This is a cleverly written story by Luke. It is symmetrical in lots of ways. For instance, the priest and the Levite walked past, but the Samaritan and the innkeeper helped.
	It is not clear who the neighbour is meant to be in this parable. Is it the Samaritan or the beaten man?	If we just have Jesus' story in verses 30 - 35, and ignore why he told it to the scribe, we get a different meaning.
	Our beliefs and experiences shape what we think when we read this parable.	The parable makes us ask ourselves who we are like, 'Are we like the Priest, the Good Samaritan or the beaten man needing help?'
Key	Blue: meaning – single or polyvalent Green: different interpretations Orange: historical and contextual information Red: reader-response issues Black: redactional issues Grey: a further, uncategorised statement which I felt would be of use to stimulate pupil thinking	

Table 6.3: an overview of the cards used in Step Three

As stated in Table 6.2, the statements within the three sets of cards shown in Table 6.3 (bronze, silver, gold) have been collated in a particular order to provide appropriate support and challenge for pupils during the third pedagogic episode in LE1. For instance, those statements within the 'bronze' set contain a greater number of cards referring to contextual information and common interpretations, whereas the statements within the 'silver' and 'gold' packs increasingly refer to redactional and reader-response aspects. The enquiry was structured in this way based on my own perception as to which questions are more challenging to consider within parabolic scholarship, as well as my experience as a primary teacher in contemplating 'what thinking/knowledge would be needed to enable further questions to be considered?'. These cards were also amended through pilots and supervisory discussions (see Chapter Seven, Section 7.3). I am conscious that there are other ways that these statements could have been selected and ordered; another may decide a different arrangement of these cards would better develop students' hermeneutical reasoning in this task, or even introduce alternative statements not included here. It is certainly of interest within this research to gather pupil perception here – which statements helped them think the most? Which ones were confusing? And are any considered irrelevant? These are discussed in Chapter Eight.¹⁸⁸

It is important to note that the activities within these learning sequences aim to allow pupils to arrive at *an understanding* of the parabolic narrative, rather than a prescribed, predetermined one (Kohn, 2005; Carswell, 2018a; Pollefeyt and Richards, 2020). Through the card sort and 'affinity mapping', pupils evaluate the importance (or otherwise) of

¹⁸⁸ Section 8.2.2 (pp. 295-317).

hermeneutical statements as they construct an informed response to the enquiry question, 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?'. Pupils agentively construct and review their 'situation models' of the narrative, using it as a basis from which to make their inferences regarding meaning and the parable.

LE1 has now been designed. It has been structured so that pupils: will have considered their prior understanding of the parable; created a 'situation model' of the narrative through scrutiny and questioning; encountered and categorised a number of hermeneutical issues with peers; made connections between their own thoughts, the cards/categories previously considered and thinking of their colleagues, before reflecting on the enquiry question, 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?'. The activities and thinking within this first part of the lesson sequence will purposefully inform the second enquiry, which is now considered.

6.7 Learning Enquiry Two: 'Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?'

The second part of the learning sequence (approximately one hour) is curated to develop pupils' cognizance that different people interpret the PGS differently, and to consider why this variance exists. This includes reflecting on why different individuals and groups, themselves included, have arrived at their reading of the parable.¹⁸⁹ This enquiry helps pupils construct an informed response to the enquiry question, 'Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?'.

¹⁸⁹ This open, focussed question again resonates with Panjwani and Revell's (2018) call for better enquiry questions (see Footnote 181, p. 204).

LE2 is informed by reader-response deliberations identified within my review of parabolic scholarship (Chapter Five, Section 5.4) and a hermeneutical standpoint which acknowledges that our interpretations of texts are shaped and mediated by our personal worldviews (Gadamer, 2004; Thiselton, 2009; Gräb, 2010; Ukpong, 2012; Levine, 2014; Zimmermann, 2015). Indeed, this is also reflective of my ontological and epistemological standpoint (Section 6.3). LE2 is detailed in Table 6.4.

Learning activity	Rationale for activity	Links to literature review	Links to research question
Step One: A 'hermeneutical' starter (5 minutes)			
A simple image is displayed to students on the interactive whiteboard (Figure E). Pupils are invited to consider the questions: <i>What do you think it means?</i> <i>What does it make you think about?</i> A selection of ideas are elicited from the class and written on the whiteboard. Observe that different people think this means different things – one image, different meanings. Reflect that if we were to show this icon a few thousand years ago in Ancient Greece, they may not have thought about X (using a particular example emerging from the class). <i>Why do you think different people take different meanings from art? Why are they not all the same?</i> Pair/share. Record these on board as aspects to return to later in the enquiry.	This introductory activity is designed to help pupils recognise that people interpret an artefact differently (in this case, a simple image) and consider what might account for this interpretive variance. It is hoped that pupils subsequently apply this reasoning in considering why different people interpret the PGS differently. Pupils' initial ideas about why people construct different meanings will be recorded on the whiteboard for later reference to support such application. An image was chosen as it is accessible to all and invites wide-ranging interpretations. It was selected over questions such as, 'What is your favourite Spielberg film?' or 'What is your dream holiday?' as these risk excluding pupils who have not had access to these experiences.	The aim for LE2 is for pupils to be cognizant that different people interpret the PGS differently, and raise informed suggestions as to why this variance might exist. This endeavour draws meaningfully upon reader-response ruminations in parabolic scholarship (Chapter Five, Section 5.4.1). Moreover, it accords strongly with my conception of post-secular (non-) religiosity (Chapter Two, Section 2.3) in recognising that all have a unique positionality which informs interpretive endeavours.	RQi, ii, iii
Step Two: Ranking and matching activities (25 minutes)			
The enquiry question ('Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?') is then shared with the class in order to clarify and frame the proceeding activities. The terms 'interpret', 'interpreter' and 'interpretation' are discussed so as to arrive at a shared definition of these terms. Explain that pupils were engaging in the act of interpretation when contemplating the image's meaning(s).	The principal rationale of this pedagogic episode is to orchestrate an encounter with alterity via different, authentic interpretations of the parable. An evaluative initial step helps pupils become familiar with the interpretations.¹⁹⁰ In so doing, they can engage reflexively and dialogically in deliberations around limiting factors and responsible interpretations. This thinking is enriched if pupils accept the 'challenge' to link their justifications back to the parabolic text itself.	Pupils encounter interpretations from a range of periods, contexts and individuals/groups. Through pondering related historical, social and personal information in an attempt to match the interpretations with the interpreters, pupils can consider why these readings emerged from	RQi, ii, iii

¹⁹⁰ These interpretations are detailed below in Table 6.5.

Pupils have seven cards (see Table 6.5), each presenting an interpretation of the parable from a different group or individual. Pupils, in pairs or threes, place them on a horizontal continuum with 'Disagree the most' to 'Agree the most' as the left and right labels respectively.¹⁹¹ Students are then invited to choose at least two and justify their ranking of the interpretation in their workbook. It will be stressed that they can deviate from the collective decision of their group if their personal view differs. A challenge is offered to pupils to justify their reasoning through linking it back to the parabolic text. When transitioning to the next activity, attention can be drawn to the probable fact that each group ranked the interpretations differently.	Inviting pupils to individually write justifications for their view on 'at least two' interpretations is useful in two respects. On the one hand, it grants pupils an opportunity to express their views independently; this is important, particularly if their view differs from the one arrived at collaboratively as a group. On the other hand, written responses provide physical data that I can then analyse. Pupils are subsequently tasked with trying to match the interpretation with their interpreter (or interpreters in the case of the Solentiname community). The purpose of this activity is to help pupils consider – at a simple, age-appropriate level – positionality and its bearing upon interpretive acts. The interpreter profiles provide some clues as to the interpreter/s and their context (such as related historical, social and personal information), but do not make it so obvious to leave the activity as a simple matching exercise between key words. Whether pupils successfully match interpretations to the correct interpreter is not significant here. Rather, it is pupil discussion and deliberation which is of importance, as well as the activity's potential value in setting the ground for later reflection on the lesson's enquiry question. A profile matching sheet, with all seven interpretations on, is provided for pupils to consult as they read the interpreter profiles.	particular individuals/groups at particular times. This helps pupils contemplate questions that are often considered in reader-response ruminations (Tolbert, 1979; Ukpong, 1996; Levine, 2014; Zimmermann, 2015) [Chapter Five, Section 5.4]. Providing interpretations from a range of periods also allows pupils to engage with aspects of the parable's reception history. Moving the interpretations along the vertical continuum can help pupils understand that interpretations of this text are not fixed but have been re-interpreted in different contexts (Jauss, 1975; Parris, 2009; Evans, 2014; England and Lyons, 2015; Gowler, 2017) [Chapter Five, Section 5.5].	
Learners then add a vertical axis to the existing horizontal axis, with the labels 'time of Jesus/1st century' and '21st century' at the bottom and top respectively (Figure F). Pair/triads are to then move the cards along this vertical axis, depending on when they think this interpretation might have occurred.	In the final part of this pedagogic episode, pupils have the opportunity to justify their matches via a written response. This will be useful for my subsequent analysis.	Pupils are challenged to justify choices made when ranking readings from 'agree' to 'disagree the most' through linking back to the parabolic text, seen as a 'limiting factor' in parabolic scholarship (Tolbert, 1979; Thiselton, 2009; Blomberg, 2012) [Chapter Five, Section 5.4.1].	
Next, pupils move around the room to look at the profiles of the seven interpreters, which have been placed on the walls (see Figure G for an example; all profiles can be found in Appendix Ten). Two of each profile are placed a small distance apart, so as to ease congestion. Once students have read each profile once, they can 'rip' off the relevant person's/group's tag to place with the interpretation they feel it belongs. Pupils can take the 'profile matching sheet' (Appendix Eleven),			

¹⁹¹ This continuum and labels are made using string and post-it notes on the table respectively.

which contains the seven interpretations, with them to assist their matching. Pupils to then show the matches they have made in their workbook (via a line connecting interpreter to interpretation) and write a justification for each choice on post-it notes (with the reminder to include the name of the interpreter they are referring to on each post-it). They have the option to diverge from the group's decision/justification to offer their own view should they wish.		Engaging with alterity as a resource to reason across/through and to stimulate personal reflexivity (Ricoeur, 1992; Jackson, 2014; Freathy and Davis, 2018; Larkin et al., 2020; Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020) [Chapter Four, Section 4.7].	
Step Three: Pupil reflection - what do we think has led to different interpretations? (15 minutes)			
In their groups, pupils to discuss the following questions: • What can we learn about the interpretation of the Good Samaritan from this activity? • What do you think has led to different interpretations? Why do you think different people interpret the parable differently? • Can we be completely certain about what we have matched? Why? Why not? Sharing thoughts as a class, particularly for questions one and two, leads purposefully into the next question for consideration: • Think about how we as a class and individually have interpreted the Good Samaritan and ranked different interpretations. Do you think our background, experiences, beliefs affect how we interpret this text? Think back to our icon thinking here.	Pupils here reflect on their thinking during this enquiry, particularly around the variant readings and their perceptions as to what might account for interpretive differences. The third question acknowledges that this area is complex, and we are making judgements/matches based on limited information in a short enquiry. Indeed, there is much more that could and should be considered in contemplating the emergence of particular readings. Helping pupils become aware of the merits and limitations of scholarly enquiries into religion and belief is certainly part of Ofsted's (2021b) view of disciplinary knowledge. Whereas pupils have just considered why different interpreters have read the PGS in different ways, they are now invited to reflect upon why <i>they</i> have interpreted the parable in a particular way. To support, reference is made back to the 'hermeneutical' starter and the recorded ideas emerging from the class' thinking here.	Within this thesis, I have argued that pupils' epistemic ability would be enriched if they had opportunities to consider the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity. This pedagogic episode allows pupils to reflect on why different people interpret the parable differently, including themselves. This has clear resonances to reader-response scholarship (Ukpong, 1996; Clarke et al., 2014; Levine, 2014; Zimmermann, 2015) [Chapter Five, Section 5.4]. The opportunity for reflexivity also develops personal knowledge (Ofsted, 2021b) [Chapter Four, Sections 4.3.2, 4.5.2].	RQi, ii, iii

Step Four: Reflection and space to answer the enquiry question (15 minutes)			
Pupils create a written response to the learning enquiry question, 'Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?'. Three success criteria are provided for pupils to refer to: • Give at least one well-explained reason to answer the question • Give examples from the interpreter matching activity to support your answer • Link your answer to your own interpretation – what do you think the meaning of the parable is? Why do you think you arrive at that meaning, yet other people arrive at different meanings? If finish, pupils to self-assess their answer against the success criteria. An extension question is offered should students have completed their self-assessment: • Is there anyone you think should read this parable? Why? What message/s would you want them to take from it?	This is an opportunity for pupils to independently show their thinking and learning through a written response. It is useful for me as the researcher to have this as evidence to analyse within this study, and purposeful for pupils to demonstrate their thinking through another means in an enquiry which has primarily been discussion-based. To support pupils' reflections here, three aspects have been included on the response page in their workbook. Firstly, the image considered in the 'hermeneutical' starter is present on this page to help students' recall and apply previous thinking. Secondly, a sentence has been provided to support those students who struggle to know how to start their answer. Thirdly, success criteria have been provided. These success criteria are used to provide clarity for pupils on what their written response should include/refer to. Avoiding the use of terms such as 'must/should/could' help all pupils to aim high, rather than introducing differentiating language which could stymie pupil learning and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977a; Mansworth, 2021).¹⁹² For those who finish their response before others, an extension question is provided. This has been chosen to further ascertain pupils' conception of the parable in case useful for understanding their perceptions and/or development of thought over the enquiries.	See column above.	RQ1, ii, iii

Table 6.4: a detailed overview of LE2

¹⁹² Differentiation was a key area of deliberation. My own educational philosophy was influenced through encountering Mansworth's (2021) *Teach to the Top* a month before the first trial. I liked the view that the same ambitious goal should be held for all, employing various methods of support to get there as required. This led to the same pro forma and success criteria given to all pupils within the workbook, with sentence starters and differentiation by support as required. There was also a discussion with the class teacher regarding the needs of the class beforehand. Furthermore, as I did not know pupils' aptitude in this yet to be explored area, I did not want to place artificial ceilings on pupil thinking.



Figure E: the ‘hermeneutical’ starter image

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Interpretation	Interpreter
Giving money and worn-out clothes to the poor once a year isn’t ‘loving your neighbour’. We need to go further, like the Samaritan did, and really care for people.	A poor peasant community on the island of Solentiname, Nicaragua (1965-77) (Cardenal, 2010).
The ‘road to Jericho’ where the man was robbed is a symbol for our lives. Many people today face racism daily as they travel through life; we need to change the ‘road’ to be a better, safer place for all.	Martin Luther King (1929-68), leader of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States (King, 2015, pp. 214-215).
Each character and place represents something. The Good Samaritan is Jesus, who saves ‘broken and sinful humans’ on life’s ‘road’. Jesus brings humans to the church (the inn) to recover and become better people, before coming back to collect them in the future.	Augustine of Hippo (354-430), a theologian who held that many of the parables were allegorical (2019, pp. 45-46).
The parable makes us think about an important question: who are the priests and Levites in our society today? Who ignores the ‘bruised and wounded’? We should condemn them, and campaign to end the unfairness we are seeing.	Frederick Douglass (1818-1895), a slave turned abolitionist in the Northern United States (Gowler, 2017, pp. 174-175).
We live in a world where we meet people of different beliefs, nationalities and cultures. The two answers in verse 27 teaches us that loving God means loving all. You can’t do one without the other. <i>“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”</i> <i>27 He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’.</i>	Brian C. Stiller (1942-), a Canadian evangelical writing on how to preach the parables to post-moderns (2005).
The Good Samaritan parable has nothing to do with God at all. Jesus simply teaches his listeners to love all people, using people and places that they would have known.	Adolf Jülicher (1857-1938), held that the parables teach general moral truths in a way which were easy for Jesus’ first century audience to understand (1910).
This parable highlights that we should not treat other groups of people differently. Yet, I’m frustrated that women are invisible and forgotten in this parable, just like in my society. I don’t like this.	Irene Matsoso (1992), a female African feminist theologian.

Table 6.5: the seven interpretations used in LE2 and their respective interpreters

193 <https://thenounproject.com/icon/care-1499470/>

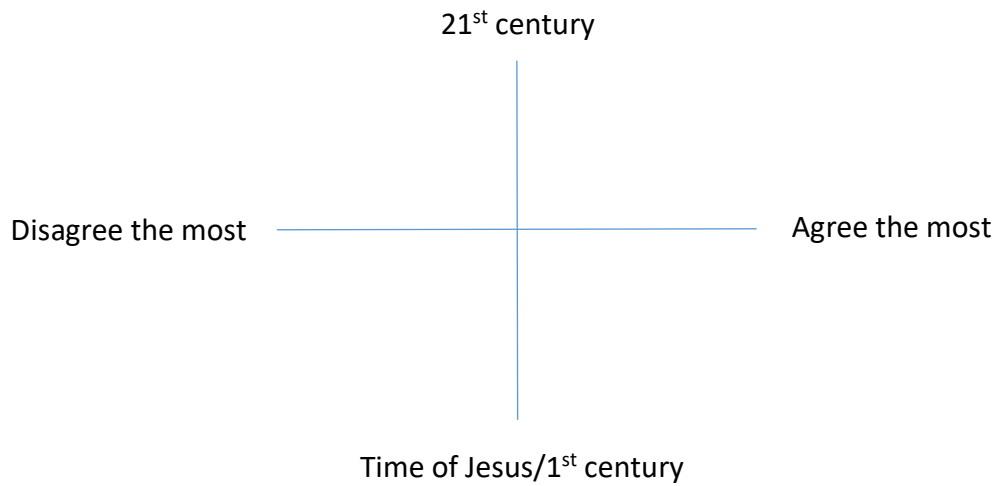


Figure F: the sorting continuums used in LE2, Step Two (part three)



Martin Luther King (1929 – 1968) was the leader of the civil rights movement in the USA. He peacefully campaigned that everyone should have equal rights and that racism should be illegal.

Martin Luther King
Martin Luther King
Martin Luther King
Martin Luther King
Martin Luther King
Martin Luther King
Martin Luther King
Martin Luther King
Martin Luther King
Martin Luther King

Figure G: an example of an interpreter profile used in LE2, Step Two (part four) ¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Martin_Luther_King,_Jr..jpg

This second enquiry draws upon reception history, a branch of parabolic scholarship I consider to hold great utility in informing a richer parabolic enquiry in the primary school (Chapter Five, Section 5.5). Allowing pupils to encounter a range of authentic interpretations from across Christian history provides alterity for pupils to reason across/through in developing their epistemic ability (Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020). Reception history expands two-way dialogue between text and reader into a three-way dialogue with the history of the text's reception. As previously mentioned (Chapter Five, Section 5.5), compiling a range of interpretations for pupils to engage with is a subjective act, one shaped by one's positionality and the traditions which bear an influence upon one's thinking (Evans, 2014). In justifying my selection, I need to be mindful of my positionality.

I have curated seven interpretations (Table 6.5). To help pupils recognise the interpretive diversity the parable attracts, my selection includes readings from a range of people, periods, places and contexts. Additionally, the idea of 'summit-dialogue' was of use (Jauss, 1975; Snodgrass, 2008). Put more explicitly, I felt there was value in selecting interpretations which reflected significant paradigmatic interpretations present within, and informing, the Western interpretive history of this parable. Hence the inclusion of Augustine's (2019) allegorical reading, and Jülicher's (1910) reading of the parable as presenting a single, generalized moral truth. All interpretations selected also have a distinctive 'historical contingent' (Evans, 2014, p. 163). That is, the background of the interpreter(s) have identifiable resonances with their interpretation. This is useful for pupil matching, and I hope will help students stand self-consciously with these readings to reflect personally upon the *impact of their own positionality* in interpretive acts. Pupils could even

be encouraged to see themselves as participating within the continuing interpretation history of parables.

To quote Evans (2014, p. 163), all ‘samples of reception...are selected for application in specific contexts and with identifiable interests’. In this research thesis, they have been compiled to help primary-aged pupils develop their epistemic ability within the RE classroom. Whilst privileging plurality, seven seemed an appropriate number to present a focussed, diverse selection within the constraints of time. The pedagogical problem of helping pupils understand the internal diversity of religious traditions within finite curriculum time – as Teece (2010) and Liljestrang (2015) draw attention to – serves to emphasise the importance on focussing here on the ‘why’ of interpretive diversity. It is my view that helping pupils contemplate the ‘why’ will develop their epistemic ability, as they are more readily equipped to *understand*, *appreciate* and *appraise* diverse views they may encounter in the future, both within and outside of their curriculum experience.

Finally, to stimulate further deliberation, I pondered the inclusion of an interpretation that many would agree is incorrect – a ‘red herring’. This has value, and is used to good effect in the UC (2016) resources.¹⁹⁵ In my aim to provide authentic interpretations only, I was unable to identify such a reading in the literature consulted (and did not want to create a fictitious one). I also became acutely aware of my subjectivity in determining whether or not an interpretation was wildly inappropriate. Moreover, a marginal reading would have less resonance with the idea of a ‘summit-dialogue’ (Jauss, 1975). Others may decide to draw

¹⁹⁵ For instance, the interpretation ‘Learn Kung Fu’ is placed as one meaning for pupils to deliberate in an enquiry on the PGS.

upon marginal, less widely accepted meanings; this also has the potential to be impactful in developing students' epistemic ability.

6.8 A post-secular parabolic enquiry: pedagogical considerations

Two post-secular parabolic enquiries have now been detailed. Various strands considered within my thesis tie together within these exemplifications – post-secular (non-) religiosity, epistemic ability, pupil agency, a post-secular perception of the child and hermeneutical questions raised within parabolic scholarship. This synthesis has informed the creation of a richer parabolic encounter to trial. This parabolic enquiry is a theory-informed pedagogical application of a Habermasian (albeit expanded)¹⁹⁶ rationale of developing epistemic ability in RE. In further identifying and clarifying aspects of these enquiries which characterise them as 'post-secular', Tables 6.6 and 6.7 present additional pedagogical considerations which underpin LE1 and LE2.

¹⁹⁶ Chapter One, Section 2.4.2.

Aspect		Post-secular enquiry in RE	In distinction to an enquiry [in] which:
Representation of religion and belief	Religious/secular dichotomy	Challenges the dichotomy between 'religious' and 'secular', instead holding that individuals negotiate and enact a worldview through a dialectic between religiosities and secularities (Eisenstadt, 2003; Bowie et al., 2012a).	Maintains clear differentiation between the religious and secular (Boeve, 2012; Ratti, 2013; Knott, 2014).
	Worldview formation	Acknowledges the complexity of worldview formation (Vattimo and Girard, 2006; Gräb, 2010; Lynch, 2016). Allows pupils opportunities to investigate and consider this within curriculum (Bowie et al., 2012a; Lewin, 2017a).	Fails to acknowledge complexity of worldviews (Lewin, 2017a).
	Truth claims and diversity	Places as central the diversity of belief and practice in the contemporary religious landscape, with pedagogy enabling an enquiry into (Woodhead, 2012b; Clements, 2014; Butler-Sloss, 2016; CoRE, 2018). This includes a commitment to introducing pupils to a range of truth claims (Habermas, 2006; Wright, 2014).	Religion and belief presented as monolithic (e.g. all Christians believe X) (Cooling, 1996; Revell, 2008). Truth claims often omitted in favour of secular-ethical readings which promote Western liberal values (Copley et al., 2004b; Barnes, 2014; The National Society, 2014). Texts are presented as bearing a single, incontestable meaning (Carswell, 2018a; Pollefeyt and Richards, 2020).
	Reasons for diversity	Pupils grow in understanding of 'why' this diversity exists. Classroom enquiries support pupils in identifying the macro and 'micro-level determinants of religious beliefs' (Clements, 2014, p. 279).	Does not provide opportunities for pupils to consider 'why' diversity exists within and across religion and belief.
	Epistemic ability	Holds that RE should effectively contribute towards pupils 'epistemic ability' (Habermas, 2006) to help them <i>understand, appreciate, appraise and co-exist harmoniously with others</i> in the light of pluralism. Understanding the socio-cultural reality of religion and belief will aid this (Giordan and Pace, 2012; Byrd, 2016).	Opportunities are missed to understand 'why' diversity exists. This limits pupil ability to understand, appreciate, appraise and ultimately co-exist. Missing these opportunities can also foster relativism/apathy (Barnes and Wright, 2006; Carr, 2012) over genuine understanding (McKain, 2017; Sutton, 2017).
Pupils	Agency	Acknowledges and allows opportunities for pupils to exercise their agency in their learning (Hyde et al., 2010; Davis, 2014; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015). This is often embedded through school/classroom culture and practices (Monk et al., 2013; Deed et al., 2014; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015; Clarke et al., 2016).	Holds the view that pupils are 'passive recipient[s] of an adult culture' (Hyde et al., 2010, p. 1). Consequently, pedagogies reflect the view that pupils are 'dependent' rather than 'competent' (Cunningham, 1996; Kohn, 2010; Davis, 2014).
	Worldview construction	Mindful of how children generate meaning through 'creative bricolage' (Oswell, 2013, p. 59), space is given for learners to volitionally construct meaning through the resources and relationships available to them (Fattore et al., 2009; Ridgely, 2012; Adams, 2014; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015; Paganelli, 2017; Rappa and Tang, 2017). This reflects a socio-constructionist view of learning (Gadamer, 2004; Zee, 2007; Ridgely, 2012).	The teacher presents enquiries which too tightly scaffold 'learning' (Aldridge, 2015). Opportunities for pupil agentive exploration are restricted. Any space for pupils to make choices in their learning may present a 'pseudochoice' (Kohn, 1993).

	Dialogic learning	Stresses the importance of dialogic learning in allowing learners to contemplate, refine and evaluate the views of themselves and others (Alexander, 2006b; Baumfield, 2010; Castelli, 2012; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015; Clarke et al., 2016). Pedagogical strategies implemented provide a safe space for pupils to reflexively voice their perspectives and listen to others as a means to further understand self and others (Habermas, 2008; Castelli, 2012; Ipgrave, 2013b; Chipperton et al., 2018a; Luby, 2020; Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020).	Omits opportunities for dialogic learning. Opportunities which do exist may lack something that is ‘at stake’, leading to dialogue with others which is more akin to ‘polite listening’ which does not take the viewpoint of the other seriously (Lefstein, 2006, p. 9).
	Producers of knowledge	Perceives pupils as co-producers of knowledge, whose views and standpoints are valued and taken seriously (Feucht and Bendixen, 2010; Ridgely, 2012; Oswell, 2013; Altmeyer, 2018). Learners are ‘not just recipients but also producers of disciplinary knowledge’ (Rappa and Tang, 2017, p. 682). As such, teacher seen as a co-enquirer alongside pupils (Bellchambers, 2011; Aldridge, 2015; Gates, 2015; Bowie, 2016; Ubani, 2018).	View pupils as naïve and passive recipients of knowledge from an ‘expert’ teacher who delivers the curriculum didactically (Freire, 1998; Feucht and Bendixen, 2010; Erricker et al., 2011; Bahou, 2012; Christodoulou, 2016).
Use of text	Discussion and multiplicity	Discussion of biblical texts acknowledge polyvalent receptions (Smith, 2010). Values a plethora of readings and interpretations (Feucht and Bendixen, 2010) in which ‘successful comprehension’ (Cain, 2010) is problematized.	Texts seen as depositories to mine (Smith, 2010; Smith, 2011). Comprehension is deemed as ‘successful’ if the a single, ‘correct’ meaning of the text is found (Feucht and Bendixen, 2010; Clarke et al., 2014).
	Hermeneutics	Hermeneutical issues are raised in textual enquiry, allowing pupils to consider ‘why’ different readings exist (Feucht and Bendixen, 2010; Schommer-Aikins et al., 2010; Bowie, 2016).	Same as above. May often use texts in a ‘fragmentary’ manner in support of dogma or precepts in RE curricula which neglects the rich hermeneutical possibilities of the subject matter (Bowie and Coles, 2018).
	Text-reader interaction	Parabolic enquiry identifies both aspects of the text-reader interaction within Gadamer’s (2004) ‘fusion of horizons’ (Clarke et al., 2014; Aldridge, 2015; Briggs, 2017). This requires pupils to be reflexive upon their positionality and consider why they have arrived at their interpretation.	May focus on one aspect of the text-reader interaction to the neglect of the other; either the text is side-lined as pupil discussion is prioritized, or vice versa (Copley et al., 2004b; Gadamer, 2004; Clarke et al., 2014; Aldridge, 2015; Briggs, 2017). Little opportunity for pupils to consider their role as reader in colouring their interpretation.
	Reading as a social act	Reading seen as a ‘social act’, which is enabled and limited by classroom culture and expectations (Fish, 1980; Smith, 2010).	Reading seen as a ‘set of relatively stable and neutral skills’ (Smith, 2010, p. 62).

Table 6.6: an overview of characteristics identified as apposite for post-secular enquiry in RE (from Chapters Two – Five)

Aspect		Post-secular enquiry in RE	How these aspects are reflected in the learning enquiries
Representation of religion and belief	Religious/secular dichotomy	Challenges the dichotomy between 'religious' and 'secular', instead holding that individuals negotiate and enact a worldview through a dialectic between religiosities and secularities (Eisenstadt, 2003; Bowie et al., 2012a).	'All Christians/atheists think this...' avoided as misrepresentative and misleading language. Interpreter profiles in LE2 give a range of contextual information, rather than presenting solely according to a label of faith (e.g. Christian).
	Worldview formation	Acknowledges the complexity of worldview formation (Vattimo and Girard, 2006; Gräb, 2010; Lynch, 2016). Allows pupils opportunities to investigate and consider this within curriculum (Bowie et al., 2012a; Lewin, 2017a).	During the LE2 starter, pupils consider the reasons why different people interpret the simple artwork differently (e.g. background, experiences, beliefs). This is used to help pupils apply similar reasoning when considering why different people interpret the parable differently. Space to consider the complex nature of worldview formation is also granted through critically reflecting on whether we can be sure of the matches between interpreters and interpretations made.
	Truth claims and diversity	Places as central the diversity of belief and practice in the contemporary religious landscape, with pedagogy enabling an enquiry into (Woodhead, 2012b; Clements, 2014; Butler-Sloss, 2016; CoRE, 2018). This includes a commitment to introducing pupils to a range of truth claims (Habermas, 2006; Wright, 2014).	A myriad of opportunities for pupils to engage with different readings and hermeneutical questions posed towards the PGS.
	Reasons for diversity	Pupils grow in understanding of 'why' this diversity exists. Classroom enquiries support pupils in identifying the macro and 'micro-level determinants of religious beliefs' (Clements, 2014, p. 279).	LE2 is focused on the question, 'Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?'. All activities here are designed with the intent of enabling pupils to answer this question in an informed way by the end of the enquiry.
	Epistemic ability	Holds that RE should effectively contribute towards pupils 'epistemic ability' (Habermas, 2006) to help them <i>understand, appreciate, appraise and co-exist harmoniously with others</i> in the light of pluralism. Understanding the socio-cultural reality of religion and belief will aid this (Giordan and Pace, 2012; Byrd, 2016).	Brings questions of the 'what' and 'why' of diversity to the fore. This a) aids pupils in understanding the socio-cultural reality of religion and belief in society and b) helps students' reflect on their own view and positionality in reasoning (and shared discourse) with and for others. This understanding will help pupils grow in understanding of self and others, leading to improved epistemic ability.
Pupils	Agency	Acknowledges and allows opportunities for pupils to exercise their agency in their learning (Hyde et al., 2010; Davis, 2014; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015). This is often embedded through school/classroom culture and practices (Monk et al., 2013; Deed et al., 2014; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015; Clarke et al., 2016).	Opportunities for pupils to exercise their agency punctuate the learning enquiries. Pupils can make choices as to how they might approach activities and the onus is on them, as agents, to consider, evaluate and share their views.
	Worldview construction	Mindful of how children generate meaning through 'creative bricolage' (Oswell, 2013, p. 59), space is given for learners to volitionally construct meaning through the resources and relationships available to them (Fattore et al., 2009; Ridgely, 2012; Adams, 2014; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015; Paganelli, 2017; Rappa and	Pupils navigate a number of resources and relationships as they interact with text, hermeneutical issues, variant interpretations and the views of their peers within these learning enquiries.

		Tang, 2017). This reflects a socio-constructionist view of learning (Gadamer, 2004; Zee, 2007; Ridgely, 2012).	
	Dialogic learning	Stresses the importance of dialogic learning in allowing learners to contemplate, refine and evaluate the views of themselves and others (Alexander, 2006b; Baumfield, 2010; Castelli, 2012; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015; Clarke et al., 2016). Pedagogical strategies implemented provide a safe space for pupils to reflexively voice their perspectives and listen to others as a means to further understand self and others (Habermas, 2008; Castelli, 2012; Ipgrave, 2013b; Chipperton et al., 2018a; Luby, 2020; Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020).	Alterity is provided for pupils to reason across/through (Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020). There are many opportunities for pair, class and group discussion in the learning enquiries as they engage with the lesson material. Allowing pupils opportunities to engage with their teacher and peers through focussed conversation can enable a rich encounter with, and greater appreciation of, a plurality of views of those with whom they co-exist.
	Producers of knowledge	Perceives pupils as co-producers of knowledge, whose views and standpoints are valued and taken seriously (Feucht and Bendixen, 2010; Ridgely, 2012; Oswell, 2013; Altmeyer, 2018). Learners are 'not just recipients but also producers of disciplinary knowledge' (Rappa and Tang, 2017, p. 682). As such, teacher seen as a co-enquirer alongside pupils (Bellchambers, 2011; Aldridge, 2015; Gates, 2015; Bowie, 2016; Ubani, 2018).	Pupil perspectives are taken seriously within this research, with ample opportunities for their views to be shared and discussed.
Use of text	Discussion and multiplicity	Discussion of biblical texts acknowledge polyvalent receptions (Smith, 2010). Values a plethora of readings and interpretations (Feucht and Bendixen, 2010) in which 'successful comprehension' (Cain, 2010) is problematized.	A range of interpretations and hermeneutical issues pertaining to the PGS are considered by pupils.
	Hermeneutics	Hermeneutical issues are raised in textual enquiry, allowing pupils to consider 'why' different readings exist (Feucht and Bendixen, 2010; Schommer-Aikins et al., 2010; Bowie, 2016).	Pupils engage with a number of hermeneutical issues across both learning enquiries.
	Text-reader interaction	Parabolic enquiry identifies both aspects of the text-reader interaction within Gadamer's (2004) 'fusion of horizons' (Clarke et al., 2014; Aldridge, 2015; Briggs, 2017). This requires pupils to be reflexive upon their positionality and consider why they have arrived at their interpretation.	Learners wrestle with (con)textual issues and the place of the reader within these enquiries. Simply put, they engage with questions related to the horizons of text and reader.
	Reading as a social act	Reading seen as a 'social act', which is enabled and limited by classroom culture and expectations (Fish, 1980; Smith, 2010).	A community of enquiry is set up through both enquiry questions: 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?' and 'Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?'. The parabolic narrative is explored individually and collaboratively in order to arrive at a personal and informed response to each question.

Table 6.7: an overview of how the learning sequences are designed to meet to the aspects of a post-secular RE enquiry identified in Table 6.6

In envisaging a post-secular RE in Chapter Four, I drew upon Biesta's (2015; 2017) domains of education as a purposeful frame.¹⁹⁷ My conceptualisation was mapped across the interrelated domains of qualification, socialization and subjectification, all geared towards developing pupils' epistemic ability. As mentioned previously (Chapter Four, Section 4.4), reflecting on how my conceptualisation and enactment of a post-secular RE holds these three domains in 'synergy' and/or 'conflict' is important to bear in mind (Biesta, 2015, p. 79). Synergistically speaking, it is my view that the various aspects pertaining to these enquiries are cogent, relational and well-calibrated towards the development of epistemic ability. The recognition and focused application of *post-secular (non-) religiosity* and *pupils as agentive hermeneuts* within a parabolic enquiry means that theoretical and practical steps have been taken in this research thesis across each of the domains in an attempt to answer my RQs. Regarding any conflict between the three domains, I have found this more difficult to postulate. Conflicts might occur if certain aspects are misconstrued. This could happen, for example, if the teacher positions themselves as a facilitator, but in a manner where they do not take adequate account of their expertise as a teacher and the need to lead pupils towards learning particular curricular outcomes (Kim, 2022). It might also occur if the perspectives of all pupils are invited, valued and heard, but shared without development, evaluation or criticality (Lefstein, 2006). The lesson trials and subsequent analysis will help me to ascertain synergy or conflicts in my conceptualisation and enactment of a post-secular RE. Indeed, being the first to attempt an explicitly post-secular RE in this manner means there will be much to reflect upon.

¹⁹⁷ Specifically, Sections 4.4, 4.6.2, 4.7.3 and 4.8.2.2.

6.9 Conclusion

Purposeful strides have been made in this chapter towards answering my RQs. In the first part, I outlined the value and focus of this research thesis (Section 6.2) before pondering ontological, epistemological and methodological considerations (Sections 6.3-6.4). This was important grounding. It allowed me to conceive of this research as a pragmatic endeavour to answer my RQs, one in which meaningful conclusions would be constructed dialogically with particular people in and for particular contexts (Dewey, 1910; 1938; Pring, 2000; Gadamer, 2004; Darlaston-Jones, 2007). In the second part, I then designed two post-secular parabolic enquiries, replete with a theoretical and pedagogical commentary (Sections 6.5-6.8). These learning sequences are curated to help pupils consider a myriad of hermeneutical issues constellating around the PGS. In helping pupils consider the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity, it is hoped that these lessons will contribute efficaciously to their epistemic ability.

Now that these lessons have been created, they are now ready to trial. In the next chapter, I explain and justify the research method employed to ascertain the impact of these post-secular parabolic enquiries.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7 RESEARCH METHOD

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter detailed the RQs, the learning enquiries and the ontological and epistemological position which underpins this research. This chapter describes the contexts and methods used for data collection and analysis. Acknowledging that all research is an 'ethical enterprise' (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 109), ethical considerations will be made explicit and will punctuate discussions of the approaches employed and process undertaken.

I first detail and justify the qualitative nature of this research (Section 7.2), before explicating the contextual and methodological aspects of data collection (Section 7.3). After considering my approach to identifying pupil agency (Section 7.4), I detail the methods of data analysis (Section 7.5). I then contemplate questions of validity and generalisation (Section 7.6), closing with some final ethical considerations (Section 7.7).

7.2 Qualitative research

This research utilises a qualitative, rather than quantitative or mixed-method, approach. Qualitative research adopts non-numerical forms of social enquiry, and can be flexibly tailored to support investigation into particular research questions (Sandelowski, 2001; Hammersley, 2013). Qualitative methods offered several advantages over quantitative approaches in the present research, which are detailed in Table 7.1:

Feature	Rationale	Key sources
Collating rich data	Rich, 'thick data' can be collected (Geertz, 1973; Hammersley, 2013). Data is thick when it is acknowledged that action and meaning-making is enabled through, and emerges from, complex contextual situations (Geertz, 1973; Casson, 2010; Braun and Clarke, 2013). The school and classroom as a site for this learning enquiry is accounted for within this research and considered a determinative/influencing factor.	(Geertz, 1973; Casson, 2010; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Hammersley, 2013)
Hearing participants' perspectives	The views, perspectives and interpretations of participants are prioritised and recognised (Cisneros-Puebla et al., 2004; Braun and Clarke, 2013). Methods selected and enacted allow participants to express, and elaborate upon, their views on the parabolic enquiries.	(Cisneros-Puebla et al., 2004; Braun and Clarke, 2013)
Recognising pupil agency and voice	Qualitative methods are apposite for a post-secular perception of the child, which recognises that pupils are social actors who construct meaning as they agentively engage with ideas and others (Smith, 2005; Ridgely, 2012; Oswell, 2013; Davis, 2014). Too often in educational research, pupils are a 'muted group' (Davis, 2014, p. 19). ¹⁹⁸ In valuing pupils' voice, the research tools are designed 'in a manner that optimises the opportunity for children's perspectives to be listened to – and heard' (Lewis and Lindsay, 2002, p. 197; Casson, 2010).	(Hardman, 1973; Lewis and Lindsay, 2002; Smith, 2005; Casson, 2010; Ridgely, 2012; Oswell, 2013; Adams, 2014; Davis, 2014)
Complexity and nuance	In using 'verbal rather than statistical forms of approach' (Hammersley, 2013, p. 12) qualitative methods can unpick layers of agency and meaning-making in the learning enquiries to a degree not possible through quantitative methods (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 24). Tools which focus on gathering rich data within a shared classroom experience can expose the complexity and 'messiness' of views (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Stern, 2016).	(Braun and Clarke, 2013; Hammersley, 2013; Stern, 2016)

Table 7.1: features of qualitative research

Whilst qualitative methods are not without criticism,¹⁹⁹ I contend that they are most useful in answering my RQs. As will be detailed in Section 7.3, a number of approaches have been utilised to collect data from a range of research participants. This triangulation – gathering and comparing perspectives from multiple sources – allowed a more detailed

¹⁹⁸ See also Hardman (1973) and Adams (2014).

¹⁹⁹ For instance, their time-consuming nature necessitates that perspectives are usually gathered from smaller numbers of participants than may be practically achievable through quantitative methods, which impacts generalisations (Cohen et al., 2018, pp. 320-321).

understanding of the effectiveness of the parabolic enquiry to emerge (Denzin, 1970; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Amassing data from particular contextual sites implicates generalisation, which I shall discuss in Section 7.6.

7.2.1 Qualitative research as befitting my philosophical positionality

Further, qualitative methods are apposite for my ontological/epistemological framework as detailed in Chapter Six.²⁰⁰ This is seen in three ways:

7.2.1.1 Researcher-as-sculptor

My role as researcher can be related to that of ‘sculptor’, who intentionally gathers and interacts with raw materials (that is, the data generated through the research) in order to create *a* construction of reality (Braun and Clarke, 2013). This construction emerges through an interactive and syncretic process, where the researcher and researched produce meaning together within specific contexts²⁰¹ (Pring, 2000; Darlaston-Jones, 2007; Howell, 2013). This social constructivist perspective contrasts with the realist viewpoint, in which the researcher is perceived as an ‘archaeologist’ who unearths the reality of the case.

Taking the analogy of *researcher-as-sculptor* helps identify further links between qualitative methods and my ontological/epistemological positionality. Firstly, just like a sculptor, I am creating a *representation*, not a *reproduction*, of reality (Casson, 2010, p. 87).

²⁰⁰ Section 6.3.

²⁰¹ Such as the classroom and school-based interview spaces.

This representation will be enabled and coloured by my historically effected consciousness (Gadamer, 2004)²⁰² alongside my approach and proficiencies as a researcher; that is, the tools I choose to use and how effective I am in employing them to collect and analyse data. Due to the situated nature of the research, researcher and researched, both personal and functional reflexivity is required (Wilkinson, 1988). So doing, I acknowledge that my conclusions within this research will be shaped and constructed as I, as a subjective being, employ certain methods in order to arrive at an informed understanding. Another researcher embarking upon the same process as I would arrive at their own interpretation of the data (Smeyers, 2006; Preez, 2008; Howe, 2009; Santoro, 2015). A recognition of this within this pragmatic endeavour enriches my research and conclusions as contextual aspects are sufficiently accounted for.

7.2.1.2 Researcher as co-constructor

Secondly, utilising a number of qualitative approaches (i.e. observation, interviews and focus groups) to collect ‘thick’ data entailed that I was not the only individual in the process of ‘sculpting’ a representation. Indeed, it is better to perceive this process of enquiry as a ‘co-construction’ between the researcher and the researched within a specific site in which experiences, values and language blend in ‘selves, situation and subject’ (Howell, 2013, p. 186).²⁰³ Qualitative methods enabled a myriad of perspectives and ‘meaningful constructions’ to emerge and interact through questioning, observation and discussion, as we all sought to make sense of our shared experience (Pring, 2000, p.249; Ramaekers, 2006;

²⁰² Section 6.3.1.

²⁰³ Section 6.3.1.

Darlaston-Jones, 2007; Howe, 2009; Schommer-Aikins et al., 2010). In the process of ‘co-construction’, it is important to recognise that all participants brought their subjectivities which coloured their engagement with, and perceptions of, the enquiry (Kvale, 1996; Gadamer, 2004; Hammersley, 2013; Howell, 2013).²⁰⁴ Methods such as interviews exposed and/or gave space to acknowledge our subjectivities – at least those we were conscious of – in a way not possible through quantitative methods. Furthermore, utilizing the raw materials of data to create a representation provided ‘some limits or boundaries on what it is possible to produce’ (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 225). The implications of this for this research’s generalisation will be discussed in Section 7.6.

7.2.1.3 My horizon as a researcher

Thirdly, I acknowledge that my understanding developed throughout the empirical investigation. From a hermeneutical point of view, each time the study was undertaken my ‘historically effected consciousness’ (Gadamer, 2004) changed as I engaged within, and reflected upon, the learning enquiry and interviews. Earlier experiences shaped later facilitations of the learning enquiry and data collection as developing pre-understandings and lines of enquiry were taken from one school-based enquiry to the next. Rather than viewing this negatively, I agree with Howell (2013) and Newby (2014) that this reflexive growth is inevitable within such an investigation, as an informed response to the research question is pursued. It is important, though, to be mindful of my learning journey and record this (Casson, 2010).²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Section 6.3.1.

²⁰⁵ Section 10.3 (pp. 414-419); Section 10.6 (pp. 430-434); reflective journal (Appendix Twenty-Eight).

7.3 Data collection

In gathering 'rich and relevant information' (Flick, 2009, p. 123) to construct an informed response to my RQs (Braun and Clarke, 2013), data was collected during the 2021/22 academic year. As will be shown in Section 7.3.3, the research design embraced a form of methodological bricolage, whereby a variety of tools and methods were selected pragmatically based on their usefulness in answering the research question within specific parameters, as opposed to rigidly adhering to a particular qualitative method (Dewey, 1938; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Maxwell, 2005; Elliott, 2006; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Hammersley, 2013). Such parameters included the school-based nature of the enquiry and the part-time nature of the research around full-time work commitments.

Figure H overviews the timeframe and process over which this research was completed. Meetings with my doctoral supervisors took place every two months, providing a valuable opportunity to discuss and shape the research process and methods.

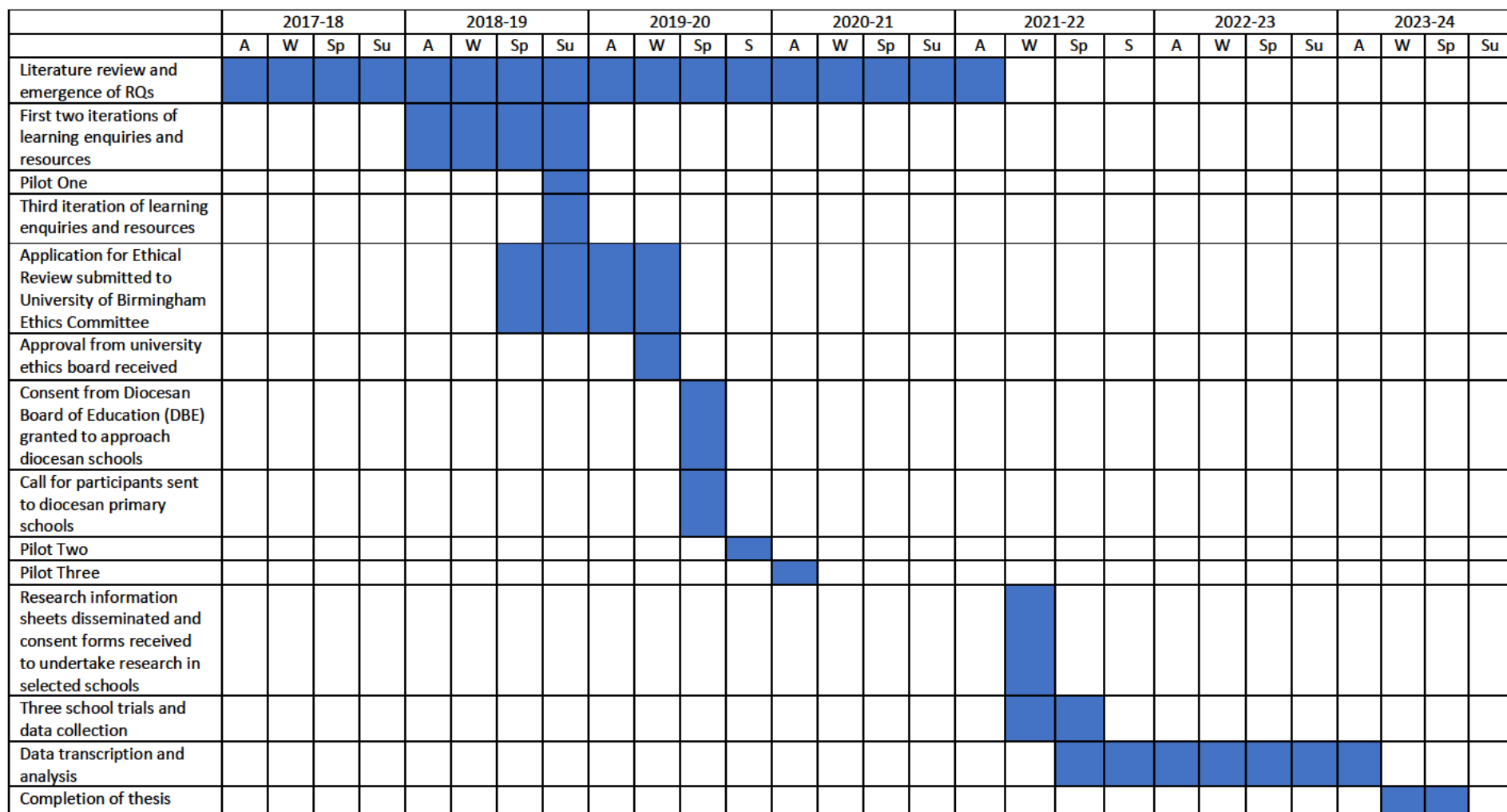


Figure H: a GANTT chart showing an overview of the research schedule ²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ A 'graphical representation of activity over time'.

Three pilots were facilitated prior to three school-based trials. These provided an opportunity to test and refine the learning enquiries and resources to ensure they were purposeful in helping to answer the RQs. Two pilots were undertaken with PGDipEd (Religious Education) cohorts at the University of Birmingham in June 2019 and 2020 respectively.²⁰⁷ Opportunities to try these resources with adult practitioners led to purposeful feedback regarding accessibility and modelling. Their participation was beneficial as I not only observed their engagement and reasoning, but also engaged with them in professional dialogue after regarding pedagogical reflections. A third pilot took place with a primary-aged student²⁰⁸ known to one of my supervisors (September 2020). Likewise, their engagement and reflections provided useful feedback which both confirmed that the pitch was likely appropriate and stimulated some further developments of the enquiries. In an ideal scenario, I would have liked the resources to have undergone a school-based pilot. With the COVID pandemic, it was not possible or appropriate to contact schools to organize this with the myriad of pressures they were facing, as well as government advice to restrict school visitors. Through these pilots, supervisory discussions and trials themselves, I exercised reflexivity both *in* and *on* these enquiries (Schön, 1991); my reflections and subsequent evolution of these lessons can be found in Appendices Twelve – Twenty-One.

²⁰⁷ One in person, the latter remotely over Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hereafter, referred to as COVID.

²⁰⁸ Due to the COVID pandemic, it was not possible to pilot these resources in a formal educational environment with primary pupils. An informal connection was utilised so that the developed materials could be trialled with a pupil in UKS2, the age-phase the trials would take place with.

7.3.1 Recruitment of participants

Following approval from the DBE (February 2020), an email invitation was sent to head teachers, chairs of governors and RE subject leaders in the Diocese of St Albans informing them of the research. Invitations were sent to Church of England primaries within the diocese only as: it allowed greater homogeneity across participating schools who each operated within different contexts; they were easily contactable through diocesan channels through my professional role, and travel time to participating schools was reduced. Although Church of England schools formed the entirety of the sample, the conclusions can speak to RE practitioners in all settings.²⁰⁹

Nineteen of the one-hundred-and-nine schools invited registered an interest to participate. Schools were considered against the following criteria:

- Had the school received a 'good' or 'outstanding/excellent' grade for RE in their previous SIAMS inspection²¹⁰, or their RE provision is of a comparable quality?
- Was their curriculum map based on the *UC* (RE Today, 2016) resource?
- Could the school offer a class in the intended age range (UKS2)?
- Did the school timetable RE for an hour per week?

²⁰⁹ Around a quarter of primary schools in England are Church of England schools and they, along with the majority of the state school sector, promote RE which is academic, non-confessional and committed to allowing pupils understand religion and belief in contemporary society.

²¹⁰ This information is available for Church of England schools who are voluntary aided, as the effectiveness of teaching and learning in RE is considered within their SIAMS inspections. The wording was changed from 'outstanding' to 'excellent' in the 2018 SIAMS Evaluation Schedule (CEEQ, 2018). Voluntary controlled schools do not receive a grade for RE. Selecting schools in which the quality of RE is 'good', 'excellent' or of a comparable standard means that the trials will take place in church schools where the quality of RE is more typical (i.e. as opposed to schools where RE 'requires improvement' or is 'inadequate').

These criteria homogenised the sample size as the number of contextual variables to take account of when analysing the data was reduced. Each school provided a strong curriculum offer underpinned by the *UC* resource. Selecting schools which all drew on this resource meant that pupils across the sample had followed, in the main, a similar diet of enquiry units and pedagogical approach. Schools were all one-form entry.

Four schools were selected from across the diocese, of which three were able to eventually participate. A small number of schools were chosen as the focus was on generating thick, rich data (Geertz, 1973). Including more schools would have been impractical in terms of the time needed to facilitate the enquiry and transcribe interviews in a part-time study. Despite receiving replies of interest during February/March 2020, the COVID pandemic meant that schools were not contacted until September 2021 to provide further information and continue the process of gaining ethical consent. Table 7.2 presents contextual information of each participating school and class:

	School A	School B	School C
School location	Urban town	Small village	Urban town
School status	Academy	Voluntary aided	Voluntary controlled
Number of pupils in school	Between 150 and 200	Between 200 and 300	Between 200 and 300
Percentage of SEND in trial class²¹¹	Between 30-35%	Between 15-20%	Between 10-15%
Number of pupils in class	25 (16 boys/9 girls)	30 (15 boys/15 girls)	30 (16 boys/14 girls)
Socio-economic make-up of class	52% Pupil Premium Grant (PPG)	20% free school meals	13% free school meals, 17% PPG
RE prior attainment of class	7 working towards, 17 expected, 1 exceeding	5 working towards, 15 expected, 10 exceeding	18 working towards, 12 expected
Religious/non-religious affiliation of class (if known)	5 identify as Christian 1 Muslim	18 identified as Christian 9 as no religion 2 as other 2 as Sikh 2 unknown ²¹²	14 identify as Christian 16 as no religion
Teaching Assistant (TA) in class during trial	Yes	For LE1 and first half of LE2	Yes (but did not support)
Date of trial	February 2022	February 2022	March 2022
Any other contextual information	2 pupils EAL ²¹³ 8 pupils non-white British There were a number of friendship issues within the class TA supported a group of four children working at Year One/Two level cognitively and emotionally	1 x SEND ²¹⁴ significantly chronologically below. Struggle to read and write. Peer support and TA.	

Table 7.2: contextual information relating to each participating school and class

²¹¹ A range has been given, rather than the exact percentage, to further safeguard the anonymity of the school.

²¹² This was the data provided by the school; I am aware there is an inconsistency between the number of pupils in the class and this cumulative total.

²¹³ English as an additional language.

²¹⁴ Special educational needs and disabilities.

What is of particular significance is the socio-economic differential between the trial schools. Fifty-two percent of the class in School A receive the PPG; this is significantly above the national average and much higher than that of the other trial classes who are both below the national average.²¹⁵ With a greater number of pupils in School A considered disadvantaged (which is held as a factor influencing educational attainment, hence additional government funding), it will be of interest to compare how these students engaged with the lessons compared to their peers in other settings. This could raise some important questions to reflect upon regarding parabolic enquiry in the primary classroom.

Another contextual factor that must be contemplated within this analysis is COVID. In the two academic years prior to these trials taking place (Spring 2022), a series of national and local lockdowns had a substantial impact upon school life. The majority of pupils accessed learning remotely from home; a smaller proportion of pupils returned to school (e.g. key worker's children) to learn, often in mixed, smaller classes. Although the full impact of the pandemic upon pupils is unknown, below are a number of key elements for consideration within the present analysis:

- with many pupils working from home and accessing school online, opportunities for group work and dialogic learning with peers were limited;
- to prevent transmission of COVID, each trial class had their seating organised in rows. Again, this would have limited opportunities for group work and thus dialogic learning;

²¹⁵ Pupil premium is an allocation of government funding given to schools to support pupils considered to be disadvantaged and in receipt of free school meals; schools use this to raise the attainment of these pupils and close the attainment gap between them and their peers (Education and Skills Funding Agency, 2022). During the academic year in which the trials took place, the national average for free school meals was 22.5% (Gov.uk, 2022).

- the seating arrangement was altered away from rows during each trial so that pupils could work on tables in threes or fours. This modification introduced a change to the learning environment, which may have unsettled or motivated some pupils;²¹⁶
- for the class in School A, I was the first visitor they received since March 2020. As before, this may have unnerved or excited some pupils; and
- all three trials were relatively close in date, with five weeks separating the first and third trial. This said, the final trial class would have had this extra time to acclimate to a more normalized state of school life.

It will be of interest to see which of these – and other – factors emerge through the data analysis (Chapters Eight and Nine) and which ones remain speculative. Further contextual information pertaining to the interviewed teachers and pupils follows in Sections 7.3.2.2 and 7.3.2.3 respectively.

Before detailing the qualitative methods used to collect data in this research (Section 7.3.2), a point on the lessons' facilitation. All lessons were facilitated by myself, rather than the class' normal RE teacher. This removed an independent variable across the learning enquiries as the facilitator in each instance was the same. This ensured more consistency in delivery and allowed me to facilitate class discussion in a way informed by my literature review and RQs. Moreover, it helped alleviate any anxiety that a teacher may have felt in facilitating the enquiry themselves. Due to my professional role as the diocesan RE adviser, teachers may have felt they were being observed or inspected, a pressure perhaps exacerbated in the knowledge that it was my planning and research.

²¹⁶ I am mindful of the *ITT Core Content* (Department for Education, 2019b, p. 26) here, where it states that '[a] predictable and secure environment benefits all pupils, but is particularly valuable for pupils with special educational needs'.

7.3.2 Methods of data collection

To construct an informed response to my RQs, a number of qualitative methods of data collection were utilised – observation, pupil work, teacher interviews, pupil interviews and personal written reflections.²¹⁷ Other approaches could have been used, but these were deemed most appropriate for the context and qualitative approach. This methodological triangulation (and, to a degree, investigator triangulation)²¹⁸ ensured that my conclusions were based on a comprehensive and kaleidoscopic evidence base, rather than emerging from limited data (Sapsford and Jupp, 1996; Whitehouse, 2018). Ethical considerations were taken seriously throughout all aspects of data collection (detailed in Section 7.7). Each approach to data collection is considered in turn in Table 7.3.

²¹⁷ A timetable of data collection can be found in Appendix Twenty-Two.

²¹⁸ This research draws on two aspects of triangulation as described by Denzin (1970) – *methodological triangulation*, in which perspectives are gathered and compared from multiple sources, and *investigator triangulation*, which refers to the use of multiple rather than single observers. Methodological triangulation is useful, as allows me to employ a plethora of sources in order to arrive at a richer understanding of the effectiveness of this post-secular parabolic enquiry. Perspectives emerging through observation and questioning in the classroom enquiry, interviews with the class' RE teacher, group interviews with pupils, my own reflections (recorded through a logbook/reflective diary) and analysis of pupil work were compared and cross-referenced (Casson, 2010). This also ensured that my conclusions were based on a solid data base, rather than being offered from limited evidence (Sapsford and Jupp, 1996; Whitehouse, 2018). With regards to investigator triangulation, the initial plan was to recruit an independent religious educator to also observe the learning enquiries to provide an additional perspective. Due to COVID, it was inappropriate to pursue this as it would have involved the addition of another person who may put themselves and others at risk of infection. This said, framing the trial as a shared endeavour with pupils and inviting their (as well as their class teachers') perspectives added a degree of collaborative enquiry.

Qualitative method of data collection	Merits and method	How I am mitigating limitations	Key theorists
Observation	• Observation allows first-hand, 'live' data to be gathered from social situations (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 542). Thick contextual information can be noted from the complex, open environment of a classroom to ascertain the effectiveness of the learning enquiries. This includes the interactions taking place with and between pupils and lesson resources (verbal, non-verbal, physical etc.). • Observation was undertaken by myself, as facilitator of the lessons. This allowed for direct, rather than indirect, observation (Cooper and Schindler, 2001). Immersion in the learning experience enabled me to attentively gain 'a holistic viewpoint' within and across multi-faceted and specific classroom sites (Newby, 2014, p. 350). • Such observation was undertaken through a participatory 'active and known' role (Cooper and Schindler, 2001, p. 375; Newby, 2014, p. 352). I introduced myself and my visit's purpose at the start of the enquiries, making clear that we were trying something new in RE and I am interested in their views as experts of their own experiences (Eder and Fingerson, 2003). This helped create an environment of collaborative exploration where I would listen, watch, peripherally join group activities and speak with pupils to ascertain the effectiveness of the learning enquiries (Cohen et al., 2018).²¹⁹ The establishing of a collaborative enquiry championed pupil voice and agency, a core commitment of my post-secular perception of the child (Davis, 2014). Name badges were given to pupils to aid the building of rapport and ascertaining views. • A 'post-observation reflection' occurred the next-day, within the twenty-four hours proceeding the lesson. As Newby (2014, p. 376) states: this reflection helps 'distance to shape perspective. We can think of our last observation in the	• As not all pertinent aspects will be seen (due to looking elsewhere or a deficit in attention), it is important to gather the views and perspectives of other participants (i.e. class teacher and other pupils). Further methods of data collection are also utilized in order to build a (as opposed to <i>the</i>) rich picture. • Observers could be consciously, or unconsciously, biased, leading to 'selective perceptions' (Patton, 2002, p. 264) whereby the observer only sees or records that which validates their research (Newby, 2014; Cohen et al., 2018). There is the risk therefore that observing through the researcher's 'historically effected' lens leads to an interpretation of events markedly different from the perceptions of participants (Gadamer, 2004; Bell, 2010; Casson, 2010). To mitigate this: methodological and investigator triangulation is employed to ensure robust conclusions are made from a comprehensive evidence base (Denzin, 1970; Newby, 2014); I am reflexive on my positionality as a researcher and the significance of this within this research process, and I engage with literature on research methods to ensure this inquiry proceeds as ethically and virtuously as possible (Stern, 2016). • As we can only record observable aspects, the question arises as to how can we make appropriate inferences regarding 'reasons, intentions, causes and purposes' linked to the effectiveness of the learning enquiry? (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 561). To redress this, observation notes were triangulated with other data sources, and included interactions with pupils to hear their perspectives (Denzin, 1970; Newby, 2014; Cohen et al., 2018). Furthermore, gathering rich, relevant and reliable data requires that observation is undertaken by skilful	(Denzin, 1970; Wilson, 1977; Morrison, 1993; Cooper and Schindler, 2001; Patton, 2002; Eder and Fingerson, 2003; Shaughnessy et al., 2003; Gadamer, 2004; Clark et al., 2009; Flick, 2009; Bell, 2010; Casson, 2010; Howell, 2013; Newby, 2014; Stern, 2016; Cohen et al., 2018)

²¹⁹ Introducing myself also put pupils at ease. Without this introduction, pupils might wonder why I was there and be reticent to share their views.

	context of earlier ones, identify similarities and differences... [and] allow for context’.	practitioners (Flick, 2009; Newby, 2014). Two teaching professionals (myself and the class teacher) were present during each trial; teachers develop an expertise in observing and responding to pupil learning. • Pupils may act differently if they feel/know they are being observed (Wilson, 1977; Newby, 2014). This could lead to increased effort, anxiety or providing answers/adopting behaviour which they feel would please the observers (Shaughnessy et al., 2003). Mitigating this involved: introducing myself, the purpose of my visit and being overt that I am an observer (Cooper and Schindler, 2001; Flick, 2009); explaining to pupils they are experts of their own experiences and their honesty is valued (Eder and Fingerson, 2003), and having class teacher present as a known adult, within the familiar setting of their classroom (Newby, 2014). A number of ‘observation sites’ with a consistent observation approach were utilised to allow for more credible conclusions to be made across numerous classes, rather than conclusions being based on one class who may display the ‘observer effect’ in a particular way (Newby, 2014, p. 387).	
Interviews	Interviews are widely held as an apposite method of data collection within qualitative research (Newby, 2014; Cohen et al., 2018). They provide an intentional space in which participants can share their experiences and perspectives, in their own words, on a particular topic (Rubin and Rubin, 1995; Braun and Clarke, 2013). A strength of interviews as a means of data collection is that the approach can be tailored in a way ‘which best meets the needs and circumstances of the research’ (Newby, 2014, p. 356). Two types of interviews were utilized within this research – individual interviews with the class teacher (pre- and post-lessons) and focus group interviews with pupils after each enquiry. All interviews were underpinned by the following principles and procedures.	<u>Semi-structured interviews</u> Semi-structured interview approaches have their limitations. The subjectivity and aptitude of the researcher can influence the questions asked and the amount of quality data generated (Howell, 2013). Being responsive within different interview contexts means that each interview proceeds in a unique manner from others, implicating generalisation (Section 7.6) (Genzuk, 2003). Additionally, the large amount of data generated by semi-structured interviews lead to more time-consuming transcription and analysis in comparison to quantitative methods (Newby, 2014). These factors considered, I hold that the advantages of a semi-structured interview approach outweigh the disadvantages.	(Hammersley, 1984; Rubin and Rubin, 1995; Kvale, 1996; Ginsburg, 1997; Silverman, 2000; Eder and Fingerson, 2003; Genzuk, 2003; Yardley, 2008; Bell, 2010; Robson, 2011; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Hammersley, 2013; Howell, 2013; Newby, 2014; Moses et al., 2015; Bell et al., 2016; Cohen et al., 2018; Whitehouse, 2018)

	<u>Semi-structured</u> Three types of interview approaches are identified by Howell (2013, p. 199) and Cohen et al. (2018, p. 511) – structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Structured interviews are typically pre-determined and fixed, reducing opportunities for participants to spontaneously offer their perspective; as a result, data useful to the research project may be missed (Howell, 2013; Cohen et al., 2018). Unstructured interviews are known by their open approach which, although offering significant freedom and flexibility to develop conversation around the interview topic, can become chaotic and be difficult to maintain focus. A semi-structured approach was seen as most appropriate in this research, as it offered the following strengths: • greater rapport can be developed within an atmosphere less formal than that of structured interviews, which can put participants at ease and more willing to share perspectives in their own words (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Whitehouse, 2018, p. 149); • semi-structured interviews allow for ‘situational responsiveness’ (Genzuck, 2003). The interview approach can be flexibly adapted (through the wording of questions and their sequence) in response to participants present and the comments given (Howell, 2013). Discussion can be guided to retain purpose and ensure all voices were heard, with none dominating (Whitehouse, 2018); and • follow-up questions can be asked to ask for clarification or to explore unanticipated areas (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Newby, 2014). Questioning can explore issues in depth (Hammersley, 2013; Newby, 2014). <u>Questioning</u> Effective questioning is a critical part of data collection. A range of research literature was consulted in designing purposeful	<u>The interviewer-interviewee relationship</u> My epistemological standpoint renders that I cannot be a ‘neutral facilitator’ of interviews; my positionality and proficiencies enabled and influenced my facilitation of them (Newby, 2014). Interviews allowed an ‘inter-view’ to emerge (Kvale, 1996), being ‘shared’, ‘negotiated’ and ‘dynamic social movement[s]’ in which meaning was co-constructed with participants (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 274). It is therefore undesirable to dismiss the role and positionality of myself as researcher, but be reflective on how my practices and values ‘may have shaped the data produced’ (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 79). Facilitating interviews in which I was ‘engaged and sympathetic’ (Newby, 2014, p. 356) and effective in gathering views required that I established rapport with participants (Casson, 2010; Bell et al., 2016). Attempts to develop rapport included: • using a calm and amiable tone of voice, as well as language ‘the interviewee[s] would be comfortable with’ (Newby, 2014, p. 358); • welcoming participants. Name badges were used in group interviews for pupils and myself, and each pupil had a chance to speak early through an informal ice-breaker question. Ground rules were discussed to ensure clarity in how the interview would work (Braun and Clarke, 2013); • ensuring that participants knew the intent and duration of the interview (Bell, 2010). I stated that they were the experts of their own opinions and that I was interested in hearing their perspectives (Eder and Fingerson, 2003); • adapting my body language to a relaxed position. Eye contact was made when speaking to participants. I sat at an angle to participants (that is, not directly opposite) to	

	interview questions, and further shaped through discussions with my doctoral supervisors. Open-ended questions were used to encourage participants to explicate their perspectives and experiences, in contrast to closed questions which invite single word answers (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Newby, 2014). Each interview began with simple starter questions to put interviewees at ease (Newby, 2014; Cohen et al., 2018); starting with a complex question may have been off-putting, leading to limited responses. Deeper questions then followed, in an order guided by the responses of participants (Genzuk, 2003; Braun and Clarke, 2013). I aimed to phrase questions clearly and singular questions were favoured over multi-step questions so as to avoid confusion and/or cognitive overload (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Cohen et al., 2018). Interviewees were encouraged to ask me to rephrase or repeat a question if required. This contributes to the credibility and validity of the study, as participants can give their informed perspective to questions they understand (Robson, 2011). Silence was used, at appropriate times, to give ample time and permission for participants to speak (Kvale, 1996; Braun and Clarke, 2013). In addition, questions were carefully scrutinized to ensure they were not leading or containing problematic assumptions (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Cohen et al., 2018).	alleviate issues around intimidation and power (Ginsburg, 1997; Braun and Clarke, 2013); and interviews occurred in a location familiar to participants (such as a classroom, meeting or intervention room), which helped put them at ease (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Newby, 2014). <u>Audio-recording</u> Each interview was audio-recorded. Audio-recording offered a digital copy of the whole interview in its original form, which could be listened to as often as required during transcription (Silverman, 2000).²²⁰ Recording also allowed me to focus on interview facilitation rather than note taking, which would have been partial and/or selective as not all perspectives could have been noted (Cohen et al., 2018). I made it clear to all participants that the conversation would be recorded in this manner. The audio-recording was supplemented by short written notes taken during the interview. These included reminders of questions to ask based on participant perspectives and significant emerging aspects. They also included brief notes on body language; a limitation of audio-recording is that it does not capture somatic responses, which may be fruitful when reflecting on the effectiveness of the interview and participant views on the parabolic enquiry. Notes taken will be made more illegible than normal writing, making it difficult for participants to read (Hammersley, 1984). Two audio-recorders were used in case one developed a fault. Interviewees were also asked to introduce themselves at the start of the interview whilst answering the 'ice-breaker' question. This assisted me in identifying different voices when I listened to and transcribed the interviews (Braun and Clarke,	

²²⁰ Section 7.5.

		2013). The interviews were transcribed as soon as possible so that initial thematic analysis could inform future facilitations of the parabolic enquiry and interviews as I arrived at a deeper understanding of the research area.	
Focus groups	I was interested in pupil views as competent agents, and felt that key perspectives would have been missed if did not gather their voice (Ridgely, 2012; Oswell, 2013; Davis, 2014; Stern, 2015). Ultimately, this research is about improving pupils' epistemic ability and religious literacy and it is imperative their voices are heard. Group interviews are seen as an apposite and effective way to interview children (Lauwers, 2013; Cohen et al., 2018). They provide a number of advantages over individual interviews: • views can be explored in detail through an interactive social exchange where pupils can share, question, elaborate and justify views (Wilkinson, 1998; Underhill and Olmsted, 2003; Casson, 2010; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Howell, 2013; Krueger and Casey, 2014; Cohen et al., 2018); • group interviews can put pupils at ease to share views due to a less formal, conversational atmosphere with peers (O'Reilly, 2005; Lauwers, 2013); some may feel intimidated in a one-to-one situation with an adult (Howell, 2013; Lauwers, 2013). Pupils can therefore more easily talk about the parabolic enquiry in their own words (Houssart and Evens, 2011; Howell, 2013). This contributes positively to the validity of the research (Braun and Clarke, 2013)²²¹; • more people can be interviewed with the available resources (such as time) in contrast with individual interviews (Newby, 2014, p. 365); • the method acknowledges pupil agency and values their perspectives in a way which resonates with a post-secular perception of the child (Flinders et al., 1986; Darlaston-Jones, 2007; Howell, 2013; Susinos and Haya, 2014; Jansen, 2015). Furthermore, group interviews 'provide an	Group interviews have their disadvantages: • a 'dominant voice' could emerge which other participants merely echo or are hesitant to challenge (Smithson, 2000; Leung and Savithiri, 2009; Newby, 2014); • although group interviews may 'reassure' some pupils, others may be reticent to share their perspectives in front of their peers (Howell, 2013, p.203; Lauwers, 2013); • there could be issues of power when facilitating group interviews with children. They might decide to give answers which they perceive to be favourable to the interviewer and/or peers (Graham et al., 2013; Morrison, 2013; Newby, 2014). Moreover, participants may be influenced by previous responses and so not give their honest view (Newby, 2014); • without the necessary interpersonal and technical skills, facilitating group interviews could prove difficult to manage (Graham et al., 2013). This could lead to significant time being spent 'off-topic' and/or not all participants' views being heard (Braun and Clarke, 2013); • the small number of participants in group interviews renders generalisations to larger populations problematic (Leung and Savithiri, 2009); and • transcription of group interview data is time-consuming (Braun and Clarke, 2013). I attempted to mitigate many of the limitations of group interviews through being aware of them and adapting my facilitation accordingly (Casson, 2010). Such reflexivity was undertaken with the intent of establishing conditions in which	(Wilson, 1977; Flinders et al., 1986; Kvale, 1996; Wilkinson, 1998; Smithson, 2000; Eder and Fingerson, 2003; Underhill and Olmsted, 2003; O'Reilly, 2005; Darlaston-Jones, 2007; Leung and Savithiri, 2009; Casson, 2010; Houssart and Evens, 2011; Ridgely, 2012; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Graham et al., 2013; Howell, 2013; Lauwers, 2013; Morrison, 2013; Oswell, 2013; Davis, 2014; Krueger and Casey, 2014; Newby, 2014; Susinos and Haya, 2014; Jansen, 2015; Stern, 2015; Cohen et al., 2018)

²²¹ As contributes to 'high ecological validity' (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 113); Section 7.6

	environment that encourages plurality in the construction of knowledge' (Howell, 2013); and group discussion can reduce the risk of 'observer effect' (Wilson, 1977) in which participants may state what they perceive to be the 'correct' answer to please the interviewer. Group interviews can also lead to the 'empowerment' of interviewees when they see themselves as experts of their own experiences (Eder and Fingerson, 2003; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Howell, 2013).	pupil agency could be valued and their perspectives heard (Graham et al., 2013). The group interviews were designed in consultation with relevant literature on research methods and my doctoral supervisors. My experience in facilitating group interviews – as a teacher, school adviser and inspector – allowed me to employ a repertoire of skills (such as inviting contributions from quieter members by name) to keep the interviews focussed and drawing on all perspectives. Another strategy borrowed from Lauwers (2013) was to place a box in the middle of the table with paper; pupils could record and place any thoughts which they wanted to share about the parabolic enquiry yet either did not feel comfortable to share in the group discussion or have time to offer. <u>Ensuring a purposeful group interview</u> To ensure an safe and purposeful environment in which detailed perspectives could be shared and recorded, a number of practical considerations were effected: - ground rules were established at the start of the group interview to provide a secure, non-judgmental atmosphere in which pupils were cognizant of when/how they could share their views (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Newby, 2014); - I chose not to adopt the position of 'deliberate naiveté' (Kvale, 1996, p. 30) in ascertaining views as I facilitated the enquiries and engaged with pupils throughout; I perceived myself more as an individual interested in understanding our shared experience in the classroom; - interviews took place in a school rooms which were relatively free from interruptions or potential distractions (such as windows past thoroughfare routes); - each group interview was scheduled an hour. This allowed ample time for voluntary-informed consent and ground rules to be explained and for rich discussion to	

		take place. It also meant that pupils were removed from class for a complete hour (a lesson) of learning²²² – the class was not disrupted through interview participants returning before the lesson had finished, nor did they miss the start of the next lesson; and • questions were phrased clearly in age-appropriate language, and singular questions were favoured over multi-step questions so as to avoid confusion and/or cognitive overload (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Cohen et al., 2018).	
Analysis of pupil work	It was important to collect as much ‘rich and relevant information’ (Flick, 2009, p. 123) as possible from pupil work to arrive at a detailed understanding of the effectiveness of the parabolic enquiry. Physical evidence of pupil work was collated as it ‘conveys important information’ which can be easily analysed (Chon and Weber, 2002, p. 63). To gather rich information, I employed the following strategies: • the enquiries included a mixture of collaborative and independent activities. This allowed pupils to express and articulate their thinking in multiple ways, some of which may have suited their preferred working style. It was hoped that these varied approaches were progressive and mutually beneficial (i.e. purposeful collaborative work led to rich independent reflection and vice versa); and • although collaboration can lead to a deeper understanding as different perspectives are shared, it was acknowledged that group dynamics or shyness can lead to a reticence for some pupils in sharing their views openly or honestly within shared discussions. Pupils were given permission that if their views were not represented on during the interpretation ranking and/or matching activity, they could state their own view independently on their personal pro forma.	The analysis of pupil work can be time consuming.	(Chon and Weber, 2002; Flick, 2009)

²²² At least, in most cases. Different schools have different afternoon timetabling, so discussions were had within each context in order to minimise disruption yet get rich data.

Personal written reflections	Following each trial, a personal reflection was written by me as the researcher. These reflections offered an opportunity to critically consider the parabolic enquiry, participant perspectives and the processes of data collection. Written the evening after each trial, I was able to percolate my thoughts and experiences whilst mitigating the risk of selective memory if a longer time frame was allowed between the data collection and formal reflection (Cohen et al., 2018). In addition, a further ‘distanced’ written reflection was recorded the next day, no longer than twenty-four hours after the trial (Newby, 2014; see bullet point four of observation benefits). Such reflections were unstructured; more akin to a stream of consciousness (see Appendix Twenty-Three). These reflections allowed me to examine the effectiveness of the post-secular curriculum intervention, as well as identify future lines of enquiry in subsequent trials. These ruminations constituted reflection-on-action which informed a clearer understanding of past events which informed future steps (Schön, 1991). The written reflections also provided a purposeful record of my learning journey throughout the research – that is, how my understanding and horizons were developing as I engaged with pupils in particular contexts, and how this impacted my research endeavour. I found these reflections extremely valuable in constructing an answer to the RQs.		(Newby, 2014; Cohen et al., 2018)

Table 7.3: an overview of the merits and limitations of the qualitative approaches to data collection employed

Now that the merits and limitations of these methods of qualitative data collection have been overviewed (and consequently deemed most appropriate to utilize in the present research), I will now discuss methodological matters in their implementation.

7.3.2.1 Observation

With the fluid nature of the classroom as a learning environment, an observation pro forma was created and iteratively shaped following pilots (Appendix Twenty-Four). Structured elements here provided prompts for focussing observation, whilst unstructured elements (such as the question, ‘Anything else to note?’) provided space to comment upon wider and unexpected occurrences within an open classroom setting (Cohen et al., 2018; Howell, 2013).²²³ Observation notes were recorded by hand during the classroom enquiries. Notes were recorded discretely in order to avoid pupils feeling that they were being observed too closely. I took brief notes during the learning enquiry and turned to more detailed observation notes on completion. This allowed me to be more attentive towards pupil interaction, engagement and learning as a facilitator during the enquiries.

7.3.2.2 Teacher Interviews

Each class teacher was interviewed prior to and proceeding the parabolic enquiry. These interviews were held to ascertain their perception and experience of teaching the parables,

²²³ This was crucial to include, as the multi-faceted and dynamic nature of classroom interactions often present unexpected situations that are important to recognise (Newby, 2014; Cohen et al., 2018). Allowing for this flexibility allowed for ‘new and perhaps more significant questions’ to emerge which were then considered in other sites (Newby, 2014, p. 340).

and their own reflections on the lessons. Their perspectives were valuable as they personally know their pupils and their learning journeys in RE, and can therefore purposefully comment on the effectiveness of the enquiry for those learners within that context.

The interviews were established as a 'professional conversation' (Kvale, 2007). Mindful of my professional role as the diocesan RE adviser, I wanted to empower teachers to speak honestly about their views in which they are experts (Eder and Fingerson, 2003). I wanted to avoid situations where colleagues felt intimidated and/or gave answers which they thought I would favour or placed 'them in a better light' (Newby, 2014, p. 358). Questions were worded to encourage this conversation between professionals. Other methods of data collection were triangulated against teacher responses to demarcate discourses around, 'what should happen, what people say is happening, and what is happening' (Stringer, 1999, p. 52).

Appendix Twenty-Five overviews the questions asked in Teacher Interview One and Two.²²⁴ Questions were asked to gather views on the enquiry in both instances. In the first interview, I also wanted to ascertain the extent to which pupils were used to working agentively or enquiring into the interpretive diversity of texts. Having the open question, 'Is there anything else you would like to mention?', provided scope for teachers to comment upon other aspects not raised in the interview. This interview also allowed a time discuss

²²⁴ As well as details on their evolution over time.

any educational needs of pupils that would require differentiation or a nuanced approach (DfE, 2013, p. 11 – Teacher Standard 5).

Questions regarding the prior experience and RE specialism of class teachers were also asked. This information (Table 7.4) provides contextual aspects which led to interesting observations across trial sites in the analysis (Chapters Eight and Nine).

	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C ²²⁵
Roles in school	Part-time Year Five teacher Designated safeguarding lead Mental health lead	Assistant Head Teacher, responsible for Key Stage Two Designated safeguarding lead Year Five class teacher (four days a week)	Year Five class teacher
Time at school	Five years	Six months	Eighteen months
Years teaching experience	Twenty-eight years	Seventeen years	Eighteen months
RE teaching experience	Taught from nursery to Year Five (mainly Reception, Year One, Four and Five)	Taught over course of career, albeit often taught by another during their leadership or planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time	Taught weekly over course of career
RE Leader	No	No	No
RE specific continuing professional development accessed	Understanding Christianity ('Day 1') ²²⁶	None, apart from a little bit in current school	Understanding Christianity ('Day 1')
Any other contextual information	States that she doesn't feel 'particularly skilled' as a RE teacher but is 'passionate and I enjoy it' (Interview One). ²²⁷ Devotes a lot of time to reading prior to teaching as wants to have a strong subject knowledge in order to facilitate RE enquiries A strong advocate for diversity and inclusion	Enjoys teaching RE but does not feel 'an expert in any particular area of it' ²²⁸ • Level Three Forest School Outdoor Learning Lead • Specialist Leader in Education for Physical Education • First-aid trained • Experience as a cover teacher • First time working in a Church of England school	Early Career Teacher (second year of teaching) Stated undertook lots of training at university; uncertain how much of this RE specific Plans own RE lessons. Draws on Understanding Christianity resource and accesses support from RE leader

Table 7.4: an overview of contextual information relating to each class teacher

²²⁵ Hereafter referred to as TA, TB and TC respectively. TA is the trial class' teacher at School A, TB for School B and TC for School C.

²²⁶ This training covers the basic aspects pertaining to 'what', 'why' and 'how to use' the resource. 'Day 2' explores the hermeneutical approach underpinning the resource.

²²⁷ Teacher A Interview One, lines 79-81, Appendix Twenty-Seven.

²²⁸ Teacher B Interview One, lines 56-57, Appendix Twenty-Seven.

Considering the horizon of each teacher is essential within this analysis. Each teacher is a ‘major player’ (Hattie, 2012) within the classroom, comprising one of the most influential factors upon pupils’ educational experiences and development.²²⁹ Teaching and learning does not happen in a vacuum; each practitioner shapes an environment in which curated educational endeavours can proceed.²³⁰ Each teacher within this research thesis is different, bringing their own experiences, educational philosophies, pedagogical preferences and more besides to the classroom, directly shaping pupils’ educational experiences over the past five/six months. Being mindful of these allows me to more comprehensively make sense of the impact and reception of these learning enquiries within and across three different, yet similar, trial sites. Indeed, there are a number of key aspects to draw particular attention to:

- there exists a difference of teaching experience across the practitioners (ranging from twenty-eight years to eighteen months), additional responsibilities (e.g. designated safeguarding lead, assistant head) and experience of teaching RE (in terms of year groups taught and duration);
- there is a range of RE specific continuing professional development (CPD) accessed across the three teachers. TA and TC have attended *UC* training. TB has not attended any external RE CPD;
- none of them have leadership responsibility for RE, nor consider themselves to be subject specialists. Trial Four – which was planned with a Year Six class with a RE leader and specialist – did not take place due to a number of factors; and
- TA and TB were explicit about particular experience, interests or passions of theirs; the former has a real heart for diversity and inclusion whilst the latter has proficiency as a cover teacher as well as full-time teaching and leadership experience

An additional factor – albeit one unknown and not fully possible to ascertain within the present research thesis – is pupils’ prior experiences in RE under other teachers.

²²⁹ And is arguably *the most* important factor.

²³⁰ Sections 3.4.2, 4.7.2.

Nevertheless, the contextual aspects detailed prove useful in the thematic analysis in Chapters Eight and Nine.

Timings of interviews were arranged with each teacher to find a suitable time. The first interview took place in the two weeks prior to the classroom-based enquiry, the second immediately following pupil focus groups. Due to COVID and related social distancing measures, the initial interview was moved to Zoom. This videoconferencing platform allowed me to replicate the face-to-face interview and, when WiFi is strong and the interviewee is familiar with Zoom²³¹, is considered a utile substitute for qualitative data collection (Archibald et al., 2019; Jowett, 2020).²³² Each interview was designed to be no longer than an hour, allowing it to fit within a teacher's planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) period. It also gave sufficient time to establish positive rapport and generate an amount of data which was rich yet manageable in terms of transcription duration. The second interview location was decided by the class teacher (to be somewhere familiar and free from background noise/distraction). This was in a meeting room in the first two trials, and the teacher's classroom for the third.

7.3.2.3 Pupil Focus Groups

Two group interviews with pupils were held after the lessons. The purpose of these interviews were to hear pupil views on the parabolic enquiry. In particular, I wished to

²³¹ Which was the case in all three instances.

²³² 'Findings suggest the viability of Zoom as a tool for collection of qualitative data because of its relative ease of use, cost-effectiveness, data management features, and security options' (Archibald et al., p. 1).

understand the extent to which it developed their understanding of the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretive diversity of the PGS. The question areas explored and their development are shown in Appendix Twenty-Six. As detailed in Section 7.7, pupil participation in interviews was carefully and sensitively considered from an ethical perspective with due regard to their protection (Graham et al., 2013). Methodological considerations pertaining to sampling and the use of stimuli are now described.

7.3.2.3.1 Sampling

Although there is debate within research literature as to what the optimum group participant size is, I decided three was apt (Cohen et al., 2018; Vasileiou et al., 2018). This small size granted all participants time to share their views, and encouraged those perhaps more reticent to share their views in front of larger numbers of peers. A decreased group size increased the ease of refocusing the conversation if necessary.

On request, pupils were selected by the head and class teacher who were considered ‘representative’ of the class population (Newby, 2014).²³³ Although this ‘representativeness’ could refer to a range of facets, of primary focus was that I could speak to a mixture of attainment levels in RE and a range of beliefs were present.²³⁴ This was in attempt to ensure that I could speak to a diverse body of pupils who would better reflect the populations of other classes in a way which would not have been possible if I spoke to a homogenous

²³³ Teachers also know ‘the personal characteristics of the pupils and the social relations between them’ (Åhs et al., 2019, p. 210). As such, it is sensible to consult them in creating triads who will likely be comfortable around each other and converse well in a focus group.

²³⁴ This is also a form of stratified sampling ‘to ensure that the range and diversity of different groups of a population are included in my sample’ (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 57).

group, such as only high-attaining and/or Christian pupils. It was also preferred that pupils selected were articulate and comfortable speaking with a visiting adult in an interview setting. Contextual information provided by the school on each pupil is shown in Table 7.5:

Pupils who contributed to focus groups (FG)		Contextual information relating to each pupil
School A (FG1)	AA	Male; Muslim; EAL; Iraqi heritage; middle/low attainment
	AB	Female; Atheist; White British; high/middle attainment
	AC	Female; Christian; Ghanian; middle/low attainment
School A (FG2)	AD	Male; White British; high attainment; good at questioning things
	AE	Male; White British; low attainment; good ideas but struggles with writing
	AF	Female; Christian; autistic; from a black ethnic group; low attainment; articulate orally
School B (FG1)	BA	Male; White British; high attainment
	BB	Female; White British; middle attainment; strong in discussion, weaker in writing
	BC	Male; black 'any other mixed background'; low attainment
School B (FG2)	BD	Female; White British; high attainment
	BE	Male; White British; free-school meals; low attainment; low attendance
	BF	Male; mixed heritage (British and Caribbean); middle attainment
School C (FG1)	CA	Male; Non-religious; White British; high attainment
	CB	Female; Christian; White British; low attainment
	CC	Male; Non-religious; pupil premium; White British; low attainment
School C (FG2) ²³⁵	CD	Female; Non-religious; White British; middle attainment
	CE	Female; Non-religious; White British; middle attainment
	CF	Male; Non-religious; White British; middle attainment

Table 7.5: an overview of the pupils who contributed to the focus groups

²³⁵ Originally, a low attaining pupil was due to join this focus group. Due to a lunchtime incident, another pupil was selected by the teacher based on consent forms and comfort within a focus group situation.

7.3.2.3.2 Use of stimuli

In order to gain rich data, a number of stimuli were utilised within the group interviews. These included the PGS and sorting cards used in LE1, and the icon starter image, interpretations and interpretation profiles from LE2. These stimuli served as visual reminders and prompts, and added variety within the interviews to reduce the risk of boredom (Casson, 2010; Newby, 2014). Providing a focus through an external object (such as cards or an image) is also a useful technique in generating discussion in a way which can reduce participant anxiety; the focus is on the object and their views around it rather than them personally. The stimuli also allowed different pupils to express themselves in a way which suited them. Whilst some may prefer a direct and quick 'question and answer' approach, others may favour time to gather thoughts through considering a stimulus before responding (Graham et al., 2013). Using a range of methods, including the box for comments in the middle, helped to ensure that all pupils were more equitably involved (Graham et al., 2013). To alleviate the risk of influencing responses through the stimuli provided, cards, texts and images were all original copies, that is, without annotations from the completed learning enquiries. Pupils also had their completed workbooks to hand for reference.

7.3.2.4 Analysis of pupil work

Pupil work was analysed to provide an in-depth picture of student thinking and how it had developed across the parabolic enquiries. Pupil workbooks, which contained student responses from both enquiries, and each group's 'card sort/affinity map' from LE1 were

taken away to scrutinise. For the latter, each pupil had a different colour pen so that their reflections could be identified. Ethical considerations regarding the taking and analysis of pupil work are detailed in Section 7.7. Pilots and supervisory meetings purposefully informed data collection through pupil work. The amendments made to the workbook questions over time, in order to more effectively gather rich data to answer the RQs, can be seen in Appendices Fourteen – Twenty-One.

7.4 Investigating pupil agency in the classroom: challenges and questions

In Chapter Three, I arrived at a working definition of agency²³⁶ through exploring sociological and psychological conceptions in the literature: *pupil agency refers to the capability of pupils to construct meaning and pursue lines of enquiry through an engagement with the subject matter and others, which in turn is enabled and mediated within the social environment*. Such a definition acknowledges the multi-faceted nature of pupil agency (Rappa and Tang, 2017) which accommodates both ‘social and cognitive processes’ (Clarke et al., 2016, p. 29). With this conception of agency, I now detail how pupils’ agentive actions were identified within the parabolic enquiries and the theoretical and practical challenges faced.

²³⁶ Section 3.4.3.

7.4.1 Identifying agentic action

Any attempt to analyse pupil agency in the classroom requires significant thought as to ‘where’, ‘when’ and ‘how’ agency might be enacted, and the ‘problems and possibilities’ in attempting to identify it (van Lier, 2008, p. 1). In this research, agency encompasses the decisions and actions pupils make to make sense of the subject matter – whether that be through the card sorts, peer discussions, personal reflection or other means. Care is taken, therefore, not to reduce the complexity of agency into ‘dichotomies, or binary oppositions’ (van Lier, 2008, p. 3). For instance, it would be inappropriate to ascribe agency to those who are ‘active’ and vocal in the classroom, and a lack thereof to their ‘passive’ silent peers (van Lier, 2008; Fisher, 2011; Goodman and Eren, 2013; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015). Such a conception would neglect quiet engagement as a valid form of interaction with subject matter and falsely assume that only vocal contributions reflect agency. Pupils will exercise agency in their own, individual manner (Madge, 2006; Grajczonek, 2010; 2011; Briggs, 2017); observing pupils’ engagement in the subject matter and asking them about their decisions and the processes they have utilised – within lessons and the group interviews – will help me to understand more deeply the effectiveness of the parabolic enquiry and pupils’ actions as agentic hermeneuts.

7.4.2 Agency as ‘embedded culture’

Previously, I identified that the ways in which pupils enact their agency in the classroom is enabled, mediated and constrained by the ‘sociocultural practices’ and expectations (Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015, p. 4). This culture of agentic action in the classroom – or lack of

– is an aspect which is negotiated and understood by pupils over time, and largely due to the pedagogical choices and educational philosophy of the class teacher (Brown, 2009; Deed et al., 2014; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015; Clarke et al., 2016). If the teacher's conception of the child is that of a 'human becoming' (Danby and Farrell, 2004, p. 39) who is fundamentally 'a passive receiver of an adult culture' (Hyde et al., 2010, p. 1), a culture of agency is likely to be suppressed in favour of didactic pedagogies; the classroom dynamic will see the teacher as 'powerful' with pupils as subordinate (Ayton, 2012). In contrast, teachers who consider pupils as 'competent interpreters of their everyday worlds' (Danby and Farrell, 2004, p. 35) and value them as 'human beings' in their own right (Adams, 2014, p. 164) will likely promote a culture in which the place of pupil perspectives becomes integral (Fisher, 2011, p. 125).

Some pupils will be accustomed to exercising their agency within an environment where decision making is modelled and their autonomy and voice valued (Hyde et al., 2010; Wigfield et al., 2015). In contrast, pupil agency might be inhibited in other settings where these opportunities are sparse. Any researcher investigating pupil agency needs to acknowledge that the extent to which it is enacted is dependent upon the embedded culture. An enquiry with scope for agentic action may work effectively with one class who are used to regularly undertaking this type of work, but lead to confusion with another which has not been used to engaging with the subject content in this manner. Interestingly, this is what Zee (2007) identified when observing his own parabolic enquiry facilitated across a number of schools in the Netherlands. However, I am cautious here. Pupils may be adaptive to agentic ways of working. In other words, it may not follow that pupils who are unused to exercising volition and voice in classroom enquiries will be unable to do so in this

parabolic enquiry. Agency is an under-researched area and my analysis may lead to some interesting findings.

Cognizant that the agentic culture of a class might be a determinative factor regarding pupil engagement and learning within the parabolic enquiry, I asked questions in both teacher and pupil interviews to gain a deeper understanding of this culture. It was not possible, however, within the scope of this research, to comprehensively investigate the 'sociocultural practices' and expectations regarding agency in each class (Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015, p. 4). Any conclusions linking agentic culture and the effectiveness of the parabolic enquiry are therefore tentative and in need of further research. Moreover, another factor to consider here is that COVID and related social distancing measures immediately prior to and in play during the trials predicated untypical classroom practices and pedagogies across many classrooms. It is more difficult to talk about a class' agentic culture during a period when home-learning was the norm.

7.5 Data analysis

The data collection methods utilised have now been overviewed. I now detail how this data was analysed to answer my RQs. Before doing so, I acknowledge the situational and subjective nature of analysis. Each researcher brings their historically effected consciousness to analysis, which influences what is noticed within, asked of and concluded from the data (Gadamer, 2004; Preez, 2008; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Golding, 2015). Additionally, a double hermeneutic movement was in play within analysis as I, from my positionality, tried 'to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their world'

(Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 181). The result is that neither the process or conclusions of the research offer an objective understanding of the effectiveness of the parabolic enquiry (Carr, 2006). The final analysis, presented and understood through themes and sub-themes, is the result of my research experiences and engagement with the data (Casson, 2010; Wilson and Santoro, 2015).²³⁷ What is ultimately offered through analysis is *my* construction of the post-secular parabolic enquiry, informed, shaped – and limited (that is, claims are not made without reference to data) – by the perspectives of all participants (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Another researcher, engaging through their own ‘horizon of understanding’ (Gadamer, 2004), will understand, approach and present the data in their own way.

7.5.1 The analytical framework employed

There are a myriad of methods researchers can employ to analyse qualitative data.²³⁸ It is paramount that the method chosen is utile in answering the RQs (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Cohen et al., 2018). Moreover, analysis does not occur in a vacuum and is intimately linked to the research (e.g. intention, nature and process).

A thematic approach, informed by principles of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) and grounded theory (GT), was utilized to ascertain the effectiveness of the post-secular parabolic enquiry. IPA gives precedence to participant views, acknowledges the situational nature of the research, focuses on gathering thick, rich data from small sample

²³⁷ What has occurred within analysis is a ‘fusion of horizons’ between my initial understandings and the perspectives of participants, leading to ‘a more integrated and more comprehensive understanding of the situation under discussion’ (Carr, 2006, p. 430; also Gadamer, 2004).

²³⁸ Detailed within Cohen et al. (2018, pp. 641-854), for instance.

sizes and identifies the double hermeneutic in play. These are all valued within the current research, yet I feel that IPA's approach, which focuses primarily on participant experiences, fails to sufficiently consider the perspectives of the researcher as integrally part of the research process. GT likewise focuses on participant perspectives, stresses that conclusions emerge from the data²³⁹ and the recognition that individuals agentively construct meaning through interacting with contextual resources resonates with the standpoint of this research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Charmaz, 2006). However, I consider the predominantly inductive standpoint of GT untenable within this research; my positionality renders it impossible to analyse the data with a *tabula rasa*, and I feel that engaging with relevant literature informs rather than mars this enquiry (Evers and Wu, 2006; Howell, 2013). Furthermore, I am not trying to generate inductive or substantive theory through this research, but rather test a hypothesis.

A thematic approach allowed me to employ a tailored, syncretic method to best answer my RQs, which encompassed the strengths of IPA and GT aforementioned. Through scrutinizing all forms of data collected, themes were created through coding (Section 7.5.2). An 'organising, interpretative framework' (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 21) was constructed around the data which helped me to make sense of participant engagement and perspectives. One criticism of thematic analysis is that, due to the construction of themes across a plethora of data sets, 'voices' of individual participants can get lost', as can 'continuity and contradictions within individual accounts' (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 180).

²³⁹ 'Rather than through a priori deduction' (Howell, 2013, p. 140).

Despite this weakness, the approach was deemed as the most effective for ascertaining the effectiveness of the parabolic enquiry across a range of sites.

My conclusions emerged as a combination of inductive and deductive inferencing; inductive as the interest in the RQs and subsequent approach arose through reflection and experience within my own teaching practice, and deductive as I turned towards parabolic, post-secular and RE literature to curate a learning enquiry. This posed a tension when it came to analysis. On the one hand, there were certain questions and interests I brought to the data, particularly focusing on the extent to which the enquiry enabled pupils to understand the 'what' and 'why' of parabolic interpretation. On the other hand, I wanted participants' voices to speak – what did *they* make of the parabolic enquiry? As such, there were no pre-conceived themes or a pre-determined formal interpretive framework through which data was filtered; I wished to arrive at a greater understanding of the parabolic enquiry through considering participant perceptions, whilst being mindful that such engagement was mediated through my own historically effected consciousness (Gadamer, 2004; Braun and Clarke, 2013). In this sense, an abductive approach to reasoning was therefore applied (Rinehart, 2020; Lofthouse, 2021). This acknowledges the imperfect process of analysis within a finite and particular data set, yet one creatively and meaningfully pursued to answer RQs.

It is also important to note that analysis was not a 'bolt-on', a stage which occurred after all data had been collected. Analysis was occurring continuously throughout the data collection, as inferences were being made as to the effectiveness of the post-secular enquiry (Cohen et al., 2018). These ruminations were formally recorded in my personal written

reflections and purposefully informed the process of data collection (Section 7.3.2, Table 7.3).

7.5.2 Analytical stages

The process of analysis was three-fold, as detailed in Table 7.6:

Analysis stage	Details of analytical stage	Key theorists
Transcription	The teacher and pupil interviews were transcribed to have all sources of data collection in a written medium. Transcription is a process of recording ‘all verbal utterances’ within interviews ‘to create as clear and complete a rendering of what was uttered as possible’ (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 163). Transcription is an ‘artificial construct’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 163), a ‘representation’ – not a ‘facsimile’ – of the interviews (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 162). The final transcription can neither record nor display all details and nuances of the interview events, but exists as a ‘selective arrangement’ based on the interpretation of the transcriber (Sandelowski, 1994, p. 311). To ensure thoroughness and consistency of transcription, the conventions advocated by Cohen et al. (2018, p. 646) were adhered to.²⁴⁰ Word processed transcriptions of the interviews (Appendix Twenty-Seven) were produced as soon as possible after they took place. This enabled the encounter to be fresh in my mind, and allowed any emerging themes and questions to purposefully inform the next learning enquiry facilitation and interviews. Indeed, transcribing the interviews became a fruitful method of analysis in itself, and pertinent ruminations were recorded in my reflective journal as I became more familiar with the data. The benefit of such rich engagement with the data outweighed the time-consuming nature of transcription. It was certainly useful to have the entire interviews accessible in this manner; I could return to them after the ‘live’ event with a renewed perspective and/or questions on multiple occasions.	(Sandelowski, 1994; Kvale, 1996; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Cohen et al., 2018)
Coding	Once all data was available in written form, a detailed analysis proceeded. A process of data distillation was first employed in which I identified key themes which would help me answer my RQ (Cohen et al., 2018). Complete coding was used to familiarise myself with the entirety of the collected data, before embarking on a process of labelling and organizing data into themes and sub-themes (Charmaz, 1983; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Braun and Clarke, 2013). This was completed manually over several periods, allowing a greater familiarity with the data than I considered would emerge through using computer software. First, all data collected from each school was analysed together in order to consider the effectiveness of each trial holistically and contextually: • for each teacher interview, two copies of each transcript was printed. A <i>thematic analysis</i> and <i>pedagogic episode analysis</i> was undertaken to identify emerging themes and arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the learning enquiries respectively • for each of the pupil focus group transcripts, three copies were printed. A <i>thematic analysis</i> and <i>pedagogic episode analysis</i> took place. A further stage of identifying the contributions of each pupil in the focus group occurred. This occurred as I did not want pupil views to be ‘dispersed across many categories and groups of people, and the...coherence of the individual respondent...lost to a collective summary’ (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 661)²⁴¹	(Charmaz, 1983; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Stern, 2015; Cohen et al., 2018)

²⁴⁰ These included: giving ‘each speaker a name or pseudonym’ (p. 646); denoting pauses through dots (...); ensuring each line is numbered, and including wide margins.

²⁴¹ See also Stern (2015).

	Then, comparisons between and across different data sets was undertaken. Shining a light on the data from various points and at different intensities allowed a more detailed understanding of the parabolic enquiry to emerge.	
Writing	When all data sets had been coded, analysis continued through the process of writing. A framework of themes and sub-themes (see below – Figures I and J), in which data was selectively organized (Casson, 2010; Wilson and Santoro, 2015), was placed around the data which helped me make sense of the parabolic enquiry and participant perspectives. Such analysis occurred in dialogue with existing literature and previous research in order to see how my conclusions contribute to or challenge theory, policy and practice in RE as engaged with in my literature reviews (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Santoro, 2015; Shuffelton, 2015; Wilson and Santoro, 2015). This analytical framework had two further benefits. First, it helped me to ‘organise material in an understandable way’ which helped me structure my written analysis (Sheldrake, 2012, p. 25). Second, this analytical framework was devised with the intended audience of this research – RE advisers and practitioners – in mind. My intent was to provide a coherent narrative which allows readers to reflect on the experience of all participants within this parabolic enquiry; in turn, it is hoped this narrative will inform readers’ own thinking and practice with regards to textual enquiry in RE (Papastephanou, 2006; Smeyers, 2006).	(Papastephanou, 2006; Smeyers, 2006; Casson, 2010; Sheldrake, 2012; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Santoro, 2015; Shuffelton, 2015; Wilson and Santoro, 2015)

Table 7.6: the analytical stages employed in this research thesis

There were many viable routes I could have taken through the data analysis. Conscious of my position as a ‘researcher-as-sculptor’²⁴² – who constructs meaning through an interactive and syncretic process with data and others within a particular context (Pring, 2000; Darlaston-Jones, 2007; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Howell, 2013) – I wrestled with a variety of analytical approaches. My ruminations upon potential options, and my journey toward a utile analytical approach, was documented within a reflective journal.²⁴³ Indeed, I wanted to embark in a meaningful and manageable manner which would best help me make sense of the data and answer my RQs.

The approach I deemed most utile is a thematic analysis of each pedagogical episode in turn. My reasons for this are four-fold:

- an analysis via ‘pedagogic episodes’ provides a narrative overview of each learning enquiry. It allows myself and readers to more clearly understand what happened within each lesson as well as how pupils responded to each aspect of the learning enquiry consecutively, highlighting the sequential and connected nature of the activities. In so doing, it builds a comprehensive picture of how pupils enquired into interpretive diversity (RQi), exercised their agency (RQii) and developed reasoned answers to the question, ‘Why do different people interpret a parable differently?’ (RQiii). Furthermore, a chronological approach allows teachers and teacher educators to further recognise how these knowledge-rich enquiries were structured and facilitated for their own appreciation and appraisal;
- this narrative overview provides clarity as to where the themes emerged and were visible; a mere overview of themes may have left the reader asking, ‘but where did these themes come from?’;
- this approach allows triangulation to become explicit and more efficaciously used to enrich analysis. For each pedagogical episode, I can consider the views of teachers, myself as researcher-facilitator and pupils (both through their work collected and views shared within the focus groups) in ascertaining the effectiveness of these curated enquiries through the exploration of themes;
- alternative approaches were not held to be as useful. Focussing on distinct aspects of data collection in isolation (e.g. an analysis of teacher interviews, then pupil work,

²⁴² Chapter Seven, Section 7.2.1.

²⁴³ Appendix Twenty-Eight.

then pupil focus groups), for instance, would have stymied opportunities for comparison and synthesis. Although some of these approaches may have been easier and more time-efficient, I felt that a thematic analysis via ‘pedagogic episodes’ afforded an extra level of critique, leading to a richer understanding of these trials.

Following the abductive process of data analysis detailed in Section 7.5.1, a number of main and sub-themes emerged. These are shown in Figures I and J respectively:

Epistemic ability	
Dialogic learning: the fusion of horizons in these parabolic enquiries	‘How do you read it?’: empowering pupils as agentive hermeneuts through dialogic learning

Figure I: the main themes emerging from my thematic analysis of the data

Main themes	Sub-themes
Dialogic learning: the fusion of horizons in these parabolic enquiries	○ Horizon of text ○ Horizon of pupils ○ Horizon of teacher ○ Horizon of different interpreters ○ Horizon of myself as practitioner researcher and facilitator
‘How do you read it?’: empowering pupils as agentive hermeneuts through dialogic learning	○ Classroom management (pitch, challenge, support, sequencing) ○ Pedagogical choices/emphases

Figure J: the sub-themes emerging from my analysis of the data

Within my analysis, I shall explore both main themes within each ‘pedagogic episode’ under separate sub-headings. This provides structure, focus, and allows me to go progressively deeper into each theme over time as different aspects of the learning

enquiries are considered. This said, I am struck by how often these themes overlap. It is therefore not appropriate to view them as two wholly isolated themes; rather, viewing them as connected recognises their linked and synergistic nature. On reflection, this is perhaps not surprising given the multi-faceted nature of teaching and learning. Certainly, the inter-related nature of the themes is shown visually through Figure 1, as each theme underpins and flows from my definition of epistemic ability detailed within previous chapters. Bringing the literature reviewed thus far, as well my developing conception of post-secular RE, into dialogue with the data through robust thematic analysis maintains a golden thread within this research thesis. Considering the ways in which the data gathered corroborates, challenges and/or charts new territory within existing scholarship and practice allows for conclusions to be proffered and questions raised regarding post-secular parabolic enquiries. Looking both backwards and forwards in this manner ensures that analysis is not static, but working towards practical, theory-informed recommendations.

Of course, not all aspects emerging from the data across the three trials fit neatly into themes. I will draw attention to misnomers, outliers and those findings which were unexpected. This is often where key insights are present, and it would be remiss of me to omit these.

7.6 Validity and generalisation

The contextual nature of this research, and its ontological/epistemological framework, has implications regarding its generalisability, reliability and validity. These are important aspects to consider within any research, and will now be addressed in turn.

This research aims to answer certain questions through analysing data collected in specific settings. With meaning co-constructed with subjective individuals within particular sites, conclusions drawn may not necessarily transfer or apply to other contexts (Alexander, 2006a; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Howell, 2013). It has therefore been important within this research to use 'thick description' in order to recognise the contextual nature of this research, alongside an acknowledgement that my positionality as a researcher has coloured all aspects of the enquiry (Geertz, 1973; Gadamer, 2004; Evers and Wu, 2006; Smeyers, 2006; Casson, 2010; Hansen et al., 2015; Ulmer et al., 2017).

This said, the contextual nature of this research does not mean that only 'temporal and context-bound hypotheses...are possible' (Howell, 2013, p. 90). Indeed, I am with agreement with Yardley (2008, p. 238), that 'there would be little point in doing research if every situation was totally unique, and the results in one study had no relevance to any other situation'. This research, which trialled post-secular learning enquiries into the parables, has not been 'plucked from the ether'; it emerged as a fruitful area for exploration from my experience as a RE teacher, researcher and adviser, alongside engagement with policy and practice of the subject at a local and national level, in order to address an identified issue (Dewey, 1910; 1938; Evers and Wu, 2006; Dinham and Francis, 2016). As such, the present research can be seen as an instrumental case study, undertaken by one immersed in the community and speaking from a shared experience and language with and to other RE practitioners and advisers (Evers and Wu, 2006). As such, the focus and conclusions of this research can be of use to the RE community through a 'horizontal extension' of conclusions (Stephens, 1982); that is, practitioners can draw upon this research and trial the learning enquiries and/or apply emerging principles in their settings

(Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Ary et al., 2002; Smeyers, 2006). Being transparent about the nature and process of this research, in order to enable such extension in other contexts, has been a core commitment of this thesis. Being the first to attempt such a post-secular enquiry with the parables means that this research can be the start of a conversation in the RE community which can be continued by others. Certainly, my positionality can be seen not as a limiting factor, but an enabling one (Gadamer, 2004).

For this research to have an impact upon RE as it is currently theorised and practiced, is it important that it is a credible and sound enquiry. Reliability is a term oft used by those adopting positivist or realist positions, who aim to design research processes and models which allow for replicability with different groups (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 279). As replicability is not possible due to the situated nature of the research, it is more apt to speak of 'credibility', 'transferability' and 'consistency' when using qualitative methods (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Achieving this involves: gathering authentic views of participants (Maxwell, 1992; Hakim, 2000; Houssart and Evens, 2011; Robson, 2011; Howell, 2013; Cohen et al., 2018); making reasonable inferences from the data gathered (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Ary et al., 2002; Braun and Clarke, 2013); being transparent about the process, context and positionalities within the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003), and using appropriate methods and tools for data collection, acknowledging their strengths and limitations (Ary et al., 2002; Whitehouse, 2018).

How 'sound' and 'cogent' the research is often referred to as its validity (Cohen et al., 2018). Terms such as 'internal', 'construct', 'content' and 'external' validity all centre around the extent to which the enquiry arrives at 'credible conclusions' which could, in turn, be

transferred to other settings (Sapsford and Jupp, 1996, p. 1; Cohen et al., 2018). Ensuring this research is credible entails that measures are employed which strengthen such validity. Alongside the aspects already identified and considered within this chapter²⁴⁴, further aspects were utilized in this research to improve its validity. Specifically:

- engagement with relevant literature has underpinned all aspects of this research. This includes literature that is pertinent to the issues under consideration, as well as research methodologies and processes that would appropriately enable a credible enquiry (Evers and Wu, 2006; Santoro, 2015). Discussions with my supervisors and personal reflection led to developments of the research methods to further ensure their utility in answering my RQs;
- within interviews, care was taken to ensure that I arrived at an appropriate understanding of participants' perspectives. This was attempted through asking participants to clarify their views and through stating my understanding of their viewpoints, which they could add to or correct. This respondent validation was also available for all participants through the opportunity to confirm, clarify, consult and re-present their views up to a specified date²⁴⁵ (Cohen et al., 2018); and
- triangulation was used to ensure that the conclusions are sound (Section 7.3.2).

7.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations permeated all aspects of this research. Although ethics are 'a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others' (Cavan, 1977, p. 810), it remains that such principles are rigorously and perceptively tailored to fit the research intent and context (Pring, 2001; Graham et al., 2013). To ensure the highest standard of ethical research, principles from the British Educational Research Association²⁴⁶ (2018), the University of Birmingham²⁴⁷ *Code of Practice for Research* (2020) and UNICEF (Graham et al., 2013)

²⁴⁴ E.g. transparency of approach, using appropriate methods and making reasonable inferences.

²⁴⁵ September 24th 2023; see Appendix Twenty-Nine.

²⁴⁶ Hereafter, BERA.

²⁴⁷ Hereafter, UoB.

underpinned the present enquiry. This research is original with clear acknowledgement of others' ideas.

Prior to any research with participants taking place, ethical approval was sought from the UoB Ethical Committee. Approval was granted in December 2019, along with an Enhanced DBS for the purpose of educational research. Classes with which to facilitate the parabolic enquiry and gather perspectives were then recruited in line with their voluntary-informed consent, following the relevant 'hierarchy of gatekeepers' (Hood et al., 1996); this process is detailed in Table 7.7.

Steps of recruitment
Ethical approval granted from the UoB Ethics Committee (December 2019)
Approval granted from the DBE to approach diocesan schools (February 2020)
'Call for participants' email sent to diocesan primary schools (February 2020). Participant information sheet and consent form sent to the head teacher and chair of governors of selected schools (September 2021).
Class' RE teacher asked by head teacher if they would be willing to participate. Following assent, an initial meeting was held over Zoom to discuss the research and give the participant the opportunity to ask questions (January to March 2022).
Participant information sheet and consent form disseminated by school to legal guardians (January to March 2022).

Table 7.7: an overview of the recruitment process

To ensure the research was ethically sound (particularly with vulnerable groups such as children), a number of aspects were implemented. These are detailed in Table 7.8:

Ethical aspect	Approach taken in research	Key theorists
Voluntary-informed consent	Voluntary-informed consent was underpinned by Diener and Crandall's (1978) four principles: • <i>Competence</i> – relevant information was given to all interview participants, including pupils.²⁴⁸ Participants were required to be competent in both understanding the aims of the school-based research and in giving voluntary consent. The school decided who would be appropriate pupils for the group interviews following this principle; • <i>Voluntarism</i> – individuals freely opted to participate in the interview/s; • <i>Full information</i> – the head teacher, class teacher and legal guardians of pupils were given a participant information sheet and consent form (Appendix Twenty-Nine) which detailed who I am, the aim and nature of the research and participant's rights, including their rights of withdrawal; and • <i>Comprehension</i> – participants stated that they understood the nature of the research and their rights. This included 'how their information will be used and how identifiable and locatable it will be' (Newby, 2014, p. 370). Participants were able to ask questions regarding the research and their rights prior to signing the consent form, and received a copy of the signed and dated form. Pupil consent was approached in a way which honoured their rights to participate in research whilst holding their safety and well-being as paramount (Graham et al., 2013). Consent from the head teacher, chair of governors and legal guardians was sought to trial the learning enquiries with pupils and collect data from within the classroom. For those pupils approached to participate in the focus group interviews, they also received relevant information regarding the purpose of the research and group interview, their rights, how data collected will be used and to what end (including how identifiable and locatable it will be) and how they can access the conclusions of the research (Newby, 2014). The head/class teacher spoke with pupils to outline the research and what their involvement would entail beforehand. This helped ensure that pupils had a prior understanding of the group interview's aim, process and principles, and gave them time before the interview to think of any questions they would like to ask me regarding their participation. Mindful that informing pupils of this research and ethical aspects might lead some to respond differently due to it being perceived as more important and/or	(Diener and Crandall, 1978; O'Reilly, 2005; Casson, 2010; Graham et al., 2013; Newby, 2014)

²⁴⁸ Detailed in the following paragraph.

	formal (O'Reilly, 2005; Casson, 2010), I felt it important that students were apprised at all stages of the 'what', 'how' and 'why' of their participation. Indeed, many pupils may have been empowered by this opportunity to share their views, and the focus groups were facilitated to help all feel comfortable and their perspectives invited and valued (see Table 7.3 – 'Focus Groups').	
Rights of participants	The participant information sheet detailed the rights of participants within the research. These included: • an explication of their right to withdraw at any time from the research, up to the 24th September 2023 (the final date before an early submission of the thesis could occur), along with the destruction of any data that may have been generated through their participation or can be individually traced back to; • my obligation to report information which indicates harm to any individuals in the school or others via appropriate safeguarding channels (Graham et al., 2013)²⁴⁹; • access to the conclusions of the research, through a two-page report (sent directly to the DBE and schools, and to legal guardians and pupils via a request to the head teacher) and a link to the thesis in full through the British Library's EThOS resource;²⁵⁰ and • the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity within the research. A number of steps have been utilized to ensure participant confidentiality and anonymity. Pseudonyms have been given for schools, teachers and pupils. No information is given which could identify participants. No pupil names were taken from the school-based learning enquiries or interviews; only initials were used in order to distinguish between, and track, pupils' written work. Legal guardian consent forms each contained an individual code, which could be cited in a request for their child's withdrawal.	(Graham et al., 2013)

²⁴⁹ In order to adhere to safeguarding practices to ensure pupil well-being, I asked the class teacher whether there is anything which I need to be aware of regarding safeguarding matters before facilitating the learning enquiries or group interviews. As is the norm in school settings, the school's safeguarding procedures and the *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (DfE, 2022) guidance was followed.

²⁵⁰ <https://bl.iro.bl.uk/collections/e492dc4b-82d9-4f8c-bb0a-2cdd8a62105d?locale=en>

	Contextual information about the school was gathered through both publicly available data and discussions with the head and class teacher to account for the situational nature of the research (Table 7.2). This included information regarding the class cohort – numbers of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, religious/non-religious affiliation, socio-economic make-up, gender, percentage of white, black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, attainment of the class in terms of RE (i.e. the extent to which the class is made up of those meeting expecting standards, exceeding or working towards). Pupils within the group interviews were selected by the school to be representative of the class profile. School data is generalised (e.g. a school with 90 pupils on roll will be recorded as a small school) so as to prevent the school from being identifiable. It was and remains the case that Church of England schools, within which this research took place, are encouraged within their SIAMS self-evaluation documentation (CEE0, 2018; 2023) or application for a RE Quality Mark (REC, 2020) to note any involvement with innovative practice/research in RE. In order to maintain confidentiality, I will stipulate to the head teacher and class teacher, via the consent forms and in verbal communication, that specific details (such as myself as undertaking the research) and details of the research are not to be stated by the school in such inspection/accreditation evidence offering. Although the head teacher is encouraged to state that they are involved, through participation, in RE research, they cannot provide details which could lead to the school being identified as taking part in this specific study beyond the use of ‘textual enquiry in RE’.	
Participant withdrawal	The DBE, schools and participants received an explication of their right to withdraw at any time during the research process until the earliest publication date of the thesis without giving a reason, with the assurance that all data generated through their participation would be destroyed. Interview participants could also request an opportunity to re-present/clarify their views, raise a concern or exercise their right to withdraw ‘at any stage of the research process’ (Graham et al., 2013, p. 55). This included withdrawal mid-interview, for instance, if they wished to abstain from answering any questions asked. In the instance of partial or complete withdrawal, participants would be thanked for their contributions. During the process of this research, no requests for withdrawal were made. Moreover, teachers and pupils were informed of their right to abstain from answering any questions they did not want to. Again, this was not exercised by participants.	(Graham et al., 2013)

Data protection	Following the most recent BERA 'Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research' (2018), only relevant data for the purpose of the study will be recorded. This data includes: • Learning activities/pupil engagement: initialled pupil workbooks (taken home); pupils' affinity mapping (including photographs of pupil work, taken by class teacher and sent to my university email address. Such photos did not include pupils' faces), and observational notes on how pupils are engaging with the lesson activities • Interviews with teachers and pupils: only data pertaining to the RQs were elicited and recorded. Semi-structured interviews were employed with a range of questions calibrated towards inviting participants' perspectives towards this end. These questions can be found in Appendix Twenty-Five and Twenty-Six. Other data relating to these interviews include the audio recordings and transcriptions. Collected data is stored on the UoB servers, via the Research Data Store. The researcher only has access to the data. As a back-up, the audio-recording device and physical data collected from interviews, lesson observations and focus groups is stored safely in a locked filing cabinet at my home address. Access is restricted to the researcher only as the password/key will not be shared. This also applies to the completed ethical consent forms. Electronic files are password protected upon a laptop which is also password protected. These passwords are different. All data shall be destroyed (through shredding and secure deletion) ten years after the date of publication. This includes the audio-recordings.	(BERA, 2018)

Table 7.8: an overview of ethical considerations in this research thesis

7.8 Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the research process, stages and methods utilised within this inquiry. My approach comprised a range of qualitative methods which are well-calibrated, and ethically employed, to gather rich data to answer my RQs. A abductive analytical approach led to the emergence of themes and sub-themes which helped me interrogate and make sense of the trials. These themes provide a purposeful frame through which my analysis is detailed in the following two chapters.

CHAPTER EIGHT

8 A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF LEARNING ENQUIRY ONE

8.1 Introduction

In the next two chapters, I undertake an in-depth thematic analysis of the trials of the parabolic enquiries. A thematic pedagogical analysis of LE1 is presented in Section 8.2. Such analysis comprises a rich, multi-faceted dialogue between the literature reviewed, my developing conception of post-secular RE, and the plethora of voices recorded through the trials and data collection.²⁵¹ In so doing, a golden thread is maintained in which I proffer conclusions and further questions relating to this theory-informed practical exemplification (Section 8.3). An analysis of LE2 follows in Chapter Nine.

These two chapters make an important and innovative contribution to scholarship within RE. In considering an appropriate post-secular hermeneutic for parabolic enquiry in the primary school, the thematic analysis of both lessons provide a wealth of findings which constellate around dialogic learning, pupil agency and epistemic ability. This research thesis therefore helps us – as a RE community of teachers, advisers and researchers – to introduce knowledge-rich parabolic enquiry in primary settings in a way urgently required.

²⁵¹ Teachers, pupils and myself as researcher/facilitator.

8.2 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?': a thematic analysis of LE1

In this chapter, I present a thematic analysis of each pedagogical episode in LE1. These episodes are:

- ascertaining prior knowledge
- textual analysis
- card sort
- affinity mapping
- pupil reflections

These are explored in turn.

8.2.1 Ascertaining prior knowledge and textual analysis

The enquiries started with tasks designed to ascertain and activate pupils' prior knowledge.²⁵² After pupils had pondered the question 'What is a parable?', they were invited to note down their thoughts on what the meaning of the PGS is/might be; this was for their – and my – later reflections upon development of thinking as a result of LE1. Pupils' responses have been categorised in Table 8.1:²⁵³

²⁵² All pedagogical activities are detailed in Chapter Four, Section 6.6, Table 6.2.

²⁵³ Full responses can be seen in Appendix Thirty.

Theme of response	Class One (16 pupils)	Class Two (19 pupils)	Class Three (22 pupils)	Total across trials (/57) ²⁵⁴
Helping others (regardless of beliefs, background or whether you like or know them)	11 (8)	15 (11)	16 (4)	42 (23)
Friendship	1			1
Being 'good'	2	1	1	4
Not all enemies are bad	1			1
Responses that show explicit familiarity with events in narrative	4	9	1	14
Describing narrative without proffering a meaning		5		5
Uncertainty/don't know	1		2	3
About God/Jesus helping people			2	2
No response			1	1

Table 8.1: a categorisation of pupil responses to the statement, 'I think the meaning of the Parable of the Good Samaritan is/might be...'

Numerous aspects stand out here. First is the dominance of responses (42/57) which refer to the parable providing a lesson about helping others; of these forty-two, twenty-three (indicated in parentheses) make reference to helping others *regardless* of belief/background/known or liking them. This finding is significant, as it identifies the majority of pupils' understanding of the text prior to these parabolic enquiries taking place. Interestingly, references to helping others *regardless* of who they are is proportionally low (4/16) in Class Three; this, and the fact that only one pupils' response in this class demonstrated explicit familiarity with the narrative, indicates that students in the third trial were less acquainted with this narrative than their peers in other classes. These observations will be helpful in understanding pupils' reasoning, and any developments in thinking, as my analysis of both lessons progress. Secondly, it is striking that, across all trials, not one pupil makes reference to the framing text. This suggests that this core contextual

²⁵⁴ In total, I received permissions to analyse the work and contributions for fifty-seven pupils (out of a possible eighty-five).

aspect pertaining to the horizon of the text is not given due regard when explored with students and/or pupils do not see this aspect as part of the parable proper. It will be of interest to see if and how pupils engage with this hermeneutical aspect in the second half of LE1. Other types of responses are evident (e.g. focussed around being 'good' or 'friendship'), yet these are statistically insignificant to infer from.

Following this starter activity, pupils then engaged in textual analysis. The purpose of this active interrogation of the parable was threefold, enabling pupils to:

- construct a 'situation model' (Willingham, 2009) of the narrative through close reading and critical reflexivity;
- identify vocabulary requiring further information that, when subsequently considered, would help them make inferences from the background knowledge the parable's author/s assumes readers would have; and
- consider aspects in the text that 'stands out' to them as readers – a springboard for reflections in LE2 pertaining to the influence of positionality in textual engagement and interpretation.

Below is a thematic analysis of the first two pedagogic episodes.

Dialogic learning: the fusion of horizons in these parabolic enquiries

8.2.1.1 Building a 'situation model' (Willingham, 2009) of the text

What is evident, from speaking with pupils in the focus groups, is how valued the textual analysis was. Principally, this was due to the opportunity this granted them to become familiar with the parable and its vocabulary. Several pupils (AB, AC, AD, BD and CF)

commented how the activity helped them consider the meaning of the words in the text;

this is exemplified by two excerpts:

...it was useful because if we didn't...do this activity we wouldn't know...what this word means...if you didn't know what the word means, you wouldn't understand the sentence... (Pupil AC)²⁵⁵

...it helped because when...you was reading it you could see and flow along the words as well and when...you're highlighting it, you can, like, sort of understand...you can sort of think to yourself what the words means (Pupil CF)²⁵⁶

This emphasis on familiarity with the text was taken further by two pupils. For BD, she appreciated the time to look 'properly...at the text'.²⁵⁷ It led her to reflect on a key aspect pertaining to the horizon of this text, that of language used in different times. As she elucidates:

I was like, 'Oh – that's really interesting', because if it had been...**a more modern kind of one it might have had different words...And it just made me think about the language used.** Because in the bible it was written so many years ago that it's got slightly unusual language (Pupil BD)²⁵⁸

In having time to actively interrogate the text, Pupil BD embarked on some hermeneutical thinking of her own, specifically about 'the language used' within older, as opposed to modern, translations. Not inviting elaboration upon her comment here is a missed opportunity; however, this is not the last we shall hear from Pupil BD. For Pupil CA, his encounter with the text was not only useful for understanding 'what we're actually talking

²⁵⁵ Focus Group A1, lines 131-132, 136-137, Appendix Twenty-Seven. *Transcriptions of all teacher and pupil interviews can be found within Appendix Twenty-Seven.*

²⁵⁶ Focus Group C2, lines 133-135.

²⁵⁷ Focus Group B2, line 141.

²⁵⁸ Focus Group B2, line 141-143, 147-148.

and learning about’,²⁵⁹ but for the ways it prompted thought regarding events within the narrative:

it was actually really helpful...you got to think, ‘What, well, this doesn’t make sense; what could I do to, like, what maybe it should’ve said’, or, like, ‘I can’t believe that they did that’. (Pupil CA)²⁶⁰

Striking is the way this activity saw pupils pursue their own lines of enquiry. The thinking prompted through this open – yet structured – activity appears to have supported pupils in building a ‘situation model’ (Willingham, 2009) of the text and, in some instances, prompted wider hermeneutical thinking (Pupils BD and CA). This is markedly better than limited textual analysis based on quick reading and supplementary cloze activities or comprehension questions.

8.2.1.2 Building a situation model: teacher reflections

The importance of pupils becoming familiar with the parabolic narrative was mentioned by all teachers in Teacher Interview One when asked what they would focus upon when teaching this text. Their responses provide an insight into what they would prioritise when teaching this parable and to what end. Each practitioner focuses on different aspects of contextual knowledge necessary to comprehend the meaning of the text which the author assumes readers will have (Smith, 2010; Dugaard et al., 2017; Hirsch, 2017; Myatt, 2018; Willingham, 2018; Nation, 2019; O’Reilly et al., 2019). For all teachers, it is essential that pupils understand the vocabulary within the text and contextual information relating to

²⁵⁹ Focus Group C1, lines 175-176.

²⁶⁰ Focus Group C1, lines 156-159.

characters. TA reflects that not only does this focus on vocabulary and cultural capital align with the priorities of her school serving a deprived area, this ‘prior knowledge’²⁶¹ is considered key to help pupils pull ‘out the message...[that] Jesus is actually telling through the parable’.²⁶² Additionally, they and TC draw attention to the wider Christian aspects – such as eternal life – that permeate this narrative.²⁶³ This links clearly to the hermeneutical layer highlighted previously in Chapter Five,²⁶⁴ that the parables often get their value in relation to the wider bible; the Gospels (and, I contend, other biblical books) ‘provide an interpretative field within which both the parables and the larger narrative shed light on each other’ (Snodgrass, 2008, p. 26; see also Luz, 1994; Fosarelli and Gorman, 2020). For these teachers, we fail our pupils if these aspects are not drawn attention to or insufficiently explained.

TB is particularly concerned that pupils have the requisite contextual knowledge of the characters ‘priest’, ‘Levite’ and ‘Samaritan’. Without this understanding of the text’s horizon (Gadamer, 2004), the parable becomes – for this teacher – ‘very difficult for children to understand’.²⁶⁵ Indeed, I was pleased that, within the textual analysis in each trial, pupils identified that further information was required about characters to help make sense of the text. These were then discussed as a class, with definitions available as reference within pupil workbooks for subsequent thinking.

²⁶¹ To help track the views from each teacher, each of their comments has been changed to a particular colour. TA’s comments are orange, TB’s blue and TC’s green.

²⁶² Teacher A Interview One, lines 280-281.

²⁶³ Teacher A Interview One, lines 265-270; Teacher C Interview One, lines 109-111.

²⁶⁴ Sections 5.3.1 and 5.4.1.

²⁶⁵ Teacher B Interview One, lines 238-240, 283-284.

The textual analysis appears, from the focus group comments and my own reflections following each trial, to have supported pupils in building a situation model of the text. After the trials, Teachers A and C extolled the way the analysis empowered pupils to identify unknown vocabulary:

I think the scaffolding of the text, with the coloured highlighters, was super...there are gonna be some pieces of vocabulary that they would struggle with and that [the textual analysis] didn't make them feel as if they were silly not knowing something. **It gave them the opportunity to say 'well actually I don't know and it's ok not to know'.** So that was really positive. And, for those children who might not know but who are too scared to ask, it was a really good opportunity for that. (TA)²⁶⁶

they needed [the textual analysis]...because there were so many of them that either hadn't read it before or kind of vaguely knew parts but actually needed to see it with the writing and have their own copy. Erm and actually reading through, like you said, they needed to read through it all together 'cos that's what we do in class anyway. And...for a lot of them maybe...the lower attainers wouldn't of taken it all in. If you had just said, 'Right, go off and read it yourself' they wouldn't have got half...as much as what they did done...because they wouldn't have been able to take it all in and read it. But then the chance for them to go through with the different colours and to **get any more information that they might have needed...** actually looking at the words and **thinking, 'Well I don't actually know what that means'** and asking for some help. (TC)²⁶⁷

Allowing a horizon of the text to be constructed with pupils *as a collaborative endeavour in which they could actively and explicitly exercise their agency* was important to this research thesis. As we shall next see, pupils valued the adequate time to familiarise themselves with the text and ponder numerous hermeneutical aspects. Furthermore, TC's comment above alludes to the importance of hearing the whole parable first *before* inviting pupils to interrogate the text – a pedagogical point insisted by Hirsch (2017).

²⁶⁶ Teacher A Interview Two, lines 16-22.

²⁶⁷ Teacher C Interview Two, lines 201-207, 211, 215-218.

‘How do you read it?’: empowering pupils as agentive hermeneuts through dialogic learning

8.2.1.3 The value of the textual analysis in enabling subsequent thinking

Another emerging finding from the data is how the textual enquiry was vital in enabling subsequent reasoning in the lessons. This was an aspect commented upon by a number of pupils, mainly from Trial Three (BB, CA, CB, CD and CE); the growing familiarity of the narrative helped pupils efficaciously consider later hermeneutical questions posed. A particular interesting comment was raised by Pupil CD:

I think [the textual analysis]...helped because usually we don't really do that, and I'm just like stuck in the middle of the lesson not knowing it and anything or like what it means...And, like, we kinda went through...what the things meant. And now, like, once you went further in the lesson, I realised as well, oh **there's somethings that I *did* highlight and what they do mean.**²⁶⁸

This pupil's response suggests that issues arise when insufficient time is granted for pupils to familiarise themselves with text in RE. Quality enquiry time is needed with texts; otherwise, as Pupil CD notes, it leads to confusion. For this pupil and others listed above, the textual analysis formed an essential part of the sequence of activities and related opportunities to dialogically reason which followed.

The aspects of sequencing and space were also commented upon by teachers. Developing a familiarity with the parable at the start of this lesson was '**a must**'²⁶⁹ (TB) in order to

²⁶⁸ Focus Group C2, lines 115-116, 120-122.

²⁶⁹ Teacher B Interview One, line 431.

engage meaningfully with later hermeneutical questions; it set the ‘knowledge in their mind for the rest of the lesson’²⁷⁰ (TC). TC also recognised that pupils benefitted from ample time to reflect upon what they are ‘actually reading’²⁷¹ in the narrative, something which, as indicated from Pupil CD’s comment above, does not always occur. Indeed, time scrutinising the text helped pupils understand the narrative’s constituent parts and how they link (Cain, 2010; Clarke et al., 2014).

Another aspect of sequencing referred to by teachers links back to the starter activities preceding the textual analysis. For TA, letting pupils ponder what they thought before they ‘delve[d] into it’ offered a rich opportunity for them to ‘then reflect back on at the end of the lesson’²⁷² on any development of thought. As I shall later discuss,²⁷³ bookending this first enquiry with opportunities for pupils to engage in such reflection provided insight into student thinking *and* an occasion to develop their personal knowledge (Ofsted, 2021b). TC drew attention to the positive impact of beginning the lesson by considering what a ‘parable’ is. She commented how it ‘worked really well...arriving at that definition...as a class and with your input...bringing all the different pieces together’.²⁷⁴ By holding various pupil views on what a parable is, a sufficiently broad yet narrow definition affirmed students’ views and informed their thinking throughout the enquiries.

²⁷⁰ Teacher C Interview One, lines 322-323.

²⁷¹ Teacher C Interview One, lines 334-335.

²⁷² Teacher A Interview Two, lines 13-14.

²⁷³ Section 8.2.4.

²⁷⁴ Teacher C Interview Two, lines 198-200.

Moreover, three pupils (BA, CB and CD) stated how having reference to the text for later reasoning was helpful. Having their annotated text in their workbook to go ‘back to’²⁷⁵ (Pupils BA and CB), rather than being on the board fleetingly or not present to refer to at all, was useful in considering later hermeneutical questions (Pupil BA) and to ‘refresh your mind’²⁷⁶ of the narrative when doing so (Pupil CB). Additionally, Pupil CD appreciated having ‘enough time’²⁷⁷ to do this hermeneutical pondering with interpretive questions explored in the lesson. They felt they had ample space to re-engage with the parable and consider, ‘what would that mean? And what would that mean?’²⁷⁸. Here is a call from students to grant them continued access to narratives; simply reading or showing at the start without future reference stymies their thinking as they cannot return to the text to remind themselves of key aspects or ponder emerging hermeneutical thoughts.

8.2.1.4 Allowing pupils to be heard

As well as valuing the textual analysis in helping them become conversant with the parable, another aspect raised by three pupils (Pupils AA, BE and CC) struck me – they deeply appreciated the space to let the teacher know *what they thought* about the text:

if we didn’t do this activity, we wouldn’t know like what to do and...if you’re doing something for the teacher and you have to give it back...you don’t know what the word is. But if you like underline the word...**the teacher will know like you really don’t, like, understand it.** (Pupil AA)²⁷⁹

²⁷⁵ Focus Group B1, line 166; Focus Group C1, line 218.

²⁷⁶ Focus Group C1, line 219.

²⁷⁷ Focus Group C2, line 804.

²⁷⁸ Focus Group C2, lines 804-805.

²⁷⁹ Focus Group A1, lines 155-159.

I found it helpful as well because...when...you don't know what a meaning is and you highlight it, **it's like telling someone you don't know what it means and you can get help on it so you can finally understand *what* it means.** (Pupil BE)²⁸⁰

So yeah, as I said... 'Ah you can actually like see what we thought and everything'. (Pupil CC)²⁸¹

These pupils felt that, through this textual analysis activity, their thoughts were recorded and valued. This is important; a central part of my educational philosophy and research thesis is championing pupil voice and agency within RE pedagogy. It is good to see the positive impact such pedagogical decisions have on pupils' experiences in RE.

8.2.1.5 A potential improvement for the textual analysis

One final reflection before moving to a thematic analysis of the next pedagogic episode. When reviewing textual analyses after the trials, I wondered whether an opportunity was missed in inviting pupils – when highlighting those aspects which 'stand out to me' – to annotate the text to explain 'what' and 'why' they have highlighted particular aspects. I could have used such annotations to stimulate student reflection on *why those aspects stood out to them* and other/similar aspects stood out to their peers. This may have helped pupils reflexively consider their own positionality as a reader; 'why has *this* part of the text stood out to me?'. In such an instance, pupils' personal knowledge and epistemic ability may have been enriched. If trialling again, I would be tempted to include this amendment to see if it is impactful. I am mindful, however, that this would add an additional activity into

²⁸⁰ Focus Group B2, lines 159-161.

²⁸¹ Focus Group C1, lines 232-233.

these learning enquiries, perhaps extending them to three lessons to explore these questions in sufficient depth.

8.2.2 Card sorting

Following the textual analysis, pupils were invited to collaboratively complete a card sorting exercise. This activity was designed so that pupils could dialogically reason together – through an array of hermeneutical issues selected from parabolic scholarship (Chapter Five) – to later thoughtfully respond to the lesson’s enquiry question of, ‘What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?’ (Alexander, 2006b, p.5; Baumfield, 2010; Clarke et al., 2014). A thematic analysis of this pedagogic episode has identified a number of interesting points.

Dialogic learning: the fusion of horizons in these parabolic enquiries

8.2.2.1 Pupil views on the card sorting activity

The twenty-three card sorts collected²⁸² demonstrate pupils’ collaborative dialogic reasoning through and across these hermeneutical issues (Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020). Before attending to these physical records, it is of use to first consider pupil reflections. Eight pupils (AC, AD, AF, BA, BB, BC, CD, CF) made general comments on this pedagogic episode within the focus groups, each positively describing the impact of this activity on

²⁸² Seven, eight and eight from the three trials respectively.

their thinking. Engaging with and sorting the statements helped pupils to think ‘deep’²⁸³ (AC, AF) about the parable and hermeneutical issues constellating around it in ways that they had not previously done (AF). As other pupils elucidated:

I thought it was useful because it helped us...realise that some people think it’s, that the story is in different ways and what the different parts meant. (Pupil AD)²⁸⁴

I think the most important part of Lesson One was doing the writing and sorting them [the cards] into ‘meaning’, ‘characters’ and ‘us’ and ‘other’. I think that really helped with writing and carrying on with the parable... (Pupil BA)²⁸⁵

[Most useful for me] was the cards...because...it was really, like, fun to learn about it and...figure it out. So it’s kinda like a mystery. (Pupil BB)²⁸⁶

it gave us loads of like facts as well about it...and like we had the chance to think in our groups about, erm, what we all thought and everything like that. And like where it should go...I really found it interesting...when we had to like put them onto...the ‘meaning’, the ‘characters’ and thing...but **it just told us a lot more about the story and what was actually, like, in the story** and about erm little, like, **meaning things behind it**. (Pupil CD)²⁸⁷

it helped you understand like what why-why it would be about the characters and that. (Pupil CF)²⁸⁸

These comments indicate that the card sort was successful in achieving what it was designed to do; specifically, developing pupils’ epistemic ability as they thought deeply and critically through a multiplicity of hermeneutical issues. Pupils developed a widened awareness of the text’s horizon and questions pertaining to meaning, evidenced through their responses here and discussions I had with them in the classroom. Furthermore, Pupil AD makes specific reference to how the card sort helped them to understand that people

²⁸³ Focus Group A1, line 238; Focus Group A2, line 93.

²⁸⁴ Focus Group A2, lines 59-60.

²⁸⁵ Focus Group B1, lines 780-782.

²⁸⁶ Focus Group B1, lines 806-809.

²⁸⁷ Focus Group C2, lines 198-199, 203-204, 903-904, 908-909.

²⁸⁸ Focus Group C2, lines 218-219.

think about ‘the story...in different ways’ which influences their view on what ‘the different parts mean[t]’.²⁸⁹ For this pupil, these tasks started their thinking about the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretive diversity (RQiii) which was to gain further attention later in the enquiries.

It is of merit to analyse pupils’ card sorts to further understand their initial engagement with these hermeneutical issues. In groups of three or four, pupils sorted up to twenty-four cards under four headings of ‘meaning’, ‘characters’, ‘us’ and ‘other’. On reviewing each card sort, each evinces logical reasoning. Put more explicitly, it is clear that pupils generally placed cards linking to meaning (e.g. ‘This parable has only one meaning. It is..’, ‘This parable has more than one meaning’) under ‘meaning’, and those cards linking to characters (e.g. ‘The Samaritan would not have been considered a neighbour to Jewish people’, ‘Each character and place represents something...’) under ‘characters’. This demonstrates that pupils understood the task and were able, through dialogue, to contemplate the broad areas under which these cards could be placed.

8.2.2.2 Pupil placements under the category ‘us’

Pupil reasoning regarding the cards pupils’ placed under the sub-headings ‘us’ and ‘other’ I found fascinating, insightful and intriguing. The cards found under the ‘us’ heading across the card sorts are shown in Table 8.2:

²⁸⁹ Focus Group A2, line 60.

Cards	'Bronze' (B), 'Silver' (S) or 'Gold' (G)	Number of card sorts containing this card under the 'Us' heading
We need to think about what Jesus' original followers would have thought about this parable for it to make sense to us	S	16
Jesus was trying to teach that we should treat everybody as our neighbour. It's about loving and caring	B	11
This parable only makes sense if we read the rest of Luke's Gospel as well. If you read a random chapter in the middle of a book, you don't get the full story	S	10
The title of the parable makes us think of the 'Good Samaritan' only. It should have a different title	S	9
An atheist would get a different meaning from this parable than a Christian	S	9
This parable has more than one meaning	B	6
The parable makes us ask ourselves who we are like, 'Are we like the Priest, the Good Samaritan or the beaten man needing help?'	G	5
The meaning of the parable is that we can't have good without evil. The Samaritan could only help because the man was robbed	B	5
The Samaritan should have left the beaten man like the holy people before him	S	5
This parable can have more than one meaning	B	5
The parable has only one meaning. It is...	B	5
This parable could be retold using different characters today	S	5
Priests and Levites were considered to be very holy and knowledgeable about Jewish religion. They were looked up to as examples to follow	B	3
A parable can mean whatever you want it to mean	G	2
Our beliefs and experiences shape what we think when we read this parable	G	2
Priests were not allowed to touch dead bodies. They were following their religion by avoiding the man they thought might be dead	G	2
The Samaritan would not have been considered as a neighbour to Jewish people	B	2

If the meaning of the parable is to 'love your enemies', Jesus would have told the story of the 'Good Jew' helping the wounded Samaritan. Jesus gave the example of the Samaritan for a reason	G	1
If we just have Jesus' story in verses 30 - 35, and ignore why he told it to the expert in the law, we get a different meaning	G	1
It is not clear who the neighbour is meant to be in this parable. Is it the Samaritan or the beaten man?	G	1
The Samaritans and Jewish people did not get on. They disagreed passionately about the right way to follow God	B	0
Each character and place represents something. The Good Samaritan is Jesus, who saves 'broken and sinful humans' on life's 'road'. The robbers are the devil	S	0
The road between Jerusalem and Jericho was known as a dangerous one to travel along. Thieves wandered the road frequently	S	0
This is a cleverly written story by Luke. It is symmetrical in lots of ways. For instance, the priest and the Levite walked past, but the Samaritan and the innkeeper helped	G	0

Table 8.2: the number of times each card was placed by pupil groups under the heading 'us'

Under the heading 'us', I expected to see the following cards which linked to self-reflection and the reader's positionality:

- An atheist would get a different meaning from this parable than a Christian
- The parable makes us ask ourselves who we are like, 'Are we like the Priest, the Good Samaritan or the beaten man needing help?'
- Our beliefs and experiences shape what we think when we read this parable

In reality, out of the twenty-four cards available to pupils, twenty of these hermeneutical issues were placed under this heading across the card sorts. The three cards anticipated were seen, but only in nine, five and two instances respectively. These numbers require some wider contextual framing. Not all groups completed all twenty-four cards; only two groups used all cards, with most groups still considering the 'silver' cards by the time the activity moved on to affinity mapping. Of the three cards mentioned above, the latter two 'gold' cards were either placed wholly ('The parable makes us ask ourselves...') or mainly ('Our beliefs...' – placed twice under 'us' and once under 'other') under the 'us' heading. Understandably, seven pupil groups decided that the card referring to 'An atheist would get a different meaning...' fit best under the heading 'meaning'. Although these findings are interesting in-so-much as it exposes my own pre-conception as to how I would have sorted the cards, what is more interesting is reflecting upon the cards which pupils placed under the 'us' heading and their attendant reasoning.

One observation here is that students within these trials associated the term 'we' with 'us', which would account for five of the eight most prevalently sorted, including the top three (Table 8.3):

We need to think about what Jesus' original followers would have thought about this parable for it to make sense to us (16)

Jesus was trying to teach that **we** should treat everybody as our neighbour. It's about loving and caring (11)

This parable only makes sense if **we** read the rest of Luke's Gospel as well. If you read a random chapter in the middle of a book, you don't get the full story (10)

The title of the parable makes us think of the 'Good Samaritan' only. It should have a different title (9)

An atheist would get a different meaning from this parable than a Christian (9)

This parable has more than one meaning (6)

The parable makes us ask ourselves who **we** are like, 'Are **we** like the Priest, the Good Samaritan or the beaten man needing help?' (5)

The meaning of the parable is that **we** can't have good without evil. The Samaritan could only help because the man was robbed (5)

Table 8.3: a table showing the prevalence of the pronoun 'we' within the most frequently placed cards under the heading 'us'

Although I would have personally placed many of these cards under separate headings, I can appreciate why pupils may have used the language of 'we' as a steer. Moreover, I am pleased that a significant proportion of cards were placed under the heading 'us' by various pupil groups. It demonstrates that the cards have a certain ambiguity and nuance which prompts dialogic reasoning; the hermeneutical issues pupils encountered here *could* be argued to fall under different interpretive categories of 'meaning', 'characters', 'us' and 'other'. Certainly, it would have been concerning if all of the twenty-three card sorts were carbon copies of one another, which would have implied that the task offered little challenge. As pupils mentioned above, the card sorting activity helped them go deeper into the minutiae of the narrative and an array of aspects pertaining to meaning and

interpretation. As a shared task, pupils arrived at their decisions through exercising their critical reasoning skills through discussion and collaborative dialogic reasoning.

Another observation is that the next most prevalent cards under the 'us' heading are of a similar nature:

- This parable has more than one meaning (6)
- This parable can have more than one meaning (5)
- The parable has only one meaning. It is... (5)
- This parable could be retold using different characters today (5)

While Appendix Thirty-One shows how these cards are mainly found under other headings of 'meaning' (first three) and 'characters' (latter statement), it is striking that around a quarter of all groups placed these similar cards pertaining to parables under 'us'. I am interested to understand the reasoning behind such placements; a few pupils justified their decision here in the subsequent affinity map activity.²⁹⁰ Certainly, there are other cards here which – following analysis – I would have been keen to have discussed with pupils to hear their reasoning. One such card is, 'The Samaritan should have left the beaten man like the holy people before him'. This was placed under 'us' by five groups, and I cannot quite infer why this statement ended here instead of under 'characters' or 'other'. At heart, of importance here was that pupils encounter and consider a range of hermeneutical

²⁹⁰ For the card, 'This parable can have more than one meaning': I think this is in 'Us' because it's our opinion to believe that (A22); I agree everyone has their own opinion on this story it could have lots of different meanings (C18); I agree with this because it could be difrent menas to difrent pepol and more than one to some pepol (C11). For the card, 'This parable has more than one meaning': I agree because there is more than one meaning to the story because everyone has a diffrent meaning and How to exPlan the story! (C16); I agree but I also disagree because to me it has more than one mening but to other it cand have other wirgs[?] (C11).

questions pertaining to the text and its interpretation, in preparation for ensuing thinking in the affinity mapping and beyond (rather than exactly *where* they were placed).

8.2.2.3 Pupil placements under the category 'other'

The cards found under the 'other' heading are also interesting to interrogate. Table 8.4 displays these hermeneutical issues in order of frequency seen:

Cards	'Bronze' (B), 'Silver' (S) or 'Gold' (G)	Number of card sorts containing this card under the 'Other' heading
The road between Jerusalem and Jericho was known as a dangerous one to travel along. Thieves wandered the road frequently	S	12
The title of the parable makes us think of the 'Good Samaritan' only. It should have a different title	S	9
This parable could be retold using different characters today	S	5
The Samaritan should have left the beaten man like the holy people before him	S	4
The Samaritans and Jewish people did not get on. They disagreed passionately about the right way to follow God	B	4
The Samaritan would not have been considered as a neighbour to Jewish people	B	4
The meaning of the parable is that we can't have good without evil. The Samaritan could only help because the man was robbed	B	4
This parable only makes sense if we read the rest of Luke's Gospel as well. If you read a random chapter in the middle of a book, you don't get the full story	S	4
Priests and Levites were considered to be very holy and knowledgeable about Jewish religion. They were looked up to as examples to follow	B	3
Priests were not allowed to touch dead bodies. They were following their religion by avoiding the man they thought might be dead	G	2
This is a cleverly written story by Luke. It is symmetrical in lots of ways. For instance, the priest and the Levite walked past, but the Samaritan and the innkeeper helped	G	2
We need to think about what Jesus' original followers would have thought about this parable for it to make sense to us	S	2

Jesus was trying to teach that we should treat everybody as our neighbour. It's about loving and caring	B	1
Each character and place represents something. The Good Samaritan is Jesus, who saves 'broken and sinful humans' on life's 'road'. The robbers are the devil	S	1
Our beliefs and experiences shape what we think when we read this parable	G	1
An atheist would get a different meaning from this parable than a Christian	S	1
A parable can mean whatever you want it to mean	G	1
This parable has more than one meaning	B	1
This parable can have more than one meaning	B	1
The parable has only one meaning. It is...	B	1
The parable makes us ask ourselves who we are like, 'Are we like the Priest, the Good Samaritan or the beaten man needing help?'	G	0
If the meaning of the parable is to 'love your enemies', Jesus would have told the story of the 'Good Jew' helping the wounded Samaritan. Jesus gave the example of the Samaritan for a reason	G	0
If we just have Jesus' story in verses 30 - 35, and ignore why he told it to the expert in the law, we get a different meaning	G	0
It is not clear who the neighbour is meant to be in this parable. Is it the Samaritan or the beaten man?	G	0

Table 8.4: the number of times each card was placed by pupil groups under the heading 'other'

This data prompts several reflections. Whilst I could infer why the card pertaining to the 'road between Jerusalem and Jericho' was commonly placed here (due to its focus on location rather than characters), I am interested to know why nine groups placed the hermeneutical aspect of the parable's title under 'other'. This is a question I would explore with students should I repeat the lessons and focus groups; it was amongst many hermeneutical issues that were placed under all four headings by various groups. Moreover, I can appreciate why the statement, 'This parable could be retold using different characters today' was placed by five groups under 'other'. Perhaps this was due to the card not referring to characters found within the narrative (although eleven groups did place it under 'characters'), or that it nods to a contemporary re-application. What strikes me most is that, just as with the 'us' category, twenty of the twenty-four cards were placed under 'other' as a result of pupils' collaborative rumination. Many of these link to the parable's historical context, focusing on the characters of Samaritans, Priests and Levites. The presence of many cards under this heading again indicates that the hermeneutical issues prompted sufficient and useful doubt to instigate rich dialogical reasoning amongst pupil groups as to where they should be placed.

'How do you read it?': empowering pupils as agentive hermeneuts through dialogic learning

8.2.2.4 The benefits of group working

Pupils and teachers interviewed stated how beneficial working in groups was for the card sorting exercise. Ruminating on this activity before the lesson, Teachers A and C each commented upon how thinking with peers would support pupils who might find this task

difficult. For TA, her response pertains to the utility of ‘mixed ability groupings’²⁹¹ in supporting struggling students. TC follows a similar vein:

...if they’re working in groups then those that might struggle will actually bounce off those who have got lots to say...Hearing [even?] the group of giving other ideas...they’ll start thinking of more things off the top of their heads.²⁹²

How group work supported rich deliberation with these hermeneutical issues came through strongly through post-lesson discussions. Pupils BB and BD drew particular attention to the ways in which dialogue with peers led to a development of thought:

I liked it because...**if you like do it on yourself you’re like, ‘Ooh I don’t know if this goes there or that goes there’. But your friends, if they think differently, you’re like, ‘Oh yeah! That might – that’s actually might be the correct answer’.** And I really liked it how we worked as a team...we got to like discuss it together... (Pupil BB)²⁹³

I think it was easier with a group ‘cos...in my group I had opportunities to actually think when someone, when I was like, ‘Oh, I think it should go here ‘cos it’s got the word “meaning” in; it should go underneath “meaning”’. But, and then that, and **then someone else in my group might say, ‘Ah! But it could also go under here’, and I think to myself, ‘Yeah, that’s better; let’s put it under there’...Yeah it made you think, ‘Oh yeah that is better than what I thought’.** (Pupil BD)²⁹⁴

These comments reveal how encountering alterity through their peers’ views enabled deep hermeneutical reasoning in this activity. This was the activity’s intention; I wanted students to develop new understandings as ‘ideas and ways of thinking other than...[their] own’ are considered as they ‘question, listen, reflect...discuss, argue’ ideas with peers

²⁹¹ Teacher A Interview One, line 384.

²⁹² Teacher C Interview One, lines 335-337, 338-340.

²⁹³ Focus Group B1, lines 209-212, 241.

²⁹⁴ Focus Group B2, lines 263-267, 272.

(Alexander, 2006b, p.5; Baumfield, 2010; Clarke et al., 2014). Undertaking this activity as individuals would have prevented the opportunity for this rich dialogue. After the lesson, TC offered her observation regarding the utility of collaborative working in this activity:

...it was really interesting because they were **working as groups, they actually had to think about what everyone else was saying as well...It's not just their opinion.** It was, 'Ok well do we *all* agree that it's going into characters? Do we *all* agree that it's meaning?'...And...I know some groups said, 'No I think it's there and I think it's there'; they had to compromise and **they had to give each other their reasons as to why they thought it went there...which was...brilliant in that the talk about the...text as well because they were bringing it back to that.** They had to...discuss it in terms of the knowledge of what they'd just learnt...So making sure they were all...sharing the same knowledge which was...really interesting.²⁹⁵

As well as witnessing pupil deliberations and debates with the hermeneutical issues, this teacher and I both observed how pupils drew upon their engagement with the text earlier in the lesson in their deliberations. Indeed, many referred to their annotated copy of the parable to test and justify their emerging ideas. That pupils did so shows the importance of letting pupils have texts to hand when thinking hermeneutically; this again offers a challenge to practice in which the narrative is read or displayed at the start of the lesson but no longer available for interrogation or reference.

8.2.2.5 Challenges of group work

This is not to say that all pupils found the group work useful. Two pupils (AD and BE) valued hearing other views, but their personal preference would have been to complete the card sort individually. Pupil BE expanded their view, stating that they found the competing

²⁹⁵ Teacher C Interview Two, lines 287-289, 293-294, 298-300, 304-306, 310-311.

views proffered as to where cards should be placed ‘a bit confusing’.²⁹⁶ Pupil CE raised an important rumination through her experience. Although she found the activity useful, she found working as a group stressful. She felt that her group ‘didn’t...listen’ nor ‘discuss’ the cards to her liking.²⁹⁷

I wanted to discuss and then like all my other groups [read: others in her group] were just, were going on [placing cards]. And I was just like can we?...When I was doing it, I just like, really, like tried to listen to my group but **it’s kind of hard when your group doesn’t listen to you.**²⁹⁸

This pupil’s comment offers a stark reminder of the challenges of dialogic learning through group work. There is always the risk – via group dynamics, uncertainty of task, the perception of whether or not others are fully contributing to the group’s thinking etc. – that collaboration will present difficulties for pupils. It is important to be mindful of these and employ, as practitioners, strategies which mitigate these barriers.²⁹⁹ The ways I attempted to mitigate these through modelling (Bandura, 1977; Haston, 2007), turn-taking and asking the teacher to decide pupil groups were effective in the main, but it remains that this group experienced some dynamic difficulties which affected their shared reasoning. Practitioners who draw upon the exemplifications³⁰⁰ offered following this research thesis will do well to bear these practical aspects in mind.

²⁹⁶ Focus Group B2, line 257.

²⁹⁷ Focus Group C2, lines 309, 847.

²⁹⁸ Focus Group C2, lines 847-848, 925-926.

²⁹⁹ Additionally, many practitioners anecdotally tell of how, post-COVID, some students struggle(d) with, and are/were apprehensive about, group work.

³⁰⁰ I.e. the lesson plans and resources.

8.2.2.6 Challenge

The issue of challenge is an appropriate topic to continue. Providing appropriate challenge is at the heart of effective teaching and learning. The present theory-informed parabolic enquiries chart new ground in RE, inviting primary-aged pupils to engage with a myriad of hermeneutical issues derived from parabolic scholarship in a way not currently afforded through published curriculum plans. Questions of challenge and accessibility were therefore of key concern in this unexplored area. A further aspect of complexity lie in the fact that I did not know the pupils in the classes nor their prior learning. What I therefore held central in designing and facilitating the enquiries was a) what I wanted pupils to think deeply about³⁰¹ to develop their epistemic ability and b) how to enable/support pupils to engage in this new thinking. So doing, I was cognizant of aspects of high-quality teaching as detailed in the DfE's *ITT Core Content Framework* (2019b) – this included helping pupils engage with key subject-specific knowledge, effectively using questioning (to stimulate further thinking, reinforce learning, granting adequate wait time for pupils to construct a response etc.) and having high expectations.

From my own reflections during and post-lessons, I felt that pupil engagement during the card sorting activity was (on the whole) strong due to appropriate pitching and support. This was indicated by pupils' positive reception to the activity detailed above, as well as TB's comment that, 'the level of challenge was pretty much spot on. I would say that it-it did

³⁰¹ I am here influenced by the work of Willingham (2009): if memory is the 'residue' of thought, what are we getting pupils to think deeply about?

challenge every child to...have to think'.³⁰² This reflection accords with my own noted in my post-lesson reflections – that this activity prompted *all* pupils to reflect in their own manner on the hermeneutical issues encountered. Pupils thought deeply and critically. This appropriate level of challenge and associated thinking is exemplified by two pupil responses:

I thought it was...a bit challenging at the same time as, like, interesting, because I didn't know all them things about it. And then, it was also challenging trying to look where they go and trying to think where...abouts they should go on the piece of paper... (Pupil CB)³⁰³

Like what she said, but...basically 'cos...it was quite challenging because...like, as it was like new to you and you didn't really know, like, those kind of things, erm it was kind of hard to think of like why you agree...and like if you agree or not. (Pupil CC)³⁰⁴

Both pupils here linked challenge to contemplating these parabolic hermeneutical issues for the first time and the subsequent categorisation of them. One element of challenge mentioned previously is the ambiguity/interpretive breadth of the cards. In many instances, they could justifiably be placed in a number of categories, and pupils therefore had to dialogically reason where they would place the cards. This was not a simple activity. Two cards in particular led a number of pupils across the trials to attract my attention for a question. These cards were: 'The parable has more than one meaning' and 'The parable can have more than one meaning'. A discussion was initiated to help these pupils recognise the nuance between these two statements, which they took back to their groups for reflection.

³⁰² Teacher B Interview Two, lines 197-199.

³⁰³ Focus Group C1, lines 331-333, 337.

³⁰⁴ Focus Group C1, lines 345-347, 351.

8.2.2.7 Three tiers of cards: for reasoning or racing?

To help pupils arrive at an informed response to the enquiry question, ‘What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?’, I attempted to support student encounter with – and understanding of – the hermeneutical issues through engaging with ‘bronze’, ‘silver’ and ‘gold’ tiers of cards in turn. The first trial raised an important aspect to consider regarding this pedagogical strategy, as reflected upon by TA:

[some pupils] were so desperate to get to gold that they really rushed through it...Cos it was almost ‘I want to be on gold’...And I think for just a few of the children – and thinking about that group at the boy-back with the two boys...There’s was a case of ‘Come on! Let’s get going! Let’s get through it’, rather than really stopping and thinking so. Really critical and it, you know, maybe it’s a case of not letting them know there’s silver and gold until they’ve done the bronze. **Because they’re too keen to rush on...rather than really thinking about the bronze. And for some of them, that was enough challenge. Erm...they didn’t then need to go on because actually, what I noticed with that group, they boys really couldn’t deal with the...silver and gold because they hadn’t really thought about the bronze ones to begin with...**³⁰⁵

TA raises apt points. In not explicitly asking pupils to take their time and deeply consider each card, the motivating element of competition stimulated by the ‘bronze, silver, gold’ tiers became the predominant focus for some groups. Consequently, some groups in the first trial rushed the card sorting; the two groups who sorted all cards were both from this class. In subsequent trials, I encouraged pupils to take their time – that I would much rather groups considered the bronze cards deeply than meagrely consider them in a dash from bronze to gold. That this had a positive impact on pupils’ thinking was observed by me as well as TB. As a result of my explication, he reflected:

³⁰⁵ Teacher A Interview Two, lines 57-58, 62, 66-71, 75-78.

...I was really pleased to see that some of the...children who are, you know, often expect to rush through something hadn't...Erm and had...actually thought carefully about it.³⁰⁶

Encouraging pupils to take their time and wrestle with the hermeneutical aspects constellating around this parable led to deeper thinking and supported later, critical reasoning around this parable and parabolic reception.³⁰⁷ Perhaps renaming the card tiers from 'bronze', 'silver' and 'gold' to something that does not denote a hierarchy would also help pupils reason slowly and deeply with the cards.

8.2.2.8 Challenge as confusion

There were, however, a number of aspects which confused some pupils. One aspect was some of the vocabulary on the cards. A particular term emerging across all three trials was the term 'atheist'. For those who use these practical exemplifications, I would advise that this term is explained (or recapped, if pupils have encountered this term previously) before pupils embark on the card sort. TC, reflecting after the lesson, ruminated on the various confidence levels of pupils to ask when they were unsure of a term. She felt that whilst some in her class would have had 'confidence to actually ask' the teacher for clarification, others might have shied away from asking or 'sat back at that point and either let somebody else do the work because they understood'.³⁰⁸ Furthermore, those who

³⁰⁶ Teacher B Interview Two, lines 190-192, 196.

³⁰⁷ This links to Section Four of the *Teachers' Standards* (DfE, 2013) and related *ITT Core Content Framework* (DfE, 2019b) around planning and implementing effective lessons. Standard 2.4 of the *Teachers' Standards* are also pertinent here as the amendments to the card sort occurred due to a 'knowledge and understanding of how pupils learn and how this impacts on teaching' (DfE, 2013, p. 10).

³⁰⁸ Teacher C Interview Two, lines 225-228.

'possibly...misunderstood or maybe misinterpreted'³⁰⁹ vocabulary then found the affinity mapping more challenging as they did not understand fully what the cards referred to. For me, this reiterates the importance of creating an environment in which pupils feel confident to ask if they are unsure. Ultimately, pupil understanding of the vocabulary on the cards will assist their dialogical reasoning on these hermeneutical issues.

Another aspect which confused some pupils was the nature of the four categories. I recognised during the first trial the importance of explaining what the headings 'meaning', 'characters', 'us' and 'other' referred to. As pupils engaged with this task, I noticed it was the latter two categories in particular which required clear explication and modelling; through reflection, I did this more effectively as the trials progressed (Schön, 1991). Broadly speaking, these categories were well understood with only a few pupils asking for clarification mid-activity and only two focus group pupils (AE and CE) indicating some difficulties understanding these categories.³¹⁰

In the final two focus groups, I pursued a question which had emerged through the first two trials: *when completing this sorting activity, were pupils actually contemplating the hermeneutical issues or simply scanning them to identify key words to categorise them?* On asking this question, the following responses were offered:

³⁰⁹ Teacher C Interview Two, lines 238-239.

³¹⁰ Pupil AE, Focus Group A2, lines 83-84, 88: 'I think erm the one the first on on the characters was a bit weird because it...was like I didn't really understand it that much...But it did help me'; Pupil CE, Focus Group C2, lines 270, 274-275, 279-280: 'There's one more thing...Erm, when we were doing it, erm on my table like, 'What was the meaning? What was the characters? What's 'us'? What's 'other'? ...And then everyone was just getting confused. And then, like, and then we ask, and then it didn't really make sense after that 'cos nobody was listening'.

sometimes a little bit...It was...interesting to find out...everyone's opinion...why everyone thought about where the card should go...**sometimes we sort of thought a bit too much about where they should go...without actually thinking about what's on, properly on the cards**...and then thinking about that. Just thinking about, 'Ooh I think this should go in meaning when it's actually about characters'...or something. (Pupil CA)³¹¹

if it did say the word 'meaning' in it, we just guessed that it went in the 'meaning' section...But erm, the characters – if there was characters in it, then we would obviously think it goes in the characters...on my table we didn't really, like, just...not read it and that. We took like our time and just read it carefully and then thought about...where it would go...We didn't just, like, not read it and just put it in a random one. (Pupil CD)³¹²

Yeah a little bit. (Pupil CF)³¹³

From the small sample of pupil responses here, I can postulate that some groups were scanning the text to categorise them rather than deeply considering the hermeneutical issues upon the cards. This is neither surprising nor, on reflection, too much of an issue. This activity provides *an* encounter with a range of hermeneutical issues not considered before. It sets the ground for the subsequent engagement with these cards and student-led discovery in the affinity mapping.

8.2.2.9 Card sorting and pupil agency

My final reflection on the card sorting relates to pupil agency and empowerment. TB offered the following rumination on a group supported by a teaching assistant:

...listening into some of the conversations that the teaching assistant was having with that group...it was quite interesting because...at least one of the children in that group is one who doesn't often express their view. **And having that sort of, you**

³¹¹ Focus Group C1, lines 367, 375-377, 394, 398-399, 403.

³¹² Focus Group C2, lines 228-229, 233-234, 260-262, 266.

³¹³ Focus Group C2, line 244.

know, freedom to be able to do that made them feel a lot more empowered during the course of the lesson...And, but also to see that other children find things hard...Because that is a child who finds a lot of things hard and will often default to, 'I can't do it'. So being able to see that other children were also finding it hard I think empowered them more...which was really interesting.³¹⁴

In my critical engagement with literature in Chapter Three, I made the case that a post-secular perception of the child invites us to review the pedagogical decisions we make in the RE classroom. Such pedagogical choices – such as those present within these parabolic enquiries – should fully recognise students as capable agents, valuing their experience, perspectives and voice (Hyde et al., 2010; Adams, 2014; Gurdal and Sorbring, 2018; Stoecklin and Fattore, 2018; Lawrence, 2019; Kirby, 2020); pupils are producers, rather than merely recipients, of knowledge (Ridgely, 2012; Oswell, 2013; Davis, 2014; Ingold, 2018). TB recognised the demonstrable impact such pedagogical choices and emphases pertaining to pupil agency can have. Reticent pupils felt ‘empowered’ to share their views on the PGS and attendant hermeneutical issues, aided by the fact their peers were also having to think deeply in this task.³¹⁵ Let us continue to recognise and champion pupils’ as agentic hermeneuts when engaging with sacred texts such as the parables (Bowie, 2018).

The impact of these opportunities for agency became evident throughout the data for this pedagogic episode. TA praised the way this open activity, ‘got them thinking...they could talk about something specific to the subject rather than it being spoken to them. It was

³¹⁴ Teacher B Interview Two, lines 199-203, 207, 211-213, 217.

³¹⁵ This calls to mind my ‘ecological’ view of agency (Costall, 2000), which recognises the contextual, dynamic (Jääskelä et al., 2021), dialogical (Wedin and Aho, 2019), relational (Ingold, 1999; Kinsella et al., 2019; Kirby, 2020; Häggström, 2022) and often dialectical (Rainio and Hilppö, 2017) aspects of agency (Chapter Three, Section 3.4.1, p. 61).

more about their thoughts and processes'.³¹⁶ Indeed, Pupil AC valued the space to engage with the hermeneutical issues:

some of the...statements...really helped me think deep like the meaning, 'The parable has only one meaning'. That is kinda not true...So I disagree with it...Parables can have different meanings, so it taught me that I can disagree and agree with some...things.³¹⁷

As well as affording the opportunity for pupils such as AC to reflect critically upon their stance on the hermeneutical issues, the openness of the activity prompted two groups to make an independent, creative step. These groups decided to place cards in between categories when they felt that they linked to both of them.³¹⁸ This would be useful to suggest to future pupils who undertake these enquiries; it could lead to richer, hermeneutical dialogue. No group took up the option to categorise the cards in another way of their choosing.

8.2.3 Affinity mapping

Following the card sorting, pupils individually considered the cards through an affinity mapping activity. This activity was designed to help students critically reflect upon hermeneutical issues pertaining to the parable, granting space for them write thoughts,

³¹⁶ Teacher C Interview Two, lines 86-89.

³¹⁷ Focus Group A1, lines 238-239, 243, 247-248.

³¹⁸ One group placed the cards 'Each character and place represents something. The Good Samaritan is Jesus, who saves 'broken and sinful humans' on life's 'road'. The robbers are the devil' and 'We need to think about what Jesus' original followers would have thought about this parable for it to make sense to us' between 'meaning' and 'characters'. Another group placed 'The meaning of the parable is that we can't have good without evil. The Samaritan could only help because the man was robbed' between these categories.

raise questions, emphasise key interpretive aspects and make further connections between the cards. Below is a thematic analysis of this pedagogical episode.

Dialogic learning: the fusion of horizons in these parabolic enquiries

To support my analysis, I began by transcribing all pupils' responses (Appendix Thirty-Two) and totalling the amount of pupil annotations to each hermeneutical issue described on the cards; the latter is shown in Table 8.5:

Card	'Bronze' (B), 'Silver' (S) or 'Gold' (G)	Number of responses
This parable could be retold using different characters today.	S	18
Jesus was trying to teach that we should treat everybody as our neighbour. It's about loving and caring.	B	16
This parable has more than one meaning.	B	15
The parable has only one meaning. It is...	B	14
This parable can have more than one meaning.	B	13
The Samaritans and Jewish people did not get on. They disagreed passionately about the right way to follow God.	B	13
The Samaritan would not have been considered as a neighbour to Jewish people.	B	13
The title of the parable makes us think of the 'Good Samaritan' only. It should have a different title.	S	11
This parable only makes sense if we read the rest of Luke's Gospel as well. If you read a random chapter in the middle of a book, you don't get the full story.	S	9
The meaning of the parable is that we can't have good without evil. The Samaritan could only help because the man was robbed.	B	9
The Samaritan should have left the beaten man like the holy people before him.	S	8
The road between Jerusalem and Jericho was known as a dangerous one to travel along. Thieves wandered the road frequently.	S	6
Priests and Levites were considered to be very holy and knowledgeable about Jewish religion. They were looked up to as examples to follow.	B	5
An atheist would get a different meaning from this parable than a Christian.	S	5
A parable can mean whatever you want it to mean.	G	4
Each character and place represents something. The Good Samaritan is Jesus, who saves 'broken and sinful humans' on life's 'road'. The robbers are the devil.	S	3
It is not clear who the neighbour is meant to be in this parable. Is it the Samaritan or the beaten man?	G	3
Our beliefs and experiences shape what we think when we read this parable.	G	1
We need to think about what Jesus' original followers would have thought about this parable for it to make sense to us.	S	0
If the meaning of the parable is to 'love your enemies', Jesus would have told the story of the 'Good Jew' helping the	G	0

wounded Samaritan. Jesus gave the example of the Samaritan for a reason.		
Priests were not allowed to touch dead bodies. They were following their religion by avoiding the man they thought might be dead.	G	0
This is a cleverly written story by Luke. It is symmetrical in lots of ways. For instance, the priest and the Levite walked past, but the Samaritan and the innkeeper helped.	G	0
If we just have Jesus' story in verses 30 - 35, and ignore why he told it to the expert in the law, we get a different meaning.	G	0
The parable makes us ask ourselves who we are like, 'Are we like the Priest, the Good Samaritan or the beaten man needing help?'	G	0

Table 8.5: a table showing total pupil responses to each hermeneutical issue during the affinity map activity

It became immediately apparent, when undertaking such analysis, that the responses reveal a real diversity of pupil thought regarding the parables via these hermeneutical issues. Although there is much of interest to consider from pupil responses, I will focus on the aspects most pertinent to my RQs.

8.2.3.1 Where is meaning located? Pupils as active hermeneuts

The first aspect to explicate is pupil responses towards cards linked to the parables and their potential/actual meanings. These cards were frequently commented upon as shown in Table 8.6:³¹⁹

³¹⁹ The codes (e.g. A1, A2) refer to specific pupil workbooks, providing anonymity.

Card	Responses	Number of responses
The parable has only one meaning. It is...	○ Agree ○ To Help everyone (A12) ○ The meaning Is Love your neibor as yourself (A16) ○ is to Love and cer for yor naber (B9) ○ I think the meaning is to treat eachother with respect (B13) ○ I agree because it's trying to teach us to be kind to each other (B21) ○ the one that has the Samaritan in (B25) ○ Disagree ○ I Disagree with This Because a parble can mean multiple things (A1) ○ it has multiple meanings so I disagree (A18) ○ I think that it has more then 1 meaning (B12) ○ I Dissgre Because theres more than one meaning (C15) ○ I disagree because it Should have maybe another meaning just to explain it in a more detailed way (C20) ○ I disagree because people Have difrent opinions not Just one so People might think that a parable might only Have one meaning but other people might think it has lots (C23) ○ I disagree, It should be in oppinion because not every person would think it has one meaning. They might think it has 3 or 2 or more (C26) ○ I Don't (C30)	14
This parable has more than one meaning.	○ Agree ○ I disagree with this I think it has multiple meanings (A18) ○ I agree with this one because it can be your on opinion (A21) ○ Yes parables can have more then one meaning (eg: not to be selfish or boastful) (B3) ○ I agree because each and every biblo story has probaly more than 1 meaning (B8) ○ I agree because Parables don't just have to have one meaning. Parables can have a lot of meanings (B22) ○ I think this is true because Just one parble dostent has to hove one meaning (B30) ○ I agree because there's more that 1 way to live and Jesus and God try to teach us better ways to live with inspiring stories (C6) ○ I agree because there is more than one meaning to the story because everyone has a diffrent meaning and How to exPlan the story! (C16) ○ I agree with this because there are lots of meanings in Just one parable (C23) ○ Disagree ○ I disagree (A17) ○ To Lorn to do lis and Help pepal in need (B9) ○ I dont think so because one man helped the Jewish man and the others left him om the road (B13)	15

	○ How could there be another meaning for a parable? (B25) ○ I agree there is one meaning because there is more than one teaching (C5) ○ Both ○ I agree but I also disagree because to me it has more than one meaning but to others it can have other meanings (C11)	
This parable can have more than one meaning.	○ Agree ○ It doesn't have one meaning it has multiple like Jesus would 'teach' us to be evil but we should only do good things to do in life (A6) ○ yes I agree (A18) ○ I think this is in 'Us' because it's our opinion to believe that (A22) ○ I agree with this because it can be your opinion on what it can be (A24) ○ I would put more than 1 meaning (B6) ○ I agree because it talks about different, different stuff (B8) ○ I think that might be true because lots of people have different opinions (B25) ○ there can be one BIG meaning, but there's always going to be smaller meanings with reasons (C6) ○ I agree with this because it could be different meanings to different people and more than one to some people (C11) ○ I agree because there can be more than one meaning in your opinion but some people can find only one. I found never give up and no matter what you are doing go and help like the Samaritan. But you will only do that if you are kind-hearted (C12) ○ It can have more meaning than one I agree with this statement (C15) ○ I agree everyone has their own opinion on this story it could have lots of different meanings (C18) ○ Link ○ [linked to the gold card 'A Parable can mean whatever you want it to mean' below] These cards link because they both mention how a parable can have lots of meanings; A parable wouldn't have a meaning that is like I'm going to buy a cat because it doesn't mention that in the story - when I mean this I mean no silly meanings (A23)	13
A parable can mean whatever you want it to mean.	○ Agree ○ You can make it personal (A21) ○ Disagree ○ you can't make it what you want it to be (A12) ○ I don't think this is true because if there is a parable and it says something that's true you can't just change it to whatever you want (C25) ○ Misc ○ I think if I wanted to call this parable I would call it A Honest Samaritan (B6)	4

Table 8.6: pupil responses to hermeneutical questions pertaining to actual/potential meanings of a parable

What becomes clear in analysing these responses is how they demonstrate a diversity of thought amongst these pupils regarding actual/potential meanings. Indeed, these responses recalled to mind Bowie's (2020a, p. 16) key hermeneutical question of 'Where is meaning found?'. For eight students at this stage of the learning enquiry (shown in blue in the table above), their view at this juncture is that there is unequivocally a single meaning which this text is communicating – a *correct* interpretation (Pollefeyt and Richards, 2020). This view is summed up by Pupil B25's question: 'How could there be another [sic] meaning for on parable?'. For a further ten pupils, meaning resides within the parable but there is more than one meaning that can be found (shown in purple above). As three pupils suggest, there are 'lots of meanings' in one parable (Pupil C23), perhaps 'one BIG meaning, but there's always going to be smaller meanings with reasons' (Pupil C6), and 'there can be more than one meaning...but some people can find only one' (Pupil C12). Furthermore, three pupils (C11, C23, C26) recognised that there are diverse opinions on this hermeneutical matter – *some* think the text bears one meaning yet *others* feel there are several meanings to uncover. The responses of these students evince a common view within these classes that this parable carries stable and enduring meaning(s); what exactly this/these meaning(s) is/are according to students are similar (e.g. relating to love, helping, respect) but not unanimous across pupil comments.

However, six students (A21, A24, B25, C11, C16, C18) started to indicate – or, at least, had the space and confidence to suggest their view – that the positionality of the reader influences the meanings inferred when engaging with this text. The responses (in green) to the cards 'This parable has/can have more than one meaning' hold a common assertion that the parables are interpreted differently *as we all have and bring different opinions to the*

text. In this view, meaning does not reside within the text as something to uncover through careful reading; it is constructed by subjective individuals (see Bowie's question above). This is made clear in Pupil A21's comment, that readers can make their reading 'persinale [sic]', applying the text in their own situation and circumstances. What is emerging here is an understanding of the place of reader in interpretative acts (Gadamer, 2004). It will be of interest to see if, by the end of the second learning enquiry, pupils can relate this thinking to themselves, so developing and demonstrating their personal knowledge (Ofsted, 2021b).

This said, three students proffered their hermeneutical concerns regarding the positionality and subjectivity of the reader. Responding to the card 'A parable can mean whatever you want it to mean':

- you cant mack it wat you want it to be (A12)
- A parable wouldn't have a meaning that is like I'm going to buy a cat because it doesn't mention that in the story – when I mean this I mean no silly meanings (A23)
- I dont think this is true because if there is a parable and it say's something that's true you can't just change it to whatever you want (C25)

Here, students are questioning the boundaries of responsible interpretation through raising an issue central to reader-response scholarship: can a text mean anything we want?.³²⁰ These pupils express the view that it cannot – the text provides a limiting factor, one that should make us question interpretations which are perhaps irrelevant or do not link to the narrative (Zimmermann, 2015). They are certainly wary of those positions which hold readers to be the sole arbiters of meaning (Janzen, 2021). Perhaps these students might warm to Thiselton's (2009, pp. 50, 52) *responsible hermeneutics*; taking seriously the

³²⁰ Considered in Chapter Five, Section 5.4.1.

historical horizon of the text can provide ‘necessary constraint and discipline in the interpretation of parables’ and helps prevent ‘wild, irresponsible interpretation’. As identified in Chapter Five,³²¹ Thiselton’s notion informs the principle resource used for the teaching of Christianity used in these trial schools (*UC*; Pett and Cooling, 2018), yet is not made explicit enough in the resources nor to teachers. Potentially doing so (and even exploring this notion with students) could provide a shared language through which discussions around a parable and its interpretation (responsible or otherwise) could be deepened.

The analysis above marks significant progress towards answering my RQs. In the light of post-secularity (Chapter Two), I curated a parabolic enquiry in which pupils could exercise their agency and voice to become more hermeneutically aware, developing reasoned answers to the question, ‘Why do different people interpret a parable differently?’. These trials have indicated that engagement with the text and hermeneutical issues (through the card sort and affinity mapping) have enabled students to comment thoughtfully on questions of meaning and interpretation. For some, this is clearly prompting reflection upon the place of the reader within the text-reader dialogue (Gadamer, 2004), evincing the development of epistemic ability. Primary pupils are able and agentic hermeneuts, engaging deeply with a range of interpretive issues. We must, as a RE community, recognise this and make wise, pedagogical choices in which students can meaningfully explore rich hermeneutical questions and offer their own views. We cannot any longer accept paltry curriculum plans and practice in which the encounter with parabolic texts are little more

³²¹ Section 5.6.4.

than, 'this is the text and what it means'. Certainly, it will be of interest to consider – by the end of LE2 – the extent to which pupils' thought as to the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity continues to develop.

8.2.3.2 Pupils' hermeneutical musings on redactionary hands

It is of interest to consider some of the other hermeneutical issues students commented upon frequently. Whilst some diversity of view was apparent regarding some of the statements (for instance, thirteen students felt that the parable could be retold using different characters today; three did not), the responses to two hermeneutical aspects in particular merit further attention. The first pertains to the statement: 'The title of the parable makes us think of the 'Good Samaritan' only. It should have a different title'. The eleven responses are shown in Table 8.7:

Agree

- Yes maybe you could call it something like spread kindness (A18)
- I agree with this because if it was titled 'the Bad Robbers you would think about the robbers (B3)
- It could be called the guy who saved lives (B28)
- I agree because in the story there was a lot to think about the title Shouldn't be just one person it should be about everyone (C18)

Disagree

- I disagree with this because I think we are meant to think about him (A16)
- I don't agree because that is all about the good Samaritan (B8)
- I think the title the good Samaritan is good because Samaritans and Jews are not friends. A Samaritan helped a Jew (B24)
- I think the Good Samaritan is a good title because it shows that even though Jews and Samaritans are not friends they are friends in this story (B26)
- I disagree because it gives us an idea of what could happen and the Samaritan was good (C10)
- I don't agree because the title tells what the book is about (C22)

Miscellaneous

- It makes me wonder what the main character in this parable is? This would affect the name of the parable (B2)

Table 8.7: pupil responses to the statement 'The title of the parable makes us think of the 'Good Samaritan' only. It should have a different title'

Of the eleven responses, four suggest that the parable should be renamed. There is an acknowledgement in each of these comments that the title of the text influences our interpretation as we focus upon a Samaritan who demonstrates a 'good' act. Pupil B3 suggests that re-titling the parable 'the Bad Robbers' (Pupil B3) would shift attention towards the 'robbers', whilst Pupil C18 questions the limiting effect of the present title: 'I agree because in the story there was a lot to think about the title Shouldn't be just one person it should be about everyone'. Six students disagreed with this statement as the focus is necessary for the correct interpretation of this narrative. This is indicated by Pupil A16's

comment that the title should be the *Parable of the Good Samaritan* as ‘we are meant to think about him’. One student (B2) proffered an thoughtful rumination. They were challenged by the statement to ‘wonder what the main character in this parable is? This would affect the name of the parable’. As identified in Chapter Five, both Bowie (2016) and Levine (2014) advocate the need to be critical upon the influencing nature of parabolic titles. I am pleased to have offered this hermeneutical consideration for students to wrestle with. Not only does it again draw attention to a diversity of interpretive views and reasoning in the classroom, it demonstrates how as agentive hermeneuts, pupils can construct genuinely useful insights when given appropriate resources, time to dialogically reason and their perspectives are championed.

The second hermeneutical card to comment upon is ‘This parable only makes sense if we read the rest of Luke’s Gospel as well. If you read a random chapter in the middle of a book, you don’t get the full story’. The nine respondents to this question all agreed;³²² when reading this parable we should be cognisant of what has happened to date within this Gospel to help it ‘make...sense’ (Pupil A24). Each student felt that interpretation would be stymied if we were unaware of the narrative (and its attendant themes) as crafted by the gospel redactors, a view – as previously identified³²³ – held by a number of parabolic scholars (Tolbert, 1979; Schottroff, 2006; Snodgrass, 2008; Blomberg, 2012). Although providing an overview of Luke’s Gospel was outside the scope of the present lesson trials, it indicates that parabolic enquiry is enriched when part of a RE curriculum offer which allows students to progressively understand Christianity as a coherent faith with reference to

³²² Pupils A16, A18, A24, B25, C1, C4, C5, C10, C17.

³²³ Chapter Five, Section 5.4.1.

biblical narrative(s). This is provided, to a degree, through the *UC* resource used by all three trial schools (RE Today, 2016). Enquiries in the primary setting where pupils deeply explore Jesus' parables as situated within particular gospels with respective authorial intents (Tolbert, 1979; Schottroff, 2006; Snodgrass, 2008) would be a potential – and fascinating – area of future research in developing hermeneutical reasoning amongst students.

8.2.3.3 The horizon of the reader: coming to the fore

Before proceeding to the second theme of the thematic analysis of this pedagogical episode, a final observation. Following the lesson, TA shared the following reflection:

we had some clear thinking and bringing in other things like... 'Child C' [Pupil A1/AC] who then erm could talk about **linking it to race...racism and gender equality...which is obviously that *prior knowledge* and that *prior experience* coming in.**³²⁴

The teacher identified how this particular pupil had applied recent discussions on racism and gender equality in PSHE³²⁵ to her thinking about this parable. This certainly formed part of this students' horizon, demonstrated in her response 'for Example: people of different race or people of different genders [sic]' to the card 'This parable could be retold using different characters today'. However, this pupil's horizon was also shaped by further influences outside the classroom (Csinos, 2020). Inviting reflections on her comment, she described how she had experienced racism and sexism as a black female. Her engagement with this parabolic narrative called to mind such experiences, forming part of her interpretation; we will hear more from this pupil on this in LE2. Her horizon had evidently been shaped by her

³²⁴ Teacher A Interview Two, lines 95-98.

³²⁵ Personal, social, health and economic education.

experiences in and outside of the classroom, and this open exercise allowed this student to recognise her positionality in the interpretive act.

‘How do you read it?’: empowering pupils as agentive hermeneuts through dialogic learning

Central to this research thesis is the trialling of a theory-informed practical exemplification which enables students, through the pedagogies employed, to agentively consider their own views on hermeneutical issues surrounding a parable. Following the lessons, TB shared an aspect which struck him during the affinity mapping:

one of the children who’s...more reticent to write quite often, put their hand up and said, ‘Can I answer more than one of these things on this on this bit of paper?’. And I said, ‘Yeah Mr Parker said he wants you to...write down as much you as much as you can. So if you’ve got an opinion *on any of those cards*, write what you feel’. And they went, ‘Oh great’ and got on with it...I think they in particular felt that kind of sense of actually, you know, I-**my point of view is valid here**...And I-I’m I’m allowed to make it. And I think, you know, two-fold: **that is what you were looking for but it’s also kind of empowered the children** to think, ‘Oh I can do that in other things’.³²⁶

I was hopeful for this outcome. Through enabling a richer encounter with this parable than currently exists (Davis, 2014), this and other students felt empowered to share their views. Their perspectives were perceived – by the teacher and therefore themselves – as valid and important within an enquiry which earnestly invited them to consider and share their thoughts on ‘How do *you* read it?’. In my view, such an enquiry is evidently more impactful than those essentially transmission-based enquiries which proffer a parable meagrely as ‘this is how it should be read’ (Ingold, 2018).

³²⁶ Teacher B Interview Two, lines 97-102, 106-107, 111-113.

Indeed, a number of pupils commented in the focus groups on how much they valued the affinity mapping. They appreciated how they could think deeply (Pupil AD, BE), express their opinions (Pupil AA, AD, BB, BD, BC) and further ‘learn’ (Pupil BB, BC) about this parable. Numerous students also appreciated the opportunity to turn from discussion-based activities to an individual – more personally reflective – task to undertake and articulate their own reasoning (Pupil AD, BB, BD, BE). The demonstration of their own views is something that is not always available for these students. Sometimes ‘you kind of get told what to write’ in RE without the opportunity to ‘express yourself’ (Pupil BB).³²⁷ The positive impact of being able to express one’s views is perhaps no more evident than in the comment proffered by Pupil BD: ‘I found it nice to be able to write – I love[d?] giving my opinion and writing down *‘cos I feel like then people know I’m there and that I can be heard’* (italics my own).³²⁸ I am delighted that this parabolic enquiry enabled this student to know that they and their opinion mattered.

8.2.3.4 The impact of dialogic learning

A thematic analysis of focus group conversations reveals that students highly regarded the support and subsequent hermeneutical reasoning which occurred through the dialogic activity of affinity mapping. Five pupils (BA, BB, BD, CA and CB) noted how reading their peers’ comments helped them to form their own view on the PGS and constellating hermeneutical issues. This pedagogical episode had a particular impact on Pupil CA:

³²⁷ Focus Group B1, lines 332-333.

³²⁸ Focus Group B2, lines 352-354.

Personally, I think it was one of the best bits of the...lessons, because it *really* helped me think about...what I thought about those...and what my group; **I was able to read all of my group's thoughts on it and sort of pick those little bits of detail...to create another bit and then another** erm...I thought it was absolutely an amazing part because it, **you get to find out what you think – truly – and yet, find out what everyone else...thinks.**³²⁹

For pupils such as CA, this activity allowed time and space to actively consider, identify and form their own views in response to encountering the views of others. Emerging here are concrete examples of the theorised benefits of dialogic learning as contemplated in my envisioning of post-secular RE in Chapter Four.³³⁰ The affinity mapping allowed pupils to encounter a myriad of views which led to reflexive development of thought in which one could understand both themselves and others better (Ricoeur, 1992; Gadamer, 2004; Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020). Certainly, there is a remarkable resemblance between Pupil CA's comment above and the affirmation of dialogic learning considered in Chapter Four³³¹ from Phillipson and Wegerif:

[encountering alterity helps pupils] acknowledge and respond to other perspectives; to seek to understand them, to be sensitive to the differences between them and one's own understandings; and to use these differences as a resource to generate new perspectives and to achieve richer understandings of ideas and of other people. (Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020, p. 33)

The dialogic learning enabled through this part of the post-secular parabolic enquiry had a positive impact upon students' epistemic ability as they could further *understand, appreciate and appraise* their own and others' viewpoints. To develop pupils' thinking further, I wondered – following the trials – whether the teacher could undertake a

³²⁹ Focus Group C1, lines 447-448, 452-453, 457, 467-468, 472.

³³⁰ Figure D, Section 4.8.2.2.

³³¹ Section 4.7, p. 105.

participatory role within this activity. Here the teacher could comment upon pupils' annotations – asking 'why?' or offering their own or counter views, for instance – to grant opportunities for pupils to justify their comments, think even more deeply and encounter more alterity. Certainly, making the voice of the teacher more explicit in this manner would increase the visibility of the relational nature of classroom learning theorised in Aldridge's (2015) educational triangle. Those using these lesson materials may wish to trial this.

8.2.3.5 The challenge of open pedagogies

Although pupils relished the opportunity to deliberate and present their views in the affinity mapping exercise, some initially found this openness challenging. This formed a particular part of the post-trial reflections between myself and TC. On acknowledging that some students struggled with the openness, TC stated:

not that they needed more guidance, but actually where maybe in other lessons or other experiences they've been given more guidance actually, **having the freedom to have their own opinion was a completely new thing...** 'Oh there's no guidance at all; it really is just what I think'...some of them, like you say, are a bit overwhelmed by that...because there's so much to think about and they've got so many opinions that they needed to narrow it down into one.³³²

In completing this activity, pupils could view the range of cards sorted in the previous activity and offer thoughts, raise questions, make connections and draw attention to hermeneutical issues they felt were especially important. Whilst valuing the space to write 'whatever I think' (TC),³³³ some struggled to decide where and how to begin. This is alluded

³³² Teacher C Interview Two, lines 330-332, 336, 340, 344-345.

³³³ Teacher C Interview Two, line 363.

to in TC's comment above, that some required adult intervention to support their decision-making. Clear explanation (TA) and support (TC) are required for this activity to proceed effectively. Moreover, mindful that agency is enacted, mediated and constrained within the 'sociocultural practices' of a learning environment (Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015, p. 4), perhaps students would feel less 'overwhelmed' by such an open exercise in RE should they receive more opportunities to act agentively in this manner (with appropriate teacher support) in RE and primary schooling generally (Clarke et al., 2016; Stoecklin and Fattore, 2018; Kirby, 2020). Indeed, the open pedagogy employed in this parabolic enquiry has enabled students to efficaciously *construct meaning and pursue lines of enquiry through an engagement with the subject matter and others*.³³⁴ Pupil agency sits squarely at the heart of high-quality post-secular RE.

8.2.4 Pupil reflections at the end of LE1

In the final episode of LE1, space was given for pupils to reflect on and express their thinking across the enquiry. This gave both students – and myself as facilitator/researcher – opportunity to consider what they felt they had learnt, considered and wrestled with within this first lesson. The five questions and statement were:

- What have you learnt about the Parable of the Good Samaritan from doing this activity?
- Which card/s made you think the most? Why?
- Answer the LO question: in your opinion, what should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?
- Have you changed your answer from the start of the lesson? If so, in what ways/s? What changed your thinking?

³³⁴ My definition of pupil agency (Chapter Three, Section 3.6).

- Are there any further questions you would ask about this parable? Why do you think these questions are important?
- This activity made me think because...

What follows is a thematic analysis of student responses within this reflective activity.³³⁵

‘How do you read it?’: empowering pupils as agentive hermeneuts through dialogic learning

8.2.4.1 An open activity inviting a range of responses

These questions and statement were designed to be open, enabling pupils to ponder and offer their thoughts from the lesson. It is interesting to note the sheer range of responses from pupils here. This is evident in responses to Question 1: ‘What have you learnt about the Parable of the Good Samaritan from doing this activity?’. Of these responses (seen fully in Appendix Thirty-Four):

- twenty-nine refer to an aspect of morality derived from the parable, including helping those in need (fourteen), treating all with respect and kindness (ten) and valuing difference³³⁶ (six). Thirteen of these responses link to caring for others, even if you do not know or like them;
- fifteen responses refer to learning about the person and/or example of the Samaritan. Seven describe learning about the actions of the Samaritan in this narrative (e.g. ‘I’ve learnt...that when the good Samaritan sees someone’s hurt he helps them’ [A17]); six refer to learning about contextual aspects of the characters (e.g. ‘I have learnt that the Samaritan and Jewish People did not get on well together’ [Pupil C14]); and
- eight are about interpretation. These range from learning: the meaning behind the parable (B7, B26, B28); why Jesus told it (B2); that the narrative has a range of meanings (A16, C16, C23) and ‘I have learnt...that everyone has there [sic] own opinion in the parable’ (C26)

³³⁵ All responses can be seen in Appendix Thirty-Three.

³³⁶ E.g. ‘I have learnt that it’s okay to be different and that we should treat everyone equally. Just like the story’ (A22); ‘That even if your different to all the others, that doesn’t mean you should get treated differently’ (B22).

I am encouraged by the fact that each pupil offered their own primary takeaways from this first lesson. Whilst some responses here link to 'learning about the text' itself (point two above), others focus upon 'learning from the text' (point one) or 'interpretation of the text' (point three). This variety of response is so much more preferable than a uniform answer, which can often be the case in narrow enquiries where teaching is pre-determined and transmission-based (Kohn, 2005; Ingold, 2018).

The second question 'Which card/s made you think the most? Why?' also attracted a range of answers. Sixteen of the twenty-four cards encountered during the card sort/affinity mapping exercises were referenced across the sample. Those cards pertaining to the amount of viable readings from a parable (e.g. the parable has/can have more than one meaning) collectively received the most responses (sixteen). A number of pupils' answers indicated development of thought regarding the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity, a key driver of my research thesis. A selection of these are shown in Table 8.8:

- What made me think the most is how the meaning can be different because I thought the meaning will never change (A16)
- The card that said...An atheist would get a different meaning from this parable than a Christian. because it made me think about it from the angle of an atheist (B3)
- I picked A parable can mean whatever you want it to mean because I thought we can name it anything and seeing people's ideas (B6)
- The card that said this Parable has more than one meaning. Because well theres way more than 1 meaning to the Good Samaritan so theres way more to find out about (B22)
- The card that made me think the most was the parable only has one meaning because everyone thinks differently in different ways (C5)
- The one that said 'The Parable has only one meaning' because everything has a big meaning but lots of opinions can topple that one big meaning and shift it into smaller more explanatory ones (C6)
- The card that makes me think the most is the one that says The parable has more than one meaning because it makes me think people are all different (C16)

Table 8.8: a table showing pupil comments which indicate the development of epistemic ability

For the third question ('in your opinion, what should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?'), students had the opportunity to answer the lesson's enquiry question. A plethora of responses were recorded, ranging from emulating the compassionate act of the Samaritan (A16), not discriminating (A22), loving your neighbour (B2) and helping those who are injured (B28). The majority – in their own way – considered the Samaritan to be a *moral model* from which to draw inspiration. Not only was space given for pupils to interpret the text themselves, this self-reflection would be useful for subsequent thinking in LE2. This is because they can contrast their reading against those of other interpreters as a means of developing their thinking and understanding of interpretation (Ricoeur, 1992; Gadamer, 2004; Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020).³³⁷

³³⁷ See also Hella and Wright's (2009) variation theory of learning.

8.2.4.2 Views on the open nature of this enquiry

Two comments emerging from the post-lesson interviews are interesting to ponder with regards to Question Three; they both focus on the openness (or otherwise) of their RE experience. It is worth quoting Pupil BD here in full:

I thought it was good that you tried to get us to answer the learning objective 'cos usually with learning objectives it's, 'You will, you will learn how to do *this*' ...I like it that it was a question – we got to answer the question at the end.³³⁸

Within this pupils' response is appreciation for the opportunity to answer the enquiry question in her own way. Her comment suggests a frustration that learning objectives are often narrowing, without space for her to offer her own personal and critical responses. I contend that great RE thinking can be enabled through offering a key enquiry question per lesson; all the better if the question is open enough for students to feel they can offer their own reasoned response through engagement with the lesson's content. I am pleased this question helped students contemplate, clarify and articulate their own interpretation of this parable (Pupil BD and CF).

This said, a number of students may have found the open nature of such a question difficult. At least, this is the impression of TA:

³³⁸ Focus Group B2, lines 358-361.

I think the opportunity was there for them to be open. I think some of them...will probably struggle to give their own interpretation because they almost feel that they're doing it wrong if they say something different. And I think that's where we as the teaching profession have possibly made things too narrow for children. The whole... 'this is what it means. Learn the message' ...I do wonder whether some of them will just still stick with 'you have to be nice to everybody' kind of thing.³³⁹

This is significant. TA indicates the view – which I have argued thus far – that presenting the parables in an exclusivist (Pollefeyt and Richards, 2020) and predetermined (Pollefeyt and Bieringer, 2005; Davis, 2014; Aldridge, 2015; Briggs, 2017; Carswell, 2018a; 2018b) manner has negatively impacted students' experience in RE. In contrast to feeling required to parrot an expected interpretation, consistent use of more open pedagogies – such as the ones employed in these trials – will empower students to feel *that their reading matters*. Perhaps it is the present lack of open opportunities which led to pupils such as Pupil BE finding this reflective question 'hard'³⁴⁰ to answer. Moreover, this comment shows a development of thought for TA. Being part of this research has enabled this teacher to develop her epistemic ability and views of what more expansive, knowledge-rich textual enquiry might look like in RE (Davis, 2014; Ofsted, 2021b). This important finding will be considered in greater depth in Chapter Nine (Section 9.2.3).

8.2.4.3 Meaning and the parable: developments of thought

Question Four invited pupils to consider whether their reading of the parable had changed since the lesson's start. Out of the forty-eight students who responded to this question, eleven stated they had changed their answer with the remainder stating that their reading

³³⁹ Teacher A Interview Two, lines 238-242, 256-257.

³⁴⁰ Focus Group B2, line 378.

had remained constant. Yet, on close comparison with responses offered at the beginning of the lesson, I noted a change or development in response in thirty-six instances (for example, C10, C14 and C20 in Appendix Thirty-Five).³⁴¹ This demonstrates that a rich engagement with the text and numerous hermeneutical issues had an impact on the interpretation of many students. It is interesting that twenty-seven students did not recognise or acknowledge this; perhaps this is due to many of their latter readings maintaining the basic thrust of their previous answers³⁴² and/or this self-reflexivity being an unfamiliar way of working. I can only speculate. Nevertheless, granting students intentional space to reflect upon their interpretation of the text at the start and end of the lesson was commented upon positively by TA as a chance to identify development of thought.³⁴³ Hardly any students elaborated in their responses through answering, 'If so, in what ways/s? What changed your thinking?'. This is a shame; it would have been insightful to have read pupils' reflections here.

8.2.4.4 Further questions and thoughts from pupils

The final two questions were constructed to gather wider pupil thinking on the parable and this enquiry. When asked whether they had any further questions to ask about the parable, a small contingent (twelve pupils) did. These all interestingly focussed upon characters, including wanting to know why the priest and/or Levite did not help (six

³⁴¹ The latter two show a shift from describing the main thrust of the text towards a personal interpretation.

³⁴² Compare C1's comments, for instance: '...even if you are against each other still care for each other' became 'We should think that the Samaritan did not like Jews but still helped him and why he did that, he was the one who listened to God and did what he said'.

³⁴³ Teacher A Interview Two, lines 11-15.

responses) and why the Samaritan did (three). TA offered a hypothesis for the small number of students having further questions:

I think they would find [coming up with further questions]...quite difficult because **in their mind it'll be 'well I know what it means, therefore I don't need to ask anything'...**But I wonder if you asked them that at the end of lesson two, whether you might get further questions...Because now they've considered that there are different interpretations, they might think 'well actually why does...why does he say that?...Or why does she say that?'.³⁴⁴

It would certainly be of interest – for those who use these practical exemplifications – to provide such an opportunity and see how pupils respond. It may be, as TA suggests, that pupil reflection upon diversity, positionality and interpretation within LE2 empowers and enables them to raise further questions regarding meaning and the parable.

Finally, twenty-eight pupils completed the statement 'This activity made me think because...'. A breadth of responses are evident, including those linking to enjoyment and deep thinking undertaken during the lesson (A4, A7, A12, B3, B6, B7, B8, B12, B17, B21, B28, C9) and meaning and interpretation of the parable (A2, A16, A18, A21, A22, B9, B18, B24, C5). My principal reflection from responses to this 'catch-all' question is that students took something away from this lesson. Many students from Trial Three ran out of time to complete this question.

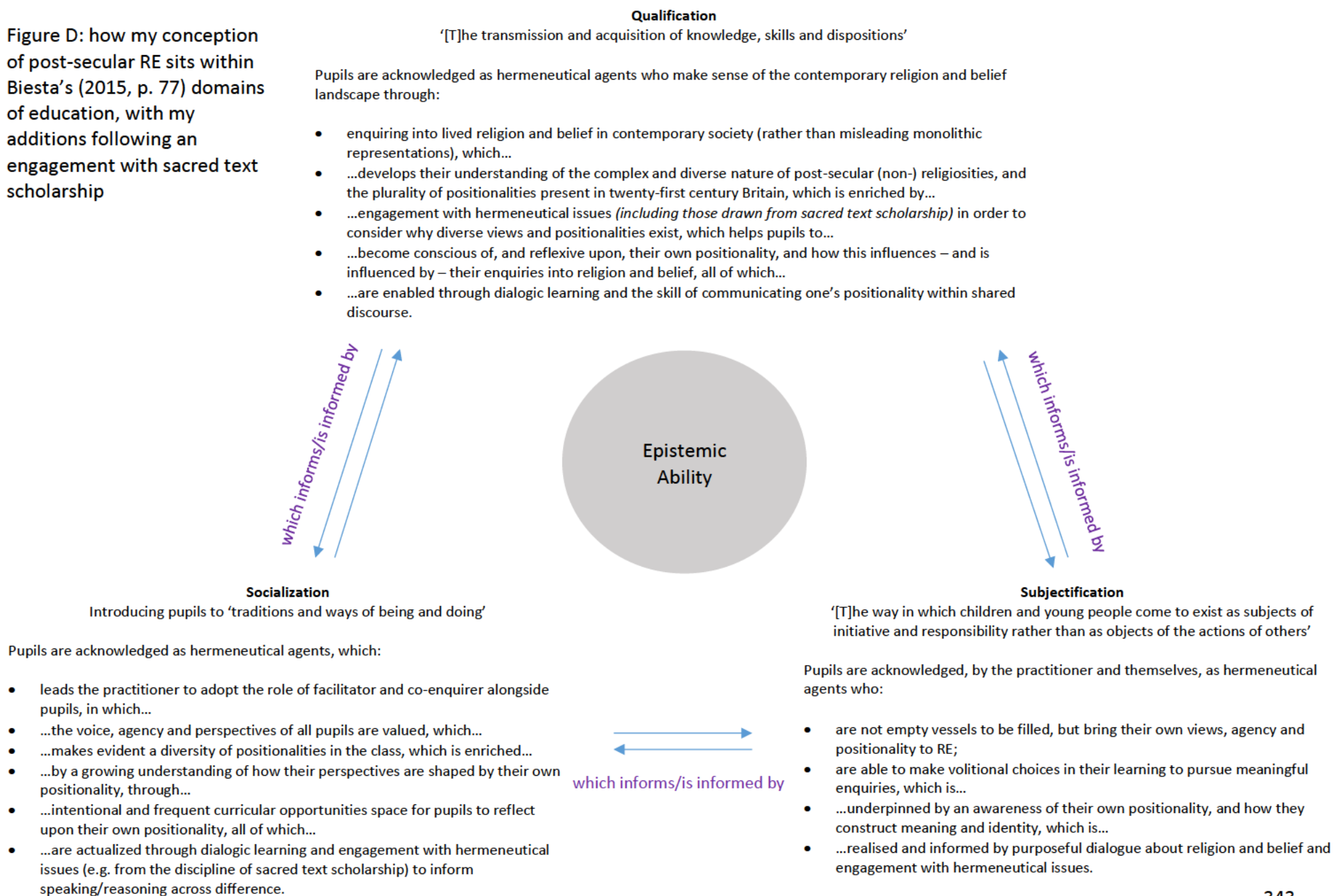
³⁴⁴ Teacher A Interview Two, lines 266-267, 271-272, 276-277, 281.

8.3 Concluding comments from the thematic analysis of LE1

In this chapter, I have undertaken a thematic analysis of each pedagogical episode within LE1 to ascertain the effectiveness of this parabolic enquiry. Before moving to an analysis of LE2, it is of merit to return to my envisioning of a post-secular parabolic enquiry proffered in Chapter Four.³⁴⁵ It is this conception (reproduced below) which has driven the curation of these learning enquiries and it is worth considering, at this half-way stage, the emerging impact of these lessons upon students' epistemic ability. To do so, I split this conception into its constituent parts (Table 8.9), reflecting upon each in turn in the light of my analysis within this chapter.

³⁴⁵ Figure D, Section 4.8.2.2.

Figure D: how my conception of post-secular RE sits within Biesta's (2015, p. 77) domains of education, with my additions following an engagement with sacred text scholarship



	Aspects of post-secular RE (Figure D)	How aspects these were seen in LE1
Qualification Pupils are acknowledged as hermeneutical agents who make sense of the contemporary religion and belief landscape through...	enquiring into lived religion and belief in contemporary society (rather than misleading monolithic representations), which...	Rather than presenting the parable as having a single, unquestionable meaning, the parable was viewed within the classes as open to interpretation and attracting diverse readings.
	...develops their understanding of the complex and diverse nature of post-secular (non-) religiosities, and the plurality of positionalities present in twenty-first century Britain, which is enriched by...	Pupils engaged with hermeneutical issues which considered the role of the reader in interpretation. Some students started to recognise the influence of positionality and subjectivity in the interpretative act (Section 8.2.3).
	...engagement with hermeneutical issues (including those drawn from sacred text scholarship) in order to consider why diverse views and positionalities exist, which helps pupils to...	Through engagement with hermeneutical issues, pupils developed their understanding of why diverse views exist. This lesson prepared the ground to focus on this aspect in greater detail in LE2.
	...become conscious of, and reflexive upon, their own positionality, and how this influences – and is influenced by – their enquiries into religion and belief, all of which...	Although some pupils demonstrated some reflexivity here, this aspect is the focus of LE2.
	...are enabled through dialogic learning and the skill of communicating one's positionality within shared discourse.	Pupils valued the opportunity to reason with and through the text, hermeneutical issues and others. Students commented how they valued being able to share their opinions and hear the views of their peers.
Socialization Pupils are acknowledged as hermeneutical agents, which...	leads the practitioner to adopt the role of facilitator and co-enquirer alongside pupils, in which...	In recognition of pupils as hermeneutical agents, I adopted these roles across all three trials.
	...the voice, agency and perspectives of all pupils are valued, which...	Pupils were empowered by the value placed on their deliberations and the time, space and opportunity to consider and offer these.
	...makes evident a diversity of positionalities in the class, which is enriched...	The lesson – from start to finish – revealed the diversity of thinking regarding this parabolic text. Opportunities for dialogic learning made this diversity of thinking apparent for pupils.
	...by a growing understanding of how their perspectives are shaped by their own positionality, through...	An understanding was emerging (Section 8.2.3). This aspect is the focus of LE2.
	...intentional and frequent curricular opportunities space for pupils to reflect upon their own positionality, all of which...	See point above (through engagement with some of the hermeneutical issues in the card sort and affinity mapping).
	...are actualized through dialogic learning and engagement with hermeneutical issues (e.g. from the discipline of sacred text scholarship) to inform speaking/reasoning across difference.	The opportunities in this lesson allowed pupils to engage agentively and dialogically across the parable and constellating hermeneutical issues.

Subjectification Pupils are acknowledged, by the practitioner and themselves, as hermeneutical agents who...	are not empty vessels to be filled, but bring their own views, agency and positionality to RE;	This view deeply influenced the pedagogical choices of the lesson, which had a positive impact on student engagement and thinking.
	are able to make volitional choices in their learning to pursue meaningful enquiries, which is...	Pupils exercised their agency at all stages. In particular, they could craft their own journey towards answering the lesson's enquiry question through the textual analysis and card activities.
	...underpinned by an awareness of their own positionality, and how they construct meaning and identity, which is...	The focus of LE2.
	...realised and informed by purposeful dialogue about religion and belief and engagement with hermeneutical issues.	Pupils engaged meaningfully with hermeneutical issues in LE1. This will be built upon for this aspect in LE2.

Table 8.9: the aspects of my conception of post-secular RE evidenced in a thematic analysis of LE1

Completing the table above has helped me recognise the considerable contribution this lesson has made to pupils' epistemic ability. Emerging is a real sense that primary pupils *can* do this rich, hermeneutical thinking; indeed, they relish the opportunity to do so. In continuing to understand the impact of these post-secular parabolic enquiries, I now turn to a thematic analysis of LE2.

CHAPTER NINE

9 A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF LEARNING ENQUIRY TWO

9.1 Introduction

Following the thematic analysis of LE1, I now turn to explore the impact of LE2. I investigate each pedagogic episode in turn:

- a ‘hermeneutical’ starter (Section 9.2.1)
- interpretation ranking (Section 9.2.2)
- interpretation matching (Section 9.2.3)
- pupil responses to the learning enquiry question, ‘Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?’ (Section 9.2.4)

Such analysis marks a significant step in this research thesis; through it I will be able to understand the extent to which this novel, theory-informed endeavour in primary RE is effective. To assist my thinking, I will conclude the chapter (Section 9.3) by returning to my conception of post-secular RE³⁴⁶ to deeply reflect upon how pupils’ epistemic ability developed across both enquiries.

9.2 Learning Enquiry Two: ‘Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?’

Building on the first enquiry, LE2 was designed to enable pupils to a) recognise that different people interpret the PGS differently and b) consider why this might be the case. The enquiry draws heavily on reader-response deliberations within parabolic scholarship

³⁴⁶ Detailed in Chapter Four, Section 4.8.2.2 (Figure D).

which recognises that our interpretation of texts are shaped and mediated by our personal worldviews (Gadamer, 2004; Thiselton, 2009; Lyons, 2010; Beal, 2011; Evans, 2014; Levine, 2014; Zimmermann, 2015; Joynes, 2020). The principle intention of this enquiry was to allow pupils – through reasoning across numerous receptions of this biblical text over time – to reflexively consider why others and themselves interpret these texts the manner they do. In other words, pupils’ epistemic ability would be enriched through developing their substantive, disciplinary and personal knowledge (Ofsted, 2021b).³⁴⁷ The enquiry comprised of four pedagogic episodes which are considered in turn.

9.2.1 Hermeneutical starter

To help pupils recognise their own positionality, a ‘hermeneutical’ starter was devised. A simple icon of a heart, hand and three emanating lines was shown.³⁴⁸ Pupils were invited to reflect: *What do you think it [this image] means? What does it make you think about?* Ideas to this open question were gathered from the class and recorded on the whiteboard. After drawing attention to the fact that different pupils interpreted this image differently, each class was then asked: *Why do you think this might be?* I scribed responses on the whiteboard as a point of reference for later in the lesson. This activity was designed to help students recognise that different people interpret a single ‘artefact’ (in this case, the icon) differently. Subsequent consideration of the reasons *why* individuals within the class interpreted this image differently could then, it was hoped, be later applied by pupils as a

³⁴⁷ Chapter Four, Section 4.8.2.

³⁴⁸ Figure E, Chapter Six, Section 6.7, p. 219.

means to postulate why the PGS is interpreted differently by different individuals – themselves included.

‘How do you read it?’: empowering pupils as agentive hermeneuts through dialogic learning

I was taken aback by how effective the ‘hermeneutical’ starter was in helping students consider the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretive diversity. Pupils’ responses to the first questions (*What do you think it means? What does it make you think about?*) were wide-ranging across classes and trials; courage, bravery, love, respect, kindness and God to state a few. When this variance was drawn attention to, pupils then presented well-articulated reasons for this interpretive diversity. They suggested how we all might interpret the icon differently due to: our different experiences in life; events that may have happened that week or that morning which influences what we are thinking about and/or our emotions, and the fact that we all have different beliefs, diverse opinions and perspectives. This hermeneutical starter allowed students to reflect deeply upon the horizon of the reader and the impact of positionality in the interpretive act. As I shall show in Section 9.2.4, pupils were able to apply their reasoning around the interpretation of this icon when considering why different people read the PGS differently later in the lesson. In the focus groups following Trial Two, I specifically asked pupils whether they were able to make such an application – the response was a resounding ‘yes’ (Pupils BA, BB, BD, BE and BF).³⁴⁹

³⁴⁹ Focus Group B1, lines 549-551, 560-564; Focus Group B2, lines 698, 700, 702.

For TA, it was effective sequencing which helped pupils to recognise and contemplate interpretive diversity:

What I really...liked was the way you led into the interpretations. It was always a little sort of step at a time wasn't it... 'okay we've got a picture. What do we think this means? Why might we think differently?' so **it gave them that idea of what interpretation might actually mean prior to 'these are the interpretations'**...I think it was useful for them...Cos it kind of processed what was coming next.³⁵⁰

This sequencing was carefully designed. The icon deliberation was proceeded by showing Jastrow's (1899) famous 'duck-rabbit' optical illusion (Figure K below) to further draw attention to interpretive diversity and a discussion around the terms 'interpret', 'interpreter' and 'interpretation'; these were evidently new terms for the majority of pupils. Teachers A and B both commented how these dialogic opportunities enabled students to develop their awareness of interpretation and positionality. TB drew attention to a 'really interesting' conversation he had with a rabbit-owning pupil who was 'adamant that it was a rabbit'.³⁵¹ Their conversation led to the student recognising 'that actually some people will see that [image] differently'.³⁵² Although it is unknown whether this is the same pupil, Pupil BB recalled this duck-rabbit image when later explaining their view on diverse readings of the parable:

I think it's because everyone's different....you have different opinions, you have different point of views. Just like the picture that you showed us...some people could see different – a rabbit and some people could see a duck.³⁵³

³⁵⁰ Teacher A Interview Two, lines 322-323, 327-329, 341, 345.

³⁵¹ Teacher B Interview Two, lines 359, 365.

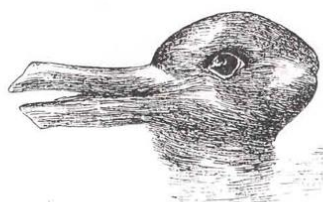
³⁵² Teacher B Interview Two, line 379.

³⁵³ Focus Group B1, lines 560, 562-564.

The reflections above all indicate the utility of these starter activities in developing pupils' epistemic ability.



Last lesson...



This lesson, our LO question is, Why might different people **interpret** the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?

Figure K: the PowerPoint slide with Jastrow's (1899) 'duck-rabbit' image

What particularly struck me and TB was that many pupils in Trial Two proffered an interpretation of the icon linking the hand, heart or lines to God and/or Jesus.³⁵⁴ This led to a shared reflection in the post-lesson interview: would pupils have interpreted in this manner if the same activity took place in another subject? Pupils '**knew...[the lesson had] a RE focus**'³⁵⁵ (TB) and perhaps this contextual factor – as well as the desire of many students to provide answers that they feel would please the teacher³⁵⁶ – led to such responses. Furthermore, TB also pondered '**if you did this at a non-denominational school whether**

³⁵⁴ E.g. 'The hand is God's, holding humanity or Jesus, and the lines represent love'.

³⁵⁵ Teacher B Interview Two, line 287.

³⁵⁶ See Hawthorne Effect (Mayo, 1933).

you'd get...different responses'.³⁵⁷ Although pursuing this line of enquiry falls outside the remit of this research thesis, it remains the case that pupil responses within Trial Two made myself and TB reflect upon the impact of context upon teaching and learning in the classroom (Hemming and Madge, 2011; Kuczynski and De Mol, 2015; Ingold, 2018).

9.2.1.1 The impact of open pedagogies

Before the lessons, TC expressed her uneasiness at the open pedagogy employed within this starter activity. She states:

I think I definitely could take them [these lesson plans] and run with them. I think with that starter on this one, I might have needed a bit more...prompt I suppose. But then I suppose there's not really a right – like you said – there's not a right answer...I think I often pre-empt what maybe they could come up with...and how I could run with whatever it is that they do decide that they think it means.³⁵⁸

TC is a reflective and conscientious early career teacher – wanting to do the best by her students. Open pedagogies certainly present an element of the unknown, an element more difficult and anxiety-inducing to manage at the beginning of one's teaching career. It is currently the case that the *ITT Core Content* (DfE, 2019b) descriptors that trainee practitioners work towards can lead to formulaic, routine lessons. The unintended effect of this prescription may be leading to early career teachers not being confident or skilled in facilitating open enquiries. Open pedagogies are something to courageously embrace; as this research has so far demonstrated, when knowledge-rich it can have a significant impact

³⁵⁷ Teacher B Interview Two, lines 343-344, 348.

³⁵⁸ Teacher C Interview One, lines 535-539, 543-544.

on pupils' epistemic ability. In practice, the range of interpretations and thoughtful reasons offered for this interpretive diversity from pupils made this part of the lesson easy to facilitate. I hope that seeing the impact of this starter gave this teacher confidence to employ open pedagogies more widely across her RE practice.

9.2.2 Interpretation ranking

An interpretation ranking activity followed this hermeneutical starter. Pupil groups encountered and ranked seven interpretations from different interpreters across a range of times and contexts from 'disagree' to 'agree the most' (Figure L).³⁵⁹ The purposes of this pedagogic episode were for pupils to:

- become familiar with a range of interpretations before attempting to match them with their interpreter;
- recognise ways in which this parable is interpreted differently by different people;
- encounter diverse readings, as a means for pupils to reflect upon their own interpretation (Ricoeur, 1992; Gadamer, 2004; Hella and Wright, 2009; Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020); and
- appreciate and appraise these interpretations in a way which valued them as agentive hermeneuts (Bowie, 2018). Here, they could comment thoughtfully upon their perceived validity of these readings in discussion and in their workbooks with reference to the parabolic text (Tolbert, 1979; Blomberg, 2012).

³⁵⁹ Chapter Six, Section 6.7, Table 6.5.

Step 1:

Each card has someone's interpretation of the Good Samaritan parable on it.

In your groups, place them in a line from 'disagree the most' to 'agree the most'.

Once you have completed this, choose at least two cards from the line. In your workbook, explain why you have placed these in agree or disagree. **Challenge:** can you back up your view using the text?



Figure L: the PowerPoint slide from which I explained and modelled the interpretation ranking activity

A further activity was planned where pupils would add a vertical axis to the continuum shown above (with the labels 'time of Jesus/1st century' and '21st century') and consider when they think these interpretations occurred.³⁶⁰ In practice, there was not enough time to undertake this activity. This was a decision made mid-lesson – *in-action* (Schön, 1991). Although it would have been interesting to see how well this activity supported students to recognise that interpretations change over time, it was not an essential activity. Students recognised varying interpretations over time through subsequent activities without it (Sections 9.2.3, 9.2.4).

³⁶⁰ Chapter Four, Table 4.4; Figure F.

‘How do you read it?’: empowering pupils as agentive hermeneuts through dialogic learning

9.2.2.1 The impact of dialogic learning

It is of interest to ascertain the impact of this learning activity in the light of the aims stated above. Certainly, high value was placed by participants upon the opportunity to encounter diverse interpretations of the parable. In the first interview, two teachers stated that this activity would ‘generate a lot of interesting conversation’³⁶¹ (TB) and would be ‘really interesting for them [the pupils] to see different...interpretations’³⁶² (TC). It was clear from these initial interviews that exploring diverse readings of sacred texts is not something that regularly, if ever, happens in these contexts. TA reflected upon this activity in the light of this:

I would imagine that is probably going to be...challenging cos I don’t know that we’ve ever...done anything about the changing Christian view. So that will be really interesting to see how they manage that one.³⁶³

The present sparsity of opportunities for primary pupils to encounter diverse interpretations of the parables is a key driver of this research thesis. Such an encounter was commented upon positively by a number of pupils in the focus groups (Pupils AA, AB, BB, BD, BF, CA, CD and CF).³⁶⁴ It was useful to see what ‘other people’³⁶⁵ thought about the

³⁶¹ Teacher B Interview One, lines 490.

³⁶² Teacher C Interview One, lines 482-483.

³⁶³ Teacher A Interview One, lines 436-439.

³⁶⁴ Focus Group A1, lines 361, 614-616; Focus Group B1, lines 109, 385, 703; Focus Group B2, line 466, 501; Focus Group C1, line 611; Focus Group C2, lines 415-417, 751-753.

³⁶⁵ Focus Group B2, line 466; Focus Group C2, lines 415-417.

parable (Pupils BF and CD) – peers as well as wider, authentic voices (Pupils BD, CA and CD).³⁶⁶ Furthermore, this encounter with alterity led to some personal, critical reflection (Ricoeur, 1992; Gadamer, 2004; Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020).

This latter point is worth illustrating via some vignettes. These are shown in Table 9.1 below:

³⁶⁶ Focus Group B2, line 501; Focus Group C1, line 611; Focus Group C2, lines 415-417.

Vignette One	Pupil AC described the significance of her encounter with two of the interpretations: ...it was useful because when I saw the one about woman rights...and racism it made...me think deeply about how p-people are so insecure that they decide to take it out on other people...and why they would do that...Because God created the people to love each other, not hate or discriminate...But they...I guess they decide to erm not follow the rules, and live by their own perspectives which is definitely fine...if you're being kind.³⁶⁷ Pupil AC³⁶⁸ resonated deeply with the interpretations of Irene Matsoso (a feminist reading) and Martin Luther King Jr. (who commented upon racism). Her personal horizon and experiences shaped how she engaged with these readings and the narrative itself; the discriminatory behaviour that she as a black, Ghanian female had experienced (and as she later described, her mother too) influenced her own development of thought regarding the PGS. She also drew attention to her own experiences here, and from her attendance at Sunday School, within classroom discussions and when invited to share more about her affinity map response in LE1.³⁶⁹ This is a clear instance of this student's post-secular (non-) religiosity being shaped by a myriad of factors, which consequently informed her dialogic reasoning within these lessons (Ridgely, 2012; Kuczynski and De Mol, 2015; Csinos, 2020).
Vignette Two	Reflecting on the focus groups and teacher interviews, I increasingly recognised these qualitative forums as further opportunities for dialogic learning (Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020). It was clear that Pupil AB was developing her thought in direct response to the reflections of Pupil AC as detailed in Vignette One. Towards the end of the focus group, she proffered new reflections on the interpretation of Irene Matsoso: I liked her [Irene's] like speech about saying how it's like, like how...people shouldn't be racist to black women. Erm because it's...not nice...and you know I think people should put their...self in other people's shoes and see how they would like it.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁷ Focus Group A1, lines 365, 369-370, 374, 380, 384-885, 389.

³⁶⁸ Referred to previously in Chapter Eight, Section 8.2.3.3, pp. 329-330.

³⁶⁹ To the card, 'This parable could be retold using different characters today', Pupil AC's response was 'for Example: people of diffrent race or people of diffrent genders'.

³⁷⁰ Focus Group A1, lines 498-499, 503-504.

	The clear links to Pupil AC's reflections (shown further through the fact that this is not the reading Irene Matsoso offered) indicates a personal review of parabolic interpretation as new interpretations were encountered in the focus group (Ricoeur, 1992; Gadamer, 2004; Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020).
Vignette Three	The third vignette emerged during a focus group within the second trial. Reflecting on the interpretation ranking activity, Pupil BF stated, 'yeah it was quite useful 'cos you get to see how other people think of it...and...while you're seeing how they think, they you might change your way of thinking about it as well' '. ³⁷¹ This pupil draws attention to how encounters with different interpretations can – and did – develop one's thinking; an awareness of this occurrence, I contend, is key within Ofsted's (2021b) understanding of personal knowledge.

Table 9.1: a number of vignettes illustrating pupils' personal and critical reflexivity through their encounter with alterity during the interpretation ranking activity

³⁷¹ Focus Group B2, lines 466, 470-471. See also the comment of Pupil AA: the activity 'was useful because erm like if you are a person that sometimes doesn't treat respect and kindness, m-maybe they would like change their mind erm to like actually the opposite way to be respectful and kind' (Focus Group A1, lines 344-346).

The three vignettes above demonstrate how an engagement with diverse interpretations (substantive knowledge) led pupils to reflect upon, and at times develop, their own interpretation (personal knowledge). This activity empowered students as agentic hermeneuts. Certainly, I was struck by TB's pre-reflection on this pedagogical episode that some pupils 'sometimes just think what their mates think'.³⁷² Pupil feedback suggests that the openness and value placed on their opinions gave them the space and confidence to consider their own personal views. They valued the opportunity to appreciate and appraise genuine interpretations of the parable (Pupils AA, AB, BB, BD, BF, CA, CD and CF) – to see 'what other people thought of it'³⁷³ (Pupil CD) and proffer their own thoughts. The four aims for this activity were therefore met.

For Pupil CA, this activity made a significant contribution to his epistemic ability. After commenting upon the value of comparing his view with what his 'group' and 'other people' thought, he ruminated upon the contextual aspects of interpretation:

it's quite interesting to see how [other interpreters]...think. It's also interesting to see – I thought of how people from their time would agree...with erm the one that says err, 'You wou- you would go further and care for someone more' ...**It just made me really think about the different times, the different cultures, the different backgrounds and experiences that lead up to similarities, differences...and unique people thinking different things.**³⁷⁴

The hermeneutical starter and interpretation ranking activities enabled this pupil to develop his understanding of both the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity. This is the

³⁷² Teacher B Interview One, line 492.

³⁷³ Focus Group C2, lines 415-416.

³⁷⁴ Focus Group C1, lines 666-669, 677-679, 683.

outcome to which all of my RQs were aimed towards – designing a richer encounter (Davis, 2014, p. 21) between primary pupils and parables to explore whether students in this age-phase are able to engage in such hermeneutical reasoning. This pupil’s view demonstrates that – with appropriate pedagogies and meaningful opportunities for dialogic learning (Alexander, 2020; Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020) – primary pupils *are able* to reason well about interpretive diversity. This finding is of monumental importance for us as a RE community, and pupils’ capability here will be further demonstrated later in this thematic analysis. It calls us as RE practitioners and advisers to recognise primary students as able and agentive hermeneuts, and to therefore provide rich opportunities for engagement with interpretive diversity and constellating hermeneutical issues. To date this access is often denied due, in large part, to the view that primary-aged pupils are not yet able to undertake this thinking (e.g. Goldman, 1964; 1965; Barnes, 2022). This is false and must be redressed rapidly for the benefit of students’ religious literacy and epistemic ability.

Certainly, the opportunity for shared, dialogic reasoning contributed significantly towards pupils’ epistemic ability. This was seen when pupils were working with peers who had ‘different opinions to them’ and, through discussions, had to ‘justify’³⁷⁵ their view points. Not only does this shared discourse resonate strongly with Habermas’ (2006) notion of epistemic ability as engaging in shared, reflective discourse, it also affirms the utility of student-student dialogical interactions in deepening pupil understanding of religion and belief (Aldridge, 2015).³⁷⁶

³⁷⁵ Teacher C Interview Two, lines 570-571, 575-576.

³⁷⁶ See Chapter Four, Section 4.7.1, Footnote 114, p. 108.

9.2.2.2 Pupil agency and the interpretation ranking

In my analytical review of literature in Chapter Three, I asserted that pupil agency might emerge in a plethora of ways within classrooms as students construct meaning, interpret their world and make volitional decisions within their learning (Danby and Farrell, 2004; Hyde et al., 2010; Oswell, 2013; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015; Paganelli, 2017; Rappa and Tang, 2017). Following a thematic analysis of the data, there are two aspects of pupil agency I wish to draw attention to within this pedagogic episode. Firstly, in Trial Two both myself and TB noticed how pupil groups pursued their interpretation ranking in ‘different ways’ (TB).³⁷⁷ Some groups took one interpretation at a time to ‘discuss...in d-detail’ (TB).³⁷⁸ Other groups considered a number of interpretations against each other simultaneously. In one triad, they decided that they would initially take two/three cards each and rank them individually before justifying their decision making to their group; they then proceeded to collaboratively order these into a row of seven along the continuum, moving ‘each other’s and...talking about why we moved it’ (Pupil BD).³⁷⁹ This activity was designed and implemented to support pupils in making their own decisions to pursue this activity in a meaningful way. I am pleased that students exercised their agency in various ways to ‘influence their own learning’ (Hyde et al., 2010, p. 1) in order to reason across and through these interpretations (Danby and Farrell, 2004; Oswell, 2013; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015;

³⁷⁷ Teacher B Interview Two, line 432.

³⁷⁸ Teacher B Interview Two, lines 433-434.

³⁷⁹ Focus Group B2, lines 500-501.

Paganelli, 2017; Rappa and Tang, 2017).³⁸⁰ As a result, students were empowered and developed their independent and collaborative reasoning within an open pedagogy.

Secondly, pupils greatly appreciated this open encounter with parables in this pedagogic episode for the way it granted space and time to think deeply and proffer reflections. Pupils commented how they had ample time to read, reflect and share their own views (Pupils BE, CD, CE and CF).³⁸¹ The sense I got from Pupils CD and CE was that these opportunities are not always afforded in RE:

I just think like that is **important to ask about what you think**, not just like get straight on to something... 'Cos like most of the time you just get [?] straight on with it – do this, do that and like you have to just...get on with it and do, like, what...the teacher thinks...But [in this lesson] erm **you actually get like time to think about, and then...you understand it a bit more...** (Pupil CD)³⁸²

I agree with that a lot...because like **I actually found it really useful that you gave us time to think about what we wanted. Not like just the teaching saying, 'You have to do this' and then like just think what the teacher would want us to, like, think about. It's just hard that way.** (Pupil CE)³⁸³

These students considered this interpretation ranking in contradistinction with previous lesson activities which were perceived as more teacher-directed and narrow. Having ample time to appreciate and appraise these interpretations in the light of their own reading of the parable helped pupils to 'understand...a bit more' (Pupil CD).³⁸⁴ Moreover, Pupil BE welcomed that their views were invited and taken seriously – 'you get to write down your

³⁸⁰ Also identifiable here are dialogical (Wedin and Aho, 2019) and relational (Ingold, 1999; Kinsella et al., 2019; Kirby, 2020; Häggström, 2022) features of agency.

³⁸¹ Focus Group B2, lines 456-457, 462; Focus Group C2, lines 386-388, 406-407, 490-492.

³⁸² Focus Group C2, lines 505-510.

³⁸³ Focus Group C2, lines 514, 526-529.

³⁸⁴ Focus Group C2, line 510.

opinion...whoever's reading it they'll know what your opinion is'.³⁸⁵ This again reiterates a strengthening thread throughout this thematic analysis, that knowledge-rich RE depends on ample time to dialogically and personally reason with and through the content (Cooling et al., 2020; Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020; Ofsted, 2021b). The RE community would do well to incorporate this into conceptualisations and enactments of the classroom as a contextual 'hermeneutical space' (Pollefeyt, 2020b) in which epistemic ability can develop.

9.2.2.3 Challenges of the interpretation ranking activity

On reviewing the data collected, some pupils encountered difficulties within this pedagogic episode. One of these challenges emerged due to the vocabulary on the interpretation cards. TA elucidates:

some of the text was just too wordy for some of our children...there were a lots and lots of erm **language in there which...a number would have found tricky**, for example, 'who ignores the bruised and wounded?...Condemn them'.³⁸⁶

TA highlighted that children in her class '**with poorer literacy**' required adult support to understand the interpretations, suggesting that '**a simplified version perhaps for less able pupils**' would help them rank them.³⁸⁷ I was eager to ascertain whether the text on the interpretation cards was to be a common area of difficulty across the three trials. Interestingly, pupils and teachers in subsequent trials stated that the language was accessible. Context is important here. The first trial class has a significantly higher

³⁸⁵ Focus Group B2, lines 1014-1016.

³⁸⁶ Teacher A Interview Two, lines 122, 383-386.

³⁸⁷ Teacher A Interview Two, lines 122-123, 414.

proportion of pupil premium students compared to the other classes;³⁸⁸ indeed, whole school foci during the year this trial took place in this setting included explicit teaching of vocabulary and the development of cultural capital in order to close the attainment gap within this deprived area.³⁸⁹ Moreover, COVID had a significant impact upon pupil learning in the year prior.³⁹⁰ Those drawing upon the lesson plans and resources for this post-secular parabolic enquiry should use their knowledge of their class(es) and incorporate any pre-teaching and/or clear explication to ensure pupils can access and understand these interpretations.

Group working was another challenge a few students encountered. Pupil CE, who previously expressed frustration with others in her group during the card sort,³⁹¹ continued her consternation that those she was working with were not ‘paying enough attention’ or ‘listening’.³⁹² Pupil AF would rather this activity was a solo exercise because they were ‘arguing with the people on my table’ (exactly what this disagreement centred around was not stated).³⁹³ Similarly, Pupil AD expressed a desire to undertake the interpretation ranking independently:

I would have preferred to do it on my own because...we had different opinions on...where we should put it. And it was hard to figure out where to put it...because everyone else thought we should put it in a different place.³⁹⁴

³⁸⁸ Section 7.3.1, Table 7.2.

³⁸⁹ Teacher A Interview Two, lines 39-43; alluded to pre-conversation.

³⁹⁰ Chapter Four, Section 7.3.1.

³⁹¹ Chapter Eight, Section 8.2.2.

³⁹² Focus Group C2, lines 392-393, 821.

³⁹³ Focus Group A2, lines 216-217.

³⁹⁴ Focus Group A2, lines 222-224, 228.

Pupil AD's point was echoed by other students (CB and CC)³⁹⁵ and is worth reflecting upon. This collaborative activity brought alterity to the fore, with students encountering discrepant opinions from their peers. The reflections from these three pupils show that some struggled to manage this diversity; perhaps this was due, in part, to some who found it challenging 'to listen to each other's opinions' (TC).³⁹⁶ A comment proffered from one student in Trial Three was particularly striking here. After I had explained and modelled the interpretation ranking exercise, this pupil raised her hand and stated, 'I don't get how this will work – we will all have different ideas about whether we agree or disagree with these interpretations. How's it ever going to be right?'. On the one hand, this pupil realized that all would bring their own personal views to this collaborative task. Her response indicates both her epistemic ability (which perhaps emerged from the hermeneutical starter) as well as a recognition of the challenge such dialogic reasoning might present. On the other hand, her comment and related question 'How's it ever going to be right?' reveals much of the regrettable status quo within primary RE (and, I contend, primary education more generally). It suggests that explicitly reasoning across difference is not something that her and her class are used to. Enquiries are too often narrowed and directed towards a single, exclusivist, pre-determined, 'correct' answer (Kohn, 2005; Pollefeyt and Bieringer, 2005; Davis, 2014; Aldridge, 2015; Briggs, 2017; Carswell, 2018a; 2018b; Pollefeyt and Richards, 2020). This is not atypical, and this research thesis offers a clarion call to the RE community to offer richer encounters with the parables than presently exist.

³⁹⁵ Focus Group C1: 'we didn't get it [the interpretations] in a line...like we wanted to, because...like two of us...was like agreeing with something, and then one was just like, 'Just put that over there' (Pupil CB, lines 579, 583-585); 'it was quite hard to agree like...where to, what side to put it because some people said, 'Disagree', some people said, 'Agree' (Pupil CC, lines 546-547, 551-552).

³⁹⁶ Teacher C Interview Two, line 545.

The third and final challenging aspect identified was the interpretations themselves. Three were mentioned by pupils in the focus groups, shown in Table 9.2 below:

Interpretations	Pupil responses
Brian Stiller: 'We live in a world where we meet people of different beliefs, nationalities and cultures. The two answers in verse 27 teaches us that loving God means loving all. You can't do one without the other'.	I didn't really get this one...Erm well I didn't really understand how a loving God means loving all. Erm because if you love God, it you can just love God not love everyone else...Or you can love everyone else and not love God (Pupil BA) ³⁹⁷
Frederick Douglass: 'The parable makes us think about an important question: who are the priests and Levites in our society today? Who ignores the 'bruised and wounded'? We should condemn them, and campaign to end to the unfairness we are seeing'.	[T]he bit where there was a question, where it said err, 'Do you think we should campaign against priests and Levites to stop, like, the un- respected erm and just cruelty we've seen?'... I didn't reall-, so I answered it, but I didn't really think it helped that much 'cos God, the whole religion of God and Jesus is about love, respect and friendship – our three core Christian values of our school. And saying we should campaign against holy, like, members of basically the holy church family, is a bit, you know like it sort of shifts your belief between, 'I believe in this. No – now I don't. Now I do. Now I don't' (Pupil CA) ³⁹⁸
Solentiname: 'Giving money and worn-out clothes to the poor once a year isn't 'loving your neighbour'. We need to go further, like the Samaritan did, and really care for people'.	I didn't really understand that [Solentiname] one 'cos...it says, erm, like that's not enough; you just have, like, to do it, like, Samaritan did and really care for people...But I didn't really understand that. Like, I get like...they wanted to erm help a lot, but giving money and worn out clothes, like, once a year will like help kind of like the poor. And like tonnes of people do it...so erm. Like it's caring 'cos you could of just like gave it to like someone else or just threw it in the bin (Pupil CD)³⁹⁹ I would not, like, buy a brand new top and then do this, 'Oh I'll give it to the poor'. I'd like wear it for a while and if I like outgrew it, then I'd give it to the poor. I woudn't, like, get a new top, like loads of fancy clothes and just like give it <i>straight</i> to the poor (Pupil CE)⁴⁰⁰

Table 9.2: pupil comments on the challenges of analysing some interpretations of the parable

³⁹⁷ Focus Group B1, lines 428, 442-443, 447.

³⁹⁸ Focus Group C1, lines 1059-1061, 1065-1069.

³⁹⁹ Focus Group C2, lines 449, 453-454, 458-460, 464-465.

⁴⁰⁰ Focus Group C2, lines 474-477.

In these pupil responses, the challenge came not through difficulty but through encountering a new interpretation. Engaging with these interpretations led to some very personal responses, each demonstrating critical thinking (and, at times, bewilderment). I am pleased that the space and value placed on pupils' views enabled such deep thinking to occur. Indeed, all of the views stated above surprised me as they run somewhat counter to my own deliberations upon these interpretations. For instance, a number of other pupils expressed to me a similar view to Pupils CD and CE on the Solentiname interpretation during this activity. Not only did this alterity cause me as a practitioner to reflect deeply upon my own views and positionality (Ricoeur, 1992; Gadamer, 2004; Hella and Wright, 2009; Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020), it led to in-the-moment decision-making as to whether to share my own agreement with the Solentiname view or abstain. Sharing would have presented further alterity for pupils to reason through (Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020), yet I was cautious of instigating an interaction which pupils might perceive as *'thank you for your thoughts but may I correct your misunderstanding'*. Teachers would do well to ponder before-hand how they would approach such a situation. There are skilful ways in which practitioners can share their views *as one valued voice amongst many* in a shared parabolic enquiry (Aldridge, 2015).

TB also noticed pupils' critical thinking when engaging with St Augustine's reading:

It was 'one that...I was asked by a lot of...the children that they didn't...fully understand...which was quite an interesting one because once I was able, you know, if I drilled down a little bit and explained it a bit better they went, 'Oh ok yeah that makes sense now'. And then and then they could start to think about where it was [ranking it alongside other interpretations]'.⁴⁰¹

⁴⁰¹ Teacher B Interview Two, lines 440-442, 446-448.

Due to its allegorical nature, many pupils found St Augustine's interpretation more challenging to unpack. With adult support, however, some pupils 'started to think a little bit more abstractly' (TB).⁴⁰² Pupil engagement with the interpretations as described above highlights the merit of including authentic and varied readings for pupils to reason across and through (Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020). It presents an alterity which leads to deep, reflective thinking and thus the development of epistemic ability.

9.2.2.4 Interpretation ranking – pupil justifications

As part of this pedagogic episode, I gave students the opportunity to write their own views on the interpretations in their workbook (see Figure M). This gave pupils a chance to proffer, independently, their own personal opinions; this may have been in accordance, or even divergence, with their group's collaborative decision. These written responses also provide a window for me as practitioner/researcher in further understanding pupil thinking around these parabolic interpretations.

⁴⁰² Teacher B Interview Two, lines 466-467.

LO: Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?

Step 1

Choose at least two of the interpretations. Circle where you would place it on the continuum, and explain why you would have placed it there. Challenge: can you link your reason back to the parable?

Giving money and worn-out clothes to the poor once a year isn't 'loving your neighbour'. We need to go further, like the Samaritan did, and really care for people.	Strongly agree Agree Unsure Disagree Strongly disagree	E.g. I strongly agree/disagree with this interpretation because...
The 'road to Jericho' where the man was robbed is a symbol for our lives. Many people today face racism daily as they travel through life; we need to change the 'road' to be a better, safer place for all.	Strongly agree Agree Unsure Disagree Strongly disagree	
Each character and place represents something. The Good Samaritan is Jesus, who saves 'broken and sinful humans' on life's 'road'. Jesus brings humans to the church (the inn) to recover and become better people, before coming back to collect them in the future.	Strongly agree Agree Unsure Disagree Strongly disagree	

Figure M: interpretation ranking page in pupil workbooks 403

An honest appraisal of this activity and pupil responses (Appendix Thirty-Six) raised a number of points. What initially struck me was the sheer range of students' views and judgements (Table 9.3):

Interpretation	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Solentiname	6	15	14	11	2	48
Martin Luther King	33	6	3	1	0	43
St Augustine	6	12	3	4	2	27
Irene Matsoso	9	4	3	0	0	16
Adolf Jülicher	0	1	5	6	3	15
Frederick Douglass	4	3	5	1	0	13
Brian Stiller	2	3	1	1	1	8

Table 9.3: the breadth of pupils' interpretive judgements during the interpretation ranking activity

⁴⁰³ The next page in the workbook contains the next four interpretations – Appendix Eight.

This analysis highlights how varied pupil views around parabolic interpretation were. For instance, there are diverse and contrasting views on St Augustine's allegorical interpretation. Whilst eighteen pupils expressed agreement with his interpretation⁴⁰⁴, six contested it. This disagreement was with reference to:

- **the incorrect symbolism on Augustine's part:** 'it doesn't symbol that it symbols what people want it to' (B3); 'it doesn't symbol that it symbols what people can't do' (B22)
- **uncertainty:** 'you don't know what Jesus made it to represent' (B2); 'it might Be god [sic] or it might not be and someone is being nice' (C15)
- **belief in Jesus' abilities:** 'Jesus doesn't [sic] have healing powers' (A19), and
- **the view that there is no symbolism expressed through the parable at all:** 'the Samaritan is his own person, he is not Jesus (C12)

Two other pupils expressed their uncertainty with regards to Augustine's interpretation – one on the grounds that this allegorical reading could be plausible 'or it could just be a story [sic] Jesus told to teach everyone to help everyone' (C10), another on the basis that the gospel writer or Augustine 'didn't well explain it' (C24). The sheer range of opinions again demonstrates primary pupils' ability as agentive hermeneuts (Bowie, 2018) and the need for parabolic enquiries to recognise, and be attentive to, diverse perspectives within a class. Indeed, interpretations often have ambiguity, and some pupils are recognising this. Post-secular RE must be attentive towards authentic diversity in the contemporary world,⁴⁰⁵ not excluding the diversity of thought present from pupils themselves (Dinham and Francis, 2016; Dinham and Shaw, 2020).

⁴⁰⁴ Pupil C5's expansion of St Augustine's reading was interesting: 'I agree because god is the spirit that lead him to the inn'.

⁴⁰⁵ Of which the classroom is a microcosm of sorts.

A close inspection of pupil responses to the Solentiname interpretation led to a surprising finding. Fifteen of the twenty-one comments⁴⁰⁶ expressed agreement I would categorise as expounding an *'I agree as helping the poor through giving money and clothes is important'* perspective.⁴⁰⁷ In doing so, they missed the basic thrust of this interpretation. The Solentiname reading emphasises that such sporadic charitable giving can fall short of what is required to truly serve neighbours in need. Yet, a critical mass of pupils seemingly overlooked this aspect; only four who agreed with this interpretation commented that we *should* go further (B7, B8, B25 and B28), with another twenty-three⁴⁰⁸ stating disagreement or uncertainty in going further as giving clothes and money is/may be enough.⁴⁰⁹ I wonder what might have been an appropriate action to support those fifteen pupils who misread this interpretation for the benefit of practitioners who facilitate this post-secular parabolic enquiry (Schön, 1991).⁴¹⁰ Clearer explanation when introducing these interpretations (perhaps using the Solentiname reading as one example) may be one way to redress the occurrence of such mis-readings.

Two further observations. First is that a number of pupils from Trials Two and Three read Martin Luther King's interpretation literally. These students responded that we should (B25, C9, C16, C26)⁴¹¹, or perhaps should not (B2, B6, B28)⁴¹², change the physical road where

⁴⁰⁶ Pupils A6, A12, A17, A21, A23, B6, B12, B18, B20, B21, C5, C16, C19, C26, C30.

⁴⁰⁷ E.g. *'I agree because theres people [sic] out there that need that stuff'* (A6).

⁴⁰⁸ Pupils A1, A4, A16, A18, A22, A24, B1, B2, B3, B22, B24, B26, B30, C1, C6, C9, C10, C12, C14, C15, C18, C22, C24.

⁴⁰⁹ I also noticed that four of these (B3, B22, C12 and C15) made reference to the impact of context in considering this interpretation; some may wish to help the poor but not have the opportunity or means to support.

⁴¹⁰ Whilst acknowledging pupils' interest in the importance of helping others in charitable ways.

⁴¹¹ E.g. *'I strongly agree because you Should Be safe on road's Not unsafe'* (B25).

⁴¹² E.g. *'Im unsure because the roads have changed since then'* (B28).

people travel; King's reading, however, is taking the road as 'a symbol for our lives'. That primary pupils cannot read parables symbolically or allegorically is unsubstantiated by the majority of pupil comments in this research thesis (contra Goldman, 1964; 1965). Rather – along with the Solentiname reading – pupils may benefit from a clear explication of this interpretation when modelling/explaining this activity.⁴¹³

Second, when analysing responses across all interpretations, I noticed a sparsity (16 of a total 170)⁴¹⁴ of those which actually referred back to the parabolic text; the majority did not do so. The following examples are indicative:

- **On Solentiname:** I agree because the poor should get more but some people have money but can't give it away (A23)
- **On Martin Luther King:** We need to stop racism (A12)
- **On Irene Matsoso:** I strongly agree because other people get treated better than others and that's not right (B21)

In these instances, it feels as though pupils are ruminating on an area commented upon by the interpreter (charity, racism and feminism respectively) *rather than justifying the extent to which they feel this interpretation is an appropriate reading of the parable*. Perhaps I am over speculating here – it may be that there is little reference to the text as this is assumed by students. It could even be due to the fact that this explicit textual justification was not modelled to pupils, and/or because it was set as a challenge in the workbook (*Challenge: can you link your reason back to the parable?*) thereby rendering it optional. It would be of

⁴¹³ I was keen to further unpack the literal readings of pupils here. Despite approaching via various angles, the range of literal views across a small sample of seven responses rendered making any substantial conclusions here difficult.

⁴¹⁴ Specifically: Solentiname (B21, C10, C12), St Augustine (B13, B21, B24, B30, C9), Frederick Douglass (C10), Brian Stiller (C10), Adolf Jülicher (B13, B30, C1, C18, C23) and Irene Matsoso (C20).

interest to compare future pupil responses should these latter two suggestions be implemented by other practitioners. This would likely enhance and demonstrate pupils' epistemic ability as agentic hermeneuts as they could appreciate and appraise interpretations with more explicit reference to the parabolic text (Tolbert, 1979; Blomberg, 2012).

9.2.2.5 A pupil's curiosity on their peers' interpretation ranking

A driver of this research thesis is exploring the extent to which a theory-informed post-secular parabolic enquiry would develop pupils' epistemic ability. Through a richer, more scholarly encounter with a parable, students would be able to more efficaciously consider the 'what' and 'why' of interpretative diversity. This impact was demonstrated in one episode recalled by TB and Pupil BD. During an interlude, curiosity (and a suggestion from TB to look at the ranking from groups who were '[predominately boys](#)')⁴¹⁵ took Pupil BD around the room to look at the reasoning of her peers. It is worth quoting Pupil BD at length here:

I found it really interesting 'cos I went and had a look round at the other tables and where they'd placed, and I was really interested in about one of the quotes... 'I'm frustrated that women are invisible and forgotten'. **I found it really interesting that some of the tables with just boys on had put it slightly lower than some of the tables with just girls on...**that's what I found really unusual. 'Cos one of the tables put it like second last and I was like, 'Why would you do', I and I just couldn't understand...**Yet for them it must have made sense...**⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁵ Teacher B Interview Two, line 156.

⁴¹⁶ Focus Group B2, lines 521-525, 529-530, 534.

Encountering the diverse thinking of her peers (the ‘what’) led Pupil BD to deliberate upon *why* such alterity exists. Here is evidence of development of thought and personal knowledge of this student (Ofsted, 2021b); she recognised that one’s positionality (shaped by experience) influenced one’s encounter with and views of these parabolic interpretations. Again, engagement with alterity has proved an effective and essential component in developing pupils’ epistemic ability.

9.2.3 Interpretation matching

Following the interpretation ranking, students were tasked with matching each interpretation with its interpreter.⁴¹⁷ Pupils moved around the room to consider a short profile of each individual/group, which provided historical, social and personal information related to the reader/s. This pedagogic episode was designed for pupils to consider how and *why* these readings emerged from particular individuals rooted in particular contexts. In so doing, they would be contemplating questions situated at the heart of reader-response scholarship around why different people interpret a parable differently (Tolbert, 1979; Ukpog, 1996; Levine, 2014; Zimmermann, 2015).

⁴¹⁷ Chapter Six, Section 6.7, Table 6.5.

Dialogic learning: the fusion of horizons in these parabolic enquiries

9.2.3.1 Horizon of the reader – a factor of interpretive diversity

This activity was designed to contribute significantly to pupils' ability to answer the LE2 enquiry question⁴¹⁸ (the focus of the final pedagogic episode) in an informed manner. All three teachers agreed that the activity was well-calibrated – and provided appropriate challenge – to help students explore the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity. TC commented upon the range of 'discussions' she heard:

They were really taking in what all of your sheets around the room were saying...using the first lesson to help their responses as well. And thinking of, well now they know what the parable actually is, **why would...people think about it in a different way?**⁴¹⁹

For TC, it was through drawing upon their familiarity with the text and constellating hermeneutical issues from LE1 which helped students achieve 'what you'd wanted them to...they could think about different...interpretations and why they were different'.⁴²⁰ The impact of these sequential enquiries was further reinforced by Pupil BA, who commented that the interpretation ranking and this subsequent matching allowed them 'to understand why different people interpreted it [the parable] differently'.⁴²¹ Pupils were able to make

⁴¹⁸ Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?

⁴¹⁹ Teacher C Interview Two, lines 500-503.

⁴²⁰ Teacher C Interview Two, lines 435-436.

⁴²¹ Focus Group B1, lines 549-550.

connections between the interpretations and interpreters, reasoning that ‘Well that person thinks that, therefore this must be their interpretation’ (TA).⁴²²

In making such connections between interpretation and interpreter, pupils demonstrated their ability to recognise how the horizon of readers influenced their respective encounter with the parable. This activity helped pupils consider that all interpreters ‘had different backgrounds’ (Pupil CE),⁴²³ each ‘[going] through’ unique experiences in a particular time and place (Pupil CC).⁴²⁴ This development of hermeneutical thinking (i.e. why do people interpret the parable differently?) is further evidenced by three pupil comments:

Because we’re all different and we all see things differently. So if we were to read that [parable], we would all have a different, like...in our head we will have a different picture...of...what happened. And then if you was gonna write that on a piece of paper, everyone would have a different answer normally...because **we all think differently, even though we have the same like lesson or...the same text.** We all will still read it the same but we all think about it differently. (Pupil CB)⁴²⁵

Maybe because some people believe in, like, Christianity and that. And oth- some people aren’t part of Christianity so they’ll believe different things. (Pupil CF)⁴²⁶

Erm I kinda think the same as [CF name omitted] ‘cos like **people have different beliefs so they would focus on different parts of this and how they think of it.** (Pupil CD)⁴²⁷

The responses above are significant. They evidence that, as a result of this parabolic enquiry, primary-aged pupils are able to engage with diverse interpretations and articulate

⁴²² Teacher A Interview Two, line 453.

⁴²³ Focus Group C2, line 603.

⁴²⁴ Focus Group C1, line 964.

⁴²⁵ Focus Group C1, lines 936-938, 942-943, 947-949.

⁴²⁶ Focus Group C2, lines 596-597.

⁴²⁷ Focus Group C2, lines 623-624.

reasoned views as to why this diversity exists (thus meeting my RQs).⁴²⁸ With this finding, there should be no reason why related enquiries into diverse readings of biblical texts should be perceived as something accessible only when in secondary school. Pupils have again demonstrated their ability as agentic hermeneuts (Bowie, 2018), engaging meaningfully with questions from reader-response scholarship (Tolbert, 1979; Ukpog, 1996; Levine, 2014; Zimmermann, 2015). This is knowledge-rich RE – substantive (on parables), disciplinary (via questions deeply rooted in theology and philosophy around interpretation) and personal (Ofsted, 2021b).

Regarding personal knowledge, it was evident how pupils were drawing on their own experiences and recognising that no one (themselves included) comes to the text with a *tabula rasa*. This was clearly seen when a number of pupils personally resonated with the experiences and interpretations of Martin Luther King. TC observed how one student was drawn to the former's interpretation as he too '*faced racism*'.⁴²⁹ This was also the case for Pupil AC – King's interpretation was felt as 'independence...empowering and strong [sic]'.⁴³⁰ Indeed, King's interpretation was one frequently cited by students in focus groups (AC, BD, CA and CC)⁴³¹ and in their written reflections at the end of LE2.⁴³² He was a figure that many pupils already had familiarity with; perhaps this is why his example was used by

⁴²⁸ Main research question: 'What is an appropriate parabolic enquiry for post-secular RE in the primary RE classroom?'. Three sub-questions: 'How can primary pupils enquire into parables in a way which draws attention to the diversity of interpretation?'; 'How might post-secular conceptions of the child, which stress their agency, affect the pedagogies employed in the classroom?'; and 'How can pupils become more hermeneutically aware, developing reasoned answers to the question, 'Why do different people interpret a parable differently?'".

⁴²⁹ Teacher C Interview Two, line 428.

⁴³⁰ Focus Group A1, line 479.

⁴³¹ Focus Group A1, line 481; Focus Group B2, lines 555-556; Focus Group C1, lines 785, 850-851.

⁴³² Considered in Chapter Nine, Section 9.2.4.

many students as a way to reflect upon how one's interpretation is shaped by one's experiences (and also supports the use of actual, rather than fictitious, interpreters). This is most clearly seen in the response of Pupil CC – we are all reading the same text but those experiencing racism 'probably see it [the parable], like, the way that maybe not other people would because they have different, like, ways of seeing it. But...they would see it a bit differently'.⁴³³ Using figures who pupils are cognizant of – through culture and/or school – helped pupils to make deeper connections between the text and the reader.

9.2.3.2 Horizon of the teacher

Concerning the horizon of readers, Pupil BD suggested a thought-provoking improvement for the enquiry:

what you could do is, maybe to make it bit better is that the **teacher could give what they thought it was** [that is, offer their interpretation of the parable]...and then you can compare it to the children who are going to be many years younger than them...And you can see what they thought because the teacher's older and will know...some things that the children don't know. And it will be really interesting to see that.⁴³⁴

In recognising that the teacher also has a horizon and positionality shaped by their own contextual life experiences, this student is both interested in and invites the parabolic views of the teacher into the class' reasoning. This pupil's suggestion is a strong one. Not only would the teacher's perspectives contribute further, authentic alterity into the class' dialogic reasoning (Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020), it also acknowledges the place, role and positionality of the teacher as situated facilitator as recognised through Aldridge's (2015)

⁴³³ Focus Group C1, lines 969-971, 975.

⁴³⁴ Focus Group B2, lines 663-665, 669-670.

educational triangle. As Aldridge (2015) elucidates, understanding occurs within the RE classroom through a dialogical interaction between text, students *and teacher*.⁴³⁵ The practitioner is not, and should not be perceived (by themselves or pupils) as, neutral (Gadamer, 2004; Bellchambers, 2011; Cooling et al., 2020; Larkin et al., 2020; Pollefeyt, 2020a). I have encountered a view in the RE community that *neutrality* is the appropriate position a teacher should adopt. I contend that it is better for teachers to recognise their positionality and, whilst adopting a position of *impartiality* to student's perspectives, should model and make explicit such positionality when appropriate to enrich student understanding of personal knowledge (Ofsted, 2021b). In such instances, the RE classroom becomes a crucible where epistemic ability is developed as text, teacher and subject matter engage in a multi-dimensional, relational, hermeneutical event; here, there is truly *shared* reasoning and discourse upon *positionality*, making it apposite for post-secular RE (Habermas, 2006; 2008; Castelli, 2012; Ipgrave, 2013b). It is evident, through these trialled parabolic enquiries, that students' epistemic ability has developed as they have considered the impact of positionality upon interpretation. As Pupils BD suggests, understanding may be further enriched by the teacher sharing their own interpretive reflections.

Indeed, through my thematic analysis I noticed that not only was pupils' epistemic ability enriched through participation in this research, but also teachers'. When asked in Teacher Interview One, 'What, in your view, are parables?', teachers provided following responses (Table 9.4):

⁴³⁵ Chapter Four, Section 4.7.2.

Teacher	Perception of parables
A	...my understanding is that they are stories that illustrate something moral or something spiritual, a bit of a sort of 'dilemma'. And it's that idea that it challenges you to think about a moral issue, a spiritual issue, in a story form...And I also think it's pulling out the message isn't it , it's pulling out that that message at the end isn't it. You know what Jesus is actually <i>telling through the parable</i> ⁴³⁶
B	... a story with a meaning ; a story where...something's happened and that...you're able to kind of d-derive how you can sort of, you know, th-th-the appropriate way to run your life as a result of having heard that story and what what you should...do as a result of it. So yeah... a story with a lesson might be a better way of putting it rather than a story, a story with a meaning ⁴³⁷
C	Erm I would say short stories with – obviously from the bible really – religious teaching but often with a moral or erm with a with a lesson behind them ⁴³⁸

Table 9.4: the teachers' perceptions of parables at the start of Interview One

Key to note is that all three teachers held the parables to be stories with a single meaning at the start of the research. This perception of these biblical texts would have informed their presentation of these narratives to pupils, in turn influencing students' notion of these texts.⁴³⁹ This is interesting in view of the *Teachers' Standards* (DfE, 2013) which require practitioners to identify and challenge pupil misconceptions; in this instance, it is *teachers* who hold the misconception themselves. This misconception needs addressing. Moreover, this perception is particularly interesting when considered alongside Teacher A and B's emphasis on the role of RE in helping pupils comprehend the diverse modern world.⁴⁴⁰ Biblical texts attract many interpretations, and the emphasis on a single meaning stymies pupils' hermeneutical encounters with these texts and understanding of diversity across the contemporary religion and belief landscape (Dinham and Shaw, 2020).

⁴³⁶ Teacher A Interview One, lines 165-168, 280-281.

⁴³⁷ Teacher B Interview One, lines 147-151, 162-163.

⁴³⁸ Teacher C Interview One, lines 60-61.

⁴³⁹ As they had done when these teachers presented the parables in collective worship – see Teacher A Interview One, lines 176-216; Teacher B Interview One, lines 168-189.

⁴⁴⁰ Teacher A Interview One, lines 91-158; Teacher B Interview One, lines 85-133.

However, through their own dialogical encounter within the interviews and lesson trials, I noticed how the teachers' perception of parables altered. This is an interesting result that was not part of the research's focus. Each started to recognise the dialogic interaction between text and reader in parabolic interpretation (Gadamer, 2004), and subsequently championed encounters with a range of readings to help students appreciate the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity; in doing so, pupils could exercise reflexivity upon their own view/s on the parable. This is evinced in the following excerpts (Table 9.5):

Teacher	New perception of parables
A	it's about personal interpretation as well isn't it. It's not that 'this is right. You've got to know this'. Cos actually it's ok to have diverse and different opinions. And I think that's part of RE isn't it to get children to be critical thinkers for themselves. (Interview One)⁴⁴¹ for me, putting it [the parable] into a modern setting is all very much about inclusion...I'm probably the school's advocate for LGBTQ+...anti-homoph-...anti-racism and so on. So for me, I really like this as a parable to put into the modern world...it looks at all those bullying and that unkindness that that's taking place in the world we live in against erm people who are not, you know, the stereotypical white, heterosexual whatever. (Interview One)⁴⁴² I think the opportunity was there for them to be open. I think some of them...will probably struggle to give their own interpretation because they almost feel that they're doing it wrong if they say something different. And I think that's where we as the teaching profession have possibly made things too narrow for children. The whole... 'this is what it means. Learn the message' ...Rather than 'well what do you think the message is?' And I think that's made <i>me</i> consider how I teach – not just RE but teach – actually we need to be far more open-ended, rather than 'this is what it means, learn it parrot fashion and off you go'...And I think historically that's how we've taught RE isn't it? (Interview Two)⁴⁴³
B	What was really interesting for me, was the over-arching view of it from from the children, was that actually a lot of them hadn't thought about the fact that there might be other points of view...to be totally honest with you...I probably hadn't either really ever considered the sort of the wider...implications...of the story...it's definitely shown me that they [pupils] can...look at different points of view. You know...it's opened my eyes a bit today...[t]hat you-you actually probably should always be looking at other points of view [in RE]. You know, whether all people view things as being the same as being the same. I think that's really – it's really opened my eyes to the fact that that's a key thing. That yes these religious texts exist...but actually not everybody will interpret them in the same way...and yeah that very definitely needs to be incorporated I think into the RE curriculum as-as a whole. (Interview Two)⁴⁴⁴
C	it will be really interesting for them to see...different interpretations...it would be good for them to see also that...how you interpret it, doesn't have to be the same as anyone else. And that's ok, because these people have interpreted it all differently and it's ok that they've interpreted it differently. There's no, there's no right way at the end to say, 'Right, this is how you've got to understand this text'. Erm to actually allowing them to...have their own opinion and to know that that's ok. (Interview One)⁴⁴⁵ So I think actually looking at different interpretations would be really beneficial in other areas of RE because they would be able to erm see those other interpretations and understand why those people think something completely different to maybe what somebody else has thought or what they think. Maybe there isn't enough of that in RE...'Cos I think sometimes some children, or even some teachers, are led to believe, 'Well that's the teaching so that's how it's to be taught. And there's one definite definition for it, or one definite erm interpretation. And that's it because that's how it was written and that's how it was intended' ...But actually, we are all allowed our own opinions. And, like you say, everyone from different walks of life are going to have their own opinions. (Interview Two)⁴⁴⁶

Table 9.5: teachers' new perception of the parables as a result of engaging in this research

⁴⁴¹ Teacher A Interview One, lines 299-302.

⁴⁴² Teacher A Interview One, lines 463-469.

⁴⁴³ Teacher A Interview Two, lines 238-242, 246-248, 252.

⁴⁴⁴ Teacher B Interview Two, lines 81-83, 91-94, 782-784, 1070-1076.

⁴⁴⁵ Teacher C Interview One, lines 494-495, 509, 514-518.

⁴⁴⁶ Teacher C Interview Two, lines 677-681, 685-688, 692-693.

These excerpts clearly show how the epistemic ability of these teachers' developed through participation in this research⁴⁴⁷ – they too recognised, and then efficaciously considered, reasons for interpretive diversity. This is significant. These teachers see the value and import of the post-secular parabolic enquiry I have envisaged and enacted, and see its practical application in the classroom. That this research impacted positively upon the views of RE practitioners on the chalkface, who open doors to understanding religion and belief for students, is an encouraging find. It is practitioners who will enable the development of pupils' epistemic ability – all the more so, as Pupil BD suggests, if they explicitly bring their interpretive ruminations to enrich the dialogic reasoning of the class.

9.2.3.3 Encountering alterity led to personal reflection

A key theoretical principle underpinning these curated parabolic enquiries is that engaging with alterity would enable pupils to not only appreciate that these texts are interpreted differently, but also recognise and critically consider their own positionality (Ricoeur, 1992; Gadamer, 2004; Hella and Wright, 2009; Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020). Although the impact here will emerge more fully when students' written responses are analysed in the next and final pedagogic episode (Section 9.2.4), there are two reflections on the interpretation matching to consider here. TC held that this activity 'definitely' achieved my aims for these enquiries, elucidating:

⁴⁴⁷ Linking back to Chapter Two, their positionality was influenced by relational networks, personal experiences and encountered truth claims (Hervieu-Léger, 1999; Turner, 2012; Middleton and Yarwood, 2013; Lynch, 2016; Nilsson and Tesfahuney, 2016) via an engagement with this research.

it was a completely new thing for the children...there were so many reasons as to why people could interpret it differently...they went from Martin Luther King to...a feminist. And there were so many different things that actually they walked over and went, 'W-w-well they think something *completely* different and now I've gotta get my head round that'. But, **I think that worked so well because even in that awe moment of, 'They...do think something completely so different', that actually shows them that there are so many interpretations for this and that's ok. And...even though the children in the class all think something different that's normal, because all of these people think...different things...**Erm and they really took on board why people thought different things.⁴⁴⁸

Engaging with authentic alterity enabled pupils to recognise that nobody stands nowhere. In reasoning through the different interpretations and contemplating *why* each interpreter read it that way, students were able to more capably understand that they each had a positionality which informs their engagement with the text. For Pupil BD, she also found the activity an impactful time 'to go round and pick up little snippets of people's conversation of what they thought...and you could think, 'Ah. I think differently to that...''.⁴⁴⁹ Through this activity, pupils' personal knowledge developed (Ofsted, 2021b) as they further recognised the horizon of the reader in the text-reader dialogue.

'How do you read it?': empowering pupils as agentive hermeneuts through dialogic learning

9.2.3.4 Challenge

As a new activity for primary-aged pupils, I was keen to ascertain whether the level of challenge for this interpretation matching was appropriate; if too simple or too difficult, it

⁴⁴⁸ Teacher C Interview Two, lines 397-398, 403-408, 412-413, 417.

⁴⁴⁹ Focus Group B2, lines 635-636, 640.

was unlikely that this pedagogic episode would contribute well to students' epistemic ability. Going into the first trial, TA held that pupils might react as "rabbits in headlights" ...cos...they won't ever...done anything like that [before]'.⁴⁵⁰ Reflecting after each trial, I felt that this matching task allowed pupils to think deeply about who might have offered a particular reading. Teachers A and B proffered a similar view in the post-lesson interview. The activity 'generated a load of discussion...because they *were* really having to think...carefully about who might have said each of those things' (TB).⁴⁵¹ For TA, this was particularly noticeable when reasoning upon the shared context and concerns of Martin Luther King and Frederick Douglass.⁴⁵² The similarity presented a level of challenge which made students contemplate 'well actually why would one be...one and not the other?'.⁴⁵³ Certainly, the activity was designed so that some interpreters and interpretations were easier to match and others would lead to more deliberation; that this was the case in reality was commented upon by numerous pupils (Pupils AC, AD, BA, BB, BC, BD, BE, CA, CB and CC).⁴⁵⁴ In my view, the ones which were deemed 'easy' (TA)⁴⁵⁵ and 'fairly obvious' (TB)⁴⁵⁶ were useful in building student understanding and confidence in the task. Indeed, a number

⁴⁵⁰ Teacher A Interview One, lines 494, 498.

⁴⁵¹ Teacher A Interview Two, lines 555, 559-561.

⁴⁵² As both were writing in and to a context of racial discrimination. **Martin Luther King**: 'The 'road to Jericho' where the man was robbed is a symbol for our lives. Many people today face racism daily as they travel through life; we need to change the 'road' to be a better, safer place for all'. **Frederick Douglass**: 'The parable makes us think about an important question: who are the priests and Levites in our society today? Who ignores the 'bruised and wounded'? We should condemn them, and campaign to end to the unfairness we are seeing'.

⁴⁵³ Teacher A Interview Two, lines 154-155, 159. The challenge of discerning through this similarity was also commented upon by Pupil CB: 'some of them were a bit tricky to like see because there was...two people who done the same thing' (Focus Group C1, lines 833-835).

⁴⁵⁴ E.g. Focus Group A1, line 471; Focus Group B1, lines 375-377; Focus Group C1, lines 839-844.

⁴⁵⁵ Teacher A Interview Two, line 142.

⁴⁵⁶ Teacher A Interview One, lines 559-560.

of pupil comments⁴⁵⁷ show how some exercised their agency here, making the volitional decision in their learning to make the easier matches first so they could then concentrate on working out the harder ones (Hyde et al., 2010; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015; Paganelli, 2017). The evident and appropriate challenge of this activity enriched students' epistemic ability as they attempted to dialogically 'work out who it was they thought had interpreted the story' (TB).⁴⁵⁸ I agree with TB that this activity was a 'positive one' for pupils.⁴⁵⁹

This said, there were some aspects emerging from these trials that those wishing to draw upon these practical exemplifications should consider. The first relates to the practicalities, and subsequent impact, of student group work at stations around a classroom. Myself and TA observed how the small number of groups who worked as a four worked less effectively than triads.⁴⁶⁰ These larger groups tended to split into two pairs which stymied their collaborative reasoning. In some instances, pupils let peers take the lead in the activity whilst they disengaged. Triads, and perhaps even pairs, are more utile group sizes for this activity; this decision should be informed by the professional judgement of each teacher with their knowledge of the class. The second aspect relates to physically accessing the interpretation profiles. Each of the seven profiles were printed twice and placed roughly half a metre from its duplicate around the room. Pupil CE related her view on how it was sometimes 'kinda hard to see the piece of paper' with 'loads of people around us'; this

⁴⁵⁷ Pupils AD, BD and CB. Pupil BD's response is indicative: 'I would rate it a five out of easy because...you could get some of them, you could match them 'cos you were like, 'Oh this is going to be easy 'cos she is a feminist [sic]...so she'll...probably have, the quote about...the fact that women are invisible'. Erm-a and then once you've matched the ones that you know, you could kind of go round and like properly dig into the this information boxes...and you can be like, 'Erm-a ah this, this man says he often likes something to do with churches; oh, this quote has the word "church" in it. They might match'.

⁴⁵⁸ Teacher B Interview Two, line 510.

⁴⁵⁹ Teacher B Interview Two, line 551.

⁴⁶⁰ Teacher A Interview Two, lines 414-418, 422, 426.

made it ‘really hard to concentrate’.⁴⁶¹ To aid accessibility, practitioners could both encourage students to visit profiles which are less frequented at that moment and then return, and/or consider printing three copies of each interpretation profile to place around the room so that pupils are more distributed.⁴⁶²

9.2.4 Pupil reflections at end of LE2

The final pedagogic episode provided pupils the opportunity to offer a written response to the learning enquiry question, ‘Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?’. In doing so, they were encouraged to refer to three success criteria:

- Give at least one well-explained reason to answer the question
- Give examples from the interpreter matching activity to support your answer
- Link your answer to your own interpretation – what do you think the meaning of the parable is? Why do you think you arrive at that meaning, yet other people arrive at different meanings?

This activity allowed students to independently demonstrate their thinking and learning against this lesson’s enquiry question, whilst providing me with rich data to analyse to ascertain the effectiveness of this second enquiry in answering my RQs.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶¹ Focus Group C2, lines 546-547, 560.

⁴⁶² The original plan, as stated in Table 6.4 (pp. 215-218) was for pupils to also justify their matches individually using via post-it notes. In reality, there was not enough time for this activity to take place. I decided during the lesson – *in action* – to omit this (Schön, 1991).

⁴⁶³ Two extension questions were also provided for pupils to answer if time permitted (Section 6.10; Table 6.5). Hardly any students had time to do so; an analysis has therefore not been undertaken of these limited responses.

Dialogic learning: the fusion of horizons in these parabolic enquiries

To make sense of pupil responses here, I scrutinised all fifty-seven responses⁴⁶⁴ and categorised them via their links to the three success criteria.

9.2.4.1 ‘Give at least one well-explained reason to answer the question’

The first and most crucial criteria was for pupils to answer, in an informed manner, the enquiry question. What is again clear from analysing pupils’ responses is how diverse they are; the reasons proffered for why people interpret the parable differently are shown in Table 9.6 below:⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁴ Shown in Appendix Thirty-Seven.

⁴⁶⁵ Six of the fifty-seven responses were hard to categorise. This was either because I was unable to discern their answer (A12) or that their response did not directly answer the enquiry question (A4, A17, A22, B6, B17).

Reasons for diverse interpretations of the parable	Pupils	Total
We have different opinions/perspectives	A1, A6, A18, A19, A23, A24, B1, B2, B3, B7, B8, B12, B18, B20, B21, B22, B24, B26, B30, C1, C4, C9, C12, C23, C24, C25	26
We are all different	B1, B9, B13, B22, B24, B28, B30, C10, C11, C12, C14, C16, C22, C27	14
What has <i>happened</i> in their life*	A1, A3, B2, B3, B22, C5, C6, C11, C14, C20, C30	11
We have different personalities	A23, B2, B8, B21, B22, B24, B30, C23	8
Time born/alive*	B3, B22, C18, C20, C22, C27	6
Our differing backgrounds*	C1, C5, C9, C14, C16, C19	6
Our faith/beliefs	A21, A24, B2, B25, C26	5
What is <i>happening</i> in our lives*	A21, C6, C16, C17	4
Where we live*	B2, B3, B30	3
Everyone sees things differently	C15, C17, C18	3
God made us all different	C10, C24	2
People focus on what's important to them	A7, A10	2
Different people hold different values	A16	1
We are different ages	C22	1
The school we go to*	B2	1
Some might be confused about the text	B13	1

Table 9.6: reasons given by students to the question, 'Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?'

All told, pupils offered sixteen reasons to account for why people interpret the parable differently. The majority of pupils stated that varied interpretations emerge due to the fact that we are all different (14), with differing opinions/perspectives (26). Whilst pupils – via these two most popular reasons – acknowledged that individuals bring their own, bespoke horizon to the act of textual interpretation (Gadamer, 2004), a number of students recognised that this horizon is shaped by particular aspects (denoted with an *). These pupils expressed that our positionality (and thus interpretative lens) is influenced by: what has happened in our lives (11); the era we were born/alive (6); our differing backgrounds (6); what is happening in our lives presently (4); where we live (3), and the school we go to (1). Through this enquiry, pupils have developed their understanding that one's positionality

is crafted and shaped through one's encounters within their environment; this resonates strongly with my working definition of post-secular (non-) religiosity proffered in Chapter Two. Put more explicitly, pupils have – in an age-appropriate manner – expressed some ways in which our positionality is influenced (considered in Chapter Two – e.g. Gräb, 2010; Boeve, 2012; Lahav, 2015; Woodhead, 2017; Taves, 2018) and that this impacts upon one's reading of a text (Chapters Four and Five – e.g. Gadamer, 2004; Thiselton, 2009; Ukpong, 2012; Levine, 2014; Zimmermann, 2015; Bowie, 2018). This development of thinking has not only contributed substantially to pupils' personal knowledge with regards to parabolic interpretation (Ofsted, 2021b), but enriches pupil understanding of diversity more widely within the contemporary religion and belief landscape (Dinham and Shaw, 2020).

A few responses are noteworthy in referring to a plethora of factors influencing one's interpretation (Table 9.7):

Pupil responses
different people have different opinions, different personalities, different views, thoughts, ideas and backgrounds. Depending on where you live, what school you go to and what religion you follow. Some interpretations are full of questions and some are full beliefs. Some people interpret it and think you should give like Brian Stiller. Martin Luther King was treated with racism so he interpreted it by talking about changing the road so that would stop racism. Irene Matsoso is a feminist so she talked about that women were not included in this parable (B2)
we all live in different places, we all born at different times. So we'll experience different things earlier or later in life than others. We are all different we'll all have different personalities, different thoughts and feelings just because we're different in some way or another doesn't mean we can't be friends. The Solentiname farmers were all different yet they came together. I have had to experience different things to others yet they've still helped me get through those hard times. My Great Grandparent will have experienced different things to me. The reason that we have different opinions is because we've dealt with different things had different experience and that's why we interpret differently (B3)
Everyone lives a very different life. We were all born at different times, different days, different months and even different years. So that means we all experience different

things that either help us or make us upset. We are all different. We have different pesonatites or opinions, different thoughts and feelings, just because some of us have different looks or races doesn't make you any less special. You should help others when there down or have had a rough day. Why we all have different opinions is becuase we have delt with different things had different experience and thats why we interpret differently (B22)
I think diffrent people interpret the parable of the good samartian diffrently beacause evryone is diffrent no one is the same not even twins! People have diffrent opinions and diffrent point of views. Everyone has a diffrent personalities and diffrent thoughts and ideas (B24)
evreyone is diffrent and comes from diffrent places. People have diffrent personalty and mind. It would be boring if evryone had the same idea and thoughts as evryone else. Evryone lives in diffrent environmnet so will have diffrent lives and opinon on things. Only one of the people mentioned girls wich show people have diffrent opinons. Onter one thought of it the Jesus it shows that he worships God when other poeple don't. People haveing diffrent likes can leed to diffrent opinons (B30)

Table 9.7: five particularly detailed responses to the LE question

These five comprehensive responses support my assertion that primary-aged pupils are able hermeneuts who are capable of undertaking deep interpretive thinking in RE. These two theory-informed parabolic enquiries – with effective sequencing, scaffolding, resources and ample time to think deeply – have successfully enabled students to develop their understanding of the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretive diversity, so meeting my RQs.

9.2.4.2 ‘Give examples from the interpreter matching activity to support your answer’

Within LE2, seven different interpretations were selected for pupils to encounter. I wanted sufficient and clear alterity across interpretations *and* interpreters to help pupils reason through and across interpretive diversity (Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020). To help me understand which interpretations were particularly useful for students’ reasoning, it is fruitful to review the interpreters pupils cited in answering the LE2 enquiry question.

Thirty-three of the fifty-seven pupil responses analysed gave an example to support their answer to the enquiry question. Across these responses, all interpreters were cited: Irene Matsoso (12), Martin Luther King (12), Frederick Douglass (6), Brian Stiller (4), Solentiname (2), Augustine (2) and Jülicher (1). In twenty-one cases, pupils proffered particular contextual information to exemplify their response as to why people interpreted the parable differently; for instance, Irene Matsoso's views as a feminist (B2, B8, C11) and Martin Luther King's experience of racism (A16, B2, B20, C4, C11, C15). In the other twelve instances, individuals were used as examples without specific reference to their background – Pupil A6's response of 'Everybody has a different opinon [sic] like Fredrick Douglass and Martin Luther King Jr' is indicative of such answers. Pupils' written responses demonstrated greater epistemic ability when they included particular examples; doing so showed their understanding of *how* one's positionality shapes one's interpretation.⁴⁶⁶ Clearer modelling and/or more precise success criteria may have enabled more students to provide these.

The fact that all interpreters were given as examples demonstrates a range of thinking across the classes and the usefulness of the selected interpretations. However, three interpreters – Irene Matsoso, Martin Luther King and Frederick Douglass – were frequently referenced. What made these interpreters particularly utile in helping pupils recognise the impact of a reader's positionality in the interpretative act? In speculating, was it that: these three readings linked to the experience of discrimination?; pupils resonated with these interpreters' experiences?; that I used some of these as modelled examples?; that they

⁴⁶⁶ Epistemic ability refers to the capability of individuals to understand, appreciate, appraise and co-exist harmoniously with others, aided through reflexivity upon one's own positionality and how this can be brought into shared discourse. **Such an ability requires an understanding of the complex and diverse nature of post-secular (non-) religiosities, and the plurality of positionalities present in twenty-first century Britain.**

were easier to infer the influence between positionality and interpretation than the other interpreters, or perhaps a cocktail of some of these and other aspects? The seven interpretations selected have been trialled with success; no doubt there are other interpretations/interpreters which would be of value to include (as well as or instead of) to further enrich students' epistemic ability.

Moreover, six pupils gave examples outside of the seven interpreters in answering the enquiry question:

- '...I think it means to be kind to everyone by **my friend may disagree** and say 'no I think it means something else'' (A22);
- '...**My Great Gandparent** will have experienced different things to me. The reason that we have different opinions is because we've dealt with different things had different experience and that's why we interpret differently' (B3);
- 'they have different backgrounds and experiences to other people like racism they might say a really nasty thing to you or **if I ask a class in a 100 years** they will have a different opinion because rules will be changed. But **if I ask someone in the 1900s** they will have a different experience because rules were strict in that time' (C5);
- 'Every one sees things differently like what I see is something I bet is going to be different for someone else...if I asked [**pupil name omitted**] then it [the interpretation] would be different' (C15);
- 'we all have different backgrounds we were all brought up differently and we look and do different. An example is me an **usain bolt** we were born in different places and brought up different' (C19); and
- 'It think that it is because we have different lives and feelings and experiences because **if someone came from the Victorian times** they wouldn't have the same answers and opinions as us. They would have a different Perspective' (C20)

Citing classmates to Victorians, these half-dozen pupils exhibited their epistemic ability through their recognition of their own and others' perspectives – what has shaped it and the influence this can have on parabolic interpretation.

9.2.4.3 ‘Link your answer to your own interpretation – what do you think the meaning of the parable is? Why do you think you arrive at that meaning, yet other people arrive at different meanings?’

The third and final success criteria invited pupils to personally reflect upon their own positionality and interpretation. Fourteen out of fifty-seven responses met, or partially met, this success criteria:

- one (A22) gave their interpretation without any reference to their positionality;
- six (A16, B3, B8, B26, C15, C19) considered their positionality in contradistinction to others. In ruminating why people interpret the parable differently, they reflected upon how their own values (A16), experiences (B3, C19), perceptions (C15) and opinions (B3, B8, B26) influence[d] their own horizon. These students did not draw upon their own interpretation in their response; and
- seven (A18, B7, B28, C1, C9, C12, C18) proffered factors influencing their positionality *as well as* their own interpretation. Each acknowledged that all bring their own horizon to the text, for instance: *‘I think that different people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently because everyone has a different perspective on things so to me it means putting others before yourself but for others it might mean treat others how you want to be treated but Martin Luther King has said something completely different because he is from 1960's America’* (C9).

It is noticeable that only six students accomplished all of the success criteria within this final pedagogic episode. This is not to say that each pupil was expected to do so, but I wonder what might help more students develop their responses to this enquiry question through clear success criteria. On reflection, it may be that the numerous steps contained within this third success criteria led to cognitive overload – it asked pupils to write their interpretation, link it to their answer, consider *why* they arrive at that particular reading and ruminate upon why others might offer another. This is a lot for one criteria. Splitting this into clearer, more focussed steps may help pupils to reflect further upon the enquiry

question and construct a more informed response. Another option for support, which I will contemplate shortly is modelling an answer.⁴⁶⁷

‘How do you read it?’: empowering pupils as agentive hermeneuts through dialogic learning

Whilst the quality of pupil responses suggest that this pedagogic episode was well pitched, some pupils experienced some difficulties. The first challenge identified in Trial One was that many students were unsure of the term ‘interpreter’; it needed re-clarifying during this final task. I needed to be more explicit about this term (as well as ‘interpretation’) when introducing it within the hermeneutical starter and to regularly refer to it throughout LE2. This was adapted into the subsequent trials to good effect – pupils no longer asked for clarification and some (B2, B3, B22, B24, C9, C16, C17) used the terms in their LE2 responses.

The second difficulty relates to the challenge many primary-aged students find in committing their thoughts to writing. This was an aspect mentioned by Teachers B and C – some pupils engaged well with the previous tasks but then ‘struggled’ (TB and TC) to formulate an answer on paper.⁴⁶⁸ Both teachers suggested ways to support students here. TB proposed that establishing time for discussion between the interpreter matching and written task may be beneficial. As he elucidates:

it was a relevant written task. But I wonder if it was my own class...whether I would have had that slightly more open discussion at the end bit, recorded some ideas on

⁴⁶⁷ pp. 398-399.

⁴⁶⁸ Teacher B Interview Two, line 528; Teacher C Interview Two, lines 437-438.

the flip chart, and then gone, ‘...now that you’ve seen other people’s responses...you should have had plenty of time to form your own opinion on this...Now I’d like you to record’...giving them those opportunities to...[share] their thoughts...it helps the more reluctant ones to go, ‘Oh ok. What I’m thinking’s ok’.⁴⁶⁹

TB knew that, for some pupils in his class, they benefit ‘from having that opportunity to have a bit of discussion before they do any writing’.⁴⁷⁰ That they need ‘something to hang their writing off’⁴⁷¹ links well to Britton’s (1970) famous assertion that ‘writing floats on a sea of talk’. Certainly, it was within Trial Two that I became acutely aware of the very practical limitation of time; due to my need to gather written responses to analyse, I had to bypass what would have been a valuable discussion of reflections following the interpreter matching activity. Not only would this discussion have provided further opportunity for dialogic learning, it may have granted students time to consider their response to the enquiry question and how they might structure it. Ultimately, my trade-off was the right call for the purposes of this research; other primary practitioners using these lesson plans would do well to incorporate such discussion as a means to support and develop pupils’ written responses.

Within Trial Three, there was time to trial such a discussion. Three questions were considered using the pair-share strategy:

- What can we learn about the interpretation of the Good Samaritan from this activity?
- What do you think has led to different interpretations? Why do you think different people interpret the parable differently?
- Do you think our background, experiences, beliefs affect how we interpret this text?

⁴⁶⁹ Teacher B Interview Two, lines 634-639, 665, 669, 673.

⁴⁷⁰ Teacher B Interview Two, line 660-661.

⁴⁷¹ Teacher B Interview Two, line 663.

A rich discussion followed. Pupils shared reflections on their thinking, including an insightful reflection from Pupil CA on how ‘no two people follow the same life path’⁴⁷² which discernibly impacted the class’ reasoning. This discussion may well have helped pupils to think further about the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretive diversity which they then committed to paper in their written response. For TC, such discussion could have gone further in helping pupils formulate their answer:

I think maybe for some of them, they would of benefitted from, ‘Ok so what’s some possible things that we could’ve put in here...Or what could we – what might you be thinking? Or what examples could we use? What does it mean by ‘*use examples from the matching activity*’? What examples have we got from that?’ ...Maybe just, like I say, just a bit more of a discussion point...before they were set off to write.’⁴⁷³

Such an approach, TC contends, would support students in the metacognitive and practical process of thinking through ‘how do I take what’s in my head and write it onto a piece of paper?’⁴⁷⁴ Providing an explicit, scaffolded bridge between discussion and writing holds strong potential in helping pupils construct their written response.

TC offered another potential way of supporting pupils in constructing their written responses, that of providing or creating a modelled answer with pupils. Often known as a ‘WAGOLL’ (what a good one looks like), this strategy can be useful in showcasing a strong response so pupils can see what is expected within their answer which they can then shape. Although I had considered including a WAGOLL within this parabolic enquiry, I eventually

⁴⁷² I noted this comment down after the lesson; it ran along the lines of ‘we all have our own experiences, backgrounds, tensions in life that we each face as we walk through our own life’s path and this changes how we interpret the text’.

⁴⁷³ Teacher C Interview Two, lines 598-600, 604-606, 610, 614.

⁴⁷⁴ Teacher C Interview Two, lines 645-646.

decided not to as providing modelled answers sometimes influences pupils' responses. This concern was recognised by TC: some responses may have 'been based on what you'd put in your example, rather than what they actually think'.⁴⁷⁵ Practitioners using these practical exemplifications should use their tact and knowledge of their class to discern whether or not to use a modelled example.

9.2.4.4 The impact of C-19

There is a final point to make, based on a rumination from TB. He considered the impact of the COVID lockdowns on pupils' ability to engage in dialogue to answer an open question:

because of the nature of lockdown learning, they [pupils] had to be able to produce some form of written content. So there was always an end point for it so that we could see what they were doing...And then we come back to school and it's a bit more open-ended...but they've also had sort of, you know, **nine months of not being able to bounce their ideas of somebody else, off their peers**...and that's a big deal for some children. I mean I think these guys were in Year Two the last time they didn't have a disrupted year because of COVID...and learning in Year Two and learning in Year Five are a bit different. And some of those skills that they would have built up during the course of Key Stage Two...[As a result of the pandemic] we're looking...at our curriculum and why the gaps are and why they're there...and how we facilitate that. **But, I think, one of those things is that lack of interaction with other children for that period of time, has had an effect on how the children work independently**...they have been working independently for a year, basically, but without those other ideas th-they kind of rely on what's going on in their own head...And there has to be a lot more to tha-, there has to be a lot more open discussion.⁴⁷⁶

My thematic analysis has demonstrated that these post-secular parabolic enquiries have enabled primary pupils to meaningfully explore the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive

⁴⁷⁵ Teacher C Interview Two, lines 490-491.

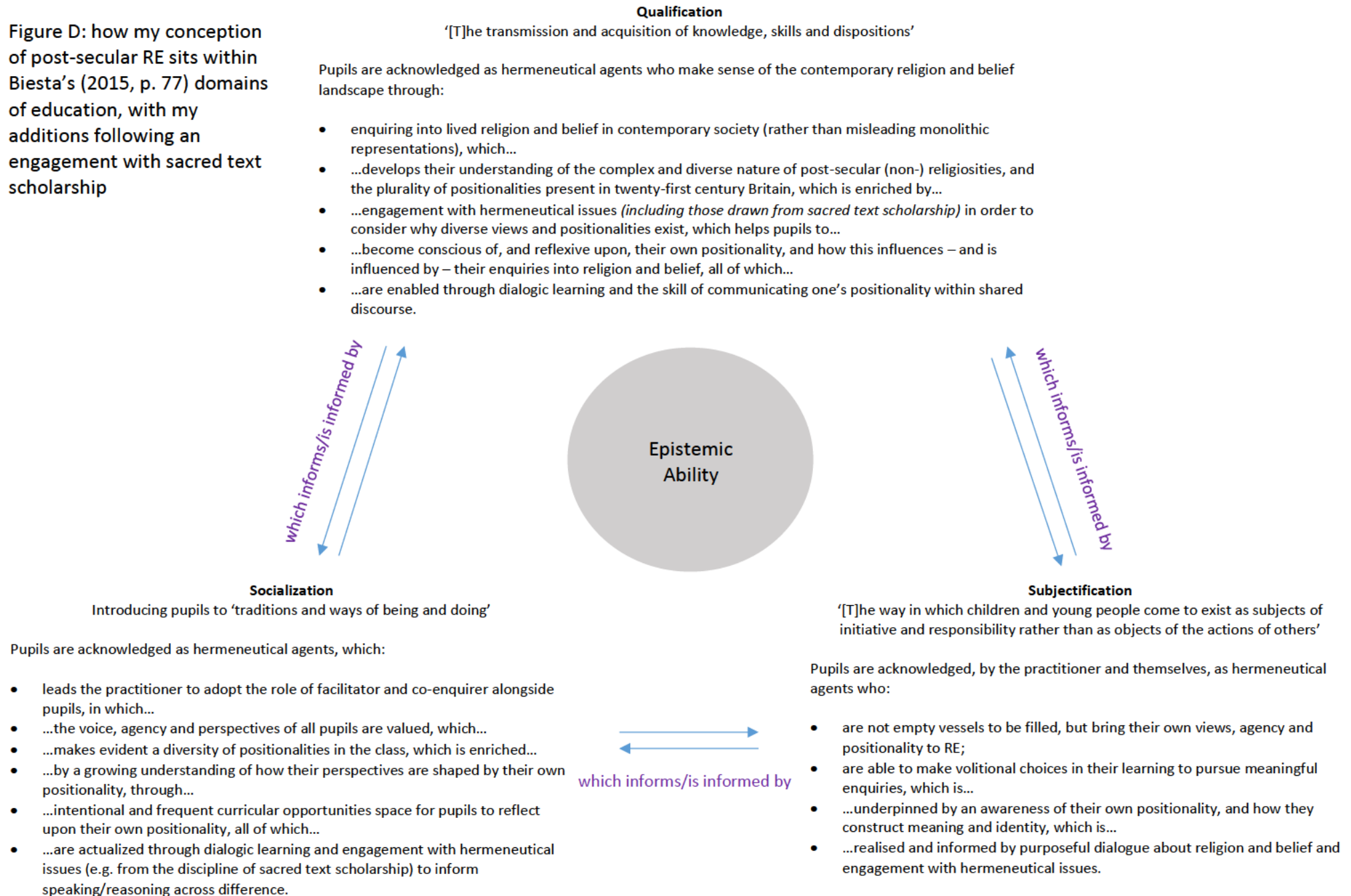
⁴⁷⁶ Teacher B Interview Two, lines 679-684, 688-689, 693-696, 722-723, 727-731, 735.

diversity. With the trials taking place in the 2021/22 academic year – the year following a period of significant disruption to students’ education due to COVID – it begs the question of whether these enquiries *would be even more effective* when used with students now who have had a more typical primary school experience. For instance, when setting up for each trial, I changed the seating arrangement from individual tables of two (Trials One and Three) and rows (Trial Two) to connected tables so that students could discuss and reason as triads/fours. This indicates that, due to the pandemic, opportunities to reason in groups for dialogic learning was not occurring due to the emphasis on public health. TB’s point raises an important contextual aspect of this research to consider; pupils participating in this research had limited opportunities to reason with peers over the preceding twenty-three months. This may well have influenced students’ ability to engage in collaborative reasoning, not least in any discussion enacted to support students construct an informed answer to the open-ended enquiry question at the end of LE2.

9.3 Concluding comments from the thematic analysis of LE2

In this chapter, I have undertaken a thematic analysis of each pedagogical episode within LE2 to ascertain the effectiveness of this parabolic enquiry. Established as a post-secular parabolic enquiry (as envisioned in Chapter Four), I now return to the conceptualisation driving these theory-informed lessons to consider the impact of both learning enquiries upon students’ epistemic ability (Figure D and Table 9.8).

Figure D: how my conception of post-secular RE sits within Biesta's (2015, p. 77) domains of education, with my additions following an engagement with sacred text scholarship



	Aspects of post-secular RE	How these aspects were seen in LE1	How these aspects were seen in LE2
Qualification Pupils are acknowledged as hermeneutical agents who make sense of the contemporary religion and belief landscape through...	enquiring into lived religion and belief in contemporary society (rather than misleading monolithic representations), which...	Rather than presenting the parable as having a single, unquestionable meaning, the parable was viewed within the classes as open to interpretation and attracting diverse readings.	Pupils valued engaging with authentic and diverse interpretations from different individuals, times and places. Through their reasoning, students recognised that this parable is interpreted differently by people around the world.
	...develops their understanding of the complex and diverse nature of post-secular (non-) religiosities, and the plurality of positionalities present in twenty-first century Britain, which is enriched by...	Pupils engaged with hermeneutical issues which considered the role of the reader in interpretation. Some students started to recognise the influence of positionality and subjectivity in the interpretative act (Section 8.2.3).	At the end of this second enquiry, students provided a myriad of reasons as to why interpretive diversity exists. This constellated around the influence of our positionality as readers, which they suggested is shaped by our backgrounds, beliefs, experiences and opinions.
	...engagement with hermeneutical issues (including those drawn from sacred text scholarship) in order to consider why diverse views and positionalities exist, which helps pupils to...	Through engagement with hermeneutical issues, pupils developed their understanding of why diverse views exist. This lesson prepared the ground to focus on this aspect in greater detail in LE2.	Through the pedagogic episodes, pupils deepened their hermeneutical deliberations from LE1 to consider a key question of reader-response ruminations within parabolic scholarship (Tolbert, 1979; Ukpong, 1996; Levine, 2014; Zimmermann, 2015) – <i>why</i> different interpreters read the parables the way they do (see point above).
	...become conscious of, and reflexive upon, their own positionality, and how this influences – and is influenced by – their enquiries into religion and belief, all of which...	Although some pupils demonstrated some reflexivity here, this aspect is the focus of LE2.	Pupils further recognised their own positionality and considered how this influences their engagement with a parable.
	...are enabled through dialogic learning and the skill of communicating one's positionality within shared discourse.	Pupils valued the opportunity to reason with and through the text, hermeneutical issues and others. Students commented how they valued being able to share their opinions and hear the views of their peers.	The opportunity to reason with classmates through the enquiry was again deeply valued by students. The strong engagement with alterity enabled students to deliberate with peers upon their own positionality in the interpretive act.

Socialization Pupils are acknowledged as hermeneutical agents, which...	leads the practitioner to adopt the role of facilitator and co-enquirer alongside pupils, in which...	In recognition of pupils as hermeneutical agents, I adopted these roles across all three trials.	See left.
	...the voice, agency and perspectives of all pupils are valued, which...	Pupils were empowered by the value placed on their deliberations and the time, space, and opportunity to consider and offer these.	This empowering continued through LE2. Students appreciated the ways in which their voice, agency and perspectives were championed.
	...makes evident a diversity of positionalities in the class, which is enriched...	The lesson – from start to finish – revealed the diversity of thinking regarding this parabolic text. Opportunities for dialogic learning made this diversity of thinking apparent for pupils.	All activities in this second enquiry (hermeneutical ‘icon’ starter, interpretation ranking and interpretation matching) effectively made the diversity of positionalities and views explicit to the classes. This included the diversity present within the class and more widely in/across society/ies.
	...by a growing understanding of how their perspectives are shaped by their own positionality, through...	An understanding was emerging (Section 8.2.3). This aspect is the focus of LE2.	As above: pupils further recognised and pondered their own positionality and the impact this bears upon their interpretation.
	...intentional and frequent curricular opportunities space for pupils to reflect upon their own positionality, all of which...	See point above (through engagement with some of the hermeneutical issues in the card sort and affinity mapping).	Tasks were designed explicitly to provide such opportunities for reflection.
	...are actualized through dialogic learning and engagement with hermeneutical issues (e.g. from the discipline of sacred text scholarship) to inform speaking/reasoning across difference.	The opportunities in this lesson allowed pupils to engage agentively and dialogically across the parable and constellating hermeneutical issues.	The opportunities for dialogic learning enabled students to efficaciously consider the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretive diversity.
Subjectification Pupils are acknowledged, by the practitioner and themselves, as hermeneutical agents who...	are not empty vessels to be filled, but bring their own views, agency and positionality to RE;	This view deeply influenced the pedagogical choices of the lesson, which had a positive impact on student engagement and thinking.	See left.
	are able to make volitional choices in their learning to pursue meaningful enquiries, which is...	Pupils exercised their agency at all stages. In particular, they could craft their own journey towards answering the lesson’s enquiry question through the textual analysis and card activities.	Pupils exercised their agency and volition across the enquiry. This was seen most clearly when implementing particular, collaborative strategies in reasoning across the interpretation ranking (Section 9.2.2).

	...underpinned by an awareness of their own positionality, and how they construct meaning and identity, which is...	The focus of LE2.	As outlined above, the design of the pedagogic episodes afforded purposeful focus and space for students to personally reflect upon their own positionality.
	...realised and informed by purposeful dialogue about religion and belief and engagement with hermeneutical issues.	Pupils engaged meaningfully with hermeneutical issues in LE1. This will be built upon for this aspect in LE2.	Pupils continued their hermeneutical reasoning in LE2 through focused and scaffolded dialogic learning around interpretation of a parable.

Table 9.8: the impact of my conception of post-secular RE evidenced within the thematic analysis across both learning enquiries

Considering, in the table above, how my conceptualisation of post-secular RE informed the classroom experience of pupils within these two enquiries has been fruitful. Not only has it allowed me to demonstrate the ways in which the learning enquiries were well calibrated to my envisioning of post-secular RE, it also shows the impact of this richer encounter for learners (Davis, 2014). Indeed, drawing upon Biesta's (2015) domains of education as a framework helps me ascertain the significance of these parabolic enquiries in the light of my RQs:

- **What is an appropriate parabolic enquiry for post-secular RE in the primary RE classroom?** *Informed by a critical engagement with a range of key western thinkers on post-secularism (Chapter Two), two enquiries have been curated and trialled with primary-aged students. Asserting that pupils must develop their epistemic ability in RE (to understand, appreciate, appraise and co-exist harmoniously with others within a post-secular society replete with plurality), these enquiries focussed student reasoning upon the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity. My thematic analysis has convincingly demonstrated that these enquiries have been effective towards achieving such ends; they have thus evidenced an appropriate post-secular hermeneutic;*
- **How can primary pupils enquire into parables in a way which draws attention to the diversity of interpretation?** *Moving beyond narrow, inaccurate parabolic enquiries which are directed towards a single, exclusivist, pre-determined 'correct' interpretation (Kohn, 2005; Pollefeyt and Bieringer, 2005; Davis, 2014; Aldridge, 2015; Briggs, 2017; Carswell, 2018a; 2018b; Pollefeyt and Richards, 2020), these curated enquiries focussed explicitly upon interpretive diversity of a parable. The first enquiry invited students to reason across a range of hermeneutical issues pertaining to interpretation of the PGS found within parabolic scholarship (Chapter Five); these included issues both 'behind' and 'in front' of the text (Gooder, 2008). The second enquiry saw students reason across and through a range of authentic parabolic interpretations (Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020). As a result of both enquiries, pupils recognised that this parable is interpreted differently by different people across the world;*
- **How might post-secular conceptions of the child, which stress their agency, affect the pedagogies employed in the classroom?** *Through my analytical engagement with literature in Chapter Three, I proffered a working definition of pupil agency.⁴⁷⁷ My view of pupil agency was then related to Davis' (2014) notion of the post-secular child; through doing so, I argued that a post-secular perception of the child lights the*

⁴⁷⁷ Pupil agency refers to the capability of pupils to construct meaning and pursue lines of enquiry through an engagement with the subject matter and others, which in turn is enabled and mediated through the social environment.

way toward a richer vision for RE. Such a vision recognises (and actualises) pupils as reflexive and agentic protagonists within primary RE, opening the door to a 'much more expansive encounter' (Davis, 2014, p. 21) between pupils and parabolic texts than presently occurs. This vision purposefully informed my envisioning (Chapter Four) and enacting (Chapters Six, Eight and Nine) of post-secular RE. The pedagogies employed recognised students as agentic hermeneuts – championing their voice, agency and perspectives; and

- **How can pupils become more hermeneutically aware, developing reasoned answers to the question, 'Why do different people interpret a parable differently?'** *The curated parabolic enquiries enabled students to engage meaningfully with the parabolic text, constellating hermeneutical issues and a range of diverse, authentic interpretations (both within and from outside the class). All of these activities were designed sequentially and intentionally, with the aim of enabling pupils to more efficaciously understand the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity. The thematic analysis in Chapters Eight and Nine demonstrates that pupils have become more hermeneutically aware and cognizant of interpretive diversity through engaging with these enquiries.*

My vision and subsequent enactment of post-secular RE as conceptualised through Biesta's (2015) view of education has seen the domains of qualification, socialization and subjectification work synergistically to develop students' epistemic ability. Put more explicitly, a richer encounter occurred as pupils were recognised as hermeneutical agents (subjectification) as they engaged in shared reasoning (socialization and subjectification) through interpretations and interpretive issues (qualification and socialization) to further understand the actual religion and belief landscape (qualification) of which they are part (socialization and subjectification). Certainly, my thematic analysis has shown compellingly that, with the appropriate scaffolding and resources, primary-aged pupils can successfully and meaningfully enquire into the 'what' and 'why' of interpretative diversity. Indeed, they have done so in a way not yet demonstrated in primary RE in formal research. I now turn, in the light of this, towards some concluding reflections.

CHAPTER TEN

10 CONCLUSION

‘[W]e as the teaching profession have possibly made things too narrow for children.
The whole...‘this is what it means. Learn the message’’ (Teacher A)⁴⁷⁸

‘[The post-secular is] a necessary phase in a larger narrative of political and social transformation destined to emancipate the child from every diminished or circumscribed account of his status and possibilities, including those directly emergent from the enlightened mission of popular education itself’
(Davis, 2014, p.21)

10.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I assert the significance of this research thesis. After detailing five recommendations for the RE community as the result of my inquiry (Section 10.2), I then reflect upon the impact of this investigation for myself as practitioner, adviser and researcher (Section 10.3). Following this, I proffer this research thesis’ key contributions to scholarship (Section 10.4) and an array of further, related questions which are worthy of exploration within the subject (Section 10.5). I close by reflecting on the importance of this research (Section 10.6).

10.2 Recommendations

In pursuing my RQs, I have envisaged and exemplified a post-secular parabolic enquiry which has contributed significantly towards pupils’ epistemic ability. As shown through my thematic analysis, pupils have been able to exercise their volition and voice as agentic

⁴⁷⁸ Teacher A Interview Two, lines 241-242, Appendix Twenty-Seven.

hermeneuts to construct informed responses as to 'why' the PGS is interpreted differently. That primary pupils are capable of such thinking has until now never been asserted nor demonstrated. This research thesis thus has important implications for how RE is theorised and practised. Below are five recommendations to offer the RE community that are required to ensure that richer encounters between pupils and parabolic texts (and wider aspects of religion and belief) become more commonplace.

Recommendation One: purpose and pedagogy in post-secular RE

Despite continuous calls on the importance of pupils understanding the diversity within and across religion and belief (e.g. Ofsted, 2013; Chipperton et al., 2018a; CoRE, 2018; CEE0, 2019; Chater, 2020), it remains that how this can be achieved pedagogically has not been sufficiently considered (Barnes, 2022). Consequently, effective ways to achieve this aim are under-exemplified. Through this research thesis, I have conceptualised, enacted and exemplified a post-secular RE which has enabled primary-aged pupils to effectively develop their epistemic ability. Through dialogically reasoning across and through alterity, these parabolic enquiries helped students to reflect deeply upon self and others in a way which helps them to navigate, negotiate and engage well with the diverse (world)views they will encounter in contemporary post-secular society. An application of the post-secular to RE in this manner constitutes new scholarship, contributing significantly to the RE community's understanding of what is possible in primary RE. **As a result of this endeavour's effectiveness, I propose that such a post-secular conceptualisation of RE – with its emphases on epistemic ability, post-secular (non-) religiosity, pupil agency and**

hermeneutics – be applied and trialled across wider aspects and age-phases in RE to further ascertain its utility.

Recommendation Two: more scholarly RE in the classroom

This research has demonstrated compellingly that a more scholarly approach to parabolic enquiry has enabled primary-aged pupils to reason well through diverse interpretations of the PGS; this has not been revealed before in formal research. Drawing upon hermeneutical questions found within parabolic scholarship⁴⁷⁹, a richer encounter has been enacted which allowed pupils to efficaciously consider the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretative variance. This is a momentous finding. It proves that primary pupils (with appropriate support, resources, pedagogies etc.) *can engage in this deep, hermeneutical thinking*; no longer must we lie in Goldman’s (1964; 1965) shadow, holding that only secondary-aged pupils can engage meaningfully with the parables.⁴⁸⁰ As a result, we must view critically those narrow, picayune enquiries which do no justice to either the horizon of the text or reader. **Instead, we must look afresh at textual enquiry in both primary and secondary RE so that pupils have richer, more scholarly-informed encounters with biblical texts.**⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁹ I.e. from *behind* and *in front* of the text, reception history.

⁴⁸⁰ Certainly, the case can be made that hermeneutically-rich exemplifications aimed at KS3 – such as the *Texts and Teachers* (Bowie et al., 2020a) resource – could actually be used in KS2. This might pave the way for the development of resources which help KS3 students to go even deeper into hermeneutical questions constellating around biblical texts than is currently occurring within this age-phase.

⁴⁸¹ Indeed, it is important to be mindful of the pedagogical problem emerging due to finite curriculum time (Teece, 2010). As we cannot explore unlimited texts and interpretations, it is important that we allow pupils to consider the ‘why’ of interpretive diversity. This will ensure they are better placed to *understand, appreciate* and *appraise* diverse views they may encounter in the future, both within and outside of their curriculum experience.

This has implications for policy and practice. In terms of policy, the conclusions of this research affirm the purposes and content-selection criteria outlined in the *National Content Standard* (REC, 2023). In particular, my post-secular parabolic enquiries exemplify an approach which calibrates well to the *Standard's* criteria around 'content', 'engagement' and 'position'⁴⁸² which helps students become 'knowledgeable, open-minded, critical participants in public discourse' (2023, p. 2). It is important that such a subject vision is applied through future review to the Church of England *Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education* (CEEEO, 2019). Although this statement outlines broad aspirations for RE in church schools, practitioners (and ultimately pupils) would benefit from further development, detail and clarity regarding the criteria stated as a result of both this research and developments in the subject since 2019 (e.g. Ofsted, 2021; REC, 2023). Specifically pertaining to this research, I suggest that the statement that '[p]upils can expect that teaching and learning in Church schools will use an approach that engages with biblical text' (2019, p. 2) be expanded to detail what a knowledge-rich engagement might entail. Incorporating effective principles from this research thesis (such as dialogic learning, engaging with alterity and diverse interpretations, positioning pupils as agentive hermeneuts and exploring questions around how and why different people engage with biblical texts) would communicate the need and expectation for more scholarly-informed encounters with biblical texts which contribute more efficaciously to students' religious literacy and epistemic ability. This includes the important aspect championed in this research of biblical text enquiry inviting educational opportunities for pupils to reflect upon

⁴⁸² See pp. 6-7 of the *National Content Standard*. For example, that the *content* selected helps pupils understand how worldviews are formed and expressed; that students *engage* dialogically with and through a range of interpreters and interpretations via a hermeneutical approach, and that pupils consider their own *position* and its influence in interpretive acts.

their own positionality and the influence this bears in interpretive acts. Ultimately, it is important that these two policy documents inform the work of SACREs and others involved in curriculum production/advisory work so that scholarly-informed encounters with biblical texts become commonplace on the chalk-face. Further exemplifications following from this research and associated policy developments would provide space and opportunity for pupils to reason dialogically with texts, authentic interpretations, and constellating hermeneutical questions pertaining to horizons of text and reader.⁴⁸³ These curricula opportunities would contribute more richly to students' substantive, disciplinary and personal knowledge (Ofsted, 2021b) than currently existing plans and practice.

Recommendation Three: recognising pupil agency and voice

Rejecting the view that pupils are passive recipients of knowledge, this research has taken seriously pupils' agency, positionality and perspectives. My theory-informed parabolic enquiries were designed to help students exercise their volition and voice within a shared dialogic enquiry: to be reflexive protagonists in their RE learning. My analysis demonstrated that the lesson resources, support and classroom culture allowed pupils to engage in deep interpretive reasoning as agentive hermeneuts. Pupils valued highly the opportunity to share and shape their own views through an encounter with the subject matter and others. Indeed, a strong thread throughout my thematic analysis was that knowledge-rich RE requires ample time for pupils to dialogically and personally reason with and through the

⁴⁸³ Such hermeneutical thinking is enriched when pupils have access to the text to refer to. As stated in Chapter Eight (Section 8.2.1.3, p. 293): 'Here is a call from students to grant them continued access to narratives; simply reading or showing at the start without future reference stymies their thinking as they cannot return to the text to remind themselves of key aspects or ponder emerging hermeneutical thoughts'.

content (Cooling et al., 2020; Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020; Ofsted, 2021b). The fact that these parabolic enquiries helped pupils to consider deeply the influence of a reader's horizon in interpretive acts challenges the view (e.g. of Barnes, 2022) that primary-aged pupils are cognitively incapable of reflexively considering their own or others' positionality. Sadly, too often biblical enquiry in RE does not afford pupils opportunities to exercise their agency as hermeneuts in this manner; commonplace are narrow, limiting enquiries where pupils are directed uncritically towards a 'correct' meaning.

Furthermore, this research has been cross-disciplinary, bridging both education and theology. Central within my data collection and analysis were pupils' perspectives. This substantially enriched my understanding. Students articulated so much in the lessons and focus groups; their ideas, their questions, what they valued, their frustrations and more besides. One disappointment which emerged from pupils – one which I share – is that too often their views are not invited.⁴⁸⁴ Not only is this the case in the curricular work in schools, but also in theological scholarship. From the body of theological research and literature I have encountered to date⁴⁸⁵, I am acutely aware of the sparsity of work which considers the voices of children and young people. This absence of pupil voice in RE and theology⁴⁸⁶ needs redressing.

⁴⁸⁴ Pupil voice is too-often overlooked in both educational research and school practice.

⁴⁸⁵ I.e. through: my undergraduate and postgraduate research; full-time role as a diocesan adviser who supports schools in their Christian distinctiveness; my training and role as a Lay Leader of Worship who facilitates all-age worship, and personal reading.

⁴⁸⁶ Both 'academic' and 'everyday' theology.

I recommend that in a recognition of children and young people as agentic hermeneuts, more attention be granted towards their agency and voices in both RE (to explore how this might purposefully inform curricula and pedagogical moves) and theological scholarship to enrich both. This holds great potential in enriching student's epistemic ability and religious literacy (Chipperton et al., 2018a).

Recommendation Four: developing teacher expertise and confidence

The impact of these post-secular parabolic enquiries requires that RE of this dialogical and hermeneutical nature becomes commonplace. Facilitating such enquiries requires expertise; it needs knowledgeable, tactful and reflective practitioners who see the importance of this type of RE. **I therefore recommend that the professional development of RE teachers take further account of hermeneutics, dialogic learning and pupil agency so that pupils' epistemic ability is more efficaciously developed through richer RE.** This is important, as it will make purposeful steps towards: addressing a wide-spread misconception of teachers that the parables (and other biblical texts) have a single, incontestable meaning; empowering practitioners to courageously facilitate more open enquiries which invite pupils into scholarly, hermeneutical conversations with texts (as opposed to narrow, pre-determined ones), and to help teachers boldly assert the value (within a time-constrained curriculum) of providing ample space to enquire deeply into texts and interpretive issues. Ensuring that practitioners develop skill and confidence to facilitate such enquiries has implications for ITT and CPD. With regard to ITT, providers should review their offer to ensure that new practitioners develop their understanding around pupil agency, hermeneutics and dialogic learning in RE – what they refer to, why they are important and

how to incorporate these areas into their teaching practice. Indeed, this research thesis has not only demonstrated the impact of taking these three aspects seriously in the RE classroom, but has also identified a growing concern around a *routinisation* of learning (Aubrey and Riley, 2022) as a result of the *Early Career Framework* (DfE, 2019a) and *ITT Core Content* (DfE, 2019b) which affects confidence in facilitating open, agency-rich⁴⁸⁷ enquiries which this research thesis champions.⁴⁸⁸ A similar call can be made for CPD. Those providing opportunities for professional development should regard the conclusions of this research and consider a) how it challenges their view of high-quality, knowledge-rich RE in the primary school and b) how they might take forward the principles exemplified in this thesis in the training and development of teachers. Certainly, with the impact of this post-secular parabolic enquiry in this research, it is important that the areas of pupil agency, hermeneutics and dialogic learning here advocated are shared more widely for practitioner deliberation and application.

A rich opportunity for teacher professional development here is potentially provided already in mandatory *UC* training. Much of the hermeneutical thinking I have advanced in this research thesis underpins the *UC* resources already through the authors' engagement with scholars such as Thiselton (Pett and Cooling, 2018). As previously mentioned (Chapter Five, Section 5.6.4), nowhere in the *UC* training or Teacher Handbook (RE Today, 2016) is Thiselton's (2009) *responsible hermeneutics* explicitly mentioned. If this was explicated and further exemplified, it would provide a meaningful vehicle to develop teachers' (and

⁴⁸⁷ That is, where pupils are recognised as agential hermeneuts and explicit opportunities planned for them to exercise their volition and voice in to meet curriculum goals.

⁴⁸⁸ See Chapter Nine, Section 9.2.1.1, pp. 352-353.

therefore pupils') hermeneutical awareness. *UC* is already used by a critical mass of schools and is well-calibrated to incorporate the advances in textual enquiry I am advocating.

10.3 A personal research journey

This research has been a joy from conception to completion. As a personal journey, it has afforded me the opportunity to explore an important area emerging out of my teaching experience in the 2016/17 academic year. Now created, trialled and having a compelling impact, I am proud to have designed a post-secular parabolic enquiry which has helped pupils consider the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity. The development of these lessons was informed by critical engagements with wide-ranging areas of interest – theology, education, sociology of religion, sociology of childhood, philosophy, pupil agency and more besides. Synthesising various bodies of literature within this research has led to important and innovative scholarship in RE, and I hope to continue contributing in a scholarly manner to the subject community (teachers, advisers, curriculum designers etc.) through the distillation and dissemination of this research⁴⁸⁹ and through future professional and academic work.

My journey has also been a professional one. I started this research in September 2017 whilst a full-time teacher, moving to an advisory post the following year. The period following 2018 has been one of significant development within English education and RE, not least with Ofsted's (2019) *Education Inspection Framework* and the recommendations of

⁴⁸⁹ E.g. through speaking at national conferences, publishing in national subject magazines and academic articles.

CoRE's Final Report (2018). I have found this research a cordial solace from which to reflect upon such ideas and movements.⁴⁹⁰ This dedicated, focused time has allowed me to improve my practice as a RE advisor, informing my work with schools, SACRES and national organisations (CEEQ and REC). Additionally, the development of my thinking has informed wider applications. For instance, in a blog (R.Parker, 2022)⁴⁹¹ I proffered a potential synergy between Biesta's (2015) domains of education and Nye's (2009) relational consciousness in helping us think about spiritual development across the curriculum.

My endeavour to answer my main RQ⁴⁹² drove all stages of this research. In Chapter One, an autobiographical approach enabled me to identify the pressing need for this inquiry. As a research-engaged practitioner, I was heartened yet frustrated with continuous calls from national reports and subject specialists that RE needs to help pupils understand the diversity of religion and belief in the world. I agreed that enabling pupils to progressively develop their cognisance of plurality across their RE experience is essential, yet these frequent calls were not supported by practical exemplifications to help teachers, who may or may not be subject specialists, achieve this important aim in the classroom. I held it untenable to continue this cycle of asserting without resourcing. Indeed, I was alarmed by curriculum resources on teaching parables. Too often, they directed pupils towards a single 'correct' and incontestable meaning.⁴⁹³ These exemplifications aggravated me; these sacred texts were being narrowed and constricted. Pupils were being told *how* to read these texts, playing little more than a game of 'Guess what's inside the teacher's head' (Kohn, 2005).

⁴⁹⁰ In terms of reflection *on* and *for* action as a practitioner, adviser and researcher (Farrell, 2012).

⁴⁹¹ <https://educationallymusing.blogspot.com>

⁴⁹² What is an appropriate parabolic enquiry for post-secular RE in the primary RE classroom?

⁴⁹³ Often a different 'correct' meaning depending on the resource consulted.

Even the *UC* (2016) materials, perceived as a game-changer in the teaching of biblical texts⁴⁹⁴ did not sufficiently help pupils explore the various readings the parables attract.⁴⁹⁵ I asserted that what was urgently required was a theory-informed, trialled exemplification which helps pupils efficaciously understand the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretive diversity. As articulated in my main and sub-RQs, such a parabolic enquiry would take seriously pupil agency. Students’ perspectives and positionality would be given due regard and, following an engagement with a range of interpretations and interpretive issues pertaining to a parable, they would have the opportunity to reflexively consider ‘How do I read it?’.

The second chapter helped me make purposeful initial strides towards envisioning and enacting a post-secular parabolic enquiry through engaging with a range of Western literature on post-secularism. Viewing the concept of the post-secular as utile in helping us understand the socio-cultural reality of religion and belief, I appraised literature from a range of sociologists (e.g. Turner, 2012; Ammerman, 2014; Berger, 2014; Woodhead, 2016b; Taves, 2018). What struck me was the way in which our identity is formed in ‘a dialogical relationship with...context’ (Cush, 2023, p. 54). This led me to proffer a working definition of post-secular (non-) religiosity, which *refers to the constructed and bespoke nature of spirituality, which individuals curate as they negotiate truth claims, personal experiences and their relational networks*. This accounts for the rich diversity in the religion and belief landscape, which RE must attend to. I then appraised Habermas’ (2006) view of epistemic ability. I argued that, whilst some weaknesses⁴⁹⁶, the basic thrust of his notion of developing

⁴⁹⁴ Due, in part, to its emphasis on theological enquiry.

⁴⁹⁵ Partially as the *UC* materials do not focus only on the parables but on the ‘big story’ of Christianity.

⁴⁹⁶ Chapter One, Section 2.4.2.

a reflexive, knowledgeable citizenry who are able (and willing) to engage in discourse around religion and belief is important with regards to understanding and relating well with societal diversity. Tying this notion to my emerging concept of post-secular (non-) religiosity⁴⁹⁷, I proffered my own innovative definition of epistemic ability.⁴⁹⁸ Arriving at this definition provided a necessary foundation from which to later conceptualise a post-secular RE and an associated parabolic enquiry. Such a move is vital as a RE well-calibrated to develop students' epistemic ability would contribute significantly to their flourishing as citizens within a pluralistic public space.

Tethered closely to epistemic ability is pupil agency, the focus of Chapter Three. A review of literature advanced my understanding of agency – what it is, how learners exercise it in the classroom and the factors enabling and/or constraining agentic action. Key within this chapter was the relating of pupil agency to Davis' (2014) notion of the post-secular child. I proposed that a post-secular perception of the child lays a path towards a richer vision for RE, one which recognises pupils as reflexive protagonists. In turn, a 'much more expansive encounter' (Davis, 2014, p. 21) with parabolic texts can be designed which goes beyond paltry curriculum exemplifications which fail to take pupils' perspectives seriously.

In Chapter Four, I proffered my own novel conception of post-secular RE. Using Biesta's (2015; 2017) domains of education as a purposeful frame, this envisioning presented a

⁴⁹⁷ So ensuring that Habermas' concept is more attentive to the plurality of spiritual identities present in contemporary society.

⁴⁹⁸ *Epistemic ability refers to the capability of individuals to understand, appreciate, appraise and co-exist harmoniously with others, aided through reflexivity upon one's own positionality and how this can be brought into shared discourse. Such an ability requires an understanding of the complex and diverse nature of post-secular (non-) religiosities, and the plurality of positionalities present in twenty-first century Britain.*

pioneering vision for the subject, one which takes post-secular (non-) religiosity, epistemic ability, pupil agency and a post-secular perception of the child seriously. This thinking was significant in answering my RQs. It helped me hypothesise how epistemic ability could be developed in the crucible of the classroom through a more hermeneutically-informed RE offer. In recognising pupils as agentive constructors of meaning, I argued that curriculum encounters could be designed which enable pupils to dialogically reason across and through religion and belief in contemporary society, which is replete with diversity. Regarding parabolic enquiries, I asserted that allowing primary-aged pupils to engage with a range of hermeneutical issues constellating around these biblical texts held great potential in helping them consider the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretive diversity. Opportunities to do this thinking is not currently afforded to primary students; undertaking such reasoning could contribute meaningfully to their substantive, disciplinary and personal knowledge (Ofsted, 2021b).

Identifying hermeneutical issues to include within this richer post-secular parabolic enquiry was the focus of Chapter Five. I started by consulting a range of key (predominantly Western) literature within parabolic scholarship to identify significant *behind* and *in front* of the text hermeneutical questions.⁴⁹⁹ Particularly striking to me was the potential utility of reception history. I pondered whether this branch of theological thinking – which considers how a text has been read over time – might be applied constructively to a classroom enquiry to help pupils contemplate hermeneutical issues through an engagement with authentic and diverse interpretations from Christian history. Here, pupils could consider

⁴⁹⁹ Via historical and reader-response criticism respectively.

both *text* and *reader* in interpretive acts. In the chapter's second part, I turned to a comprehensive review of guidance and curriculum materials available to practitioners on the teaching the parables since 1988. I concluded that current materials do not adequately help students consider the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity. Published enquiries too often present the parables in an exclusivist (Pollefeyt and Richards, 2020), predetermined (Pollefeyt and Bieringer, 2005; Davis, 2014; Aldridge, 2015; Briggs, 2017; Carswell, 2018a; 2018b) and/or instrumental manner (Aldridge, 2011; Chater and Erricker, 2013; Watson, 2013). This observation cemented the need and value for my research, as a richer, theory-informed parabolic enquiry was required which contributed more effectively to pupils' epistemic ability.

I was then ready to address my RQs through curating (Chapter Six), trialling and analysing (Chapters Seven through Nine) a post-secular parabolic enquiry. The key contributions to scholarship from these trials are now presented in Section 10.4.

10.4 Key contributions to scholarship

This research has demonstrated that primary-aged pupils *can ably engage in rich hermeneutical reasoning pertaining to why a parable is interpreted differently by different people*. This has significant implications for how the subject is theorised and practised. My aim was to design a post-secular parabolic enquiry (my main RQ), one well-calibrated to develop pupils' epistemic ability as knowledgeable, reflexive citizens within a pluralistic public space. In order to achieve this, I envisaged and enacted *an appropriate hermeneutic*. In other words, I curated an enquiry which took post-secular (non-) religiosity, epistemic

ability, pupil agency, a post-secular perception of the child and hermeneutical questions raised within my review of parabolic scholarship seriously. Such an enquiry utilised dialogic learning as a purposeful pedagogical tool in enabling pupils to reflexively reason across and through a myriad of perspectives and hermeneutical issues. My analysis of these two lessons have provided persuasive evidence that, as a result of these curriculum interventions, pupils developed their understanding of the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretive diversity of the PGS; their epistemic ability was enriched. A distillation of the key aspects contributing to the success of these enquiries are presented below.

10.4.1 Dialogic learning: reasoning across/through the parable, perspectives and positionalities

In Chapter Four (Section 4.7), I drew upon a number of key dialogue partners to develop my understanding of dialogic learning as a utile pedagogical tool in enriching pupils’ epistemic ability (Ricoeur, 1992; Barnes, 2002; Gadamer, 2004; Aldridge, 2015; Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020). My hypothesis’ basic thrust was that enabling pupils to encounter a plethora of aspects to reason across and through – hermeneutical issues, variant interpretations, perspectives of their peers – would provide a rich alterity to stimulate student thinking. I postulated that such reasoning would develop pupils’ understanding of others and self in a virtuous hermeneutical spiral (Ricoeur, 1992; Boeve, 2012; Freathy and Freathy, 2013; Jackson, 2014; Aldridge, 2015; Larkin et al., 2020).

My analysis has shown that the desired impact was achieved. There are a number of conclusions to draw attention to here. First, pupils valued highly the opportunity to actively

analyse the parabolic text towards the start of LE1. Numerous focus group students stated how it helped them become familiar with the text – the characters, events, vocabulary etc.; to build, as Willingham (2009) terms, a robust ‘situation model’ of the narrative. Not only was this reasoning useful for subsequent hermeneutical thinking, but pupils found it beneficial to have the physical copy of the text present to refer to as part of their thinking. Students stated how space to engage with the text is not often afforded to them; textual enquiry in RE is often limited to brief encounters followed by cloze activities or comprehension questions.⁵⁰⁰ These fleeting encounters, as Pupil CD stated, often lead to confusion. Further, inviting pupils’ initial thoughts on the parable prior to engagement with the text helped them reflexively consider their interpretation/development of thinking later in the enquiry. This contributed efficaciously to their personal knowledge as they pondered their own perspectives and positionality in their parabolic encounter (Ofsted, 2021b).

Second, encountering alterity stimulated deep dialogic reasoning. Engaging with a plethora of hermeneutical aspects, authentic interpretations and perspectives from their peers developed pupils’ understanding of the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of interpretive diversity. This is perhaps best captured in Pupil CA’s comment, that encountering variance ‘made me really think about the different times, the different cultures, the different backgrounds and experiences that lead up to similarities, differences...and unique people thinking different things’.⁵⁰¹ Epistemic ability was discernibly enriched as pupils developed their thinking

⁵⁰⁰ The sense of rushed classrooms with directed comprehension and ‘do it now’ activities run counter to the rich and slow pedagogy employed in this research.

⁵⁰¹ Some other quotes from pupils which demonstrate their epistemic ability include the following reflections on why different people read the parable differently:

- **‘Because we’re all different and we all see things differently.** So if we were to read that [parable], we would all have a different, like...in our head we will have a dif- different picture...of like what happened. And then if you was gonna write that on a piece of paper, everyone would have a different

pertaining to both aspects of the text-reader dialogue (Gadamer, 2004), and could more efficaciously *understand, appreciate and appraise* their own and other viewpoints. They therefore developed their understanding of others as well as self. Indeed, a number of students explained how encountering a diversity of views helped them to not only recognise others' views, but also to reflexively ponder their own perspectives and positionality – the hermeneutical spiral in action (Ricoeur, 1992; Boeve, 2012; Freathy and Freathy, 2013; Jackson, 2014; Aldridge, 2015; Larkin et al., 2020).⁵⁰² Allowing pupils to enter into scholarly conversations about texts (i.e. considering *behind* and *in front* of the text issues from parabolic scholarship) and their interpretive diversity contributed significantly to their substantive, disciplinary and personal knowledge (Ofsted, 2021b). This is a momentous finding, particularly as teachers and pupils reiterated my observation in Chapter Five that engaging with diverse readings of sacred texts rarely occurs in primary RE.

Thirdly, dialogic reasoning was promoted through opportunities for pupils to reason within groups. As noted in the previous paragraph, students valued the opportunity to reflect together in a shared engagement with the subject matter. In considering and communicating their own views with others and contemplating the perspectives of their peers, they were engaging in informed, reflective discourse. As a key tenet of Habermas' (2006) epistemic ability, this dialogical and hermeneutical approach is therefore apposite for

answer normally...because **we all think differently, even though we have the same like lesson or...the same text**. We all will still read it the same but we all think about it differently' (Pupil CB); and

- **'people have different beliefs so they would focus on different parts of this and how they think of it'** (Pupil CD).

⁵⁰² And exemplifies what Shaw (2022) describes as 'a reflexive engagement with plurality'. This is shown, for instance, in Pupil CA's comment that the affinity mapping allowed him to 'find out what you think – truly – and yet, find out what everyone else...thinks'.

post-secular RE (Castelli, 2012; Alexander, 2015; Biesta et al., 2019).⁵⁰³ The trials also drew attention to some of the challenges of group work. An effective collaborative endeavour often relies on positive group dynamics, clarity around the task and the active contribution of all group members.⁵⁰⁴ Practitioners who use these practical exemplifications must be mindful of these factors and employ strategies to mitigate these barriers.

10.4.2 Pupil agency: empowering students' as agentic hermeneuts

In envisioning and exemplifying a post-secular RE which contributes towards pupils' epistemic ability (Chapters Four and Six), a post-secular conception of the child (Davis, 2014) informed the pedagogical repertoire trialled within this parabolic enquiry (RQii). I asserted that notion of the child lit the way towards a richer vision for RE, one which recognises and actualises pupils as reflexive, agentic protagonists within their learning. My design of a post-secular parabolic enquiry highlighted how dialogic reasoning through alterity can champion pupil agency through a 'pedagogical and epistemic stance that together foreground and explicitly signal the empowerment of the student as speaker, thinker, reasoner, learner and evaluator' (Alexander, 2020, p. 119).

It is clear that pupils felt empowered within these enquiries. They deeply valued that their perspectives were invited and championed, and that frequent opportunities were presented for them to formulate and express their opinions. This impact was powerfully evident in

⁵⁰³ The impact of quality dialogic learning via student-student interaction leads me to further assert the need for this to be acknowledged within Aldridge's (2015) view of the learning event as articulated in his educational triangle. Indeed, this omission is a point he himself acknowledges (2015, p. 129).

⁵⁰⁴ As well as the perception of this from peers.

Pupil BD's comment that 'I love[d?] giving my opinion...'*'cos I feel like then people know I'm there and that I can be heard'* (italics my own). Although pupils appreciated the chances to share their views, teachers and pupils both acknowledged that this did not happen often enough in RE. Too often, as Pupil BB states, 'you kind of get told what to write' in RE without the opportunity to 'express yourself'. This richer parabolic encounter highly engaged pupils as they were earnestly invited to ponder 'how do you read it?' rather than being told 'this is how it should be read' (Ingold, 2018).⁵⁰⁵

Furthermore, pupils were empowered by the lessons' emphasis on diversity. Encountering a plethora of hermeneutical issues and authentic interpretations helped students to recognise that these texts attract many ideas, and *that their ideas are valued contributions to scholarly conversations around these texts*. I wonder how often the fear of 'getting it wrong' prevents pupils offering their rich contributions in the RE classroom. In these lessons, the space and opportunity to express their views enabled pupils (as well as myself and teachers) to see a diversity of perspectives across the class. Students had a range of views regarding the amount of viable readings of this parable, the usefulness of titles, which hermeneutical aspects made them think the most, the appropriateness of particular interpretations and more besides. The diversity within classes is paramount for teachers to recognise and *use as a resource* – as it was to good effect in these enquiries – in developing pupils' epistemic ability.

⁵⁰⁵ TA's comment is apt here: 'we as the teaching profession have possibly made things too narrow for children. The whole...*'this is what it means. Learn the message''*.'

As well as enabling pupils to exercise their voice as reflexive agents, this parabolic enquiry also allowed them to exercise their volition in their learning (Danby and Farrell, 2004; Hyde et al., 2010; Oswell, 2013; Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015; Paganelli, 2017; Rappa and Tang, 2017). Through establishing a culture of choice and agency, a number of pupils made their own independent decisions to support their own reasoning. This was seen, for instance, in the interpretation ranking activity. Some groups opted to consider each interpretation one at a time; others evaluated all readings at once. One group decided to take two cards individually to reason through, before proffering their justification to the group for collaborative decision making. This demonstrates how students were empowered as protagonists in their own learning and developed their independent and collaborative reasoning within an open pedagogy (Davis, 2014).

10.4.3 Effective sequencing, support and challenge

For this innovative, hermeneutical approach to be impactful with primary pupils, it was key that the sequencing and support was effective, and challenge appropriately pitched. That pupils were able to engage in this deep thinking attests that these aspects were achieved. It was striking that both teachers and pupils expressed the usefulness of the connected pedagogic episodes. For instance: the textual enquiry helped students' engage well with the card sort and affinity mapping; LE1 informed pupil reasoning in LE2, and granting pupils the opportunity to reflect on their reading of the PGS at the start of LE1 helped them consider their own development of thought and positionality at the end of both enquiries. The impact of the hermeneutical starter in LE2 particularly stood out to me. The numerous ideas generated by the class regarding what a simple icon meant and why

different people had different ideas about it helped students identify the horizon of the reader/the place of positionality in interpretive acts. Pupils subsequently applied their reasoning here when deliberating upon variant receptions of the PGS. As well as sequencing, the analysis showed how modelling, well-calibrated resources, support of teacher and peers, and ample time to reflect deeply enabled pupils to exercise their agency as agentive hermeneuts in exploring interpretation and the parable. Certainly, piloting these lessons were beneficial in shaping these enquiries before trialling in schools.⁵⁰⁶

The three trials highlighted key aspects that practitioners using these resources should be cognisant of. One is ensuring that pupils have a secure understanding of the terminology used. The first trial helped me realise that clear explication was required at a number of stages; this included what the headings mean in the card sorting, and what the terms ‘interpret’, ‘interpreter’ and ‘interpretation’ refer to in LE2. More intentionally and repeatedly explaining these terms in the subsequent trials was impactful. Another is providing appropriate support to primary-aged students in navigating the common challenge of committing their thoughts to writing. I am grateful for Teacher B’s idea on how to support pupils here. They suggested that establishing a time for pupils to discuss their reflections following the interpreter matching activity to share thoughts and pool ideas together might help pupils construct their written response at the end of LE2. I had time to try this in Trial Three, which led to some insightful reflections being offered in class discussions which supported pupils when formulating a written response to the lesson’s enquiry question.

⁵⁰⁶ See Chapter Seven, Section 7.3, Appendices Twelve – Fourteen.

10.4.4 The development of teachers' epistemic ability

Not only was pupils' epistemic ability enriched through this research, but the teachers' too. Through their own dialogic encounters within the interviews and trials, I observed how their perspectives moved from 'the parable has one meaning to communicate' to a recognition that the parable attracts diverse interpretations. Each saw the importance of this research and the impact of an approach which emphasised pupil agency and authentic alterity. If more pupils are to experience more scholarly encounters with the parables in RE, it is key that practitioners no longer hold the misconception that they bear a single, incontestable meaning. These lessons enabled the participating teachers to reflect upon their practice and take key points away to inform their future RE teaching.

10.5 Future areas of research

In undertaking this research thesis, numerous questions and areas for further research have emerged. Below are a selection:

- With UKS2 pupils able to engage in rich hermeneutical thinking around a parable, what might be appropriate for students to explore in other age-phases as part of a progressive primary and secondary RE offer?⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁷ Perhaps an increasing number of *behind* and *in front* of the text questions can be used as pupils engage with authentic interpretations between KS1 and LKS2. In KS3, perhaps focus could turn to: ideological readings (such as feminist, black, queer, liberation); deeper contemplation of the parables as situated in particular gospels with respective authorial intents (Tolbert, 1979; Schottroff, 2006; Snodgrass, 2008), and/or encountering readings considered 'less legitimate' to stimulate discussion around limiting factors and 'who decides' the validity of interpretations.

- How else might reception history inform richer parabolic enquiries across RE? Using commentaries, art and other sourceable interpretive ruminations has a rich, unexplored potential in helping pupils encounter and reason across/through numerous authentic interpretations from a range of times and places. Not only can this help students consider the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity, but it could help them recognise (and even challenge) the influence of certain interpretations⁵⁰⁸ and contemplate how (and why) readings have changed over time.⁵⁰⁹
- How might wider aspects of RE teaching be enriched by my conception of post-secular RE? How might a focus on dialogic learning, encountering alterity, pupil agency, hermeneutics and epistemic ability enhance encounters with other biblical texts, sources of wisdom from other living religious traditions, and further aspects of (non-) religious belief and practice? With regard to the findings of this thesis (with a focus on a Christian, New Testament text) advancing developments in the teaching of non-Christian religions, I am mindful of 'Christian blueprints' too often informing how these living religions have been understood and presented in the past (Smart, 1971; Holt, 2023). These blueprints should be viewed critically. Indeed, my Habermasian-informed (Habermas, 2006; 2008) perspective contends that religion and belief should be presented in an accurate way, one which adherents feel is representative of their own understanding of their faith (therefore linking 'epistemic ability' to 'epistemic justice'; see Stones and Fraser-Pearce, 2022). With this in mind, I contend that my conclusions regarding the utility of a hermeneutical approach with

⁵⁰⁸ See Chalmers' (2020) interesting think-piece on how Calvin's view on Israelite-Samaritan hostility shaped future encounters with the PGS.

⁵⁰⁹ And even how we are part of the (re)production of the live tradition of how texts are understood and used (Evans, 2014).

a parable of Jesus still invites consideration of how sources of wisdom in other religious traditions are explored in the primary RE classroom. For instance, Hussain and Cooper-Davies' (2024) proposal that KS3 students should have the opportunity to encounter the hermeneutical reasoning of *ijtihad* to understand *how* and *why* diverse interpretations of Islamic texts are produced could be trialled in UKS2.

Likewise, the reception history approach of Levine and Zvi Brettler (2020) demonstrates the interpretive conversation that surrounds many Jewish sacred texts which can be drawn upon for pupils to reason with and through to further understand diverse Jewish thinking and practice.

- How can we best support and equip teachers to facilitate such hermeneutically and dialogically-rich enquiries? What CPD will be appropriate?
- How might learning in this mode best be assessed?
- This research has demonstrated – contra Goldman (1964; 1965) – that with appropriate sequencing, support and resources, primary pupils *are able to engage in rich hermeneutical reasoning with parabolic texts*. I wonder in what other areas of RE pupils are constrained due to a restrictive and inaccurate view of what primary students are and are not yet able to do?
- What enables and constrains agency in the RE classroom? How might students' epistemic ability be enriched across the board in RE if pupils were recognised as agentive hermeneuts? How might this affect curriculum and pedagogy (Parker, 2021)? What might the impact be if agency was centre-stage in RE as a 'process' and 'goal' (Stenalt and Lassesen, 2022, p. 653)? How could we support practitioners' understanding and enabling of agency, facilitating RE lessons where students can exercise their voice and volition whilst meeting curricular aims (Moses et al., 2020;

Kim, 2022)? Could recent moves towards disciplinarity in RE be a way through which pupil agency is identified and championed as developing scholars of religion and belief?⁵¹⁰

- What other pedagogical moves would enable knowledge-rich, self-reflexive RE?
- With *engaging in shared discourse* constituting a key element of epistemic ability, I wonder whether research into developing pupils' oracy, and dialogue in the classroom, might be a fruitful area to explore in RE?⁵¹¹

These questions are important. Pursuing them, in a subject which is under-researched, is essential in helping the RE community shape a curriculum offer which more effectively contributes to pupils' religious literacy, epistemic ability, and their substantive, disciplinary and personal knowledge (Ofsted, 2021b). Disseminating my research⁵¹² – the conclusions and further questions raised – will hopefully inspire others to join me in exploring some of these questions.

10.6 Concluding reflections

Returning to my view of this research as a personal journey, it is interesting to look back and consider the paths trod and those unexplored. This research has been a part-time endeavour, beginning in 2017. Over this time period, many developments in RE, as well in

⁵¹⁰ There are potential links to epistemic agency here, where pupils can 'shape the knowledge production in classrooms' (Stroupe et al., 2018, p. 1177).

⁵¹¹ Inspired by Kim (2022).

⁵¹² Footnote 489, p. 414.

educational generally in England,⁵¹³ occurred. A number of these developments, such as CoRE's (2018) advocacy of a move to worldviews and Ofsted's (2021b) explication of knowledge-rich RE, were dialogically incorporated into this research. Other publications, such as the REC's *Draft Resource for curriculum developers* (Pett, 2022) and *National Content Standard* (2023), were published too late for detailed consideration within this thesis.⁵¹⁴ Important thinking around decolonisation (e.g. Tharani, 2020; McInnis, 2021) in RE was also not considered (yet this post-secular parabolic enquiry could be seen as decolonial RE with its emphasis on hermeneutics and providing an encounter with diverse interpretations/interpreters). Additionally, this research took place during a global pandemic. A number of lockdowns and measures to prevent transmission had a significant impact on the educational landscape. With the trials taking place in Spring Term 2022, participating pupils had two years in which opportunities for group work and dialogic learning were limited due to online schooling and working in rows. I wonder whether, now pupils have had a few years of 'normal' schooling, these enquiries would be more effective as students are more regularly reasoning with peers.

At each stage of this research journey, there were choices I had to make. This included, for instance, the choice of parable, the age-phase to focus upon and the particular interpretations selected. Others may well have chosen different options. I hope that colleagues take the principles and conclusions of this research and apply them more widely. Certainly, in my professional role as an RE adviser, I will continue to share the principles of

⁵¹³ Such as Ofsted's *Education Inspection Framework* (2019) with its language around 'intent', 'implementation' and 'impact', and the DfE's *ITT Core Content Framework* (2019b) which frames particular goals for early career teachers to work towards.

⁵¹⁴ Their non-statutory nature also was a factor in not engaging with these publications.

high-quality textual enquiry – which had a demonstrable impact in this research – with RE teachers to inspire them to design richer encounters with biblical texts.

Retrospection on my research over the past seven years has allowed me to consider how it has developed my practice across numerous roles:

- **As a RE practitioner:** returning to my experience as a primary practitioner in the 2016/17 academic year where my interest in parabolic enquiry was kindled, this research thesis has allowed me to offer a significant challenge to the status quo of primary parabolic enquiry. In this research, I have followed my lines of enquiry emerging from my experience on the chalkface, curating theory-informed practical exemplifications which have enabled pupils to exercise their voice and agency as hermeneuts in an engagement with interpretive diversity. Within my thematic analysis, I have been continually struck by how much pupils valued the opportunity to share their perspectives and reason collaboratively; I share their frustration that too often they are told ‘this is how you should read this text’ within narrow, pre-determined enquiries. A rich, hermeneutical engagement with sacred texts in which pupils were asked ‘and how do you read it?’ contributed so much more significantly to their religious literacy (Chipperton et al., 2016);
- **As a RE adviser:** this research and its associated findings has had a significant impact upon my professional work. The effectiveness of these theory-informed practical exemplifications has developed my understanding of how numerous directions of travel in Church of England schools – which envision RE as knowledge-rich (Ofsted, 2021b), balanced (Chipperton et al., 2016), and attending to the complexity,

diversity and plurality of religion and belief (CoRE, 2018; CEE0, 2019) – can be actualised with regards to parabolic enquiry. Through my development of thought, practical exemplifications and resources, I can more efficaciously advise teachers on enacting a self-reflective, knowledge-rich RE in their contexts. Such advice can now be underpinned by robust research which demonstrates the impact of recognising pupils as agentive hermeneuts, championing pupil voice, engaging with alterity and providing opportunities for dialogic learning within enquiries into the parables (and in RE more generally); and

- **As a researcher:** undertaking this thesis has developed my skills as a researcher through working with different methods and research design. Furthermore, this research has again showed me the insights possible through bringing pupil voice to the fore. They have been able to share with me their perspectives and views on their learning, an aspect which does not happen as frequently as it should in schools or research in RE.

Looking forward, I am galvanized by the conclusions of this research. This thesis joins the swell of educationalists asserting the value of hermeneutics in unlocking deeper, more scholarly encounters in the RE classroom (e.g. Aldridge, 2015; Panjwani and Revell, 2018; Pett and Cooling, 2018; Bowie et al., 2020b). Through these post-secular parabolic enquiries, primary pupils have developed their epistemic ability through an encounter with authentic people, positions and perspectives. In so doing, they are now more able to understand, navigate and flourish within a society replete with diversity. I hope that, in

disseminating my conclusions and the practical exemplifications,⁵¹⁵ others can take the principles and 'recipe' (Alexander, 2020, p. 113) showcased here and re-apply them in meaningful, manageable and contextual ways to create further high-quality encounters in the RE classroom. Being the first to attempt an explicitly post-secular parabolic enquiry in RE means that my conclusions emerging from this research may be the first word, but certainly not the last. Let us work towards richer encounters in primary RE, ones which champion pupils' perspectives and ability as agentive hermeneuts to explore the complex and beautiful landscape of religion and belief.

⁵¹⁵ These lessons have been created, trialled and fully resourced. They are therefore ready to be shared with practitioners nationally (and freely) as an example of high-quality, post-secular RE.

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Appendix One: Aspects underpinning purposeful dialogue aimed at developing pupils' epistemic ability (pp. 109-110)

Aspects underpinning purposeful dialogic learning		Key theorists
Skillful practitioners	Dialogue which develops epistemic ability requires skilful teachers. Practitioners need to have an intentionality and clarity regarding the purpose of the dialogue, with sufficient subject knowledge and tact to manage and facilitate classroom dialogue toward such an end. Pupils are seen as collaborators within the shared enquiry, with the teacher 'acting as prompter, chair, interviewer and questioner, as well as providing information' (Jackson, 2014, p. 44). Practitioners must also be mindful that 'if they take a too directive role, students may rely on the teacher's arguments or not participate in discussion' (Jackson, 2014, p. 55). Within such dialogue, all views are respected with the teacher adopting an impartial position (whilst being reflexive on their own positionality). Furthermore, teachers need to be aware of 'power relations within classes' (Jackson, 2014, p. 55) and make pedagogical choices which allow all pupils to engage in dialogue. Such dialogic learning would look towards a balanced relationship between text, teacher and student in a manner that does not inflame the authority of one of these aspects to the neglect of the others (Standish, 2014; Hannam and Biesta, 2021). Skilful practitioners would also avoid monologic practices, reconstituting pupil reflections to that of their own (Alexander, 2020).	(Jackson, 2014; Standish, 2014; Ipgrave, 2015; Alexander, 2020; O'Grady and Jackson, 2020; Hannam and Biesta, 2021)
A safe, inclusive space	A safe, inclusive space is required in which pupils feel that they and their perspectives are valued and respected; consequently, they bring them into dialogue. Within this atmosphere of trust and mutual sharing, dialogue can transcend superficial conversation to become purposeful where all can learn about self and others in an engagement with alterity. Although the teacher is a guardian and enabler of this safe, inclusive space, pupils (as agents) and the school ethos more broadly are also significant contributors.	(Alexander, 2006b; Castelli, 2012; Jackson, 2014; Åhs et al., 2019; Lockley-Scott, 2019; Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020)
Scaffolding and support	Pupils need appropriate support to engage in purposeful dialogue. Modelling, scaffolding and establishing clear rules for dialogue can all be effective. In so doing, teaching <i>for</i> dialogue leads to teaching and learning <i>through</i> dialogue (Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020).	(Vygotsky, 1978; Mercer and Dawes, 2008; O'Grady and Jackson, 2020; Phillipson and Wegerif, 2020)
Impartiality and relativism	If all views are respected and given equal value within the RE classroom, does this necessarily result in relativism where all views are seen as equally true/false? This is a complex question. I understand the anxieties emerging from some quarters of the RE community, that without the evaluation of truth claims pupils may perceive 'discourse and debate...little more than the free play of more or less interesting fictions none of which may lay greater claim to truth than others' (Carr, 2012, p. 161). Indeed, a lack of criticality may lead to pupils perceiving dialogue as a 'frivolous exercise' (Lefstein, 2006, p. 9) where there is little at stake; although all can bring their perspectives, there is no space granted to question or challenge standpoints one holds to be false or inappropriate. Post-secular RE should grant space for pupils	(Barnes and Wright, 2006; Lefstein, 2006; Boeve, 2012; Carr, 2012; Jackson, 2014; Lewin, 2017a; McKain, 2017; Sutton, 2017; CEE0, 2018; Luby, 2020; Pollefeyt, 2020b; Thalén, 2020)

	to <i>understand</i> and <i>appraise</i> views. Perspectives should be open to respectful debate and questioning where students can evaluate views of others' as well as reflexively examine their own standpoint. At the same time, it remains there exists a <i>plurality of positionalities in twenty-first century Britain</i>; post-secular RE must allow pupils to understand that there are a range of views on the question of 'truth'. Certainly, a necessary question which emerges regarding the evaluation of truth claims is on what grounds, criteria and basis? This will be of interest to ponder further within the next chapter on interpretive issues within parabolic scholarship. Not least, it will help me to clarify my own view regarding the <i>appraise</i> aspect of epistemic ability as pertaining to dialogic, parabolic enquiry. Within the present research thesis focused upon the development of epistemic ability, pupils understanding the 'what' and 'why' of diversity (which supports harmonious living in the light of such difference) takes precedence over questions of truth.	

Appendix Two: A comprehensive review of a range of interpretive issues and standpoints within historical-critical parabolic scholarship, précised in Table 5.1 (pp. 134-135)

Hermeneutical standpoints within historical critical parabolic scholarship	Examples from parabolic scholarship
The parables as social commentary and challenge	Oakman (2008, p. 296) and van Eck (2009) argue that the parables, as originally told by Jesus, are specific stories about the Kingdom of God which offer ‘social challenge and transformation’. Crucially, this ‘kingdom’ is in contrast to the Pax Romana, one which describes an alternative way of life which appealed to Jesus’ majority peasant listeners; a ‘kingdom’ without oppression or exploitation under a ruling class (see also Herzog, 1994; Moxnes, 2003). In this view, ‘Jesus’ historical activity was essentially about politics and the restructuring of society, and not about religion or theology’ (Oakman, 2008, p. 296). Any attempt to read any metaphor, symbolism or theology into the texts, therefore, is wholly inappropriate in ascertaining their original meaning; indeed, evangelistic redaction is perceived as later, misleading anachronistic additions. Hedrick (2004, p. 38) follows a similar position, holding that any attempt to ‘look for meanings in a second level of reality...violates the integrity of the parable’. Indeed, Hedrick (2004, p. 40) contends that what is widely known as the ‘Parable of the Prodigal Son’ with often salvific readings attached, is simply ‘a tragic story about a dysfunctional family’. Myers (2002) holds a similar standpoint to Oakman and van Eck, yet differs from these scholars through contending that the redaction of the Evangelists is valuable to analyse. He focuses on Mark’s Gospel, claiming that it is a highly political text which ‘envision[s] the abolition of the oppressive relationships of productions that determined the horizons of the Palestinian farmer’s social world’ (2002, p. 177). Although he praises scholars such as Jeremias for bringing the first-century context of the parables to the fore, he believes that ‘the price of historical criticism has been the isolation of the parable from its literary context’ (2002, p. 169). In seeking to redress this neglect, Myers advocates a socio-literary reading of Mark’s Gospel. Here, according to Myers (2002, p. 172), Mark adopts the ‘parable-as-political-criticism’ directed fervently against Roman imperialism; this is seen most clearly in the ‘paradox of smallness/greatness and power/powerlessness’ (2002, p. 183). Reflecting on the Parable of the Mustard Seed, for instance, Myers (2002, p. 179) notes: ‘There can be no question that this similitude concerning the disproportion between the seed and the mature plant is meant to instill courage and hope in the small and fragile discipleship community for its struggle against the entrenched powers’. There are some key hermeneutical questions raised here. Although I feel that the parables as originally told by Jesus may have had clear resonances to politics and proffered an alternative kingdom to that of Rome, to claim that ‘Jesus’ historical activity...[was] not about religion or theology’ (Oakman, 2008, p. 296) goes too far. Certainly, if the parables are about the Kingdom of God then this necessarily raises theological questions, both for original hearers as it did for the Evangelists

	(Dodd, 1980). Myers (2002) work is significant on pondering the redaction and agenda of the Evangelists; his reading of Mark's Gospel opens further questions as to authorial intent and the community/ies the text was intended for.
Evangelistic redaction: abuse or meaningful use?	A number of hermeneutical endeavours have focused on the parables as presented by the Evangelists (e.g. Tolbert, 1979; Myers, 2002; Schottroff, 2006; Snodgrass, 2012a). The parables have what Jeremias (1963, p. 23) terms a 'double historical setting'⁵¹⁶; they were originally told orally by Jesus to his audience and subsequently narrated several years later within the early church by certain authors for certain communities. It is the latter form through which we encounter the parables of Jesus within the New Testament. In being written, these narratives were placed in a literary context under a redactional⁵¹⁷ hand who employed 'framing texts' (Schottroff, 2006, p. 99) such as introductory narratives, conclusions and/or interpretations.⁵¹⁸ Furthermore, each Evangelist, in presenting the good news of Jesus Christ, placed the parables with intentionality within certain parts of their re-telling (Tolbert, 1979; Myers, 2002; Snodgrass, 2012a).⁵¹⁹ There exist a range of standpoints on the issue of Evangelistic use of the parables, each raising their own hermeneutical questions. Some view critically and reject the redactional hands of the Evangelists (Jülicher, 1910; Crossan, 1973; Hedrick, 2004; Oakman, 2008; van Eck, 2009; Levine, 2014). For these commentators, the framing texts added by the gospel writers 'pertain...to later layers of the tradition and should be bracketed in studying the historical Jesus' (Crossan, 1973, p. 39). Such layers include theological, allegorical and anachronistic stratum which irresponsibly contort the original parables of Jesus (Jeremias, 1963; Hedrick, 2004; Oakman, 2008; van Eck, 2009). I find Levine's (2014) reticence regarding anachronistic readings of the parables particularly striking. On contemplating Luke's 'domestication' of the Parable of the Widow and the Judge into 'a lesson about constant prayer' which would not, she maintains, have been the message interpreted by Jesus' first-century Jewish audience, she declares that 'the parables in that first-century context need to make sense without any knowledge of how Jesus's followers came to understand him after the Romans crucified him' (pp. 14-17). This is a valid point, one which is worth considering when approaching the parables.

⁵¹⁶ This said, Weren (2014, pp. 251, 252) raises an apt challenge to this view of a 'double historical setting': 'The Gospel according to Matthew is the fruit of a long maturing process. It contains traces of traditions of days long past. The tension between the older and younger layers can be clearly discerned in the final product. It is therefore inadvisable to relate all the data contained in this Gospel, and which are often difficult to reconcile with each other, to one particular moment in the life of one particular group. Redaction-critical studies often suffer from this malady. They focus one-sidedly on the situation in the 80s of the first century C.E., at the time of the final redaction of the book. Taking the tension between tradition and redaction as a point of departure, I want, instead, to try and form a picture of the history of the Matthean community, or groups belonging to it, over a longer period of time'.

⁵¹⁷ My use of the term 'redaction' refers to the themes and agendas of each author, as opposed to questions of source or synoptic relationship.

⁵¹⁸ The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37), for instance, is embedded within a conversation between Jesus and 'an expert in the law' regarding 'What must be done to inherit eternal life?'. Likewise, in the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13: 1-23; Mark 4: 1-20; Luke 8: 1-15), the Evangelists introduce the context by stating that a crowd gathered around Jesus, and conclude with Jesus' exposition of the parabolic allegory to his close disciples.

⁵¹⁹ Such redaction may be based on chronological or perhaps theological grounds. For instance, Luke arranges three parables (Chapter 15) which for him link in a soteriological theme: the Parable of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin and Prodigal Son (Snodgrass, 2008, pp. 93-95).

	Yet, others hold it fruitful to consider how and why the parables have been presented by the Evangelists in the way they have (Tolbert, 1979; Dodd, 1980; Myers, 2002; Schottroff, 2006; Snodgrass, 2008). In the first instance, they give us an insight into the understanding of Jesus' kerygma and person amongst the early Christian communities (Tolbert, 1979; Myers, 2002). The redaction of the Evangelists was itself, according to Tolbert (1979, pp. 62, 63), 'an exercise in hermeneutics, an attempt to understand what the material could mean for a particular period in the history of the early church'. Viewed in this way, one can enquire into the agenda of the gospel writers, be this literary, theological or otherwise (Goodacre, 2008). Certainly, in reading the synoptic gospels it becomes apparent that each author has 'distinctive themes' (Blomberg, 2012, p. 83) for their communities: Matthew writes for a Jewish audience, holding Jesus to be the Messiah as foretold by the prophets and emphasising God's judgement (Schottroff, 2006; Weren, 2014); Mark focuses upon the 'good news' of Jesus Christ, the 'Kingdom of God' and discipleship (Nineham, 1963; Hooker, 2009); and Lukan themes include Jesus' fulfilment of the scriptures, salvation and Jesus' concern for the disadvantaged and outcast (Tiede, 1993; Forbes, 2000; Adams, 2011; Spencer, 2017). Such agendas are often evinced within the different presentation of shared parables, such as the Parable of the Lost Sheep in Matthew and Luke.⁵²⁰ Moreover, it is not only the themes of each Evangelist which are significant to consider when looking at the parables, but also their location within the Gospels (Zimmermann, 2015). As Snodgrass (2008, p. 26) explains, 'the narratives [of the Gospels] provide an interpretative field within which both the parables and the larger narrative shed light on each other'. For instance, Mark places many parables within close proximity to significant events within his Gospel, using them as a basis for his echoes and foreshadowing (Malbon, 1993; Williams, 2013).⁵²¹ Similarly, Luke arranges three parables together (Chapter 15) which for him link in a soteriological theme: the Parable of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin and Prodigal Son (Snodgrass, 2008, pp. 93-95). It is of value, therefore, to consider the authorial intent of each of the synoptic Evangelists when contemplating their use of parables and what this might reveal about early Christian communities from which and to which they wrote (Schottroff, 2006; Goodacre, 2008), whilst remaining mindful that such endeavours are in large part speculative (Gooder, 2008).⁵²² There is value in being mindful of this debate in parabolic scholarship on whether Evangelistic redaction stymies or supports our understanding of the parables. My question is: why is this often posited as an either/or rather than a both/and? I maintain it is enriching to consider both how parables would have resonated with the first listeners <i>and</i> how

⁵²⁰ For Matthew, 'it is the sheep who is "deceived"', and the church must help bring those back to the fold who have been led astray by false and heretical teaching (Levine, 2014, p. 32). For Luke, however, the narrative links to divine joy in human repentance (Snodgrass, 2008).

⁵²¹ An example is the link between the 'Parable of the Mustard Seed' (Mark 4: 30-32) and the healing of the Gerasene Demoniac (5: 1-20); something small (the mustard seed; this one man) can lead to something substantial (the 'greatest of all shrubs' (Mark 4: 32); the proclamation of Jesus throughout the Decapolis (Mark 5: 20)).

⁵²² It is important to highlight that some of the scholars who are critical of Evangelistic redaction cite the differing contexts and interpretations of the parables across the synoptic gospels as evidence of inappropriate use (Jülicher, 1910; Crossan, 1973; Hedrick, 2004; Levine, 2014; Zimmermann, 2015). In adding misleading and obscuring framing texts, they misrepresent the parables as originally told by Jesus and 'represent later Christian interpretations rather than a historical memory of the original social context' (Hedrick, 2004, p. 11).

	the early (and later) Christian communities have received and responded to them. There is rich hermeneutical thinking here. Indeed, I am wary of positions (such as Jülicher (1910), Crossan (1973) and Oakman (2008) which hold that we should remove the redaction of the Evangelists to extract something <i>core</i> or <i>original</i> to Jesus with certainty. This certainty is questionable; the fact that those pursuing an original meaning of Jesus' parables often arrive at very different interpretations reveals the fraught nature of such a pursuit.
Sitz im Leben	One focus that remains pivotal in historical criticism is investigation of the <i>Sitz im Leben</i>, the 'setting in life'. Particular advocates of this approach were Jeremias (1963) and Dodd (1980), who argued that it is important we consider what the likely interpretation of the original listeners may have been. To inform such rumination, it is key to consider the first-century setting and the respective issues and experiences for/of those living within this time and place. I think such deliberation is a fruitful endeavor. This said, I am uncertain about those restrictive views which hold that if an interpretation is one not likely shared by Jesus' first-century audience, it should be rejected (van Eck, 2009; Blomberg, 2012; Levine, 2014). Snodgrass' (2012a, p. 178) position is a case in point here when he states that, 'context is the determiner of meaning...Any interpretation that does not breathe the air of first-century Judaism cannot be a legitimate hearing of Jesus' intent or a legitimate use of Jesus' parables'. Yes, considering the <i>Sitz im Leben</i> is useful, but to hold this as a litmus test for determining 'successful' or 'unsuccessful' interpretation perhaps inappropriately boxes in, prescribes and limits interpretive endeavours. This litmus test is also slightly undermined when we take into account that the context of first-century Judea and Galilee is a shifting field of understanding.
The parables as theological texts	Although some pursuing historical critical approaches to the parables maintain that theological meanings are outside Jesus' original intent (Jülicher, 1910; Hedrick, 2004; Oakman, 2008; van Eck, 2009), others disagree (Jeremias, 1963; Dodd, 1980; Snodgrass, 2008; Zimmermann, 2015). Snodgrass (2008, p.20), for instance, holds that the parables are 'theocentric'; original hearers or readers – through their knowledge and experience of Judaism – would have understood stock metaphors within the parables (such as 'father', 'master', 'shepherd', 'king') as referring to God. Consequently, Jesus' parables would have been understood by his first-century audience theologically. Unlike Jeremias (1963) and Dodd (1980), who held that all the parables were concerned with eschatology, Snodgrass contends that some have eschatological foci, others ethical.

Appendix Three: A comprehensive overview of a range of key guidance on teaching the parables in RE between 1988 and 2013, précised in Table 5.3 (pp. 153-155)

Publication ⁵²³	Guidance on parabolic enquiries	Merits/demerits
Rankin, J., Brown, A. and Hayward, M. (1989) <i>Religious Education Topics for the Primary School</i> . Harlow: Longman.	5-7 year olds: 'Jesus used parables to teach...The essence of parables is that they transmit a message, though the message may be one thing to one person and another to a second person...The [Parable of the Lost Son] integrates well with a topic on forgiveness; it is an opening gambit for a discussion about jealousy and envy, about sharing and perhaps about family relationships. The rationale for using this story is that it <i>is</i> a good story and can be used simply as a story or to support topic work' (pp. 19, 20). 'Tell a story of Jesus, or one which he told, and, without discussion, ask the children to model in clay...or paint an illustration for the story...The aim of this activity is to encourage the children to express <i>their</i> response to the story' (p. 20).	Merits - An acknowledgement that different people interpret the parables differently - Pupils are given opportunity to interpret the parable in their own way Demerits - No contextual/historical consideration - No explicit links to theological readings
Cooling, M. (1991) <i>Christianity Topic Book Three</i> . Norwich: Religious and Moral Education Press.	- Jesus the Story-teller. 'Jesus used stories [including parables] to teach people something important. Choose one story from the list to read. What do you think Jesus was trying to tell his listeners?'. 'Jesus did not tell stories just for entertainment. His stories had a point. Discuss with the children the main points of some of the stories. Encourage them to suggest a variety of interpretations. Children might like to ask some Christians how they interpret the story' (p. 71). - Parable of the Great Feast. 'Activity: Design an invitation to a party. Make sure it has a reply slip. On the reply slip write an excuse for not coming to the party' (p. 72). [The Great Feast cont.] 'Jesus said that entering God's kingdom is like being invited to a wonderful party. Look at the party menu card and fill in what you think there was to eat. Decorate	Merits - An openness and opportunity for pupils to engage with the parables and present their own views. 'What do <i>you</i> think Jesus was trying to tell his listeners?'. - Pupil consideration of different interpretations encouraged. This acknowledges polyvalency of parables. Demerits - The age to which these enquiries are suitable are not designated beyond 'primary'. This is too broad. - Acknowledges different interpretations exist amongst Christians (e.g. symbolic, historical,

⁵²³ The publications in bold are national subject reports and/or exemplar, non-statutory materials from which many curriculum writers drew influence.

	your menu. Think about someone from whom you would really like a party invitation. Describe how you would feel if that invitation arrived' (p. 78).	theological). However, no examples of diverse readings are given and it is left 'to teachers to decide at what age they introduce the issue of interpretation to their children' (p. 9). • No contextual/historical consideration of the parables suggested. • The follow up for the 'Parable of the Great Feast' includes activities (such as menu thinking and decorating) which would not contribute to pupils' religious literacy.
<i>Newcastle Upon Tyne Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education.</i> (1991) Newcastle: Newcastle Upon Tyne Local Education Authority.	• No aspects relating to sacred texts within KS1 • Although no objectives link explicitly to sacred texts in KS2, a foundational unit of 'Jesus taught in parables' is mentioned (p. 13) • KS3: 'reflect on and evaluate the message and meaning in pieces of religious literature' (p. 16) • KS4: communicate the variety of interpretation of belief (p. 18)	Merits • With the vagueness and generic statements including here, it is difficult to evaluate strengths Demerits • The KS3 outcome can easily be read to assume that religious literature has one meaning only • The objectives rarely link to the parables and, when do, little guidance/explication is offered here
Read, G., Rudge, J., Teece, G. and Howarth, R.B. (1992) <i>How Do I Teach RE? The Westhill Project RE 5-16</i>. Cheltenham: Stanley Thornes Ltd.	• Detailed study of texts, such as the parables, are best reserved until after Key Stage 4 into tertiary education as 'varieties of interpretation...are beyond the understanding of younger children' (p. 37). • Parables should not be taught in topics which are not meaningful for RE, such as the parable of the sower within a topic on farming (p. 49). 'The point of the parable of the sower is, in fact, fairly sophisticated, and depends on an understanding of the differences between parables and allegories. There is, of course, no reason why young children should not hear the story of the sower. In this case they will simply be enjoying it as a story for the pleasure it gives and the impression it leaves... [perhaps under a heading] such as 'stories Jesus told'' (pp. 49, 50).	Merits • Acknowledged that parables should be placed within meaningful and relevant enquiry units. Demerits • Assumes that primary-aged children are incapable of meaningfully engaging with the parables and questions of interpretation; they should simply enjoy the story for pleasure. • The intention of this publication of interpreting the 1988 Education Act for teachers may, in part, have influenced later agreed syllabi in reserving questions of interpretive diversity until upper secondary/tertiary education.

Staffordshire County Council. (1992) <i>Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education</i> . Stafford: Staffordshire County Council Education Department.	Parables not mentioned until fleetingly in Key Stage 2: 'investigate a variety of literary forms found in sacred books' [including parable] (p. 41) and 'investigate stories which help believers to understand God's relationship with people' [including Parable of sheep and goats] (p. 45).	Merits - Encourages investigation around the literary form of a parable. - A theological reading is considered from the perspective of Christians. Demerits - Very little support is offered to practitioners here beyond these vague statements.
Copley, T. and Copley, G. (1993) <i>Religious Education in Key Stage 1: A Practical Guide</i> . Crediton: Southgate.	A caution is offered to avoid secularising religious material. For instance, the Good Samaritan is not 'merely a kind man to someone found after a mugging. The connection with the commandment (verse 27) and the fact that to many Jews of the time the only 'good' Samaritan was a dead one (a feeling matched only by that of the Samaritans for the Jews), is ignored as the story becomes a secular twentieth-century moralism about helping people in need. But in the real story, the religious expert almost choked rather than name a Samaritan as hero (verse 37)' (p. 52).	Merits - The importance of considering the historical context of this parable is valued. - The secularizing of religious material is advised against. Demerits - No further practical exemplification is offered for Key Stage 1 practitioners.
Brown, A. (1994) <i>Christianity in the Agreed Syllabus</i> . London: The National Society.	'When teaching from the Bible, whether it be from the Old or New Testaments, and for use at <i>any</i> Key Stage, the following may be helpful for teachers preparing work at each Key Stage but particularly at Key Stages 1 and 2: - that pupils should understand from the text <i>what</i> is going on and <i>who</i> is involved; - that pupils should ask and attempt to answer the question: <i>Why</i> did the events happen? - that pupils should ask and attempt to answer the questions: <i>Whom</i> did the events affect, and <i>how</i>? - that pupils should reflect on what they think the passage means: a) to Christians b) to them at their own level of perception and understanding' (p. 7)	Merits - Purposeful questions of texts such as the parables, including (from my inference) <i>why</i> the parable was told and the potential impact on the first audience. - An opportunity granted for pupils to consider their own interpretation and opinions of these texts. Demerits - Not enough emphasis on the fact that Christians are a diverse group and different interpretations exist amongst them. - Very vague instructions for teachers – what exactly would it mean to 'respond imaginatively' to texts such as the parables?

	Guidance not too forthcoming in this document about actual plans. Guidance on what should be taught on six proposed areas of study: • The Bible (KS1): identify some stories from the Bible; respond imaginatively to stories from the Bible. (KS2): demonstrate knowledge and understanding of some key material from the Old and New Testaments; reflect on and respond imaginatively to Biblical material (p. 8); • Jesus (KS1): give an example of a story Jesus told; demonstrate awareness of the effect Jesus had on the people who met him; be able to offer an opinion about an aspect of Jesus' teaching; (KS2) demonstrate an ability to reflect on the teaching of Jesus (p. 9); • Belief, Faith and Values (KS1): comment on the events and characters in some of the parables; identify the moral in a simple Biblical and/or Christian story; (KS2) demonstrate the diversity of views among Christians on some moral issues (p. 13).	• Is there a sense that the parables have a single, moral meaning? The exploration of diversity advocated in KS2 is about stance on moral issues, not interpretive diversity.
SCAA. (1994a) <i>Model syllabuses for religious education: Faith Communities' Working Group Reports</i>. London: SCAA.	• Christianity: KS2 Jesus: 'Teaching about the Kingdom of God in parables and miracles' (p. 7); KS3: The Bible: Attitudes to the Bible: Christians interpret the Bible in a variety of ways...Literal, allegorical, devotional and theological interpretations' (p. 8). KS4: The Bible: Attitudes to the Bible: The Bible is central to all Christians, although they interpret it in a variety of ways. This can be seen in Literal, allegorical, typological and critical approaches (p. 9).	Merits • The recognition that Christians interpret the Bible in a variety of ways. • That the parables are enquired into theologically as being about the Kingdom of God. Demerits • The diversity of biblical interpretation is seen as not accessible until secondary education.
SCAA. (1994b) <i>Model Syllabuses for Religious Education. Model 1: Living Faiths Today</i>. London: SCAA.	• 'skills and processes in religious education' > 'b) interpretation > the ability to suggest meanings of religious texts' (p. 7); • 'Progression within Key Stage 1 > talking about the meanings of stories and symbols (KS1); enhancing their own spiritual and moral development by: realising that stories from religious traditions often deal with concerns and feelings similar to their own (p. 10);	Merits • Under 'interpretation' is the 'ability to suggest meanings of religious texts' (p. 7). There is an openness and value ascribed to pupil voice and agency here. Demerits • Explicit mention of the diversity of textual interpretation only occurs in KS4.

	• ‘Progression within Key Stage 2’ > considering the meaning of symbols, stories and symbolic language for members of faith communities (AT1); talking about stories which focus on values, relationships or religious teachings, and considering the relevance of this teaching to their own lives.....recognising and respecting the right to hold different views and beliefs (AT2) (p. 22); • End of Key Stage Statements for Key Stage 3 > ‘They [pupils] correctly use some of the technical terminology, and explain the meanings of texts, language and symbols in relation to the central beliefs of a religion’ (p. 41); • [Although no specific mention of parables] ‘Learning experiences related to Attainment Target 1’ > Discuss the different ways in which Christians interpret the Bible, and how they refer to it for help in making decisions about contemporary ethical and moral issues’ (p. 43); • End of Key Stage Statements for Key Stage 4 > AT1 > ‘They use correct technical terminology, and show how texts, languages and symbols, etc are interpreted differently within faiths’ (p. 59).	
SCAA. (1994c) <i>Model Syllabuses for Religious Education. Model 2: Questions and Teachings</i>. London: SCAA.	• KS2 – Christianity – Key Teachings/Focus – Salvation – New beginnings as a result of Jesus’ death and resurrection – Teaching about ‘starting again’ through parables, eg The Lost Son (p. 29). • KS4 – Key Teachings/Focus – Bible – Revelation – Interpretation of the Bible – Views of the Bible, including inerrancy, typology, allegory – critical approaches and how this leads to different views about contents and inspiration (p. 53).	Merits • The parabolic example is presented within a unit linked to a Christian concept, rather than a vague secularised topic. Demerits • Again, hermeneutical questions around diverse approaches to the parables reserved until KS4.
Copley, T. (1994) <i>Religious Education 7-11: developing primary teaching skills</i> . London: Routledge.	• Warns that parables are ‘so often ruined by moralizing interpretations’ (p. 35); • Story is central to the great world faiths—the ultimate all-age, all-ability teaching technique—and these stories can be shared with children. That means for the teacher there is the twofold task: to provide context, so that the story is understood against its original cultural or religious	Merits • Copley holds it important that the context is considered • It is also stated that religious stories such as the parables should not be secularised • Pupils are given opportunities to ask questions of the text; to empathise with characters and

	background and not just torn out of it; to avoid turning religious stories into secular material by stripping out all the references to God, faith, religion, etc., for doing this destroys the material itself. In the case of the good Samaritan, for example, it is important for children and adults to know who the Samaritans were, where they lived—there are still some 600 living descendants—their religious beliefs and law, why they and the Jews were ‘daggers drawn’, and why the religious expert who asked Jesus the question ‘Who is my neighbour?’ choked when Jesus asked him in reply who the neighbour was. Rather than name ‘the Samaritan’ he presumably muttered ‘the one who showed him [the victim] kindness’. He was not going to name his traditional enemy as the doer of a good deed! (Luke 10.25–37). By not providing context for the story we may reduce it to merely a secular moral (Let’s be nice to people) or create confusion by wrong association. Many children who have grown up on the good Samaritan story without the context being provided genuinely believe that this Samaritan belonged to an organization dedicated to helping desperate and suicidal people, instead of beginning to understand why that twentieth century organization arrived at its name. (p. 28) • So with story we can identify useful stages of teaching and learning; 1 The communication of the story, including its context, perhaps with appropriate classroom ritual—lighting a story candle, seating children around us, going to the story corner, starting with a stilling exercise such as the Buddhist suggestion of listening for the most distant sound, or even waiting until the class can hear a real pin drop! This telling the story as it is, allowing the children to reflect imaginatively upon it, is the basis for all development of story. By doing this accurately the story teller has not provided ‘false’ information which the child has to unlearn later, but has supported the child by retelling the story in its framework as a basis for later consideration of what the	dilemmas; to understand the vocabulary present and to reflect on their own beliefs in relation to the story Demerits • No mention of diversity of interpretation • The assumption that one can and should ‘believe in God’ to engage in certain textual engagement

	‘truth’ element is. 2 Seeing ourselves as looking in on the story (Jonah believed God was speaking rather than I am telling you that God was speaking to Jonah, which implies that there is no shadow of objective doubt about God and I am requiring you to believe in him as essential to this exercise). 3 The questions we want to ask—providing time for children to raise issues and being ready to push some questions back (Well what do you think about that?). 4 Our imaginative entering into aspects of the story: what would it be like for...or if... How might she have felt when...? Should they be doing X or Y or Z? 5 We pick out key words in the story; if ‘hibernate’ or ‘extinct’ is possible in infant science or ‘pyramid’ or ‘cuboid’ in infant maths, then ‘prophet’ is equally possible in religious education. ‘Prophet’ would certainly be worth using as it is a key concept in three faiths—Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Not being able to spell it—profit and phrophet still abound—does not mean not being able to understand or say something about it. 6 The beliefs of the people in the story and the people who passed it on become clearer as the child passes through the first five stages. 7 We think about our beliefs (secular and religious) in relation to the themes of the story: treatment of animals, forgiveness, care for the earth, etc. 8 We re-tell or express the story in other ways: 1, 4, 6 or 7—follow-up discussion or drama or display or dance or mime? Merely telling it and then getting children to draw a picture is a waste of a good story, because it fails to explore it properly. (pp. 29, 30)	
<i>Birmingham Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education</i>. (1995) Birmingham: Birmingham City Council Education Department.	• No parabolic curriculum suggestion for KS1 • KS2: Our Planet. Area of Study: Making sense of our world. Learn about Religion [AT1]: ‘Hear and read the parable of, “The Wicked Steward”, “The Pounds”, “The Vineyard”’. ‘Explore the Bible theme of humans as God’s steward responsible for the successful flourishing of the vineyard’ (p. 34)	Merits • Theological framing for parabolic enquiries Demerits • No acknowledgment of diverse readings; these suggestions follow quite a tight, pre-determined script and interpretation of the parables

	• In Lesson 4 (after three thinking about the wonder of the world and the ways humans have exercised dominion): 'Explain to the pupils how Jesus often describes God as being like an owner of a vineyard who has put a steward in charge. God is the owner. The vineyard is the planet. Humans are the steward. A steward should try and make the vineyard flourish. A steward should not just sit back and do nothing. A steward shouldn't damage the vineyard. Read together Luke Ch 19 v 11-27, The Wicked Steward Luke Ch 16 v 1-7 and Matthew Ch 21 v 33-44. Invite the pupils to talk about and respond to these three stories. What would a good steward of the planet be like? What would a good steward of the planet do?' Next lesson: how can we be a good steward? (p. 36) • KS2. Unit 2: Thinking about God. 'Encourage the children to share their ideas about God. Explore the Christian idea of God as father. Father as a symbol of creator, provider and love. Explore stories of God as a loving, concerned and forgiving father. The father in the prodigal son, the shepherd in the lost sheep' (p. 32)	
<i>Royal County of Berkshire Religious Education Agreed Syllabus (1995-2000).</i> (1995) Reading: Berkshire Education Department.	• Based on SCAA model syllabi • Skills and processes in Religious Education > b) Interpretation > the ability to suggest meanings of religious texts (p. 3) • Optional Unit: KS1. Moral Stories > Core Content > Some of the moral teachings of Christianity eg the Good Samaritan the Prodigal Son. Learning experiences related to AT1: Listen to some stories from the Bible. Learning experiences related to AT2: Discuss their meaning and importance for today. (p. 15)	Merits • See SCAA Model 1 Demerits • Parables reduced to moral teachings
<i>Wolverhampton Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education.</i> (1996) Wolverhampton: Wolverhampton Council Education.	• In KS2 under the theme of 'Tradition', the following is stated: 'Listen to and read stories and scriptures [including parables] in order to identify the way in which they are important to believers' (p. 27)	Merits • Focuses on what the religious text would mean to an adherent of that religion

		Demerits Assumes there is one 'way' in which particular scriptures are important to believers
<i>Lewisham Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education: Learning Together Through Faiths.</i> (1996) London: Lewisham Education.	- Based on SCAA model syllabi - Outcome: 'Interpretation...the ability to suggest meanings of religious texts' (p. ix) - KS2 map: Beliefs > Jesus: 'Events in Jesus' life as told in the Gospel stories and put into a historical context...teaching about the Kingdom of God in parables' (p. 13) - Learning experiences related to Attainment Target 1: 'Talk about, and discuss, the meaning of stories about Jesus' life, or stories Jesus told e.g. the lost Son, the Good Samaritan, the Widow's mite or Zacchaeus'. Related 'Learning experiences related to Attainment Target 2': 'Talk [original SCAA is 'consider'] about feelings of being lost and found and about feelings of being excluded and included' (p. 14) - KS2: Jesus > Learning Outcomes related to Attainment Target 1: 3. Some of the parables which Jesus told e.g. The Good Samaritan, The Lost Coin. Related 'Learning Outcomes related to Attainment Target 2': 'Talk about stories which indicate Christian values' (p. 33) - KS1: Who am I? What is my community? [Unit title] [all principle six faiths have an overview of a contribution here; with Christianity, it states...] 'The relationship between God and humankind. Christians believe everyone to be of equal value. Joining the Christian family. Parable of the Lost Sheep and the Good Samaritan...' (p. 135) - KS1: Jesus the Teacher [unit title]: Jesus' teaching about God e.g. as Father [Prodigal Son] as shepherd [Lost Sheep]. Specific teaching about love [Good Samaritan] forgiveness [The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant] (p. 137) - Only in KS4 when indicated appropriate for pupils to consider that texts 'interpreted differently within faiths; (p.1 97). In latter outcome overviews, no mention of parables. Enquiries relate to different interpretations of 'right and wrong' with mention to Golden Rule and Ten	Merits - Parables framed theologically as pertaining to the Kingdom of God and Jesus' teaching. This includes themes such as love and forgiveness Demerits - Assumes the parables have one meaning, or at least is not explicit that they are polyvalent - Elsewhere in KS2 guidance, parables linked only to Christian values - Assumed pupils cannot engage with diverse views until KS4

	Commandments. (p. 210). Also a broad comment on p. 213 on 'Views of the Bible, including inerrancy, typology, allegory-critical approaches and how this leads to different views about contents and inspiration'.	
<i>Camden Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education</i> . (1998) London: London Borough of Tower Hamlets Inspection and Advisory Service.	- Based on SCAA model syllabi - AT1: This includes the ability to...explain <i>the</i> meaning of religious language, stories and symbolism [italics my own] (p. 6). This is reflected in the Programmes of Study for KS2. Parables not specifically mentioned, but considering the meaning of 'stories that Jesus told' is (p. 11) - Unit on 'Shared Values' for Year 1: 'Read the story of the Good Samaritan in a modern version and find out why Jesus tells this story. Discuss how this story teaches Christians to love their neighbour' (AT1). Pupils then to '[t]alk about what it means to 'love your neighbour as yourself'' (AT2) (p. 45) - Post-16: 'ways of interpreting sacred texts' (p. 18)	Merits - Different ways of interpreting sacred texts acknowledged Demerits - Pupils only seen to be able to engage with interpretive diversity post-16 - Presents the parables in the primary setting as having one meaning
Hertfordshire SACRE. (2001) <i>Exemplification of Standards in the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus of Religious Education. Key Stages: Foundation, One, Two, Three</i> . Wheathampstead: Hertfordshire School Improvement & Advisory Service.	- Y2: 'Children heard the story of the Good Samaritan and were asked to retell the story saying why Jesus told this story'; 'The whole class teaching of this story includes what Jesus was trying to teach his followers' (p. 29) - Y2: 'Task: To draw a picture based on the story of the Prodigal Son, then discuss the meaning of the story with the teacher. The text underneath the picture is pupil's own words'. [Image of picture and then a pupils' writing] 'We listened to a story from the Bible, The Prodigal Son. Jesus told this story to teach people something. First of all I thought that "It means that God always gives people a second chance". Then we talked about the story and we decided that Jesus was telling people that, like the father in the story, God will forgive us if we are really sorry for the bad things we have done. So I was quite right!' (p. 59)	Merits - Pupils in KS1 considering the reasons why Jesus told the parable Demerits - Assumes the parables had/have one meaning
<i>Exploration & Response. The Redbridge Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education</i> . (2001) Ilford: London Borough of Redbridge.	Year 1. The key question 'How does the Christian parable of the Prodigal Son (Loving Father) help us to think about forgiveness?' is framed within a unit which is designed to help pupils think about 'their relationship with family and friends' (p. 23)	Merits In Year 3, consideration on why Jesus used the parables is offered

	- Year 3 unit: 'Why did Jesus use stories to challenge people? In this unit, pupils will explore the power of stories to challenge people to think about the way that they lead their lives. In this context, a number of stories which Jesus told will be explored in order to see how they could challenge people at the time and still today...Suggested key questions: - What story has challenged you? - What is the challenge in the story of the houses built on rock and sand? ...Pharisee and the tax collector?...lost sheep and the lost coin?...of the mustard seed?' (p. 29)	Demerits - Assumes the parables each have 'one' challenge within them which applies in past, present and future contexts - The Year 1 unit does not consider what the parable might mean to Christians
Truro and Exeter Diocesan Boards of Education. (2001c) <i>The Parables Project</i> .	Three sequenced enquiries for Upper Key Stage Two pupils on three parables. These are planned to allow pupils to: - Consider the original context and hearers - Consider what the parables 'might mean or could mean for modern hearers' (read Christians) (p. 7) - Reflect on who they identify with in the story 'reflect their significance for Christians today' (p. 7)	Merits - A range of hermeneutical factors inform these exemplifications, including considering meanings for Christians today, reflection on titles, context, <i>Sitz im Leben</i> and purpose Demerits - It is clear, however, that these enquiries are structured around clear learning objectives predicated around a single theological reading - As a result, pupils are not granted the opportunity to reflect on a range of interpretations nor consider <i>why</i> differences exist
Copley, T. et al. (2004b) <i>Teaching Biblical Narrative: A summary of the main findings of the Biblos Project, 1996-2004</i> . Swindon: Bible Society.	- Too often, the parables and other biblical narratives are presented as concerning secular-ethical and citizenship issues only - Pupils should have space to 'theologise' and think theologically about biblical texts - This requires engagement with the 'historical, social, cultural and theological context in which the narratives were written' (p. 9) - A call for pupils to enquiry into the 'complexity and diversity' of biblical interpretation (p. 9)	Merits - A recognition of diverse biblical interpretation and the need for pupils to engage with this - Particular emphasis placed on students' enquiring theologically into these texts. This includes some rumination on <i>behind</i> the text contextual issues. Demerits - Despite this assertion, the authors failed to provide any examples for how enquiries into this complexity or diversity might proceed in the primary or secondary setting.

		It appears that in the authors' concern that biblical text should be enquired into theologically, narrow and carefully scaffolded units are offered to teachers which stipulate the theological meaning of the text that the class should understand. As a consequence, diversity of interpretation is regrettably missed. The text is authoritative in the text-reader dialogue.
Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. (2004) <i>Religious education: The non-statutory framework</i>. London: Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.	'Example of an activity: In the context of a learning theme to do with 'growing' or 'the natural world', children encounter the parable of the mustard seed. They look at and talk about some tiny seeds and the teacher tells the parable, putting it into context as a story Jesus told. The teacher emphasises how, in the story, the tree that grew from the little seed became a safe home for birds. Children talk about what helps them to feel safe. They take a walk to look at trees and touch trees. They think about how they should look after trees. They talk about what it would be like to fly up into the branches. They plant seeds and role-play the growth of the seed in dance. They produce shared or independent writing on what they would like to grow into. Through these experiences children become more aware of themselves, for example of the concepts 'I am growing' 'I need to feel safe'. They respond to the significant experiences of exploring a story and wonder at the growth of seeds. They learn to understand their responsibility to the natural world and begin to consider beliefs about Jesus.' (p. 22) [Foundation Stage] 'Religious education provides opportunities to promote moral development through:...■ exploring the influence of family, friends and media on moral choices and how society is influenced by beliefs, teachings, sacred texts and guidance from religious leaders' (p. 14) 'They learn about sacred texts and other sources and consider their meanings. They begin to recognise diversity in religion, learning about similarities and differences both	Merits - The report suggests that high-quality RE in Key Stage Two helps students to recognize diverse beliefs within a religion Demerits - A view that texts have something definite to say about 'God, the world and human life' (p. 27). The place of the reader is not acknowledged. In Key Stage Three, the term 'transmitted' is used in reference to the meaning of texts (p. 28) - Diversity in how texts are interpreted are seen as a feature of secondary students. This diversity is in regard to 'different traditions' with no focus on individuals (p. 37)

	within and between religions and beliefs and the importance of dialogue between them.’ (p. 26) [KS2] • ‘teachings and authority: what sacred texts and other sources say about God, the world and human life’ (p. 27) [KS2: Themes] • ‘They interpret religious texts and other sources, recognising both the power and limitations of language and other forms of communication in expressing ideas and beliefs.’ (p. 28) [KS3] • ‘analyse and explain how religious beliefs and ideas are transmitted by people, texts and traditions... g interpret and evaluate a range of sources, texts and authorities, from a variety of contexts’ (p. 28) [KS3, Learning about religion, Knowledge, skills and understanding] • Describing a pupil working at Level 6 (for AT1): ‘They interpret sources and arguments, explaining the reasons that are used in different ways by different traditions to provide answers to ultimate questions and ethical issues.’ (p. 37)	
Stern, J. (2006) <i>Teaching Religious Education: Researchers in the Classroom</i>. London: Continuum.	• Stern argues that textual enquiry would be enriched by helping pupils engage with source material (rather than second-hand or précised presentations) and go beyond recall and low-level comprehension. • Stern (pp. 9-12) also criticizes the Biblos Project (2004b) on the grounds that the suggested use of texts do not adequately account for the positionality of the reader. • Stern acknowledges questions such as framing – how texts written and why underexplored (p. 19)	Merits • Stern recognizes the importance of the text-reader dialogue in interpretation, and commends approaches which help pupils to reason across both aspects • Stern calls for the need for practitioner research into how pupils engage with sacred texts in a way which builds on the Biblos Project (to which my research does). (p. 18) Demerits • Stern raises some important points here; it is regrettable that they are not expanded upon pedagogically
Birmingham Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education. (2007) <i>The Birmingham Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education</i>	• A brief mention in KS2 documentation of how ‘pupils will acquire some basic interpretive skills from reading and listening to religious stories and teachings’ (p. 13)	Merits • The parables are considered via various lens, both as key foundational and historical texts emerging

2007. Birmingham: Birmingham City Council.	• No mention of the teachings of the parables in Key Stage One. In Key Stage Two, the syllabus requires that pupils 'become acquainted with some important religious narratives...[including] some parables...and how these illuminate various religious practices and beliefs' (p. 14) • Pupils should develop their 'knowledge...affections...dispositions...abilities/skills and relationships with others in society by...considering and using a range of narratives and ideas, considering the significance of key events from the religious past, and learning to appreciate the inspiration, origin, development and character of the Bible and other sacred texts' (p. 14)	from the beginning of Christianity and well as being used by the teacher to stimulate personal reflection on the part of students Demerits • Exactly what 'interpretive skills' the syllabus pertains to are neither expanded upon nor exemplified. • No mention of parables in other key stages other than Key Stage Two
Ofsted. (2010) <i>Transforming religious education</i>	• 'In the majority of the schools visited, weaknesses in the provision for teaching Christianity were reflected in several ways. The primary schools in particular were often uncertain about whether Christian material should be investigated in its own right, as part of understanding the religion, or whether it should be used to consider moral or social themes out of the context of the religion. For example, it was common for teachers to use Jesus's parables to explore personal feelings or to decide how people should behave and not to make any reference to their religious significance. As a result, they lost the opportunity to extend pupils' understanding of Christian beliefs'. (p. 33)	Merits • Ofsted draw attention to widely spread practice in which the parables are not explored theologically

Appendix Four: ‘Commentary on the text and its meaning(s)’ – background information provided for practitioners teaching the units in the UC resource

UC unit	Background information for teachers	My reflections
FS Unit 2: Incarnation (Digging Deeper). <i>What makes every single person unique and precious?</i>	None	
FS Unit 3: Salvation (Digging Deeper). <i>How can we help others when they need it?</i>	The story of the Good Samaritan...applies the great commandments to a real-life situation. It...encourages Christians to act as a ‘neighbour’ when someone is in need: we must not walk by. The traveler in the story would be seen as foolish to travel on this road alone; it was notorious for robbers. The ‘Samaritans’ were mixed-race immigrants who Jewish people avoided. For Jesus’ audience, he was an unlikely hero to do the right thing by the injured man. (p. 7)	Attention drawn to contextual considerations One meaning pre-determined and advanced
KS1 Unit 1.1: God (Core). <i>What do Christians believe God is like?</i>	The son decides he needs to return to his father and say sorry, which is symbolic of sinner turning back to God. He returns and repents without expecting to regain his old place in the household. God is shown as not only a forgiving father, but also a loving one who was watching out and waiting for his son to come home, receiving him with open arms and celebrating his return. When the older son is angered by the events, the father explains why they should celebrate — because the younger brother was dead/lost and is now alive/found. This part of the parable has been interpreted in many ways, including seeing the older brother as representing people who think they are on the right path, but look down on people who are ‘sinners’ and ‘outcasts’. Many Christians see the story as telling them that God is particularly concerned with the people who are furthest from him, and rejoices when they turn back. They believe that God generously forgives people when they turn back to him — even though they don’t deserve forgiveness. (p. 6)	One meaning pre-determined and advanced This said, there is an acknowledgement that a ‘part of the parable has been interpreted in many ways’ (although only one reading is mentioned). The language of ‘many’ nods to the fact that not all Christians interpret this text the same.
KS1 Unit 1.4: Gospel (Digging Deeper). <i>What is</i>	MATTHEW 13:45–46: A PEARL OF GREAT PRICE	A clear meaning of this parable is explicated by the background information.

<i>the good news Jesus brings?</i>	This two-sentence parable of Jesus asks his followers to prioritise what really matters. Humans often miss the big purpose of life because they are absorbed with little things. For Jesus' followers, finding God is the ultimate achievement. God's Kingdom is so valuable that it is worth giving up everything else to be part of it. This is not a guarantee of an easy life, however. Christians struggle and suffer like everybody else, but in the practice of prayer, meditation, or remembering Jesus with bread and wine, in private or public worship, in confession and in celebration, Christians testify that they find peace even in difficult circumstances, and thank God for this peace. The story of the parable is used here to promote understanding of Christian devotion to God, above everything else, and also to open up questions for pupils about what matters most in life. (p. 7)	
LKS2 Unit 2A.4: Gospel (Digging Deeper). <i>What kind of world did Jesus want?</i>	THE GOOD SAMARITAN The Good Samaritan story is found in Luke 10:25–37. As with other parables, Jesus does not explain it in detail, but leaves his listeners to interpret the meaning. Over time, people have seen a number of different meanings in the parable, so it should not be assumed that the interpretation in this unit is the only one. However, the reading here is widely known and appropriate for this age range. This parable starts with a test given to Jesus by an expert in religious law, wanting to know how to inherit eternal life. In the discussion, the lawyer knows the answer: he says “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, “Love your neighbour as yourself.” Jesus himself uses this summary of the Law and the Prophets in other Gospels; these verses are often known as the Greatest Commandments. In Luke, Jesus says that the lawyer has made the correct interpretation and will live if he follows these rules.	An acknowledgment that many interpretations of this parable; a single, common one is advanced in this parabolic enquiry. Framing texts here seen as key. Contextual information (including <i>Sitz im Leben</i>) included.

	The lawyer seeks further clarification, however, saying ‘... “And who is my neighbour?’ (Luke 10:29), and Jesus answers with the story of the Good Samaritan. It was a story that would shock in a number of ways. Jews and Samaritans were not just two groups who did not get on. The hatred between them was fierce for several reasons, so a Samaritan doing the right thing when the priest and Levite did not would have astonished Jewish listeners. The story structure would lull listeners into a false sense of security. The scenario of three people who could all help the injured man may well have been one that listeners were used to. As the first two were important, religious men, listeners may well have been expecting the third to be a regular Jewish person, but never a Samaritan — so their shock would have been great on hearing this. Jesus’ parables often use a conventional literary structure to surprise people, making them sit up and take notice of his message. This one comes with quite a sting in the tale/tail... (p. 7)	
Unit 2B.5: Gospel (Core) <i>What would Jesus do?</i>	The Wise and Foolish Builders: Matthew 7:24–27. This parable at the end of the Sermon on the Mount is surprisingly hard to interpret, but for the pupils its plain meaning should be that ‘foundations’ matter. The nub of the story is about the relationship between hearing and doing: for Christians, faith is about hearing the Word of God in a way that makes a difference to how you live. Those who follow what Jesus said have built firm foundations. For Christians this often means trusting God, praying humbly, giving generously, forgiving and accepting forgiveness, living in a way that shows love of God, neighbour and self. (p. 6)	A clear interpretation advanced, with a recognition that this ‘foundation’ might pertain to different aspects for different Christians.
Unit 2B.8: Kingdom of God (Core). <i>What kind of king is Jesus?</i>	JESUS’ PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM The four Gospels record over 50 parables — stories Jesus uses to make a key point or to subvert a conversation. They are often sharply targeted at hypocrisy, they carry big ideas about God, faith and grace, and they stick in the mind. Many of the parables begin ‘The Kingdom of	It is made clear to teachers here that the parables ‘are open to different responses and interpretations’. Again, one only interpretation is offered for the parable ‘The Feast’. Two different readings are mentioned in the tenant parable. Clear consideration of context and original/modern hearers.

	God is like...' and use figurative, metaphorical or imaginative ideas to open up Jesus' teaching about how to live a life following God. THE FEAST: LUKE 14:12–24 This parable is certainly about inclusivity. The rich and well-fed exclude themselves from the feast, so the downtrodden and outcast are brought in. Luke's Gospel is a long series of 'short stories of inclusion'. Here, Jesus implies a welcome to anyone not too proud to join the feast of the Kingdom of God. But there are always shades of meaning in the parables, and they are open to different responses and interpretations. One way of looking at it might include the idea that, for the audience at the time, the first guests to be invited are the religious leaders of Israel; the poor and the lame represent the outcasts of Israel; and the people from the highways represent the Gentiles — people who were not Jewish — so that the Kingdom is open to them too. This is a challenge for his audience, although the 'big story' of the Bible always said that Israel was to attract other nations to God. Here, the master's generosity is matched by his severity too — the parable suggests that there will come a time when the invitations will stop. In the light of this, people's reasons for refusing to join the feast and accept God's generous invitation look rather feeble. The challenge for Christians today is to work out what this might mean to them in the twenty-first century: with whom do they identify? Have they received an invitation? Have they accepted the invitation, or are they putting up excuses...? (p. 6) THE TENANTS IN THE VINEYARD: MATTHEW 21:33–46 Christians, who call Jesus the 'Son of God', see Jesus as the son, the one the tenants kill. The parable suggests that God is patient in waiting for people to turn to him, even when they are hostile, but that the opportunity to take advantage of that patience will not last forever.	

	Some say the tenants are Jesus' enemies, for example from the Sanhedrin. Others say listeners are nudged to see the tenants as typical of any humans who find God's message, and its claim upon their lives, hard to take. The parable was remembered by the early Christians perhaps because it feels like a prophecy or prediction of what was to happen to Jesus himself. The key points of Christian belief that relate to these two parables are that God extends a gracious welcome to all humanity, but this is not always well received: selfishness or greed can get in the way of spiritual life, and of the coming of God's Kingdom. (p. 7)	
Unit 2B.8: Kingdom of God (Digging Deeper) <i>What kind of king is Jesus?</i>	THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT: MATTHEW 18: 21-35 This Bible text suggests that being part of God's Kingdom brings both blessings and obligations. As Scottish theologian Thomas Erskine put it: 'religion is grace and ethics is gratitude'. Those who have themselves been forgiven much by God should then become like God, willing to forgive others generously. Reciprocity or mutuality are continuous themes in Jesus' ethical guidance to his followers: 'do to others as you want them to do to you', 'forgive and you will be forgiven', 'the measure you give will be the measure you get'. This principle is balanced with God's generosity, or grace. Humans put in a little of their goodness; divine grace multiplies and expands it. The Kingdom of God is in the small seed that grows to a mighty bush, or in the little bit of yeast that raises a whole loaf of bread. Christians today may still, of course, find the practice of forgiveness very challenging, but Jesus' inspirational teaching lies behind all Christian efforts at reconciliation and peace-making, and Christians acknowledge their reliance upon the Holy Spirit to grow in goodness (p. 7)	A clear meaning articulated to teachers.

Appendix Five: The full parabolic enquiries in the *EP* resource, précised in Table 5.6 (pp. 175-176)

<i>EP</i> unit	Teaching and learning suggestions
KS1: What did Jesus teach about God in his parables?	• [Teacher's notes – p. 3] • He [Jesus] came down to the level of his 'pupils' and used stories to explain to them some of the mysteries of God. • In his parables (stories with meanings) Jesus supplied in picture language, lots of images of what God is like and some of his images challenged what people had thought previously. • Because Jesus lived a human life on earth, his sayings, conversations, sermons and stories all drew spiritual parallels and lessons out of the Palestinian life and culture with which he was surrounded. People were constantly amazed at his authority – he knew what he was talking about and those who listened knew this instinctively. • Much Christian teaching about God is derived from Jesus' parables – they are like rich treasure boxes containing wisdom, comfort and challenge. Parables are known as 'earthly stories with heavenly meanings'. 'Parable' means to 'throw alongside; they throw another image alongside a difficult one to make it easier to understand. For example, the Parable of the Lost Sheep teaches about God's love and forgiveness, shows the cost of waywardness, and God's joy when his 'sheep' return: all in a story shorter than this paragraph. When Jesus told parables e.g. to answer a question, he rarely explained the meaning. He said "he who has ears to hear, let him hear" i.e. think about it yourself. He wanted people to find God for themselves. • [Teaching and learning suggestions] • What is a parable?...They are stories with special meanings inside them. Jesus used parables to help his followers learn more about God and his kingdom (p. 5) • Christians love to pass Jesus' parables on because they help people know more about God. (p. 5) • Jesus' parables usually teach something about what God is like or about what people are like, but what do the children in this class think it teaches people? There may be lots of different possibilities! (p. 5) • Christians say Jesus told parables so his followers would think carefully about what God is like and ask questions. (p. 6) • We are going to look inside each parable box and each one will help us investigate and answer our big question: What did Jesus teach about God in his parables? You could stick 'What did Jesus teach about God in THIS parable?' on top, or inside the top, of each box. (p. 6) • If you could choose 2 other things to put in the Parable Box to help tell this story, what would they be?...If you could put a question in the box about the story, what would it be? In pairs, children devise a question to ask – maybe write on a sheep shape to put in the box? (pp. 6, 7)

	• From the box take this picture by John Freeman. He has painted a picture to pass the story on. What part of the story is it? What do you think the artist wants to pass on about what the shepherd is like? (p. 7) • Imagine you are the little white bird in the painting; your job is to tell us what Jesus wanted us to know about God. Finish the sentence: The shepherd in Jesus' story is God is a bit like that. (p. 7) • Teacher's note: The parable of 'The Prodigal Son' features a father welcoming home a wayward son. Jesus understood God as the best of all possible fathers, a model for human fathers; he did not intend those with poor experiences of fathering to use these as a lens through which to view God. (p. 8) • We know what is in one of them. Describe what is in the 'Lost Sheep' box. Who told the story? What did Jesus want his followers to know about God? (p. 8) • As the lesson draws to an end, gather the class together and talk about what the father is like using the children's ideas. Add your ideas to the second parable box. (p. 9) • OR Imagine you are the little white bird in the painting; your job is to tell us what Jesus wanted us to know about God. Finish the sentence: The Father in Jesus' story is God is a bit like that. (p. 9) • On Sunday Tom and Tessa's vicar will stand in the church pulpit and teach everyone what God is like. He will use the parable to help. Which words about the Good Samaritan do you think will help him say what God is like? (p. 11)
LKS2: How do Christians show reconciliation?	• [Pupils engage with the Parable of the Lost (Prodigal) Son] • Investigate the story of the Lost (Prodigal) son which is one of Jesus' parables. Explain that Jesus told parables to help his followers learn more about God; they are like mystery stories with lots of special meanings in them. (p. 8) • Can we all learn something from a Christian story like the Lost Son? Look at Rembrandt's 'The Return of the Prodigal Son' or Frank Wesley's 'Forgiving Father'. (p. 8) • What was the turning point in the younger brother's life? Talk about when the son understands and realises how sorry he is and how lonely, this is his part of the reconciliation. What do you think the son said to his father? • Is this a story about God – if so, where is God in the story? Is it a story for Christians, if so, what does it tell Christians? Is it a story for everyone, if so, what does it tell you? (p. 8) • Now look at this powerful sculpture of Reconciliation by Margaret Adams Parker which is installed at Duke Divinity School in the United States. Which character is which in the Prodigal Son story? (p. 9) • In three's, model yourselves into the sculpture and talk about the feelings, thoughts and words which might be taking place. (p. 9) • What is needed now in this family? Another reconciliation? More than one reconciliation? Use feelings faces / emotions graphs to describe the situation if wished. The father is like a 'bridge' between the two sons – explain what this means. (p. 10)

	• Finish reading the story. Discuss why Jesus left it on a cliff hanger for the older brother. What could the ending be? How would you feel if there was no reconciliation? Children can finish the story as a story board or a narrative. (p. 10)
LKS2: What do Christians mean when they talk about the Kingdom of God?	• A parable is a story to explain a spiritual principle in everyday language using familiar situations. (p. 9) • Jesus told his followers many parables to help them understand about God and his kingdom. The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats starts with a king. (p. 9) • What clues do Jesus' parables give about what the Kingdom of God is like? Be a Bible detective: God's kingdom is a place where Start with your ideas from the 'Sheep and Goats' parable. Now, what else can you find out from these short parables? • the parable of the Mustard Seed - Matthew 13 v.31-32 • the parable of the Yeast - Matthew 13 v.33 • the parable of the Pearl of Great Price – Matthew 13 v.45 • the parable of the Hidden Treasure - Matthew 13 v.44 • Challenge pupils to present one of these parables, however they wish (acting, artwork etc.) and report on any clues it gives about a Christian view of what God's Kingdom is like. (pp. 9, 10) • Create a series of pictures showing Christians bringing in God's kingdom e.g. through doing things mentioned in the Sheep and Goats parable. How could we find out if Christians do these things? What else do they do? (p. 11)
LKS2: Why are good stewardship and generous giving important for every Christian?	• [Teacher's notes – p. 3] • Accountability - A steward managing someone's estate must expect the rightful owner to hold them to account for their work. Like the servants in Jesus' Parable of the Talents, Christians believe all humanity will have to account for their use of what God has given them. • Teacher's note: Christians believe God gives everyone gifts or talents that can be used to serve him, and that all are accountable for the way they use these. In Jesus' Parable of the Talents, the distribution of the money seems unfair, but the emphasis is on how the servants view what they are given and their perception of the one who gave them the money. One wonders if the owner knew he was taking a risk with the third servant but gave him a chance anyway. (p. 8) • [The way in into introducing and engaging with the parable of the talents is to consider: 'How should you care for something that belongs to someone else?' (p. 8)] • What might a Christian learn from the story? THINK: What do you think the story is saying to Christians about God and about being a good steward? What might a Christian learn from the story? Who could you ask to check your ideas? (p. 9)

UKS2: How do the 'Heroes of Faith' encourage Christians today?	• A Christian explains: Some Christians join a church as small children; their parents promise to teach them the Christian faith and they will make their own faith promises later when they may be confirmed. Others join a church at an older age, when they put their faith in Christ themselves; they may then be baptised as believers. However it happens, faith starts small and needs to grow. At church Christians worship God and learn together so that their faith grows and develops. It is a bit like being watered every week! Faith, said Jesus, is like a mustard seed. It starts small; it is not easy to believe or trust sometimes – remember Gru and the girls in Despicable Me. They jumped and were caught; it would be easier to have faith next time. And just like a mustard seed, faith can grow big and bring benefit to uncountable numbers. (p. 11) • Jesus explained this in a parable. Find it in Matthew 13 v.31-32 in the Bible / on www.biblegateway.com or in a Bible storybook...You could also watch 'Grace Kids' as they explain Jesus' Parable of the Mustard seed taught people to pray and put their trust in God when they were in trouble, as they did a mustard seed of faith would begin to grow. https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xeyh5z (p. 11)
UKS2: When Christians need real wisdom where do they look for it?	• [Teacher's notes – p. 4] • Wise or Foolish Parables: Jesus' 'Sermon on the Mount' (Matthew 5-8) summarises real wisdom in practical, but controversial ways, as Jesus gave his own views on established ways of interpreting Jewish scriptures. He said that those who built their lives on his words would be like a 'Wise man who built his house on rock'. The opposite of wisdom is foolishness, which is a wrong understanding of life. Jesus told several parables on this theme, including the parable of a Rich Fool (Luke 12 v.13-21) which is a warning about putting our trust or faith in the wrong things (here, money and possessions). The fool has missed the point of life – he does not realise that his soul is on loan from God, who can require it back whenever he likes. The fool thinks that the aim of life is 'to be happy', however he interprets that, and he thinks he can gain happiness by doing what he wants and by accumulating possessions. The wise person recognises their limitations, trusts in God and understands that there is more to life than may be seen on the surface. • [Teaching and learning suggestions – p. 13] • What was Jesus saying in the parable of Two Housebuilders? Jesus was a very popular teacher; people came from everywhere to see and hear him. Sometimes they stayed for whole days to listen to his stories and what he had to say about God. He told this story at the end of a day of teaching. • Watch a video of the Wise and Foolish Builders e.g. https://www.max7.org/en/resource/WiseFoolishBuilders OR see Resources. • Find the story in a Bible: Matthew 7 v.24-27 and Luke 6 v.47-49. It is very short but could make it shorter, cut it back to the 'bare bones'? Aim to write down the basic facts in fewer than 25 words? Work in pairs. Share attempts after 2 minutes.

	• You can also use e.g. Lion Storyteller Book of Parables p.60 or Lion Storyteller Bible p.112-113. Or sing a song (see Resources). • The parable is not really about builders, but wisdom and listening. Jesus had been teaching his disciples about God and how to live, passing on God's wisdom. What he said is found in the 'Sermon on the Mount', just before the parable. None of his teaching would be any good if the disciples just ignored what had been said. • 'Wisdom' lay in obedience, putting it all into practice....

Appendix Six: A review of a range of key publications linked to parabolic enquiry, as considered in Table 5.7 (pp. 180-181)

Publication	Publication Type	Merits	Demerits
Pett, S. (ed) (2020) 'What did Jesus teach about the kingdom of God? A study of parables. A unit for 11-14s'. <i>Examining Religion and Belief: Christians Vol. 2</i> , pp. 18-23	Curriculum exemplar	• Behind, within and in front questions explored • <i>Sitz im Leben</i> and framing texts of the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant are considered. The context of first-century listeners is deliberated upon through scrutinizing the vocabulary used • Pupils evaluate a range of interpretations and consider which are most appropriate	• KS3, not primary • Interpretations which students' evaluate are not authentic interpretations from actual, identifiable interpreters
Lane, M. (2022). 'Using sacred texts in the classroom', <i>RE:Online</i> [website online]	Blog	• Lane suggests that pupils read a text thrice, with a different viewpoint each time – as writer, reader and believer. This enables pupils to consider questions <i>behind</i> and <i>in front</i> of the text. In terms of the latter, opportunities for pupils to consider their own positionality as readers	• No engagement with perspectives outside the class • In the third step, pupils are to consider what a believer 'would take from this story'. This assumes one meaning, and doesn't help pupils recognise that different people interpret sacred texts differently
Jenkins, J. (2020) 'Theologies of reading', <i>RE:Online</i> [website online]	Blog	• Jenkins here provides extensive overview of hermeneutics and has contributed richly to the RE community's thinking. She identifies some of the main contours of biblical hermeneutics and suggests a myriad of ways that we might offer deeper encounters with sacred texts. • Of particular merit if Jenkin's calls for: slower, reflective reading; the evaluation of interpretations; questioning whether	• These suggestions are isolated ideas, not complete or trailed enquiries for practitioners to implement • No focus on the context of commentators; the 'why' of interpretive diversity is missed • No specifically primary parabolic application

		authorial intent is accessible and, if so, whether is take priority over readers' interpretation, and the positionality of readers.	
Ruggiero, S. (2020) 'Hermeneutics in the classroom' [website online]	Blog	- Ruggiero provides two practical ideas for helping students enquire <i>behind/within/in front</i> of the text. One exemplifies Carswell's (2018b) LAaSMO approach for the Parable of the Prodigal Son; another provides a brief commentary on the impact of an enquiry into the Parable of the Sheep and Goats. - I like his comment that scholarly RE helps students become aware 'that knowledge is in a constant state of academic debate – hermeneutics a way to satisfy this'	This is for KS4, not primary
Holt, J. (2022) <i>Religious Education in the Secondary School: An Introduction to Teaching, Learning and the World Religions</i> (London: Routledge)	Book		In this secondary phase idea, the enquiry assumes one meaning: 'What was Jesus teaching in this parable?' (p.213)
Ostler, R. (2022) 'From the Good Samaritan to the climate crisis: a prayer boat display'. <i>RE Today</i> , 39:3, p.40	Subject article		This exemplification for 8-10 year olds reinforces the 'parable as bearing one meaning' view: 'The class saw that the story teaches us to treat others as we wish to be treated and highlight's the difference that one's person's actions can make' (p.40).
Georgiou, G. and Seymour, O. (2023). <i>What does it mean to 'get better' at the ways of knowing in RE?</i> [website online]	Guidance document	The report details progression in 'ways of knowing in RE'. In terms of theology, this sees students developing an 'increasingly complex understanding of	This is an important work in providing a model of progression along with exemplars in hermeneutical engagement with a parable. Although it

		theology as a field of enquiry and be able to use theological methods in increasingly complex ways' (p. 7). • Through four steps, progression in an encounter with a text such as a parable moves from: 1) understanding that texts are carriers of meaning; 2) stories can contain 'hidden meanings'; 3) texts are shaped by a context, and 4) texts are interpreted by readers who are situated in their own context(s) (p.7) • The Parable of the Good Samaritan is used to exemplify this (p. 9 and 12)	calls for pupils to consider diverse interpretations (and why this might be), It would be enriched by explicitly stating the value of pupils encountering authentic alterity from a range of times and places to develop their understanding of religion and belief in the modern world.
Bowie, R.A. (2016) 'Doing RE hermeneutically: learning to become interpreters of religion', <i>RE Today</i>, 34:1, pp. 60-62	Subject magazine article	• Argues that pupils should read should 'read texts through different perspectives' and contemplate both how and why different Christians arrive at different readings (p. 61). In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, for instance, pupils (in Years Five and Six) could consider why the majority of wealthy Christians resonate with the Samaritan, whilst those lacking this wealth identify with the beaten man? (p. 61). • For Bowie, we should also be critical of the titles offered for the parables in the New Testament, or at least, consider the extent to which they inform our interpretation of the parable. He contends that, 'the title given to a story immediately creates an interpreting lens drawing on theological and philosophical ideas in the background: human free	

		will, sin, loss, forgiveness, grace, redemption and salvation' (p. 62). Consequently, within the classroom we should (p.6 2): 'Play with titles: offer multiple titles, invent new titles, encourage students to discover how titles can frame and lead towards particular inferences and meanings, and how different titles can reveal new meanings. Give untitled selections of texts which don't follow traditional Bible chapter breaks and ask students to invent titles, giving reasons for them in order to reveal their interpretive lens'.	
Earl, M. (2015) <i>RE-framing education about beliefs and practices in schools: a lens and tools (concept based) approach</i> (Cambridge: University of Cambridge)	Guidance document	• Earl suggests that students consider both 'text and con-text': Why was this narrative produced? When? Who is/was it important for? How is it read now? Can it be interpreted in different ways? Who says so?' (p. 12) Earl's suggestions here involve aspects of historical criticism, acknowledge the polyvalency of texts and the ways in which readings of biblical narratives may vary in different contexts. • Asserts that, in KS5, pupils can be introduced to questions of <i>why</i> different people interpret a text differently (p. 84)	• Such questions are reserved until the secondary school and beyond
Felderhof, M. and Thompson, P. (eds.). (2014) <i>Teaching Virtue:</i>	Book		• A KS4 suggestion for the Parable of the Good Samaritan posits that the text has a single meaning about the importance

<i>The Contribution of Religious Education</i> (London: Bloomsbury)			of justice (pp. 201, 202). Pre-determinism and exclusivism.
Moss, F. (2015) 'Engaging children creatively: effective planning for developing enquiry', In Elton-Chalcraft, S. (ed.). <i>Teaching Religious Education Creatively</i> (London: Routledge, pp. 64-77)	Book chapter	Pupils consider why Jesus told the Parable of the Lost Sheep, and reason through some different ideas, justifying their choices (p. 71)	- A pre-determined meaning - No engagement with authentic alterity, or <i>in front</i> of the text questions
Commission on Religious Education. Interim Report: Religious Education for All (2017) and Religion and Worldviews: The Way Forward. A National Plan for RE (2018)	National report	- The interim report (2017, p. 61) suggests that a national entitlement for all students is that their RE experience helps them understand the 'different ways that people interpret and respond to texts and other sources of authority. - The final report (2018) states that pupils should engage in 'hermeneutical approaches to texts' (p. 77) in a way cognizant of 'different theological and philosophical approaches' (p. 30)	
Ofsted. (2021) Research review series: religious education.	National report	- Denigrates the way sacred texts often used as 'proof-texts' in RE as a misrepresentation - Encourages hermeneutical tools (e.g. from sacred text scholarship) are used as a means to develop pupils' disciplinary knowledge. This includes reference to 'author', 'original context' and 'initial audience'	
Brooks, S. (2017) 'Creative learning with parable cloths', <i>RE Today</i> , 34:3, pp. 28-29	Subject magazine article	Pupils consider how interpretation of the parable informs belief and practice today	Assumes the parable has a single meaning; no opportunity for students to explore the 'what' or 'why' of interpretive diversity

Diocese of Lichfield. (2017) <i>Exploring the Parables of Jesus. 38 lesson outlines exploring the parables of Jesus for use in Religious Education and Collective Worship</i>	Curriculum exemplars	• Some contextual information provided. E.g. Parable on Lost Sheep and Coin does have reference to Pharisees and the contrasting views of the Pharisees and Jesus: 'This parable challenged the Jewish religious establishment and highlighted their failings and inability to help those who needed their help.' (p.19); lost son feeding pigs and how first listeners would have responded to this (p. 22) • Some <i>Sitz im Leben</i> for an enquiry into the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector: 'What do you think must have been happening within society at the time for Jesus to tell this parable?' 'What do you think he wanted to teach?' 'What changes do you think he wanted people to make in their lives because of this passage?' Discuss answers. (p. 38) • One acknowledgement of different scholarly views. On the Parable of the Sower: 'Many scholars think the allegory is referring to the early persecution of the Christian church and how followers of Jesus responded to the message of the 'good news.' Other scholars think the allegory also refers to the Jews and how some responded positively initially but then drifted away.' (p. 39)	• An assumption that the meaning of the parable is a given. No interpretations of first listeners/readers, diversity of interpretation, positionality etc. • Pre-determinism and exclusivism

Carswell, M. (2018a) 'Promoting fundamentalist belief? How scripture is presented in three religious education programmes in Catholic primary schools in Australia and England and Wales', <i>British Journal of Religious Education</i>, 40(3), pp. 288-297 Carswell, M. (2018b) 'Teaching Scripture: moving towards a hermeneutical model for religious education in Australian Catholic Schools', <i>Journal of Religious Education</i>, 66, pp. 213-223	Articles	(2018a) • 'Does the current educational obsession with outcomes and assessment mean that defined answers are valued over personal interpretation informed by critical study and thought? Is the gulf between biblical scholarship and education too wide to enable collegial dialogue between these two groups?' (p.296) (2018b) • Critical of approaches which direct sacred text enquiry to a pre-determined meaning and/or theme • Acknowledges that such use of sacred texts often lack engagement with contextual information and framing texts: 'Engagement with passages is most often limited to the superficial, to role-play, illustration or the answering of closed comprehension questions in support of the theme' (p. 216) • As theme pre-determined, often not enough scope for pupils to consider their own interpretation	
Carswell, M. (2020a) 'LAaSMO: A Hermeneutical Pedagogy'(pp. 20-24) In Bowie, R. A., Panjwani, F., Carswell, M. and Clemmey, K. (2020) <i>Opening the Door to Hermeneutical RE: The Practical</i>	Guidance document	• Carswell advocates LAaSMO – an acronym for an approach which structures a hermeneutical approach which takes seriously 'knowledge of the Bible and skill in its interpretation' (p. 21). LAaSMO summarized as:	• This is a publication aimed at secondary practitioners, not primary • Context of first-century listeners considered and Evangelists' audience, but not future interpreters

<i>Guide. Classroom Tools for Sacred Text Scholarship.</i> National Institute for Christian Education Research.		L – literary form and features (whole passage) (e.g. we read newspapers unconsciously – news, advertisements, opinions, sport – forgetting/automatically encompassing their different authorial intentions and purposes) Author – who and their intention(s) Audience (as much as we can infer) Setting – where passage is placed/set-in (e.g. words/actual text, that is 1st century and Pharisee, Levite, Samaritan etc.) M – meaning – two at this stage – 1) meaning for evangelists’ audience (sentence starters – possible language; ‘I think the passage is really/might be about...’); 2) does this meaning still resonate with us now? O – other/our world. What did you think? Why? Pupils engage with discourse.	
Hutton, L. and Cox, D. (2021) <i>Making Every RE Lesson Count: Six principles to support religious education teaching</i> (Carmarthen: Crown House Publishing)	Book	• The authors advocate the utility of hermeneutics. A range of <i>behind</i> the text questions are provided, with the suggestion that students consider different interpretations (pp. 48-49) • ‘What different interpretations are there of it [e.g. a biblical story]? Why?’ (p. 62)	• Secondary, not primary
Bowie, R.A., Panjwani, F., Carswell, M. and Clemmey, K. (2020a) <i>Opening the Door to Hermeneutical RE: The Practical Guide. Classroom Tools for Sacred Text Scholarship.</i> National	Guidance documents/research report	(2020a) • Lots of principles and ideas for how teachers can open up more hermeneutical encounters with sacred texts • This includes issues <i>behind</i> and <i>in front</i> of biblical texts	• Secondary, not primary

Institute for Christian Education Research [online] Bowie, R.A., Panjwani, F. and Clemmey, K. (2020b) <i>Opening the Door to Hermeneutical RE: The Findings Report</i>. National Institute for Christian Education Research.		(2020b) • Participating teachers introduced to a myriad of hermeneutical questions from sacred text scholarship. These included questions <i>behind</i> and <i>in front</i> of the text, including: authorial intent, initial reception(s), <i>Sitz im Leben</i>, different approaches to interpretation and questions of where meaning resides (e.g. text or reader) • Study found that hermeneutics allowed classrooms to ‘become sites of active exploration of meaning’ (p. 7)	
Bible Society (2019b) KS3 <i>Parables</i>	Guidance document/curriculum exemplars	• A key question is ‘How have Christians interpreted the parables...in different ways?’ [webpage question/title] • An acknowledgement of <i>behind</i> and <i>in front</i> of the text issues • ‘What do you think it is about the tax collector that Jesus wanted his listeners to think of as being pleasing to God? Again, use words from the box if you want to.’ (p. 5). I like the fact there are a selection of words which different pupils can choose, but they are invited to come up with their own • ‘Can you suggest some ways in which a modern-day Christian reading this parable in their Bible or hearing it read out in church might think about himself or herself differently because of it? You could give your answer in the form of	• Secondary, not primary • No focus on ‘why’ different people interpret this text differently

		questions they might ask about themselves'. (p. 5) • Links to Lukan framing texts and what influence this might have on interpretation (p. 6) • Pupils contemplate allegorical and non-allegorical readings and the work of Jülicher (p. 8)	
Bible Society (2019a) <i>The Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37): A guide for teachers.</i>	Guidance document/curriculum exemplars	• This guidance document helps teachers consider the Parable of the Good Samaritan with: its placing in Luke's Gospel with particular Lukan themes (p. 2); its 1st century context (p. 5); different, authentic interpretations (p. 6) and a range of modern day interpretations (p. 13) • I like that there is reference to a survey in 2015 of what different participants think the parable links to • "Being a Good Samaritan means doing something to help someone else, which costs you nothing.' Do you agree?' (p. 12). Students/teachers given the opportunity to critically reflect upon meaning and their own view. • Tasks calibrated to recognize variant interpretations. E.g. create a written response and 'try to include at least two different Christian understandings as well as a non- religious understanding of what it might mean to be a Good Samaritan. (p. 15)	• The authentic interpreters are not known, leading to a missed opportunity for pupils to consider 'why' different people read this parable differently • It is not known what age the activities are aimed at, or whether they are for teachers' professional development only

Freathy, G. (2016) <i>The RE-searchers Approach. A quick start guide with exemplar units of work and activities</i> (Exeter: Univeristy of Exeter)	Guidance document/curriculum exemplars	• Parable of the Good Samaritan enquired into in a UKS2 unit 'Let's talk about love' • Focus on framing texts – i.e. the parable being a response to a question on eternal life (p. 125)	• Despite their calls for diverse methodological, dialogic enquiries which enable pupils to be reflexive scholars, their Parable of the GS enquiry below in the quick start guide is paltry and another form of pre-determinism • There is no focus on interpretive diversity within the Christian living religious tradition
Moseley, A. M. and Takolia, N. (n.d.) <i>The Story Tent. The Workers in the Vineyard.</i>	Curriculum exemplar		• This stipulates the meaning and doesn't explore any <i>behind</i> or <i>in front</i> of the text issues • No acknowledgement of diverse interpretations or positionality
Wintersgill, B. (ed.) (2017) <i>Big Ideas for Religious Education</i> (Exeter: University of Exeter)	Guidance document	• A call for pupils to understand that there are 'different interpretations and ways of understanding' sacred texts (p. 28)	• No further guidance follows this statement
Appleton, N. and Jack, A. (2016) <i>Approaching Religion Through Story A project of the Story and Religion Network at the University of Edinburgh</i>	Curriculum exemplars	• Time spent familiarizing pupils with these narratives • Insufficient attention to <i>behind</i> or <i>in front</i> of the text questions	• It is not mentioned what age group(s) these resources are aimed at • Little reference of various interpretations • Some pre-determinism

Appendix Seven: Lesson plans for LE1 and LE2

Session One		
LO: What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?		
Resources:	Differentiation:	
- PowerPoint - Pupil workbooks - Highlighters x 3 per pupil - Large piece of paper (A1/2 x sugar paper stuck together) with labels pre-stuck (+ a spare to model with) - Card sort (8 x bronze, silver and gold cards) - Card sort instruction sheet - Blue tack - Fineliners (different colours) - WOWO pen for board	- Pupil selection of question to interrogate text with - Mixed ability groups - Adult/peer support - Sentence stems on proforma	
Activity		Resources
Starter (5 mins) Ascertain prior learning <i>What is a parable? Pair/share. Arrive at definition.</i> <i>Share LO. Has anyone heard of the Parable of the Good Samaritan before? What is it about? Write what you think the meaning is/might be on the front page of your workbook.</i>		<i>Pupil workbook</i>
Main (Part One: 10 – 15 mins) Introduce the Parable of the Good Samaritan text. Read as class. Pupils to read the text on their own, slowly. Pupils to select one, two or all of the following questions to consider whilst reading:		<i>Pupil workbook</i> <i>3 x highlighters each</i>

- What stands out for me in this parable? - Are there any parts that don't add up or make sense? Why not? - What information might help us understand this text more? (E.g. Who is...? Who were...?) Model this on board or print a large copy to highlight myself. Pupils to use highlighters and pens to annotate the text with their thinking here. Pupils to then discuss this with pair/in a triad, before sharing some ideas as a class (in reverse order from questions on sheet). Discuss some of the key terms which emerged (e.g. 'the Law' (contextual – not like law today), 'priest', 'Levite', 'Jerusalem to Jericho', 'Samaritan'). Write on a WOWO board.	
Main (Part Two: 25-40 mins) Introduce card sort activity. Using the whiteboard, model the activity of reading and grouping cards with animal information (under the headings 'classification', 'fact' and 'opinion'). The information is (to be revealed in this order): - Sea lions are often used in shows displaying tricks - Elephants are majestic creatures. - Lions are carnivores. - Whales can be spotted all around the world. - Pandas have the funniest sneeze. Then, explain card sort. The enquiry question is: <i>What should we think about the parable of the Good Samaritan?</i> Pupils in triads. They will have 24 cards (in rounds as bronze, silver and gold) which they should discuss, debate, group and evaluate in light of the enquiry question. One member of the table will be allocated by	<i>Card sort</i> <i>Instruction sheet</i> <i>A1 sugar paper with four labels on</i> <i>Fineliner pens</i> <i>Blu tack</i>

myself (in discussion prior with the class teacher)/the class teacher as a group leader to ensure that all steps are followed and time restrictions are placed (e.g. twenty seconds before next person selects a card).

Step 1: Place the eight bronze cards face down in a pile in the middle of your table.

Step 2: The first player selects the top card and reads it out to the group. As a group, decide which label the card best links to and place it underneath *[explain the labels are 'meaning', 'characters', 'us' and 'other']*. Leave some space between cards as you be writing between and around these shortly. *[Remind pupils that there are not necessarily right or wrong answers here – this activity is all about your own thinking on a big question]*.

Step 3: The player to the left takes a card and repeats Step 2. Decide which label is would be best placed under.

Step 4: Repeat until you have run out of bronze cards. One of your team collect the silver cards and continue.

Step 5: When you have finished the silver cards, collect the gold set!

Step 6: Let your teacher know when you have placed all of the cards.

To discuss if finish: are there any other labels you can think of that could have been useful to group some of these cards under?

Remind pupils that they can refer to Good Samaritan text at any stage to support their thinking should they wish.

Step 7: Pupils to then take their fineliners and 'concept-map' – writing their thoughts, links, questions and interpretations on the sheet, using arrows to denote links between the cards and/or labels. Each pupil to

have a different coloured pen (and to create a key with initial) so that the contribution of each pupil can be shown. <i>Teacher to collect any remaining blu tack.</i> <i>Teacher should model ways to tackle the activity (include thought process and referring back to text).</i>	
Plenary (10-15 minutes) Pupils to write written responses to questions on pro forma. ○ What have you learnt about the Parable of the Good Samaritan from doing these activities? ○ Which card/s made you think the most? Why? ○ <i>In your opinion, what should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?</i> ○ <i>Have you changed your answer from the start of the lesson? If so, in what way/s? What changed your thinking?</i> ○ Are there any further questions you would ask about this parable? Why do you think these questions are important? ○ This activity made me think because... Model example answer on IWB - stress that this is my view, not theirs. Spelling bank on board. Write sentence stems on WOWO if needed.	<i>Pupil workbook</i>

Session Two		
LO: Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?		
Resources:	Differentiation:	
- String for continuum (pre-cut) (set up continuum during break?) - Post-it notes (for labels) - Interpretation cards - Interpreter profiles (two of each in classroom) - Interpretation matching sheet - Fluorescent post-its to place above interpreter profiles for ease of pupil noticing around classroom - Paper clips (7 per group) (and spares) - Blue tack - Post-it notes - PowerPoint - Pupil workbook	- Mixed-ability groups - By outcome (mild, spicy, hot) - Adult/peer support	
Activity		Resources
Link activity (starter) (5 mins) 'A hermeneutical starter' – something which pupils will interpret differently based on prior experience. Have a look at the icon on the screen. <i>What do you think it means? What does it make you think about? Share some ideas.</i> Notice that different people think this means different things – one image, different meanings. If we were to show this icon a few hundred years ago in Ancient Greece, they may not have thought about X. <i>Why do you think different people take different meanings from art? Why are they not all the same?</i> Pair/share. Record these on board.		

Main (25 minutes)

Explain the LO for this lesson, defining 'interpretation' in the process. We are going to link our thinking to text. *'What we were just doing was interpretation – we were trying to interpret this image. What do you think I mean when I say interpretation?'*

Step 1:

Pupils to have seven cards, each with a different interpretation of the Good Samaritan. Pupils (in triads) to place them on the horizontal continuum, from 'disagree the most' to 'agree the most' (this continuum to be made from string and with post-it note labels on table). Pupils to choose at least two and justify their decision on their pro forma (NB: they can deviate from decision of group if they have a different view). Challenge: can pupils justify it through linking back to the parable to support their view? Note how interesting it is that different groups have different views.

Step 2:

Pupils to add vertical axis to their curriculum using string and add the post-it labels of 'time of Jesus (1st century)' and '21st century' at the bottom and top of the vertical axis respectively. Pupils to move cards up or down depending on when they think this interpretation occurred. (NB: the answers are in their workbooks, encourage not to look at/to close workbook). Pupils to stick these down with blu tack.

Step 3:

Pupils then move around the room in triad (carousel) to look at the profile of the seven interpreters. Once they have been around once, they can 'rip' the relevant person's tag to place with the interpretation on their profile matching sheet with a paper clip. Pupils to take profile matching sheet with them to help them.

Once all have been decided, pupils to connect each interpreter's tag to the relevant interpretation on the continuum (to visually show different interpretations at different times). Pupils to then show the matches they have made on their pro forma and write a justification for each choice on post-it notes (with the reminder to include the name of the interpreter they are referring to on each post-it); they have the option to diverge from the group's decision/justification to offer their own view should they wish.

String
Labelled post-it notes
Interpretation cards
Pupil workbook

Interpreter profiles (several of each to avoid crowding/not being able to see)

Fluorescent post-its

Profile matching sheet

Paper clips

Blu tack

Post-it notes

Main (15 mins) Pair/share <i>What can we learn about the interpretation of the Good Samaritan from this activity?</i> <i>What do you think has led to different interpretations? Why do you think different people interpret the parable differently?</i> <i>Can we be completely certain about what we have matched? Why? Why not?</i> <i>Think about how we as a class and individually we have interpreted the Good Samaritan and ranked different interpretations.</i> <i>Do you think our background, experiences, beliefs affect how we interpret this text?</i> <i>Think back to our icon thinking here.</i>	
Plenary (15 mins) Pupils to answer the LO question. Model well, perhaps suggesting to meet success criteria step by step. • Give at least one well-explained reason to answer the question • Give examples from the interpreter matching activity to support your answer • Link your answer to your own interpretation – what do you think the meaning of the parable is? Why do you think you arrive at that meaning, yet other people arrive at different meanings? Extension: Is there anyone you think should read this parable? Why? What message/s would you want them to take from it? If finish, pupils to self-assess their answer against the success criteria.	<i>Pupil workbook</i>

LO: What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?

Appendix Eight: Pupil workbook



Initials:

Date:

I think meaning of the Parable of the Good Samaritan is/might be...

LO: What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?

This stands out to me	
This doesn't add up/make sense	
More information needed	

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'

²⁶ 'What is written in the Law?' he replied. 'How do you read it?'

²⁷ He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"^[a]; and, "Love your neighbour as yourself."^[b]

²⁸ 'You have answered correctly,' Jesus replied. 'Do this and you will live.'

²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?'

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half-dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii^[c] and gave them to the innkeeper. "Look after him," he said, "and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have."

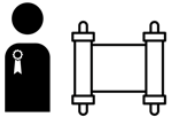
³⁶ 'Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?'

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, 'The one who had mercy on him.'

Jesus told him, 'Go and do likewise.'

(Luke 10:25-37 - New International Version – UK)

LO: What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?



Expert in the law: *studied the Jewish scriptures in depth*



Jerusalem to Jericho: *an 18 mile path between the city and town. It was regularly used by traders and people wanting to visit the Temple in Jerusalem; it provided lots of hiding places for thieves.*



Priest: *an expert in Jewish law. They would have been seen as a teacher and someone who knew God's ways really well.*



Levite: *Levites travelled to the Temple in Jerusalem to help with worship. They would have known the law too and would have just left worshipping God.*



Samaritan: *Samaritans were a group of people living locally. There was a deep hatred between Jewish people and Samaritans as they held different beliefs.*

LO: What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?

Answer the following reflective questions below: 

- 1) What have you learnt about the Parable of the Good Samaritan from doing this activity?

- 2) Which card/s made you think the most? Why?

- 3) Answer the LO question: in your opinion, what should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?

LO: What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?

- 4) Have you changed your answer from the start of the lesson? If so, in what ways/s? What changed your thinking?

- 5) Are there any further questions you would ask about this parable? Why do you think these questions are important?

- 6) This activity made me think because...

LO: Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?

Step 1

Choose at least two of the interpretations. Circle where *you* would place it on the continuum, and explain why you would have placed it there. Challenge: can you link your reason back to the parable?

Giving money and worn-out clothes to the poor once a year isn't 'loving your neighbour'. We need to go further, like the Samaritan did, and really care for people.	Strongly agree Agree Unsure Disagree Strongly disagree	E.g. I strongly agree/disagree with this interpretation because...
The 'road to Jericho' where the man was robbed is a symbol for our lives. Many people today face racism daily as they travel through life; we need to change the 'road' to be a better, safer place for all.	Strongly agree Agree Unsure Disagree Strongly disagree	
Each character and place represents something. The Good Samaritan is Jesus, who saves 'broken and sinful humans' on life's 'road'. Jesus brings humans to the church (the inn) to recover and become better people, before coming back to collect them in the future.	Strongly agree Agree Unsure Disagree Strongly disagree	

LO: Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?

The parable makes us think about an important question: who are the priests and Levites in our society today? Who ignores the 'bruised and wounded'? We should condemn them, and campaign to end to the unfairness we are seeing.	Strongly agree Agree Unsure Disagree Strongly disagree	
We live in a world where we meet people of different beliefs, nationalities and cultures. The two answers in verse 27 (<i>'Love God with all you have and love your neighbour as yourself'</i>) teaches us that loving God means loving all. You can't do one without the other.	Strongly agree Agree Unsure Disagree Strongly disagree	
The Good Samaritan parable has nothing to do with God at all. Jesus simply teaches his listeners to love all people, using people and places that they would have known.	Strongly agree Agree Unsure Disagree Strongly disagree	
This parable highlights that we should not treat other groups of people differently. Yet, I'm frustrated that women are invisible and forgotten in this parable, just like in my society. I don't like this.	Strongly agree Agree Unsure Disagree Strongly disagree	

LO: Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?

Step 2: Match each interpreter to an interpretation and explain why you linked them on post-it notes.

St Augustine
354-430



Frederick Douglass
1818-1895



Adolf Jülicher
1857-1938



Martin Luther King Jr.
1929-1968



Church in Solentiname
1965-1977



Brian Stiller
b. 1942



Irene Matsoso
1992



Giving money and worn-out clothes to the poor once a year isn't 'loving your neighbour'. We need to go further, like the Samaritan did, and really care for people.

We live in a world where we meet people of different beliefs, nationalities and cultures. The two answers in verse 27 teaches us that loving God means loving all. You can't do one without the other.

The Good Samaritan parable has nothing to do with God at all. Jesus simply teaches his listeners to love all people, using people and places that they would have known.

This parable highlights that we should not treat other groups of people differently. Yet, I'm frustrated that women are invisible and forgotten in this parable, just like in my society. I don't like this.

The 'road to Jericho' where the man was robbed is a symbol for our lives. Many people today face racism daily as they travel through life; we need to change the 'road' to be a better, safer place for all.

The parable makes us think about an important question: who are the priests and Levites in our society today? Who ignores the 'bruised and wounded'? We should condemn them, and campaign to end to the unfairness we are seeing.

Each character and place represents something. The Good Samaritan is Jesus, who saves 'broken and sinful humans' on life's 'road'. Jesus brings humans to the church (the inn) to recover and become better people, before coming back to collect them in the future.

LO: Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?

Stick your post-it notes on this page. Remember to mention the name of the interpreter:

e.g. I think this is St Augustine's
interpretation because...

LO: Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?

Answer the LO question below. How many of the success criteria can you meet?

- Give at least one well-explained reason to answer the question
- Give examples from the interpreter matching activity to support your answer
- Link your answer to your own interpretation – what do you think the meaning of the parable is? Why do you think you arrive at that meaning, yet other people arrive at different meanings?



I think different people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently because...

[illegible]

LO: Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?

Self-assess against the success criteria – have you achieved them all?



Extension: Is there anyone you think should read this parable? Why?

What message/s would you want them to take from it?

Instructions

Step 1: Place the eight bronze cards face down in a pile in the middle of your table.

Read

Step 2: The first player selects the top card and reads it out to the group. As a group, decide which label the card best links to and place it underneath with blu tack.

Step 3: The player to the left takes a card and repeats Step 2. Decide which label is would be best placed under.

Place

Step 4: Repeat until you have run out of bronze cards. One of the team collects the silver cards and continue.

Step 5: When you have finished the silver cards, collect the gold set!

Label

Step 6: Let me or your teacher know when you have placed all of the cards.

To discuss if finish: are there any other labels you can think of that could have been useful to group some of these cards under?

After the gold set...

Take your sharpie - now is your turn to get creative! Read the cards and select two of the following:

Share your thoughts - What does the card make you think of?
I agree, because... I disagree with what this card as... This card makes me wonder...

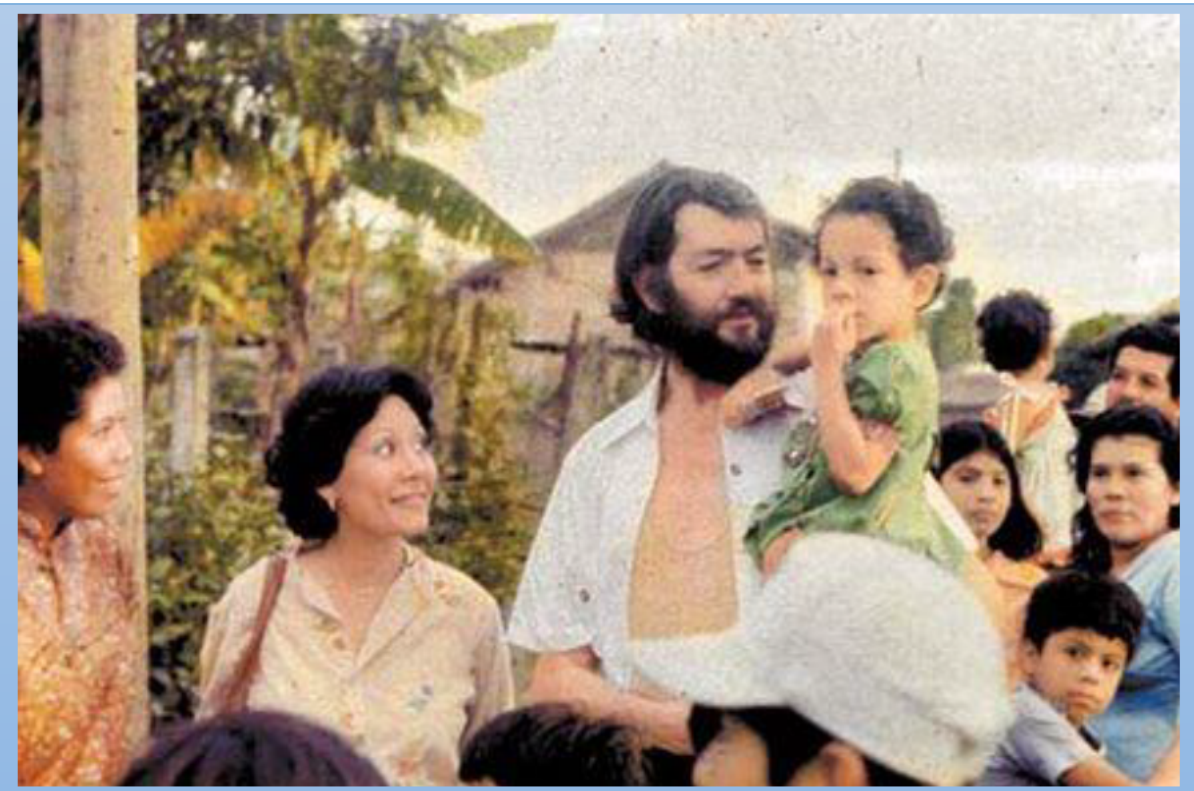
Write questions you think of -
What...? Why...? I wonder...? If...?

Are there any pieces of information you think are *really* important to know when reading this parable? Why? Any information you think is not needed? *This is important because... This information doesn't help me/us as...*

Draw arrows to link cards and/or labels, explaining the link you have noticed.

Remember to keep the same pen, and create a key in the corner with your initial.

Appendix Ten: The interpreter profiles (LE2)



<https://pompanointertext.com/2017/09/01/apocalipsis-de-solentiname-by-julio-cortazar/>

Many people on the island of Solentiname were very poor. A group of farmers gathered together to read the Bible (1965-1977); they often thought it gave advice about how to best help those who are less fortunate.

[illegible]



Augustine (354 - 430 AD) lived a rebellious life before converting to Christianity in his thirties. He argued that we all need help from God, and the church is the best place to get that help.

Augustine

Augustine

Augustine

Augustine

Augustine

Augustine

Augustine

Augustine

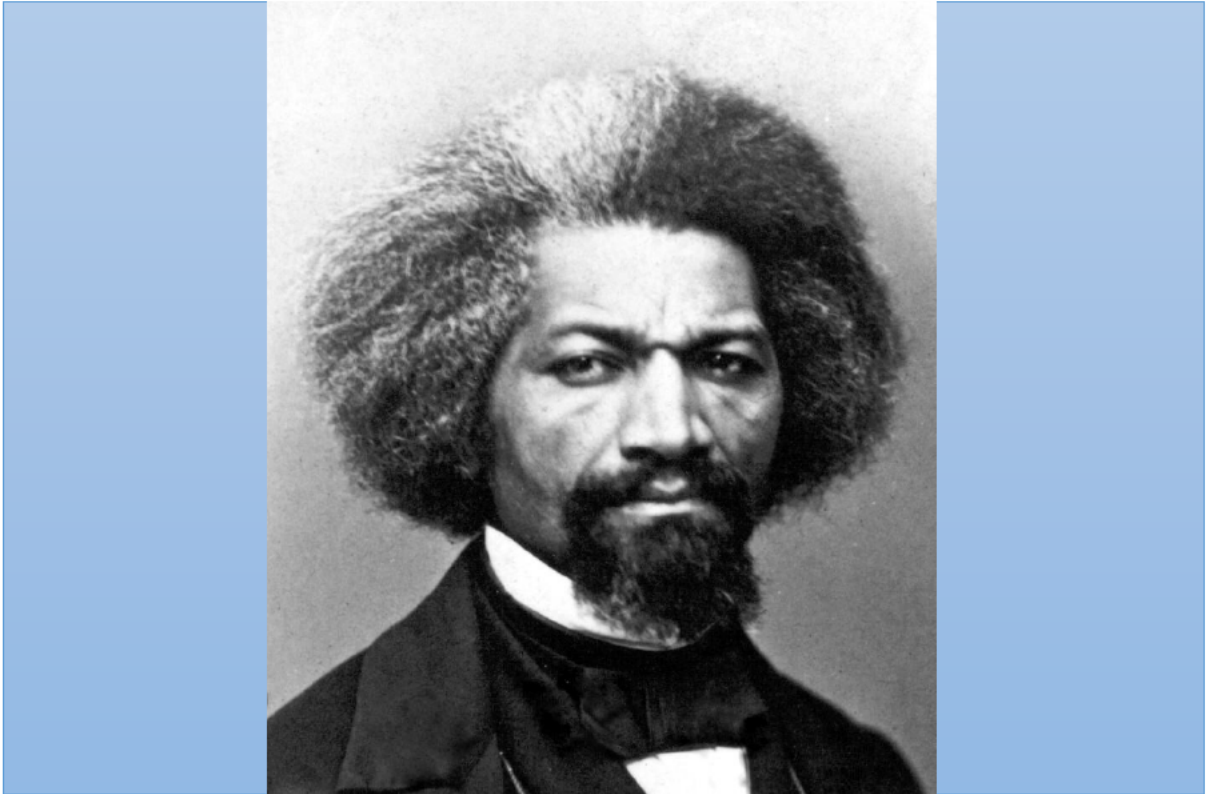
Augustine

Augustine

Augustine

Augustine

Augustine



After escaping slavery in the United States, Frederick Douglass (1818 – 1895) campaigned against the slave trade. He wrote many books about his experiences, where he was often whipped and beaten as a slave.

Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass

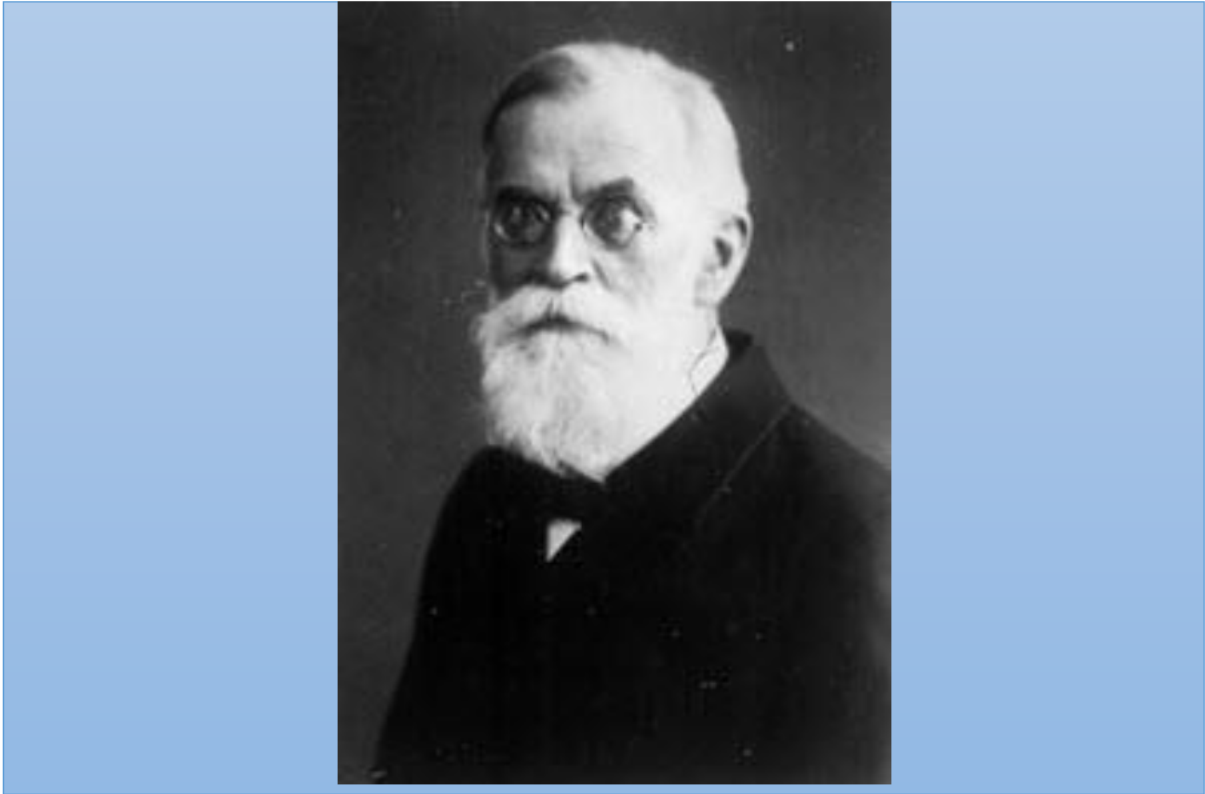
Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass



Adolf Jülicher (1857-1938) was a university professor who thought that parables had one meaning only. This meaning was about how to live a good life, and not about God.

Jülicher

Jülicher

Jülicher

Jülicher

Jülicher

Jülicher

Jülicher

Jülicher

Jülicher

Jülicher

Jülicher

Jülicher

Jülicher

Sources of images:

Solentiname: <https://pompandintertext.com/2017/09/01/apocalipsis-de-solentiname-by-julio-cortazar/>

Martin Luther King:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Martin_Luther_King,_Jr..jpg?uselang=en#Licensing

Augustine: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Gerard_Seghers_%28attr%29_-_The_Four_Doctors_of_the_Western_Church,_Saint_Augustine_of_Hippo_%28354-430%29.jpg

[The Four Doctors of the Western Church, Saint Augustine of Hippo %28354-430%29.jpg](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Gerard_Seghers_%28attr%29_-_The_Four_Doctors_of_the_Western_Church,_Saint_Augustine_of_Hippo_%28354-430%29.jpg)

Frederick Douglass: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Frederick_Douglass_c1860s.jpg

Brian Stiller: <https://twitter.com/bcslms>

Adolf Jülicher: [https://www.deutsche-digitale-](https://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/item/AFOLJ7Y526PAKWMYVZLUNGKWL52YXPI6)

[bibliothek.de/item/AFOLJ7Y526PAKWMYVZLUNGKWL52YXPI6](https://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/item/AFOLJ7Y526PAKWMYVZLUNGKWL52YXPI6)

Irene Matsoso: <https://blog.dhsprogram.com/page/9/>

Appendix Eleven: The profile matching sheet (LE2)

Name:

Date:

LO: Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?

Giving money and worn-out clothes to the poor once a year isn't 'loving your neighbour'. We need to go further, like the Samaritan did, and really care for people.

The parable makes us think about an important question: who are the priests and Levites in our society today? Who ignores the 'bruised and wounded'? We should condemn them, and campaign to end to the unfairness we are seeing.

The Good Samaritan parable has nothing to do with God at all. Jesus simply teaches his listeners to love all people, using people and places that they would have known.

This parable highlights that we should not treat other groups of people differently. Yet, I'm frustrated that women are invisible and forgotten in this parable, just like in my society. I don't like this.

We live in a world where we meet people of different beliefs, nationalities and cultures. The two answers in verse 27 teaches us that loving God means loving all. You can't do one without the other.

Each character and place represents something. The Good Samaritan is Jesus, who saves 'broken and sinful humans' on life's 'road'. Jesus brings humans to the church (the inn) to recover and become better people, before coming back to collect them in the future.

The 'road to Jericho' where the man was robbed is a symbol for our lives. Many people today face racism daily as they travel through life; we need to change the 'road' to be a better, safer place for all.

Appendix Twelve: Reflections during and following the pilots

Pilot	Reflections and amendments on/enquiries
Pilot One – PGDipEd (Religious Education) cohort (June 2019)	○ On the whole, I was pleased with how the activities went and student engagement. This first pilot led to a number of learning enquiry revisions, specifically: a colour per question would be useful during the annotation of the parable in Learning Enquiry One, allowing for easier referencing during subsequent peer discussion; the card sort in Learning Enquiry One should be more effectively modelled, using a simple example of the process (through categorizing animal facts), and pre-determined labels should be given for categorization purposes within this card sort, with the option of creating their own offered as a challenge. ○ The interpretation cards used in Learning Enquiry Two were refined over several drafts and this pilot (the first iteration was particularly identified as being overly complicated and text-heavy).
Pilot Two – PGDipEd (Religious Education) cohort (June 2020)	○ This trial saw the learning enquiries amended to be facilitated over a virtual platform (Zoom). Through the use of break-out rooms, trainee students effectively engaged with the activities, and their feedback was extremely positive. I am pleased that the enquiries flowed well and stimulated deep discussion regarding the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of parabolic interpretation. ○ Amendments from the first trial, specifically the modelling of the card sort using the animal examples worked well. In sum, this second pilot confirmed that the revisions made from Pilot One enabled a richer enquiry to take place, and that the activities achieved their intention ○ Feedback was extremely positive. One or two noted they would have liked more time to complete the pro forma, which is something I noted mid-session and would agree with. The next step is to trial this in a classroom with Upper Key Stage Two pupils; this will certainly allow a clearer understanding to emerge as to the age-appropriateness of the learning enquiries, as well as the timings. I also had the following reflection following the session. In Learning Enquiry Two, would it be better to have pupils justify their decisions re: card ranking using the lesson pro forma (as created for this virtual session), rather than through post-it notes? Post-it notes could get a little fiddly, and albeit an exciting way to write, might lead to less detailed information. This amendment was incorporated. ○ Trainee work shows good engagement with the learning enquiries. There is a pleasing range of diverse responses via the lesson pro forma, showing how each trainee had engaged in their own

	way. The card sorts reflect apt and thoughtful thinking based on the content of the cards. It appears that more time would have been useful to allow all trainees to complete the tasks – the fact that this was trial was undertaken virtually would have been a factor. ○ On looking at the matches trainees had made between the interpreter and interpretations in Learning Enquiry Two, it appears that the task was an appropriate level of challenge. Certainly, this is what they had stated to me when asked during the session – cards were neither too obvious nor too vague; they had prompted rich discussion and debate. Not all matches were correct, but all were logical. ○ I am now interested to see how effective a classroom-based trial with Upper Key Stage Two is and what amendments should be made to improve this post-secular parabolic enquiry.
Pilot Three – primary-aged pupil (September 2020)	○ Their reflection was particularly pertinent to the thrust of my thesis: ‘usually in class we have these ideas but don’t expand on them’ ○ They found the affinity mapping challenging, particularly finding the cards relating to number of meanings a bit subtle to decipher their differences ○ This pupil found interpretations of Douglass, Jülicher, Augustine and Solentiname most difficult to match ○ I am pleased with this student’s engagement and learning in these enquiries. By the end of Learning Enquiry Two, they could give an informed response as to why different people had interpreted the text differently – this was due to their context and who they were as an individual ○ I would have been interested to see the extent to which they felt their own positionality informed their reading. Following this pilot, perhaps I could substitute the extension questions to ask a question related to whether pupils feel their own positionality influenced their reading. This is discussed prior to completing the pro forma in Learning Enquiry Two, but may be useful to capture this in a written manner. Perhaps something along the lines of: ‘Why do you think you have a different interpretation from some others in the class and those you have looked at?’. [On reflection, students have the opportunity to comment on their positionality already at the end of LE2]

Appendix Thirteen: Development of the pedagogic episodes over the duration of this research (developments in purple)

Pedagogic episode		After Pilot One	After Pilot Two	After Pilot Three/final reflections before trials	During Trials
Learning Enquiry One	Ascertaining prior knowledge (images found in Appendix Fifteen)			LE1: Recap prior learning (changed to 'ascertain prior knowledge' as, due to COVID, timing not planned for relevant stage of curriculum map). The decision to not to trial at a relevant/appropriate time of the curriculum map was also decided against as a) it might not have been possible to do this equally meaningfully, if at all, across all schools, and b) doing so may have run the risk of predetermination (cf. Carswell) Added 'Share LO' [learning objective] <i>Has anyone heard of the Parable of the Good Samaritan before? What is it about? Write what you think the meaning is/might be on the top of your sheet. Changed to keep open and not assume that the parable has one meaning. 'Might' also added in case pupils had not encountered this parable before.</i> Icon of Good Samaritan parable added to PPoint page and workbook. This to encourage all to have an initial view/idea about the story and potential meaning of the parable; the idea was not to catch them out or test them but to broaden their initial/current understanding.	
	Textual analysis (images found in Appendix Sixteen)	A colour per question would be useful during the annotation of the parable in Learning Enquiry One, allowing for easier referencing during subsequent peer discussion		Pupils to then discuss this [textual analysis] with pair/in a triad, before sharing some ideas as a class (perhaps pupils can write post-it notes and place on board (split into sections per question), which the teacher could group (as a way of modelling for next activity). Decided against this post-it note activity as a) saved time for other enquiries not to do, b) I don't feel it added anything to pupil learning and c) the task was modelled subsequently.	

				Added a clear section after textual analysis to discuss key vocabulary emerging out of their thinking 'more information needed'. 'Discuss some of the key terms which emerged (e.g. 'the Law', 'priest', 'Levite', 'Jerusalem to Jericho', 'Samaritan')'. Page added to workbook of contextual information slide. Pupils could refer to this if wish during both learning enquiries. I considered adding relevant verse too but thought this might be too much text/cognitive overload if on screen. I did ponder 'I wonder questions' for the GS textual analysis, but thought the current ones link more to the lesson outcomes/more purposeful.	
	Card sort and affinity mapping	The card sort in Learning Enquiry One should be more effectively modelled, using a simple example of the process (through categorizing animal facts), and pre-determined labels should be given for categorization purposes within this card sort, with the option of creating their own offered as a challenge.		Step 2: The first player selects the top card and reads it out to the group. As a group, decide which label the card best links and place it underneath. (The labels are 'meaning', 'characters', 'us' and 'other'). <i>Do leave some space between cards as you be writing between and around these shortly.</i> Example of thinking which eventually informed trial: Which card/s made you think the most? Why? (LE1 pro forma). To ensure the cards are still visible for pupils to consider here, would it be useful to ensure affinity mapping remains on table? <i>Pupils to have blue tack to keep cards in place.</i> This will reduce risk of paper getting knocked and cards moving. Perhaps the team leader in charge of blue tack? Buy and bring blue tack and add this to lesson plan and lesson plan resources. Ask class teacher re: size of tables. Tweaks made to order of animal statements to make modelling clearer. Using the whiteboard, model the activity of reading and grouping cards with animal information (under the headings 'classification', 'fact', 'opinion' and	

				'other'). The information is to be revealed in this order): - Lions are carnivores. - Elephants are majestic creatures. - Whales can be spotted all around the world. - My favourite animal is a snow leopard. - Sea lions are often used in shows displaying tricks. And then became: Using the whiteboard, model the activity of reading and grouping cards with animal information (under the headings 'classification', 'fact' and 'opinion'). The information is (to be revealed in this order): - Sea lions are often used in shows displaying tricks - Elephants are majestic creatures. - Lions are carnivores. - Whales can be spotted all around the world. - Pandas have the funniest sneeze. I decided not to give pupils the challenge of deciding different labels whilst doing as might be too difficult and too much of a challenge on cognitive load, but did give this as a challenge to ponder after. Doing so allowed pupils to explore potential and broader connections between the cards, and also gave an activity in case groups finished well before others.	
	Pupil reflections (images found in Appendix Seventeen)	See Appendix Seventeen below for the evolution of this pro forma.			

Learning Enquiry Two	Hermeneutical starter (images found in Appendix Eighteen)			A source of deep rumination was a purposeful starter in LE2 which would set the ground for rich thinking regarding why different people might interpret the parable differently. This activity needed to be an appropriate step to eventually allow pupils to reflect on their positionality and their engagement with the text. Based on feedback from a supervisor, I/we thought about whether a) there might be a better starter activity than the holiday starter or b) whether an additional step might be taken. Needs to be something that helps pupils to understand that different people have different views on something because of their views, experiences, beliefs; a bridge that can be meaningfully applied to texts. <u>Thinking later that morning (22/1/22)</u> • Needs to be something that helps pupils to understand that different people have different views on something because of their views, experiences, beliefs; a bridge that can be meaningfully applied to texts. <i>Art? Different views on what happening? Different forms of 'interpretation' – what is going on here? Perhaps an icon instead?</i> • A simple artwork might be suitable. Just as art can be interpreted differently, so can texts. One with two/three potential meanings. <i>What do you think it means?</i> • Perhaps an image in which the meanings might bear similarity to the Good Samaritan? (go and do likewise, choices, love neighbour as self) • I thought about Rothko, but perhaps more linked to how people feel. • Maybe some conceptual imagery: Fork in the road with signposts? Showing compassion? Hands showing care?	Pupils need terms 'interpreter' and 'interpretation' defining clearly here and subsequently throughout this enquiry.

				Then thought an icon could be simple and effective to enable this hermeneutical conversations here. https://thenounproject.com/icon/care-3720157/ https://thenounproject.com/icon/care-1499470/ a) What do you think it means? b) How could/might other people interpret these? c) What does it make you think of? What does it make you think of in your own life? (why do we have different views?) d) Why do you think we interpret this differently? Link activity (starter) (5 mins) 'A hermeneutical starter' – something which pupils will interpret differently based on prior experience. What is your dream holiday? Think on your own about where it would be, what it would include and who it would be with. Pupils to share with class and noted on board. Why do we think we each have different ideas about a dream holiday? Why do you think they are not all the same? Record these on board. Changed to... Link activity (starter) (5 mins) 'A hermeneutical starter' – something which pupils will interpret differently based on prior experience. Have a look at the icon on the screen. <i>What do you think it means? What does it make you think about?</i> Share some ideas. Notice that different people think this means different things – one image, different meanings. If we were to show this icon a few hundred years ago in Ancient Greece, they may not have thought about X. <i>Why do you think different people take different</i>	

				<i>meanings from art? Why are they not all the same?</i> Pair/share. Record these on board. Explain the LO for this lesson, defining 'interpretation' in the process. We are going to link our thinking to text. <i>'What we were just doing was interpretation – we were trying to interpret this image. What do you think I mean when I say interpretation?'</i> [Question moved from starter to align with this part as this is where it makes most sense] Question also added to this hermeneutical starter for class discussion: <i>Why do you think different people take different meanings from art? Why are they not all the same?</i> Pair/share. Record these on board.	
	Interpretation ranking (images found in Appendix Nineteen)		I also had the following reflection following the session. In Learning Enquiry Two, would it be better to have pupils justify their decisions re: card ranking using the lesson pro forma (as created for this virtual session), rather than through post-it notes? Post-it notes could get a little fiddly, and albeit an exciting way to write, might lead to less detailed information. This amendment was incorporated. For card ranking: Pros: post-its more exciting; collect same data; pupils can see diversity in views	Step 1: Pupils (in triads) to place them on the horizontal continuum, from 'disagree the most' to 'agree the most' (this continuum to be made from string and with post-it note labels on table). <i>Pupils to choose at least two [so no-one finishes quickly and thinks they have completed the task]</i> and justify their decision on their pro forma. Challenge: can pupils justify it through linking back to the parable to support their view? <i>Note how interesting it is that different groups have different views.</i> Step 3: Pupils then move around the room in triad (carousel) to look at the profile of the seven interpreters. Once they have been around once, they can 'rip' the relevant person's tag to place with the interpretation on their profile matching sheet with a paper clip. <i>Pupils to take profile matching sheet with them to help them.</i>	In practice, not enough time for vertical continuum activity.

			Cons: fiddly; are they necessary?; real risk that I will know their justification but I won't know how they ranked this unless meticulous photos are taken Decided to change pro forma.	Once all have been decided, pupils to connect each interpreter's tag to the relevant interpretation on the continuum (to visually show different interpretations at different times). Pupils to then show the matches they have made on their pro forma and write a justification for each choice on post-it notes (with the reminder to include the name of the interpreter they are referring to on each post-it); they have the option to diverge from the group's decision/justification to offer their own view should they wish.	
	Interpretation matching (images found in Appendix Twenty)	Pupils then move around the room (carousel) to look at the profile of the seven interpreters. Once they have been around once, they can 'rip' the relevant person's tag to place with the interpretation. Pupils to write a justification for the link they have made as a group and/or individually (on a large post-it? A large fluorescent star?). Changed to: Pupils then move around the room (carousel) to look at the profile of the seven interpreters. Once they have been around once, they can 'rip' the relevant person's tag to place with the interpretation on their sheet with a paper clip [a pro forma created]. Pupils to write a justification for the link they have made as a group and/or individually (using the large fluorescent stars). It would be useful to ask pupils to place the name tags and fluorescent stars with the interpretation on the continuum (so pupils can see different interpretations over different periods).		Also: - Decided to print two of each interpreter profile to place in classroom so to avoid congregations/not being able to see if other groups looking at. - Dates added to interpreter profiles and pupil workbook so pupils gain an awareness of when different interpretations took place.	Not enough time for post-it note justifications of matches made.
	Pupil reflections (images found in	Pair/share questions towards end of LE2:		Amendments to post-interpretation matching discussion:	Following the reflections of Teacher B in Trial Two, I trialled opening a class discussion of

Appendix Twenty-One)	• <i>What can we learn about the interpretation of the Good Samaritan from this activity?</i> • <i>What do you think has led to different interpretations?</i> • <i>Can we be completely certain about what we have matched? Why not?</i> • <i>Think about your interpretation of the Good Samaritan. Has our background/experience/beliefs affected our interpretation? E.g. Which character do we empathise with the most? Why might that be? Think back to our dream holiday here.</i> Changed to: • <i>What can we learn about the interpretation of the Good Samaritan from these activities?</i> • <i>What do you think has led to different interpretations? Why do you think different people interpret the parable differently?</i> • <i>Can we be completely certain about what we have matched? Why? Why not?</i> • <i>Think about how we as a class and individually we have interpreted the Good Samaritan and ranked different interpretations. Do you think our background, experiences, beliefs affect how</i>		• <i>What can we learn about the interpretation of the Good Samaritan from these activities?</i> • <i>What do you think has led to different interpretations? Why do you think different people interpret the parable differently?</i> • <i>Can we be completely certain about what we have matched? Why? Why not?</i> • <i>Think about how we as a class and individually we have interpreted the Good Samaritan and ranked different interpretations. Do you think our background, experiences, beliefs affect how we interpret this text? Think back to our dream holiday thinking here.</i> Changed to: • <i>What can we learn about the interpretation of the Good Samaritan from this activity?</i> • <i>What do you think has led to different interpretations? Why do you think different people interpret the parable differently?</i> • <i>Can we be completely certain about what we have matched? Why? Why not?</i> • <i>Think about how we as a class and individually we have interpreted the Good Samaritan and ranked different interpretations. Do you think our background, experiences, beliefs affect how we interpret this text? Think back to our icon thinking here.</i> <u>Written reflections</u> Pupils to answer the LO question. Mild – give at least one, well-explained reason Spicy – achieve mild, but also link your answer to your own interpretation	these questions after the opportunity to pair/share in Trial Three. This appears to have been impactful in developing student thinking and supporting their subsequent independent written responses. In Trials One and Two, there was no time for these discussions.

		<i>we interpret this text? Think back to our dream holiday thinking here.</i>		Hot – as above, but explain your view using examples from the cards changed to Pupils to answer the LO question. Model well, perhaps suggesting to meet success criteria step by step. • Give at least one well-explained reason to answer the question • Give examples from the interpreter matching activity to support your answer • Link your answer to your own interpretation – what do you think the meaning of the parable is? Why do you think you arrive at that meaning, yet other people arrive at different meanings? Changes made to stress modelling, support and move to success criteria Extension: Is there anyone you think should read this parable? Why? What message would you want them to take from it? Changed to: Extension: Is there anyone you think should read this parable? Why? What message/s would you want them to take from it? The dual-coded icon added from hermeneutical starter to prompt reflection.	

Appendix Fourteen: An overview of changes to the questions (and their order) found on the pro forma at the end of LE1 (changes in purple). All changes made to prompt richer reflection and not overtax pupils' working memory.

First iteration	Second iteration (following supervisory feedback)	Third iteration (following first pilot)	Fourth iteration (following second and third pilots)	Fifth iteration (before trials)
What have you learnt about the Parable of the Good Samaritan from doing this activity?	What have you learnt about the Parable of the Good Samaritan from doing this activity?	What have you learnt about the Parable of the Good Samaritan from doing this activity?	What have you learnt about the Parable of the Good Samaritan from doing this activity?	What have you learnt about the Parable of the Good Samaritan from doing this activity?
Which cards made you think the most? Why?	Which card/s made you think the most? Why?	Which card/s made you think the most? Why?	Which card/s made you think the most? Why?	Which card/s made you think the most? Why?
Any further questions you would ask about this parable?	Any further questions you would ask about this parable? Why do you think these questions are important?	What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan? Have you changed your answer from the start of the lesson? Why/why not?	Any further questions you would ask about this parable? ~~Why do you think these questions are important?~~	<i>Answer the LO question: In your opinion, what should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?</i>
How did you find this activity? Easy/hard? Explain your answer.	What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan? Have you changed your answer from the start of the lesson? Why/why not?	This activity ~~has~~ made me think because...	What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan? Have you changed your answer from the start of the lesson? Why/why not?	<i>Have you changed your answer from the start of the lesson? If so, in what way/s? What changed your thinking?</i>
What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?	This activity has made me think because...	Any further questions you would ask about this parable? Why do you think these questions are important?	This activity made me think because...	Are there any further questions you would ask about this parable? Why do you think these questions are important?
				This activity made me think because...

Appendix Fifteen: Evolution of the ‘ascertaining prior knowledge’ pedagogic episode

First iteration

Name:

Date:

LO: What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?

Have you heard of the Parable of the Good Samaritan before? What is it about?

Write down what you think the meaning of it is.

I think meaning of the parable is/might be...

Final iteration

LO: What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?



Initials:

Date:

I think meaning of the Parable of the Good Samaritan is/might be...

Appendix Sixteen: Evolution of the ‘textual enquiry’ pedagogic episode

First iteration

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he asked, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’

²⁶ ‘What is written in the Law?’ he replied. ‘How do you read it?’

²⁷ He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’”

²⁸ ‘You have answered correctly,’ Jesus replied. ‘Do this and you will live.’

²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half-dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. “Look after him,” he said, “and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.”

³⁶ ‘Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?’

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, ‘The one who had mercy on him.’

Jesus told him, ‘Go and do likewise.’

(Luke 10:25-37 - New International Version – UK)

Final iteration

LO: What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?

This stands out to me	
This doesn’t add up/make sense	
More information needed	

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he asked, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’

²⁶ ‘What is written in the Law?’ he replied. ‘How do you read it?’

²⁷ He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, “Love your neighbour as yourself.”

²⁸ ‘You have answered correctly,’ Jesus replied. ‘Do this and you will live.’

²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half-dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. “Look after him,” he said, “and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.”

³⁶ ‘Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?’

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, ‘The one who had mercy on him.’

Jesus told him, ‘Go and do likewise.’

(Luke 10:25-37 - New International Version – UK)

Appendix Seventeen: Evolution of the ‘pupil reflections’ pedagogic episode in LE1

First iteration

LO: What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?

What have you learnt about the Parable of the Good Samaritan from doing this activity?
Which cards made you think the most? Why?
Any further questions you would ask about this parable?
How did you find this activity? Easy/hard? Explain your answer.
What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?

Spelling bank: Samaritan Priest Levite Jerusalem
Jericho Innkeeper Jesus Parable

Second iteration

What have you learnt about the Parable of the Good Samaritan from doing this activity?



Which card/s made you think the most? Why?

Any further questions you would ask about this parable? Why do you think these questions are important?



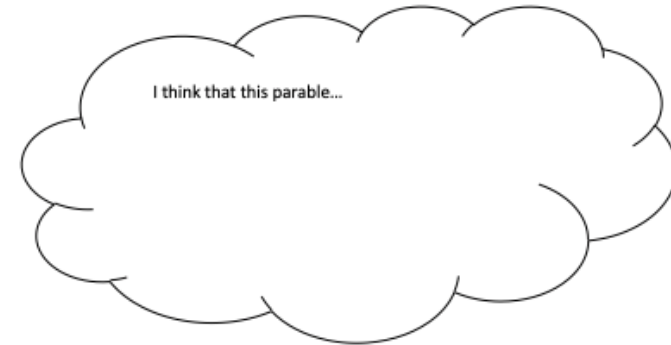
Name:

Date:

LO: What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?

What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?
(e.g. what its meaning might be)

Have you changed your answer from the start of the lesson? Why/why not?



This activity has made me think because...

Final iteration

LO: What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?

Answer the following reflective questions below: 

- 1) What have you learnt about the Parable of the Good Samaritan from doing this activity?

- 2) Which card/s made you think the most? Why?

- 3) Answer the LO question: in your opinion, what should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?

LO: What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?

- 4) Have you changed your answer from the start of the lesson? If so, in what ways/s? What changed your thinking?

- 5) Are there any further questions you would ask about this parable? Why do you think these questions are important?

- 6) This activity made me think because...

Appendix Eighteen: Evolution of the 'hermeneutical starter' pedagogic episode in LE2

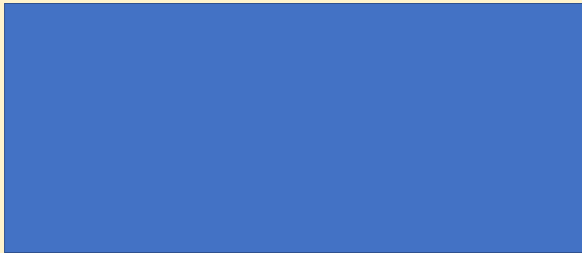
First iteration (PowerPoint slides)

What is your dream holiday?



Think on your own about what it would include, who it would be with and where it would be.

Why do you think we might all have different ideas about our dream holiday?



Final iteration (PowerPoint slides)



What do you think it means? What does it make you think about?



Why do you think different people take different meanings from art?

Why are they not all the same?

Appendix Nineteen: Evolution of the 'interpretation ranking' pedagogic episode in LE2

First iteration

Giving money and worn-out clothes to the poor isn't 'loving your neighbour'. We need to go further, like the Samaritan did, and be a 'comrade'.	The parable makes us think about an important question: who are the priests and Levites in our society today? Who ignores the 'bruised and wounded'? We should condemn them, and campaign to end to the unfairness we are seeing.	The Good Samaritan parable has nothing to do with God at all. Jesus simply teaches to love all people, in a way that was easiest for his hearers to understand.
Jesus helps us to think that we need to change the 'road to Jericho' completely. We need to change society, so that 'men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed on life's highway'.		
Each character and place represents something. The Good Samaritan is Jesus, who saves 'broken and sinful humans' on life's 'road'. Jesus brings humans to the church (the inn) to recover and become better people, before coming back to collect them in the future.	We live in a world where we meet people of different beliefs, nationalities and cultures. The two answers in verse 27 teaches us that loving God means loving all. You can't do one without the other.	We should not treat other groups of people differently – I see this all the time. Yet, I'm frustrated that women are invisible and forgotten in this parable, just like in my society. I don't like this.

Final iteration

Giving money and worn-out clothes to the poor once a year isn't 'loving your neighbour'. We need to go further, like the Samaritan did, and really care for people.	Each character and place represents something. The Good Samaritan is Jesus, who saves 'broken and sinful humans' on life's 'road'. Jesus brings humans to the church (the inn) to recover and become better people, before coming back to collect them in the future.	We live in a world where we meet people of different beliefs, nationalities and cultures. The two answers in verse 27 teaches us that loving God means loving all. You can't do one without the other. "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" ²⁷ He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'
The 'road to Jericho' where the man was robbed is a symbol for our lives. Many people today face racism daily as they travel through life; we need to change the 'road' to be a better, safer place for all.	The parable makes us think about an important question: who are the priests and Levites in our society today? Who ignores the 'bruised and wounded'? We should condemn them, and campaign to end to the unfairness we are seeing.	The Good Samaritan parable has nothing to do with God at all. Jesus simply teaches his listeners to love all people, using people and places that they would have known.

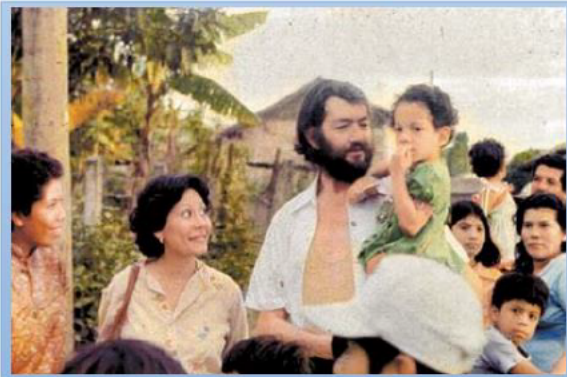
This parable highlights that we should not treat other groups of people differently. Yet, I'm frustrated that women are invisible and forgotten in this parable, just like in my society. I don't like this.

Appendix Twenty: Evolution of the 'Interpretation matching' pedagogic episode in LE2

First iteration

A group of peasant farmers from Central America. Many lived in poverty. Communism was popular here at this time.	After escaping slavery in the United States, he campaigned against the slave trade. He wrote many books about his experiences.	A university professor who thought that parables had one meaning only.
A black, male American, who protested for equal rights for all.	This person is a Christian author. Their book describes how they meet lots of people with different beliefs who don't actually act on them (e.g. they believe giving to the poor is good but don't do it).	Irene <u>Matsoso</u> is a black feminist. She writes from her African perspective.
A priest in early Christianity. He is famous for his arguments with a group called the <u>Pelagians</u>, who said that humans were born good and live a holy, heaven-bound life without special help from God.		

Final iteration



<https://pompanointertext.com/2017/09/01/apocalipsis-de-solentiname-by-julio-cortazar/>

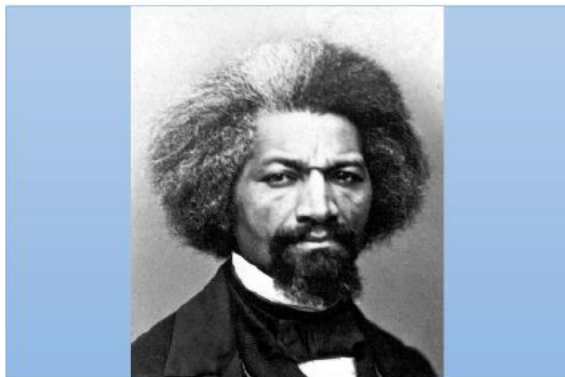
Many people on the island of Solentiname were very poor. A group of farmers gathered together to read the Bible (1965-1977); they often thought it gave advice about how to best help those who are less fortunate.



Martin Luther King (1929 – 1968) was the leader of the civil rights movement in the USA. He peacefully campaigned that everyone should have equal rights and that racism should be illegal.



Augustine (354 - 430 AD) lived a rebellious life before converting to Christianity in his thirties. He argued that we all need help from God, and the church is the best place to get that help.

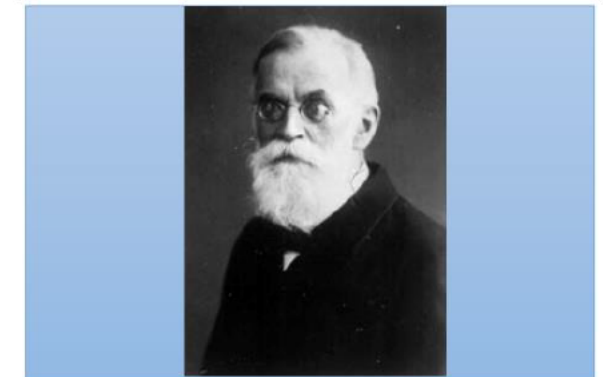


After escaping slavery in the United States, Frederick Douglass (1818 – 1895) campaigned against the slave trade. He wrote many books about his experiences, where he was often whipped and beaten as a slave.



<https://twitter.com/bcsfms>

Brian Stiller (born 1942) is a Christian author. His book describes how he meets lots of people who say they are Christian and believe in God, but don't actually follow Christian teachings on helping others (e.g. they think that helping the poor is good, but don't actually give to charity).



Adolf Jülicher (1857-1938) was a university professor who thought that parables had one meaning only. This meaning was about how to live a good life, and not about God.



<https://blog.dhsprogram.com/page/9/>

Irene is a feminist. A feminist is someone who argues for equal rights for females. She wrote an important article about the parables in 1992.

Appendix Twenty-one: Evolution of the ‘pupil reflection’ pedagogic episode in LE2

Iteration One

Final iteration

LO: Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?

Answer the LO question below:



Give at least one, well-explained reason



Achieve mild, but also link your answer to your own interpretation



As above, but explain your view using examples from the cards

I think different people would interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently because...

Extension: Is there anyone you think should read this parable? Why?

What message would you want them to take from it?

LO: Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?

Answer the LO question below. How many of the success criteria can you meet?

- Give at least one well-explained reason to answer the question
- Give examples from the interpreter matching activity to support your answer
- Link your answer to your own interpretation – what do you think the meaning of the parable is? Why do you think you arrive at that meaning, yet other people arrive at different meanings?



I think different people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently because...

LO: Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?

Self-assess against the success criteria – have you achieved them all?



Extension: Is there anyone you think should read this parable? Why?

What message/s would you want them to take from it?

Appendix Twenty-two: A timetable of data collection

Steps of data collection	When
Teacher Interview One (over Zoom)	Two weeks prior to trials
Observation and observational notes (during and post-lesson)	During trial (morning)
Focus groups with pupils (x 2)	After trials (afternoon)
Teacher Interview Two	After focus groups (afternoon)
Personal written reflections after data collection	After all data collection (evening)
A post-observation written reflection	Afternoon of following day

Appendix Twenty-three: Post-trial personal reflections

Trial One reflections

On day

- Generally, lessons seemed to go really well. Good engagement and evident pupils thinking hard. Looking forward to analysing concept maps, pupil workbooks and FG interviews to further understand the effectiveness of these lessons. Will also be good to see how other classes engage.
- It was a shame that a lot of pupils, including many HA pupils, did not return their permission forms or their parents denied analysis of work. It would have been useful to see these pupil workbooks as many of the insights looked deep.
- I agree with class teacher that many of the interpretations in LE2 quite text heavy. Some pupils struggled to understand them.
- LE1 text analysis seemed particularly useful. LE2 harder than LE1. The icon starter worked really well – some really diverse views and well-articulated reasons for this plurality (i.e. because of experiences in life, diverse perspectives, different beliefs).
- Due to timings, some aspects cut from LE2. This included the vertical ranking activity (although I did explain that this activity was something we could have done), the post-it note matching and the questions at the end of LE2 before pupils tried to answer LE2 LO in workbook.
- Pupils needed the word ‘interpreter’ defining in final LE2 task; I need to be more explicit about this term and interpretation throughout lesson.
- Also, some tables who went round in groups of three/four to different interpreter profiles let some pupils take the lead whilst they sat back. If I were to trial these again, may say to go in pairs. This does have advantages, but also has limitations as mixed ability triads/support may be compromised. Will keep the same for these trials to keep all trials as similar as possible.
- Perhaps some pupils found difficult as not used to this kind of textual enquiry in RE curriculum?
- I also decided not to record notes on observation pro forma, but instead wait until end. I made this decision as I wanted to be fully immersed in the lesson and supporting/challenging pupils; I felt trying to take notes in the moment would have compromised this. Detailed reflections were taken as soon as possible after, though.

Day after

- Had a quick look through the pupil workbooks. Some good responses. Pupils evidently struggled to get their perspectives down on paper. Perhaps a lack of time? Scaffolding? WAGOLL in final answer might have been useful? Many pupils identified that different interpretations was due to the fact that different people had different experiences/opinions. Some pupils gave examples too – Irene Matsoso, MLK and Frederick Douglass seemed to be the most popular references. Was this due to the observation from the teacher re: her perspective? Contributions of two black pupils of their views on racism?

- Many pupils answered the ‘which card made you think the most?’. It would have been really interesting to see pupil responses if they had answered the other question of ‘why’ here.
- A question which would be useful to ponder throughout future lessons – what is an age-appropriate response here. Is it that different people have different interpretations because of different beliefs/opinions/perspectives?
- Really fascinating that, on an initial survey of the LE1 card sorts, there appears to be some cards that draw many pupils’ attention. For instance, many responded to cards relating to ‘the parable has only one meaning’ and noted their disagreement with this. Will be great to analyse these in more depth.
- I do think pupils would have benefitted from more time on the concept mapping. Perhaps even having these prompts and undertaking a silent debate activity would have been interesting?
- 15/2: I recall during LE1 card sort, many pupils placed cards under headings that I myself didn’t feel was most appropriate (e.g. those with characters within them were place under meaning). Not necessarily a bad thing but interesting – was this due to a particular reason? Misunderstanding? Uncertainty? I should have asked more questions here, and perhaps will do in future trials.
- 16/2: to what extent would modelling the matching of an interpretation and interpreter have been useful? Perhaps with a different example?
- March 2022 – SH comment during supervision meeting: School 1 a deprived area Parents may not have read as much with children; a factor is their lack of vocabulary compared to other trials?

Reflections which emerged during transcription

Class Teacher Interview One

When writing this section:

Me: We’ll then move onto erm defining ‘interpretation’, you know ‘what you were just doing is thinking of the meaning of that we’re trying to interpret that’ erm and then we’re gonna do some interpretation ranking. So I’m going to give them seven interpretations erm from the course of Christian history about this text. St Augustine for instance

TA: Wow. I I wo- I would imagine that is probably going to be cha- challenging cos I don’t know that we’ve ever – and I feel a bit bad admitting this – I don’t think we’ve ever done anything about the changing Christian view. So that will be really interesting to see how they manage that one.

- Have primary pupils ever really engaged with actual interpretations of Christians like this before? I’m sure they have (although never seen it in classrooms or published research/exemplifications), but I certainly haven’t seen it via reception history (that is, a number of readings from different contexts and times).

- TA: Yeah and I was I was it's interesting what you were saying about Martin Luther King cos very much for me, putting it into a modern setting is all very much about inclusion, you know I, you know, I I'm probably the school's advocate for LGBTQ+, erm anti-homoph- erm anti-racism and so on. So for me, I really like this as a parable to put into the modern world. You know, we're not talking you know and i-i-it looks at all those bullying and that unkindness that that's taking place in the world we live in against erm people who are not, you know, the stereotypical white, heterosexual whatever. So, I think that will be really nice, linking in with the work we've been doing in PHSE as well on erm diversity and inclusion. So, I think that will be nice.
- I'm interested by this comment in the light of the two black pupils (also interviewed) who really resonated with MLK's and Frederick Douglasses' interpretation. I think this is reflected in their written work – will be interesting to check.
 - When asking question regarding whether pupils are used to utilising agency in such a way, is it likely that teachers will say no even if this is the case? A sense that don't want to come across as a 'bad teacher'?
 - Did class teacher one understand the question asked about agency? Response links to pupils giving their views and beliefs, rather than agentic choices in their learning. Perhaps this was due to differing views on agency or the fact that I didn't explain my view of agency.
 - Might it be of any use to show on a world map where the different interpreters came from, alongside the dates of their readings?

Pupil Transcriptions

FG1

- It was quite difficult to distinguish between pupils AA and AB on audio at times
- I noticed that I could have given more pause time after pupils responses to see if they would have given further information. Perhaps this was because of me being nervous during the first focus group, perhaps due to all of the questions I wanted to ask within the limited time-frame
- On reflection, I'm not too pleased with my facilitation of this focus group. I don't think I gave enough time to allow pupils to really explain their engagement/reflections from the task. I moved on too quickly and much of it was very surface level; the questions needed to be focused more on the learning and thinking. It will be interesting to see if my focus group facilitation improved in the future FGs. AC was also quite dominant a personality and often interrupted others in the group mid-responses. I also didn't gather views per question for each pupil where it might have been useful to do so.
- I think AB influenced by AC – lots of reiterating her views, which they didn't do for AA
- Is the view 'not everyone's the same and has different opinions' a type of fusion of horizon thinking?

FG2

- Pupl FG interview two better (developing as a focus group facilitator via reflection), but still some missed opportunities to further invite pupils to elaborate on their responses. Some instances where I asked a question to the group and moved on to the next question before giving all time to respond. But definitely times when FG facilitating improved. As in the first FG, I should have given more thinking time
- Lots more instances of follow-up questions from me though compared to FG1
- Could these FGs also be analysed by identifying just what each pupil said? Would this be a useful way in to understanding the data more efficaciously?
- Interesting that pupils in this FG preferred to do interpretation ranking task in LE2 on own
- Reflectively, I always would have thought I could have asked/invited more reflections from pupils no matter how well I perceived the interview to go
- Pupil AE said they really struggled with matching the interpretations to the interpreters, but demonstrated great reasoning as to why she felt different people read the parable differently
- In one sense, it is impossible to determine the impact of these lessons. It depends in a large degree upon what remains in their long-term memory which is unattainable in this research. It may also depend on the retrieval practices based on this lesson applied by the class practitioner
- A split between those that liked group work and those which didn't. Probably reflected across experiences and preferences across pupils in the FGs
- AD: we focussed on the story which was nicer. 'Cos normally we would unbeing based on one religion and only do stuff from that. But doing one thing that was from *this* religion but wasn't the religion was nice
- This quite insightful. Is that this lesson was also about hermeneutics and interpretation in which pupils could reflectively think about their own views and positionality also? Would be interesting to reflect on more

Analysis

Me: Mmm yeah thank you. And-and they have kind of like several layers of meaning sometimes don't they these texts. Ok, so Lesson Two. This is my kind of teacher view of Lesson Two, because what I was hoping was that in Lesson Two we could think about, 'Ok, different people have different interpretations of this parable' and then us to think, 'Well why might that be?'. So I started with this starter [shows icon starter image]. So it is one image, and some people thought it was about being brave, some people thought it was about having courage, some people thought it was about this and. So one image but different people thought it meant different things. So what I was hoping to do was to help us think that just like an image like that, the same with the text; one text but different people think it means different things. And to help us think, 'Well why might that be?'. So, can you remember we had the string in the middle and you were trying to put in order different interpretations. In your opinion, do you think it was helpful to see real life interpretations and think about them in that lesson to help our thinking or not? This worked better when I subsequently asked questions in LE2 in a sequential

manner rather than as an overview in future focus groups. Richer and more focussed responses were gathered

Trial Two reflections

On day

- Engagement of pupils seemed strong throughout. I felt that the enquiries provided an appropriate level of challenge for all and allowed all to think deeply.
- From FGs, pupils seemed keen on these lessons and valued the time to explore the parables themselves. Opportunities afforded by the activities for discussion with others highly valued for both the support they could get from others if unsure and to hear other perspectives.
- As with Trial One, pupils stated they had not looked at different perspectives like this before in RE
- FG2 really valued the time to do slower and deeper into a parable/text. This is really useful to do, yet also mindful of limited curriculum time.
- Was this class, due to context, more literate than the class of Trial One? Text was not so much an issue with this trial and seemed accessible to all.
- These lessons would likely be useful to extend to three. The second class teacher interview discussion prompted the thought that this extended time could be granted in a primary setting. I'm used to a middle school context where you had fixed one hour lesson timings and then the class moved on. This may remain the case in middle schools to a certain degree (depending on how much time the form tutor teacher spent with their class), but traditionally in primary schools teachers could afford more time to grant to such discussions should they so choose
- My initial sense (before analysing pupil interviews or work) is that this trial was more successful than the first. Could also be because of my improved delivery following the first trial and my subsequent reflections.
- Was class teacher 2 less of a subject specialist than class teacher 1? Perhaps due to time teaching RE and time in a CofE context? Perhaps.
- Regarding the 'icon' responses in LE2, fascinating that in contrast to Trial One (with responses such as courage, bravery, love, respect etc.), many pupils proffered an interpretation linked to God (e.g. the hand is God, holding humanity or Jesus, and the lines represent love). This led to the reflection of whether pupils would have given these responses if it was not a RE lesson?
- A real sense that primary pupils can do this hermeneutical work/thinking.
- I'm became aware, once again, of my subjectivity and hermeneutical standpoint when looking at the response of pupil B3 in their LE2 written reflections, both in the lesson and in the FG. This resonated with my own view, and therefore I thought it was a great answer.
- Interesting that many pupils – in FG and workbook – flit between 'different people read differently' yet 'it has one moral/meaning' (e.g. B3).
- Has class discussion time (which may be better in terms of learning) been sacrificed for time for pupils to write down thoughts which I can analyse? Perhaps.
- Would pupils have been able to show their understanding of the 'what' and 'why' of interpretive diversity better through:

- a) LE2 discussion I had planned (but didn't do due to time)
 - b) discussion then writing
- Did writing act as a stumbling block for some in the final LE2 reflection?
- Initial sense from LE1 concept mapping – a real diverse range of views! Might be good to list? Tabulate? Categorise? Number in analysis perhaps?
- I was really taken aback by the level of agency by one group. In the LE2 card sort, they decided to each rank two. They then all stood back and justified their decision making and then proceeded to collaboratively order (see Pupil B3's explanation of this in FG2)
- LE1 concept mapping reflection during initial analysis: for many of the comments I would have loved to have asked 'why' to further see their reasoning. Perhaps the teacher could take a questioning role with their own pen, and write 'why' on pupil annotations to grant the opportunity to justify their thinking and think deeper.
- LE1 concept mapping reflection: I think some cards are more popular in terms of pupil annotations and reflections. It would be interesting to see what these are, and also those cards which are commented upon little or at all.
- Encouraging pupils in the LE1 affinity mapping to take their time and not race through bronze to gold (i.e. 'I would much rather they only started silver and thought really carefully about each card than sorted all cards but didn't really consider them) may have been really beneficial in terms of quality of thinking and responses.
- So far, I think there is a strong case that, with the appropriate scaffolding, pupils can successfully and meaningfully enquire into the 'what' and 'why' of interpretative diversity. Not only that, they value the opportunity to do so. It may be that tweaks are made per class to ensure this scaffolding, and that discussion before the LE2 written task is an essential bridge between the profile matching and this task. These lessons are not perfect but have made significant headway and progress; pupils have really thought about these parabolic texts and hermeneutical issues in a way not yet demonstrated in primary RE in formal research.
- LE1 post-observation reflections: I should have asked pupils to annotate where/why they have used the orange highlighters. Decided not to as didn't in Trial One.
- LE1 post-observation reflections: Teacher had to take some time responding to a safeguarding issue during the first half of LE1. They were in room.
- LE1 post-observation reflections: Pupils struggled with 'us' category. Needs explaining. Also, for this class, the term 'atheist'. It might also be of use to show and model the four labels on the IWB.
- LE2 post-observation reflections: sacrificed matching activity for qualitative reflection. Teacher more involved in observing LE2, but not to same degree as class teacher in Trial One.
- Reflections post-both enquiries: pupil engagement really strong throughout. Seemed to be pitched right for all. Q: can pupils give examples when answering LE2 enquiry question? Can/do answers go beyond 'because we all have different opinions?'
- I seem to recall (a few weeks on) that pupils' prior knowledge of the Good Samaritan was stronger in this class than it was in School A/Trial One.

Day after

- Perhaps including some explicit teaching of why different people might interpret the parables differently, drawing on examples looked at in LE2, might be useful. Contextual, hermeneutical reasons.
- An alternative route through LE2 may have been to focus on 3/4 interpreters. This may have granted scope to think more about how their interpretations emerged out of their unique contexts
- Getting teachers and pupil views on the lessons also useful as I'm aware I have a tendency to be a perfectionist and very critically reflective!
- I didn't ask pupils in Trial 2 to match interpreters to interpretations in their workbook. Decided I wanted to give more time for pupils to answer written questions at end
- Looking at comments, some pupils evidently misunderstood the questions/tasks throughout (or they were not explained well enough). Again, time for peer and class discussion before answering these questions might have been useful.
- Initial thoughts re: workbook analysis – such a variety of thoughts of views!
- The class had heard the parable before and were familiar with it
- Is there a sense, e.g. with B22, that some pupils in LE1 acknowledge that the parables can/have more than one meaning but that these are set and finite? E.g. 'it can have more than one meaning and it's good to find out what these other meanings are'
- Did I have particular hopes of what pupils would say/write? Yes, particularly deep reflections on the what/why of interpretative diversity at the end of LE2 (such as linking to different interpretations emerging from different contexts). Was this in itself a sense of pre-determination/closing of the enquiry?! Sometimes I was disappointed by pupils reflections (as perhaps they didn't write the answer I would have ideally liked). Will be really fruitful to reflect on this. Perhaps they answered in an age-appropriate way? (e.g. people are different with different views and opinions)
- Unsurprisingly, this research is raising more questions than answers in many respects

Reflections which emerged during transcription:

Class Teacher Interview One

- View that parables have one meaning. Later on (14:50): 'It's that, you know, it is that message of actually we should, we should be kind regardless of of who that is.'
- Reflection during this transcription: 'Well if two people have walked past so will the third person'. Erm, see what happens. Might even ask, 'What would you do? You know, if you're, if if that was your situation and you saw somebody who was in that position, what would you do? Would you walk past? Would you help? Wh-Why might you not help?...' Would it have been fruitful to focus more upon why the priest and the Levite didn't stop? Contextual info plus the danger of stopping on the road.

- Erm came out of some first-aid training I did just before Christmas. Clear links to Teacher B's fusion of horizons? Not everyone else would have thought of this.
- whether the children have actually drawn out the meaning which, you know, is there. A sense of mining for something which obviously/questionably there?
- Which is [laughs] erm. Which is, you know is always, is always an interesting discussion to have. No I think that'll, I think that'll work erm I think that'll work really well. Erm again I think, you know, similar p- similar pupils – just from a logistical point of view – there's a couple of children who will struggle to write down their justifications but will actually, if you talk to them, will probably be able to to give you er-er-a, you know, a fairly well-reasoned answer but they'd find, you know, actually committing pen to paper sometimes a little bit tricky. Yes, I agree with this.
- 'N-not in the time that I've been with them. Erm having said that,...we probably have touched on it but not called it diversity of interpretation. Erm I think, you know, in particular one of the erm activities were we looking at when I was doing the Vikings before Christmas was looking at different points of view of the same, you know, of the of the same th- the same [theme?] of the attack on Lindisfarne. But th-th-the different points of view of the same thing. Erm and actually how that might have been interpreted by different people. Erm, but I haven't really talked about it in terms of that erm, you know, diversity of interpretation. Err similarly with the Battle of Hastings; points of view of yo-yo-you of what, you know, what might have happened? Whose points of view might have been different? How that might have been interpreted by different people? But again not specifically mentioned as diversity of interpretation.' Other/all subjects contributing to epistemic ability and understanding of what/why of diversity? This is not RE's to pursue alone; synoptic links can be made.
- Experience as a cover teacher likely informed why they found these plans quite easy to pick up and roll with
- TB: Yeah and actually that was a con- 'cos she said to me, 'I'm gonna go and have a look at the others – see where they've put things on that continuum' and I said, 'Yeah, that's absolutely fine; I don't have a problem with that'. But I said, 'You might be quite interest-' – I-I I'll be honest with you – I said, 'You might be quite interested to see where the groups that are predominantly boys have pl-
- **Me: Yeah. Yeah.**
- TB: have placed that'. Erm and she kind of looked at me and said, 'I'm not saying what they're doing is right, I'm just saying that
- **Me: [Laughs]**
- TB: actually it might – that their view might be different.
- **Me: Mmm**
- TB: That's, you know, it-it and it's worth you considering that. Erm
- The above is an interesting reflection. I'm unable to do this due to pupil initials and the absence of full names, but it would be interesting to ask/explore myself (and also with pupils), whether girls resonated more with the feminist theologian reading in contrast to boys.
- TB: Because I think with something that's open-ended like this...and again fr-, you know, we're going back to the discussion that you and I were having at lunchtime about the im-impact lockdown's had on children's learning behaviours. Erm because of the nature of lockdown learning, they had to be able to produce some form of

written content. So there was always an end point for it so that we could see what they were doing because we were because we were – with th- I mean I wasn't here during the lockdown and certainly in the school I was working at. And then we come back to school and it's a bit more open-ended

- **Me: Mmm**
- TB: and, but they almost had sort of, you know, nine months of not being able to bounce their ideas of somebody else, off their peers [see discussion which follows this in transcription too]
- It would be good to draw attention, as the teacher did here, to the impact of the lockdown on pupils' ability to engage in open-ended collaborative activities such as this and the potential impact of missing opportunities for dialogic learning
- TB: where the children were numbers. Which i-i-is, you know, annoying. Erm-er-er I think what you've done with my class today has proven to them that they are definitely capable of independent thought
- I'm getting the sense that this teacher felt the lessons were really effective in developing pupils' collaborative working and thought following the disruptions to education post-lockdown. This may have been in part due to the rows of tables in this classroom; perhaps a feature of C-19 learning in which opportunities for group work and dialogue limited.

Pupil Focus Group One

- My FG facilitation had definitely improved, leading to richer responses. I gave more thinking time too which aided this
- BB – lots of comments linked to dialogic learning and the impact this had on her thinking
- Is there also something in these interviews about the ability for pupils to talk about their learning rather than the task? Is this a developed, practiced, metacognitive skill?
- BB – valued time to write her own thoughts and acknowledged sometimes told 'what to write'
- Do I want to analyse these inductively (that is, no themes pre-decided but emerging from teacher and pupil interviews), deductively (pre-determined themes)? Abductively (acknowledges imperfect process and arriving at best informed theory based on limited information – see Impact article 2021/22)? Or bit of both? With my positionality, could this ever be a truly inductive process due to those aspects I'm interested in and my RQ?
- Pupil BC contributed less to discussions than the other two. Definitely needed prompting – 'How about yourself?'

Pupil Focus Group Two

- This one was more difficult to transcribe as their voices were all quite similar
- A comparative analysis of the perceived use of the textual analysis in LE1 would be a great place to start – teacher, pupil and my reflections in light of the literature review in Chapter Four and Five

- I wonder how many pupils changed their answers from the beginning to the end of LE1?
- I wonder if I would have got richer answers/more feedback if I'd left a few more seconds of silence after each answer. This may have caused/allowed pupils to elaborate further
- Based on BD's comment of enjoying looking at what others had written during concept map activity, it made me think that the 20 star activity might work well here. 'You have 20 stars – look around at the comments of your classmates and given a star to those you found the most thought-provoking' etc. Could link to dialogic learning.
- FG facilitation markedly improved since Trial One. Definitely more time given for pupil responses and asking follow up questions based on their answers. There are some instances in this FG where I feel I go off on one and pupils may be agreeing with me re: Hawthorn Effect. Also times where I didn't allow all pupils to respond to each question. Perhaps I focussed too much on pupil BD also
- Some really clear and interesting examples of pupil agency from pupil BD – both individually and within her group. Pupil BD was the pupil who went around and looked at other group's ranking during the break
- Would BD's group's method of each placing two (within the interpretation ranking) and then discussing/moving be useful to adopt? Pros and cons which would be worth reflecting upon
- Could these enquiries be shortened by removing LE1 affinity/concept mapping and going straight from textual enquiry to LE2? This would be a valid option in many ways but would reduce engagement with hermeneutical questions
- Also, BD's reflections showed how she valued dialogic learning. E.g. BD: And it was nice to go round and pick up little snippets of people's conversation of what they thought
- BD's reflections to LE2 question are fab – fusion of horizons understood, although not in that language
- Many pupils value diversity. Lots of comments in FGs such as this: BE: Yeah people have different opinions and if everyone's just all the same, and have all the same answers, what's the point? [Perhaps a coding theme of 'valuing diversity'?]
- BD: is fine if it's not something silly, like, if erm-a the, I mean, that is kinda just a silly thing to say. But if it was like a proper opinion like, 'I think this *because*', and then you give a reason why you say that. I think it'd be – if it's someone did say that, I think it would need, you would need to know *why* they thought that. *Very interesting following a question re: could a text mean anything. Justification key, according to BD. Her response raises further questions, of course*
- Pupil BE often needed prompting and plenty of time. Lots of uncertainty in their responses; often times they reiterated previous comments. They certainly contributed less

Trial 3 reflections

Afternoon/evening after

- No TA support LE1 – this was different from Trials 1 and 2
- The four labels of ‘meaning’, ‘characters’, ‘us’ and ‘other’ were explained more clearly this time. Pupils still found difficult. I wondered and explored with pupils their extent to which cognitive load was placed on sorting rather than reading the cards: a mixed-response from FGs here, as many stated they were still able to read the cards.
- Pupil CG (also in FG) really understood and articulated importance of context. See FG recording 1. This was along the lines of ‘we all have our own experiences, backgrounds, tensions in life that we each face as we walk through our own life’s path and this changes how we interpret the text’
- Loved that one pupil put her hand up during my explanation of interpretation ranking activity in LE2 to say, ‘I don’t get how this will work – we will all have different ideas about whether we agree or disagree with these interpretations’. Exactly!
- Engagement in LE2 very strong. Stronger than in LE1, as some tables (note: not all) – perhaps due to difficulty/uncertainty – lost focus during start of affinity map activity. After a few minutes, engagement in LE1 here was stronger.
- FG pupils seemed quite happy with language of interpretation cards in LE2
- Following mention of ‘strategic’ in class teacher interview two, I agree that the LO questions provided a strategic direction across enquiries. Pupils in FGs (particularly FG1) noted how the sessions were well planned and early work (e.g. textual analysis) purposefully informed activities they then did later on in the enquiries.
- There were evident times where some groups had finished (e.g. during the interpretation ranking in LE2) and others needed more time. Because of the finite time of the lessons (and that I couldn’t extend into another lesson, I opportunity I would have been able to maximise would this have been my own class), I decided to press on to move the class onto other activities. I could have set the extension activity of moving from 1st century to 21st century, but felt it best for the class’ learning within this time frame to all move on.
- In contrast to my own view, a number of pupils during this trial misread/resonated strongly with the Solentiname example. I.e. giving money and worn out clothes is fine; that’s great – that’s loving your neighbour! From discussions in class but also evident in workbooks (when looked at the following day).
- I remember stating to class teacher during lesson that some valued the openness of many of the activities; some struggled due to the lack of ‘do this particular think now’
- It will be of interest to make these lesson ideas available in a way which fits easily into an hour. These trials have definitely been of some success, but each lesson has been 1 hour 10 – 1 hour 20
- FG children stated that interpretation cards fine vocab wise – at right level

Twenty-four hours after

- A surprise in the focus groups that some/many found the most important part to be the textual analysis. Stresses the importance of not bypassing this rich textual engagement and giving time for pupils to spend time with the text itself.
- Just like Trial 2, vocabulary didn't appear to be an issue. Did overhear one or two questions regarding 'what is an atheist?' in affinity mapping
- Reflections after brief analysis of workbooks:
 - a sense of quite strong answers to the LE2 question – consistently the best so far?
 - I would like to hear pupil two's response (C15) in FG2 to hear her view on why different people interpret the parable differently. Her written response missed the point a bit.
 - I'm interested by pupils understanding, interpretation and their responses to the interpretation cards in LE2. Is there a sense that this were misunderstood? Certain aspects focused on? Who am I to say they misinterpreted? A mix perhaps? Certainly, a diversity of views and responses to these across class (and perhaps even all trials)
 - Many pupils find MLK an easier example to make links to – is this because I often use him as an example? Some in this trial and others focussed on Irene Matsoso too – I wonder why? Due to links to feminism? Cited as an example by me whole class? Bit of both?
 - My whole class question about people in this class in the Victorian era may have read differently seems to have had an impact on pupil thinking, as evident through their LE2 responses
 - Some responses seem to indicate the thinking that Jesus was in the parable himself. Perhaps some timeline images on the IWB would help pupils understand the dialogue-parable-dialogue structure
- Reflections after brief analysis of affinity maps:
 - There are so many comments which I'd like to ask 'why?' to hear their perspective further. You could do a whole lesson on this activity alone, with the class teacher writing comments to prompt further thinking and then pupils going around with starts to give to favourite/deepest comments
 - Could I have included a card on: 'the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was unsafe and that's why the priest and Levite didn't stop'. Could have been interesting, but in my view not as important as couldn't touch dead bodies due to ritual uncleanness.
 - Certainly many pupils in their concept mapping noted their views that the parable can have more than one meaning
 - Many cards (e.g) I would place under meaning found their way under us. Many cards found themselves under labels I myself wouldn't have placed them, but this is not necessarily an issue
- This class had less prior knowledge/awareness of the parable than the class of Trial 2.
- Again, ideas from class in icon starter different to Trial classes one and two. More of a mix between both initial trial classes (e.g. love, care, kindness, God)

- 'How do you read it?': asking pupils this question and, implicitly, pupils were asking this of each of the seven interpreters placed around the room in LE2 (as well as 'why' do you read it that way?)
- Due to permissions, was unable to see all workbook responses. This would have been interesting to see to get a wider number of responses to analyse to see the impact of these lessons on pupil thinking. In total, I had X workbooks.

Some reflections following supervision meeting on 23rd March 2020 (after first three trials)

- It would be useful to incorporate formally these trial reflections into my reflective journal
- Trial 2: pupils knew parable from CW – here it was one meaning too
- Decolonising (KW) is RE behind or taking the lead here?
- Values – to what extent did values influence response/enquiry in each school? Clear example in School 3, FG.
- Thematic analysis would provide an extra level of critique than going through chronologically (this is what class teacher interview said; pupil FGs etc.). Do all thematically together would ensure writing at a higher level

Reflections from transcription

Class Teacher Interview One

- All three class teachers, during interview one, felt parables had a single meaning
- An interesting response given re: aims of RE. Certainly less nuanced than TA and TB (e.g. didn't link to living as part of a diverse society etc.); may have done later
- Interesting that Zacchaeus comes up in Trials 2 and 3 as a parable
- We could have had a lot more time with the text, during the textual enquiry, breaking down each line step-by-step
- Question I could have asked if had time at the end of LE2: can we be completely certain by what we've matched? Is this an apt question which links to Richard Kueh's idea of disciplinary knowledge and epistemological questions in the 'how' of the disciplinary basis/bases of RE
- TC: how you interpret it, doesn't have to be the same as anyone else. And that's ok, because these people have interpreted it all differently and it's ok that they've interpreted it differently. There's no right way at the end to say, 'Right, this is how you've got to understand this text'. Is this evidence of the teacher changing their mind/view of the parables from the 'one meaning' view at the start of the interview?
- I reflected that many teachers – particularly Teacher Two – noted how stating there wasn't a right answer, their views were important and I cared about them – really empowered them to engage with the text. Is this good RE?
- TC: I think I definitely could take them and run with them. I think with that starter on this one, I might have needed a bit more erm prompt I suppose. But then I suppose there's not really a right – like you said – there's not a right answer, so. Erm it-it would be more accepting that there's not a right answer and er thinking – I think I often pre-empt what maybe they could come up with
- **Me: Mmm**

- TC: erm and how I could run with whatever it is that they do decide that they think it means.
- Teachers 1-3 seemed to have taken confidence in the openness in this these enquiries to feel they could lead them ok. Is the above an indication that some idea of what they might come up with is useful thinking to do beforehand due to the openness of the questions?
- Teachers arriving at views in interview one and two from own horizon. Teacher 3 evidences this when she talks about her repentance lesson towards the end of this interview, for instance.
- TC: Erm...no. I mean I don't think that there's anything that the children would struggle with as such. Erm I think it's quite it's quite *broad*, but also quite narrow where they're not gonna have to go off and think *too much* on their own; the thinking's kind of been guided as much as it needs to be if that makes sense. So
- **Me: Mmm**
- TC: those children that might struggle to to come up with something, they've had enough structure and enough support with with your introductions to be able to actually go off and do their own thinking from that.
- I'm pleased TC said this, as this is what I was hoping for. I think this came through in reality from my own reflections and the data collected from pupils and teachers in interview two.

Interview Two

- TC: They were all listening and engaged with what you were telling them and using that knowledge, and taking previous knowledge and listening to each other. But no I mean they really did, they really did just kind of throw themselves into it...And, erm building off from each other's ideas as well. Once someone says something – which they do as a class – but actually it was, 'carrying on from what so-and-so said, I'm adding this to it' which was really good. So shows that they were paying attention, they were listening.
- Dialogic learning?
- TC: It's easier to go through as a – and actually it was really interesting because they were working as groups, they actually had to think about what everyone else was saying as well.
- **Me: Yeah**
- TC: It's not just their opinion. It was, 'Ok well do we *all* agree that it's going into characters? Do we *all* agree that it's meaning?'
- **Me: Mmm**
- TC: And eve- and I know some groups said, 'No I think it's there and I think it's there'; they had to compromise and they had to give each other their reasons as to why they thought it went there
- **Me: Yeah. Yeah**
- TC: which was, again, it was that was brilliant in that the talk about the sa- about the erm the text as well because they were bringing it back to that. They had to they had to discuss it in terms of the knowledge of what they'd just learnt.
- **Me: Mmm. Mmm**
- TC: So making sure they were all erm sharing the same knowledge.

- Dialogic learning in action?
- TC: Yeah. Well not that they needed more guidance, but actually where maybe in other lessons or other experiences they've been given more guidance actually, having the freedom to have their own opinion was a completely new thing. And
- **Me: Mmm**
- TC: 'Oh there's no guidance at all; it really is just what I think',
- **Me: Yeah**
- TC: some of them, like you say, are a bit overwhelmed by that
- **Me: Yeah**
- TC: because there's so much to think about and they've got so many opinions that they needed to narrow it down into one.
- Interesting to reflect upon! Questions here around were pupils use to such agency and the usefulness of scaffolding for pupils to do this thinking (or perhaps over scaffolding in other lessons? Perhaps both/and?)
- TC: And I think, for a lot of them, they then used prior knowledge. Erm I know one of the children, for example, was saying well he faced racism and that was a whole, a whole different thing because they were bringing in their knowledge of what they'd known before... Erm to bring into those inper-interpretations.
- Example of fusion of horizons? Pupils of black ethnicity in Trials 1 and 3 really focussed on their experience of racism. Will be interested to see if this emerged in Trial 2 also.
- Again, we discussed and were aware that discussion and scaffolding before the written task at the end of LE2 would have supported pupils here if time allowed. This links to Trial 2 also in particular

Pupil FG One

- Part of the analysis could purely be on the textual analysis section (pupil, teacher, workbook, my views)
- Pupil CA very praising of activities and how he valued having time to think carefully and critically about what he thought of the parable, but also to hear/read of other views
- A theme which frequently appears and would be good to code is 'encountering other views'. Some clear links to theory in Chapter Four here
- CA – Sky Documentaries mention. Example of 'fusion of horizons' and encounters
- CA: erm time. And their different opinions. It just made me really think about the different times, the different cultures, the different backgrounds and experiences that lead up to similarities, differences and unique people thinking different things [horizon of reader!]
- This flipping of question led to some quite revealing answers: to this interpreter activity. So, erm I'll flip the question that I usually ask a little bit round here: what do you think I was trying to get you to think about through this activity? With the interpreter profiles around the room, what do you think was the main thing I was trying to get you to to think about or learn?
- CA: I didn't reall-, so I answered it, but I didn't really think it helped that much 'cos God, the whole religion of God and Jesus is about love, respect and friendship – our

three core Christian values. [Interesting! Perhaps useful to analyse against Carswell and Linda Woodhead?]

- A slight sense that Pupil CB reiterating CA's points
- CA: like once or twice and we've barely just – we've just thought about, 'Oh this guy was good because he showed friendship' in like Ye- Year Three
- **Me: Ok so it's, so it's been quite narrow**
- CA: But, but I don't, like, I know we've sort of evolved from that age, but it's much it's – I think it's really good that erm that we've been given lots of time.

Pupil FG Two

- Valued actually having time with the text
 - CD: Erm, I think it kinda helped because usually we don't really do that, and I'm just like stuck in the middle of the lesson not knowing it and anything or like what it means
- A clear sense that pupils felt textual enquiry valuable and helped prepare for later thinking in lesson
- CE: Erm when we were doing it, erm when like we were doing this bit, I didn't really, like, get a few words in it. So then when, like, it was just a bit hard to understand. This a reflection based on textual enquiry part of LE1. An option could be to pre-teach the vocab before asking pupils to look at the text – pros and cons.
- Pupil CE evidently was confused by a lot of Lesson One and found it difficult to work on this task with her group throughout. This was the group who had a pupil who had hearing difficulties/aids; his aid was playing up and I was given an audio lanyard which I was inconsistent in using and took time for me to remember I had it on! This may have led, in part, to this pupil's disengagement
- I think there is a recurring theme of those in FG saying that they had not changed their mind from the start of the lesson as regards to the meaning of the text. This would be interesting to check if this holds re: a workbook analysis
- CD: It's also erm really good because you could of[?] seen, like, what other people thought of it and everything like that. And not just, like, what people in the room thought of it and just random people erm that like ages ago or now or something like
- Another instance here (pupil CD), that was also picked in in class discussions, that pupils disagreed with Solentiname. Giving clothes and money to poor is great, they said – what's wrong with that? It would be good to triangulate this with workbooks
- This FG the most critical
- **Me: Yeah. Do you think it's it's important or useful to know that different people think different things about a parable?** CD: I think yes because like you don't just think about erm what you think, like, yourself. You get to see about what other people think and like their stories about it. And like so then you actually can think of like different things like, 'Oh yeah, kind of that works as well'. And then like, you have like more ideas like going in your head about it [dialogic learning as enriching pupils epistemic ability]
- Would a theme in analysis of 'what' and 'why' of diverse interpretations be useful?

Appendix Twenty-four: The observation pro forma

I made several changes from the first version to the second version of the observation form. Amendments made as:

- Decided to make separate one for LE1 and LE2
- Wanted to give more space to record notes/reflections
- Removed reference to IRE, as not used due to C-19

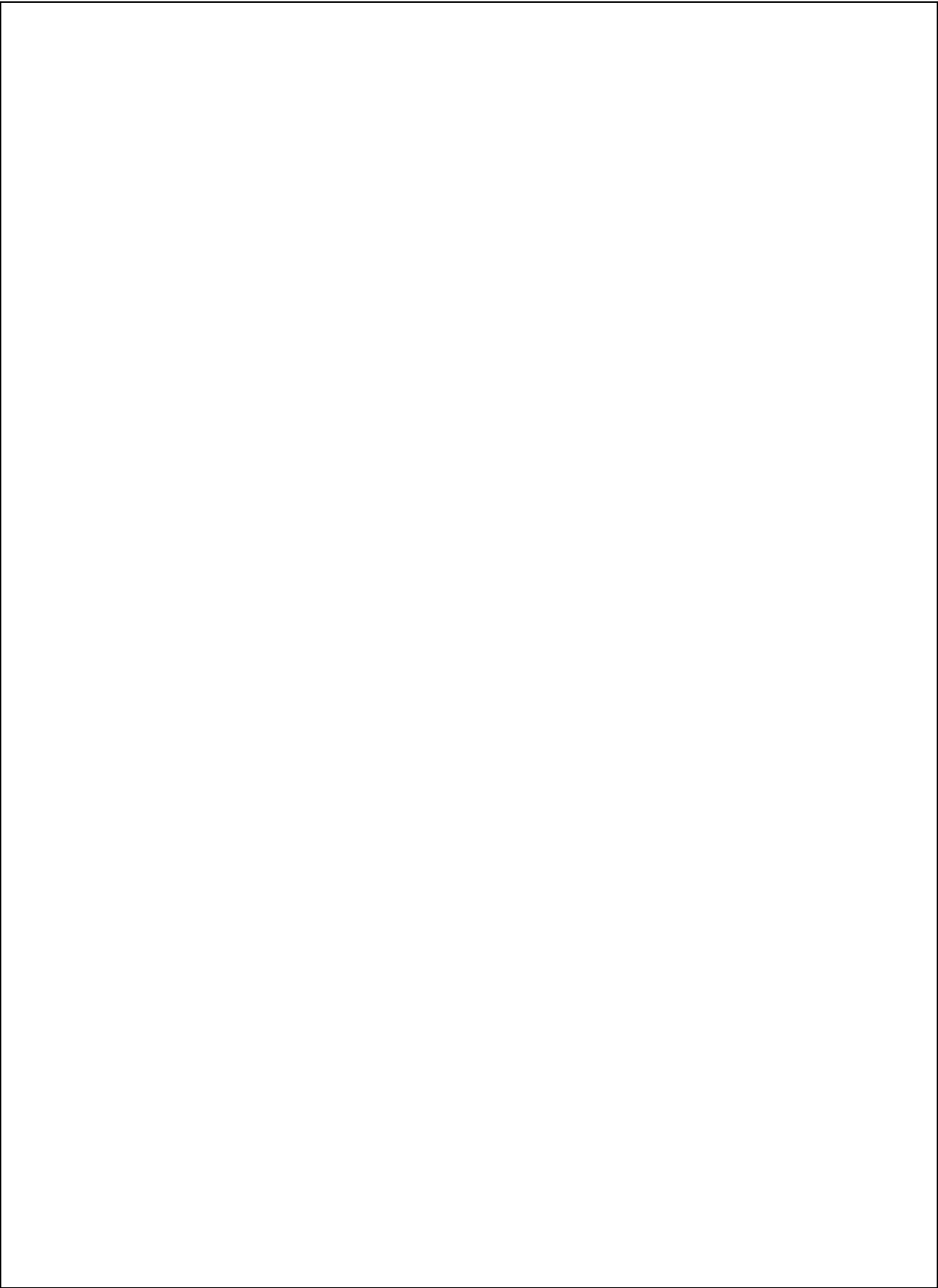
Decided to overhaul completely as thought having separate questions would tax me too much cognitively and distract me 'in the moment'. For richer data collection (and better facilitation of lesson enquiries), I changed the form so just had bullet points on key areas for me to reflect and record notes on. Each version can be seen below:

First version

Observation pro forma		
Date:	Observation number:	Researcher or IRE (circle)
Contextual Information		
How are pupils engaging with the lesson activities and content? Does it seem an accurate level of challenge, too simple or too difficult for Year 5/6 pupils?		
How are pupils acting 'agentively' as they construct an answer to the enquiry questions of 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?' and 'Why might different people interpret a text differently?'. Which methods are they employing and how useful are they?		
What are the learning activities making pupils 'think' about? What are pupils' responses and positionality re: the different views and information presented during the lesson?		
Anything else to note?		
Post-observation reflection		

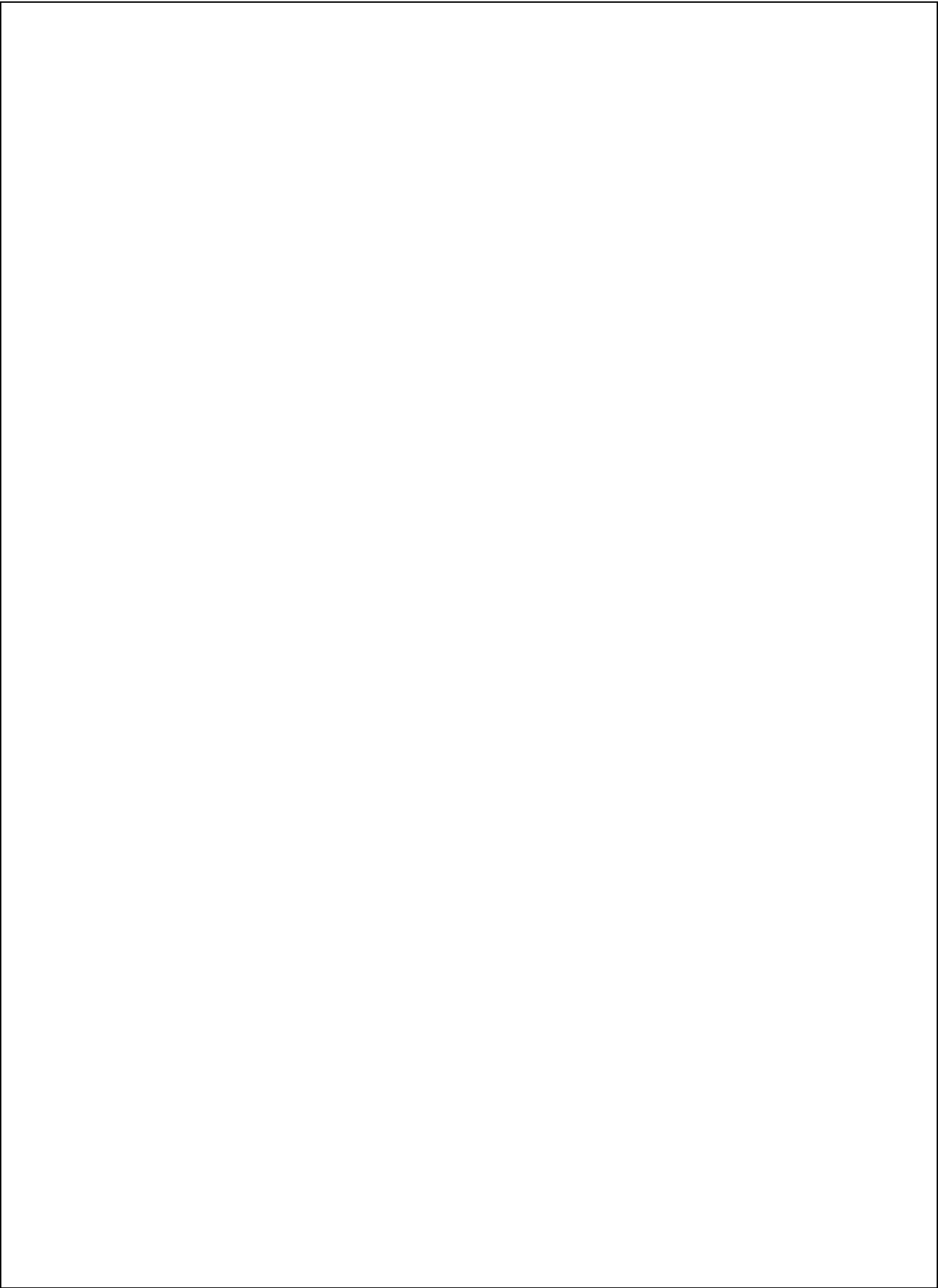
Second version

Observation pro forma: LE1	
Date:	School:
Contextual Information	
Record anything pertinent to: • Pupil engagement and challenge • Pupil agency to meet the enquiry question • What pupils are thinking about/discussing • Anything else?	



Post-observation reflection

Observation pro forma: LE2	
Date:	School:
Contextual Information	
Record anything pertinent to: • Pupil engagement and challenge • Pupil agency to meet the enquiry question • What pupils are thinking about/discussing • Anything else?	



Post-observation reflection

Appendix Twenty-five: The questions asked in Teacher Interview One and Two

First iteration

Questions for class teacher	Question area
<i>Interview One</i>	
What is your role in the school?	Background/RE specialism of class teacher
How long have you been a qualified teacher?	
What is your experience of RE teaching? Have you been on any RE specific training courses? If so, which?	
What would you say are the aims of RE?	
What are the parables?	Experience in facilitating parabolic enquiry
Have you taught the parables in RE before? For which year group/s? What did you want pupils to learn from that/those lesson/s? How did you plan for pupils to engage with it? How do you think it went?	
Here is a copy of the Parable of the Good Samaritan for you to read. What might you focus on with pupils in your planning/the lesson? Why? Are there any aspects you think pupils would find difficult in engaging with this text? What do you think the meaning/s is of the Parable of the Good Samaritan?	
<i>Outline what the learning activities to be used are:</i> From your experience, how do you think pupils in your class will engage with these activities?	Perception of learning enquiry prior to facilitation
If I gave this plan to you or another teacher, what might be the challenges of delivering them? What might be easy? What support do you think might be needed to help teachers of RE to deliver a lesson such as this?	
What might be the challenges for pupils? How do you think they might engage?	
Have you covered diversity of interpretation in the class before?	Prior experience of class
Is the agency offered in an open activity such as this something which pupils are used to? Can you give any examples?	
Is there anything else you would like to mention?	
<i>Interview Two</i>	
What did you think about the activities? Do you feel they helped the class in their learning? If so, in what ways?	
How useful do you feel they were in allowing pupils to think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan and interpretations? The 'what and why'?	
Were there any aspects that you think could be improved? How might this be done?	
Is there anything you think would be useful from this enquiry to incorporate into other areas of RE teaching? Why? Why not?	
Is there anything else you would like to mention?	

Second iteration

Questions for class teacher	Question area
<i>Interview One</i>	
What is your role in the school? How long have you been at the school?	Background/RE specialism of class teacher
How long have you been a qualified teacher?	
What is your experience of RE teaching? Have you been on any RE specific training courses? If so, which?	
What would you say are the most important aims of RE?	

What, in your view, are parables?	Experience in facilitating parabolic enquiry
Have you taught about parables in RE before? For which year group/s? What did you want pupils to learn from that/those lesson/s? How did you plan for pupils to engage with them? How do you think it went?	
Here is a copy of the Parable of the Good Samaritan for you to read. What might you focus on with pupils in your planning/the lesson for Key Stage 2? Why? Are there any aspects you think pupils would find difficult in engaging with this text? Tell me your opinion about meaning and this text.	

Have you covered diversity of interpretation in the class before?	Prior experience of class
Is the agency offered in an open activity such as this something which pupils are used to? Can you give any examples?	
Is there anything else you would like to mention?	

Post-interview reflection:

Interview Two

What did you think about the activities? Do you feel they helped the class in their learning? If so, in what ways?

(Recap) LE1: 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?' What did you think about the effectiveness of this enquiry? To what extent were pupils able to answer the question in an informed way?

(Recap) LE2: 'Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?' What did you think about the effectiveness of this enquiry? To what extent were pupils able to answer the question in an informed way?

How useful do you feel they were in allowing pupils to think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan and interpretations? The 'what' and 'why'?

Is there anything you felt the class/pupils found difficult? Why do you think they might have done so?	
Were there any aspects that you think could be improved? How might this be done?	

Is there anything you think would be useful from this enquiry to incorporate into other areas of RE teaching? Why? Why not?	
Is there anything else you would like to mention?	

Post-interview reflection:

Aspects and evolution of teacher interview questions

General

- a second version of the class teacher interview questions were made (Jan 22), before the first school trial. These changes were made to give space to write informal notes under each question and to split the questions more distinctly into 'class teacher interview one' and 'class teacher interview two'
- added underneath both sets of interview questions a formal place to record my post-interview reflections. This took place and was revisited in the twenty-four hours following each interview

Interview One

- in interview one, the right hand column on the pro forma was used to remind me what each area each question linked to and gave a space for me to note down any further questions I would like to ask
- added to class teacher interview one the question: How long have you been at the school? This to give further contextual information that might be useful (e.g. a difference between new RE lead and one who has been RE lead for twenty years)
- in class teacher interview one questions, added a note to '*Précis thesis*' before outlining dual-coded lesson observation. This is something I did in the very first class teacher interview and, feeling it was necessary, decided to add it as a prompt for future interviews
- decided, in consultation with supervisor (Jan 22), to send class teacher interview one questions to teacher a few days before. This to be caveated with a 'please don't research or do any work towards answering these, more of a heads up to simmer on'.
- decided to give advance showing as this would allow for richer data to be gathered as questions not given 'cold'. Only shown a few days in advance so as to not give ample opportunity for personal research. Second set of questions not given in advance.
- decided that the question I had included in interview one to try and ascertain the amount of agency afforded to trial classes did not gather rich enough data to meaningfully interrogate (22/10/22)
- class teacher interview one amendments (for version two – January 22):
 - What would you say are the **most important** aims of RE? [to gather perspective, not a test]
 - What **in your view** are parables?
 - Here is a copy of the Parable of the Good Samaritan for you to read. What might you focus on with pupils in your planning/the lesson? Why? Are there any aspects you think pupils would find difficult in engaging with this text? What do you think the meaning/s is of the Parable of the Good Samaritan? (version 1)
 - Here is a copy of the Parable of the Good Samaritan for you to read. What might you focus on with pupils in your planning/the lesson **for Key Stage 2**? Why? Are there any aspects you think pupils would find difficult in engaging

with this text? Tell me your opinion about meaning and this text. [change made so as to not imply there is a single or multiple meanings – see how this goes e.g. didn't say view or views, or tell me what you think the meaning/meanings might be] (version 2)

- What are the parables? (version 1)
- Changed to: 'what, in your opinion, are parables?' (version 2 – to avoid the view I was asking for a list of parables)
- From your experience, how do you think pupils in your class will engage with these activities? (version 1)
- From your experience, how do you think pupils in this class will engage with these activities? (version 2 – amended to make less personal)
- What might be the challenges for pupils? How do you think they might engage? (removed and added to two questions previous) (version one – see below)
- From your experience, how do you think pupils in this class will engage with these activities? Is there anything you think they might find challenging? Why? (version two – of above)
- Have you covered diversity of interpretation in the class before? (version 1)
- Has the class though about diversity of interpretation before? (version 2) (to make less personal)

Interview Two

- added (in Jan 22), into the second version of the 'class teacher interview two' pro forma, two prompt questions after the initial question. This was to gather more specific feedback on various aspects of the enquiries; the first question on its own may have been too broad. I.e.
 - What did you think about the activities? Do you feel they helped the class in their learning? If so, in what ways?
 - (Recap) LE1: 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?' What did you think about the effectiveness of this enquiry? To what extent were pupils able to answer the question in an informed way?
 - (Recap) LE2: 'Why do different people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?' What did you think about the effectiveness of this enquiry? To what extent were pupils able to answer the question in an informed way?
 - [note: decided not to give recap at start so as to reduce chance of influencing class teacher's thinking]
- other questions added to class teacher interview two pro forma to elicit further information: Is there anything you felt the class/pupils found difficult? Why do you think they might have done so?

Appendix Twenty-six: The questions asked in pupil focus groups

First iteration

Opening question:

What do you think about the lessons we have just done?
What is a parable? What can you tell me about parables?
Have you heard about parables before? Where? Which ones?

What did you feel that you learnt over the last few lessons? How did you learn this? What did the lessons make you think about? How did you sort the cards? Can you tell me about anything that you found interesting? What was this? What made it interesting for you? Was there anything you found easy to do? What was this? Why do you think this was easy? What made it easy? Was there anything that was difficult to do? What was this? Can you tell me a little more about what you found difficult about this? Would anyone like to add anything else here?

Quick thoughts: Why do you think different people interpret the parable of the Good Samaritan differently? Can you think of an example? Do you feel you know more about parables through doing these lessons? If so, what have you learnt? Do you feel this is an important thing for people to learn about in their RE? Why? Was there anything that surprised you? What/why? Would anyone like to add anything else here?

What are your feelings on this kind of learning in RE? Do you feel it helped you learn about Christianity? In what way? What do you think could be added to help you learn more about religions? Is there anything that you think didn't help you learn? Is there anything else you would like to add here?

Closing question:

Have you anything else you would like to say or any final thoughts on the lessons they would like to add that I haven't asked about?

Second iteration

Questions for pupils	Question area
Before today, had you heard about parables before? Where/when? Which ones?	Opening questions – prior knowledge/ experience of parables
What is a parable? What can you tell me about them?	
What did the lessons make you think about? Have today's lessons made you think differently in any way?	Views on the parabolic enquiry
What do you feel you learnt over the two lessons?	
LE1. The LO was: 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?' How useful was the analysis of the parable? Would it have been missed if not included?	

How did your group work in sorting the cards?
Did this help you to answer the enquiry question? Why/why not?

LO question: What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?

LE2. LO was: 'Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?'

In your opinion, how useful were the card sorting activities in answering the enquiry question?
What was the challenge level like?

Was it useful working as a group, or do you think it might have been better doing this individually? Why?	
How useful do you think the interpreter matching activity was? What was the challenge level like?	
Was the 'icon' think piece useful in helping you answer the enquiry question? Why/why not?	
Why do you think different people interpret the parable of the Good Samaritan differently? Can you think of an example?	

Did your thinking about this parable change today? If so, in what ways? Did anything surprise or interest you? Why do you think this was?	
Is there anything that you think didn't help you learn? Why?	
Is there anything else you would like to add here?	
Do you feel you know more about how different people read and interpret parables through doing these lessons?	

Do you feel this is an important thing for people to learn about in their RE? Why/why not?	
Would anyone like to add anything else here?	
What are your thoughts about this style of learning in RE?	
Have you done learning activities where you have a choice like this before in RE? In other lessons?	Perspectives on the RE pedagogy/ascertaining the embedded nature of pupil agency in class pedagogy
Have you done learning activities where you have looked at different interpretations before in RE?	

Do you feel it helped you learn more about Christianity? If so, in what way? If not, what do you think could have been added?	
Was there anything in this approach that you found particularly useful in your learning? Why?	
In your experience, did the approach have any difficulties which limited your learning? What were these? How was learning affected?	
Are there any questions you now or still have about this parable or interpretations?	Bonus questions

In your opinion, what do you think was the most important part of these lessons? Why?	
Have you anything else you would like to say about the lessons or parables that I haven't asked about or would like to share?	
Invite to place any thoughts in the box if they would like to, with initial	Closing question

Focus group checklist used

Pupils to bring/I to have:

- their workbooks
- cards from LE1
- icon starter image
- cards from LE2
- profile sheets

Pre-interview checklist:

- I will need to know which pupil relates to each code in case they or their legal guardian later opts out. Which ones are A1, A3, A18 etc. Match this quickly with pupils on the audio recording (e.g. first one to speak pupil A3, next one A7) and keep a note of these. Ask on day.

During interview checklist:

- Welcome all
- Introductions
- Recall the previous enquiries into the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Explain that I would like to ask a few questions about these lessons – how they found them, which aspects they felt helped them to learn, which parts they found challenging etc.
- Explain to pupils that I am really interested in their perspectives about these lessons – they are the experts in your learning and opinions – and their feedback will help pupils in other schools think about this parable in different ways. The interview will be about 45 minutes.
- Explain to pupils that they are allowed to refuse to answer any question and have the right to withdraw. If they would like me to repeat or rephrase a question, they can let me know. Explain ‘ground rules’ so clarity how interview will work. Check that pupils have understood the above, giving an opportunity for pupils to ask questions about the research and focus group.
- Start by asking each pupil to say something into audio recorder – ‘Hi I’m A1’ or ‘my favourite animal is X’. This allows matching of ‘data’ to each voice and in case of opt-out requests.
- Take short written notes on question list. These can include further questions to ask, key notes to circle back to, emerging aspects and somatic language.
- Sit at angle, not immediately opposite
- Talk about box: *another strategy borrowed from Lauwers (2013) was to place a box in the middle of the table with paper; pupils could record and place any thoughts which they wanted to share about the parabolic enquiry yet either did not feel comfortable to share in the group discussion or have time to share.*

Appendix Twenty-seven: Interview and focus group transcriptions

School A

Class Teacher Interview One

Over Zoom

Date: Tuesday 1st February 2022

Time: 10 am

Length: 34:03

- 1 **Me:** **What is your role in the school?**
2
3 TA: So I'm the deputy head erm...and I teach Year 5 part-time in the afternoons. Erm I'm
4 also designated safeguarding lead, mental health lead and a few other bits and bobs.
5
6 **Me:** **Lots of different hats.**
7
8 TA: Yeah.
9
10 **Me:** **Erm and how long have you been at the school?**
11
12 TA: I've been oh gosh now is this this could well be my...fifth year
13
14 **Me:** **fifth year...**
15
16 TA: Yes I think fifth year.
17
18 **Me:** **Lovely. And how long have you been in the teaching profession?**
19
20 TA: I knew you were gonna ask that and I don't like this cos it makes me really really old
21
22 **Me:** **You can abstain...**
23
24 TA: 28 years.
25
26 **Me:** **Nice...28 years**
27
28 TA: Woah that's a long time.
29
30 **Me:** **[laughs] but you obviously love it. You obviously love it which is great.**
31
32 TA: I do.
33
34 **Me:** **Erm...**
35
36 TA: I love being in the classroom there's a difference
37
38 **Me:** **[laughs]**

39
 40 TA: [unclear comment]
 41
 42 **Me: Definitely. I know your feeling there...Erm...so...what what's your experience? Can**
 43 **you tell me a little bit about your experience of RE teaching?**
 44
 45 TA: So it's literally just as a class teacher so...erm...I've taught it so I've taught all the way
 46 from nursery to Year 11 in my teaching career but secondary school I didn't teach
 47 any RE because I was erm a French teacher erm but I've taught RE from nursery to
 48 Year Ssss...5 I haven't taught RE in Year 6 apart from when I've had like cover
 49 lessons. Erm with most of my most a lot of my primary experience being Year 4 Year
 50 5 erm and also early years so lots in early years and Year 1.
 51
 52 **Me: That's brilliant.**
 53
 54 TA: Erm but as a class teacher as opposed to being responsible for RE at all erm the only
 55 specific training I've done is the Understanding Christianity first part that's the only
 56 training I've done for RE...erm...a lot of it is self-taught which is often a danger isn't it
 57 because you might get it wrong but erm I really enjoy it as a subject erm...and so...I
 58 do lots of reading around it particularly when I don't feel t...very knowledgeable I
 59 have I do lots of reading prior to teaching so, for example, I did the unit last term
 60 erm with Year 5 about Humanism view of things didn't have a clue so I had to do lots
 61 of reading and learning before I could teach it...erm and what's *really* interesting is
 62 my daughter is doing GCSE erm RE and is looking to do it for A-level so we have lots
 63 and lots of really really interesting and really intelligent from her point erm
 64 conversations because I'll talk to her about what I'm doing and she'll put in her
 65 knowledge as well so
 66
 67 **Me: Oh that's amazing...Yeah...Oh man there's some insane dinner table conversations**
 68 **there in the [teacher surname] household**
 69
 70 TA: Yeah we have some I mean she's phenomenal. She really really is phenomenal at it
 71 you know this is her real strength. Erm...so I'll say to her 'oooh I'm doing I don't
 72 know like the err...Is God holy and loving?'. You know that one and some of the stuff
 73 she was coming out with 'have you thought about this mum? Have you thought
 74 about that?' so...It's nice seeing it from a different a completely different perspective
 75 which I can then use...
 76
 77 **Me: Yeah**
 78
 79 TA: ...in the class. So I don't feel particularly skilled as a RE teacher I'll hold my hands up.
 80 It wouldn't be one of the ones that I would say 'yeah I feel skilled' but I'm passionate
 81 and I enjoy it and I think that makes a massive difference doesn't it.
 82
 83 **Me: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Definitely**
 84
 85 TA: Not like [unclear] and music. No.

86

87 **Me:** [Laughing] We've all got our subjects, don't we. We do. Erm...ok so so the next one

88 is erm...what would you say are the most important aims of RE? What's kind of the

89 why of the subject? What would be missing if it wasn't in our curriculum maps?

90

91 **TA:** I think we live the society we live in is pretty secular isn't it. You know, despite the

92 fact you know we work in a church school, very very few of our children I would say

93 are practising Christians or prac you know are practising anything if that makes

94 sense. So I think a lot of it is about children understanding their own beliefs,

95 understanding the beliefs of others, erm...being able to compare values...belief

96 systems. It lets them reflect I guess on their own life doesn't it as well in that bigger

97 context. You know yes we are in a school but also for a lot of our children as you

98 know they don't have experience of life out of the estate. You know they don't even

99 go to [name of location omitted] let alone [name of location omitted], let alone

100 [name of location omitted]. So it's very much about showing the world that's out

101 there in the sense of we are a multi-faith world and you might come across people of

102 different faith of different beliefs. And it I think it's about being able to question

103 those belief systems but also to understand them...erm and that whole idea of 'yes I

104 might not be religious but I do have a spiritual identity' does that make sense? I feel

105 a bit waffly there...And it's giving children those opportunities to have those

106 discussions, to have...those times to really be able to reflect and think which they

107 won't necessarily get out of school.

108

109 **Me:** Mmmm. Mmmm. Oh thanks [name omitted]. I love that...yeah yeah absolutely. I

110 think...

111

112 **TA:** I felt a bit waffly but no I think this is where I'm really passionate because actually

113 you do have to work with other people you have to live in the world...and you have

114 to understand to be able to do that well. You know it's all very well saying 'we've got

115 British values of respect and tolerance' but actually if you don't know why you need

116 to be tolerant and respectful then it's pointless.

117

118 **Me:** It's a bit of a cul-de-sac isn't it?

119

120 **TA:** Yeah

121

122 **Me:** Yeah

123

124 **TA:** Absolutely

125

126 **Me:** Yeah. Oh that's fab [name omitted] thank you and erm you know as part of this

127 research I'm arguing that RE's so important because pupils need to understand the

128 diversity in the real world...

129

130 **TA:** Absolutely

131

132 **Me:** ...in order to, you know, understand it, navigate the world, negotiate the world
 133 **and different spiritualities they may meet, both now and in the future**

134 **TA:** But also it's about understanding yourself isn't it. It's not just about other people it's
 135 about actually 'Who am I and what do I stand for?'. It might not be that I have
 136 particularly religious beliefs, but it's those spiritual beliefs that actually are really
 137 important aren't they. And you know w-when we did the unit about erm...you know
 138 with humanism humanist views compared to Christian views, the discussion we had
 139 in our class was brilliant. You know 'What is right? What is wrong? Is there such a
 140 thing as a bad person?' you know we went off on quite tangents. And some of the
 141 discussions we had were really really thoughtful because some you know the
 142 children were saying 'Well actually, you can be a good person and make mistakes –
 143 that doesn't define you – but equally why might you try not to do the wrong thing. Is
 144 it because you're scared that God is gonna punish you whoever your God might be,
 145 or is it because you just want to be the very best person you can be on your time on
 146 earth. And the discussions that came were really really fantastic. And I think it
 147 challenged them rather than just 'Oh that's bad, that's naughty', they understanding
 148 of why might people do that and actually why might some people not.

149

150 **Me:** **Yeah. Yeah. The kind of complexity of different views and that 'why' question's**
 151 **really important**

152

153 **TA:** And well now we're looking at erm Islam and we were looking...I'm gonna say taqwa
 154 I don't know pronunciation taqwa takwa, my pronunciation is not great...and they
 155 were saying, you know, some of the children were saying 'You know muslims behave
 156 really really well because they're scared of Allah'. And then some had said 'Well are
 157 they scared or are they doing it because they want to show that they love him?'.
 158 So...it's it's challenging their thinking greatly.

159

160 **Me:** **Yeah, yeah. Oh that's fantastic. So, we'll springboard from that to what we're**
 161 **going to think about a little bit later but before we do so, erm...I'd just like to ask**
 162 **you a question about the parables. So what, in your view, are the parables? Kind of**
 163 **what words, phrases, ideas come into your mind.**

164

165 **TA:** Ok. So my understanding – and this is where it could all go [drastically?] wrong – my
 166 understanding is that they are stories that illustrate something moral or something
 167 spiritual, a bit of a sort of 'dilemma'. And it's that idea that it challenges you to think
 168 about a moral issue, a spiritual issue, in a story form.

169

170 **Me:** **Mmm.**

171

172 **TA:** I don't know if that's right [laughing]

173

174 **Me:** **Fab fab fab. Yeah no definitely. So have you taught the parables in RE before at all?**

175

176 **TA:** I haven't taught them but I've used them, for example in worship. So...erm...I've
 177 looked at the Parable of the Lost Sheep, also erm the one about the vineyard
 178 workers. That's a that is a parable isn't it.

179

180 **Me: Yeah. Definitely.**

181 TA: I'm panicking now [laughing]

182

183 **Me: [Laughing] It's not a test. It's not a test.**

184

185 TA: They've been used to illustrate particular points in worship, so where I've delivered

186 whole school worship. Erm so obviously the one that I really remember was the

187 vineyard workers and this idea that, you know, 'Why I should get more than that

188 person because I've done this' but the idea that actually, at the end of the day, we

189 are all equal. And we're all loved equally. So that was quite interesting and we had

190 some my class in particular were really grumpy about it they didn't think it was right

191

192 **Me: [Laughing and emulating pupil views] It's not fair**

193

194 TA: 'That person got up early in the morning and they done twice as much work as that

195 person why should they only get the same'. So, again, the discussion that came from

196 it...erm...was really really useful. The only thing I would say is that some of them

197 really did struggle to understand the message, if that makes sense? Because in their

198 minds that was not right, and that should not have happened. So for those that sort

199 of small group of children they could not see that there was a message because in

200 their mind it was wrong and it should never have happened.

201

202 **Me: How interesting. How interesting.**

203

204 TA: Yeah.

205

206 **Me: Yeah. How different pupils are engaging with this...**

207

208 TA: And obviously you know sometimes that could be due to neurodiversity you know I

209 know my son, for example, he would be very much, 'No. You worked twice as long,

210 you get twice the money'. Black and white.

211

212 **Me: Yeah.**

213

214 TA: Fair unfair. And I think that's sometimes where things like the parabl- you know

215 parables and things can be tricky for some of our young people because they can't

216 see that grey area, you know. It's that right/wrong.

217

218 **Me: Yeah. For sure. For sure. So, what I'm gonna show on the screen now is copy of**

219 **erm the Good Samaritan text erm...let me just...make sure it's that one...Has this**

220 **shown up on screen? The Good Samaritan text**

221

222 TA: Yes

223

224 **Me: Excellent. Erm...with in mind what you thought were the most important aims for**

225 **RE, you know understanding of others, understanding of self erm...would you just**

take a moment or so just to read this parable and I wonder af- erm after, I'm gonna ask the following question: With your Year 5 class, what might you choose to focus on within this parable to kind of explore it? Erm and why those parts? You know what bits would you pick out in particular to discuss and enquire into.

TA: I mean the first thing that jumps to mind, cos our children do not have lots of previous experience and knowledge which is very much our focus as a school, there needs to be some background to it. So, for example, where is Jerusalem? Where is Jericho? What is a Samaritan? Or what was a Samaritan? What is a Levite? So that language they would need explaining to them because actually it doesn't really make any sense without that. I know the Good Samaritan you know they've heard before but they don't always understand unless it's explicitly taught to them. And I would say that's very key in Year Five. They need that explaining prior to it, because otherwise they've got no context. So, I would say that would be the first thing that I would do with them...erm...and things like 'denarii', you know, do they know that that's money? Erm so it's purely just the linguistics of the of the text first and then sorry I've completely forgotten the rest of the question. Sorry Ryan

Me: Yeah. Erm yes so jus- just to kind of have a read of it, what would you choose to focus on with pupils? You said about contextual information and making that quite explicit, erm...is there anything else that with

TA: I think that the the neighbour neighbour part is the key isn't it, you know what is a neighbour because again it would be for some of the children 'well it's the person that lives next door to me'. And then its actually expanding that to actually *what else is a neighbour?* Erm you know is it someone who lives in your local community? Is it somebody in the wider community? I think that would be very much where I would want to develop that with them with the class erm going from that literal understanding to the wider community. And I think that goes back to what we were saying at the beginning, the whole point of you know we're looking at people with contrasting views, contrasting faiths, erm...and that idea of *I'm living in this big wide world wide community*. So I think that would kind of be where my whole my whole [being?] the whole crux would probably be erm for them. Some of them, I'm just gonna warn you, some of them will be really really immature and they will they will giggle at stripping, stripping off clothes, because we've got some very immature children in that class. So just be warned of that one.

Me: Sure

TA: And I think it would then be going back to the difference between the 'what actually is eternal life?' What what is that meant at the beginning of the story the beginning of the parable? Erm what you know what does mean and actually perhaps then linking it to erm you know the idea of 'living your best life' and forgiveness of God and so on. So linking in all that other other stuff as well not just purely focussing on the parable.

272 **Me:** Yeah. Great. Great, great, great. Yeah thank you so much [name omitted], that's
 273 awesome. Erm is there anything else before...?
 274

275 TA: Erm I don't think so. I think pre-predominantly for them it's that prior knowledge
 276 that is lacking and it's giving them that context before they start.
 277

278 **Me:** Ok...lovely. Erm...so...
 279

280 TA: And I also think it's pulling out the message isn't it, it's pulling out that that message
 281 at the end isn't it. You know what Jesus is actually *telling* through the parable you
 282 know through the parable.
 283

284 **Me:** Lovely, lovely. Thank you. So what I'm gonna share now is erm just kind of a dual-
 285 coded overview. I love dual-coding – erm I think it's great. Erm overview of the
 286 lesson so I'll give you kind of a potted thesis really...erm so my my thesis is all
 287 about thinking right, well we've got this one text – the parable – and often, erm
 288 I've noticed when I was a err a primary teacher that many of the curriculum plans I
 289 were given was given kind of say 'this is the parable. This is the one meaning. The
 290 lesson's been successful if the pupils can parrot back that one meaning to you at
 291 the end of the lesson'. And that got me thinking
 292

293 TA: [speaks – undecipherable]
 294

295 **Me:** Sorry.
 296

297 TA: It's more than that isn't it. Sorry it's more than that RE isn't it. You know it's more
 298 about that erm how we interpret things ourselves, and that's very much where I try
 299 and teach and I, rightly or wrongly, it's about personal interpretation as well isn't it.
 300 It's not that '*this is right. You've got to know this*'. Cos actually it's ok to have diverse
 301 and different opinions. And I think that's part of RE isn't it to get children to be
 302 critical thinkers for themselves.
 303

304 **Me:** Absolutely.
 305

306 TA: Sorry I interrupted you that was really rude sorry.
 307

308 **Me:** No, no that's gold. I'm so pleased you said that. And er and yeah so that got me
 309 thinking, I mean this was live five years ago, and I've spent four years in a room
 310 obsessed with this question you know...what got me interested is thinking 'well
 311 actually, a) you know, kind of as you mentioned, people have different views, and
 312 that includes pupils in the class. So surely we should give space to that. And b) if
 313 we're kind of going in with the assumption that a parable means one thing, it's
 314 kind of like well pupils are empty vessels and we're just filling them with this
 315 information without, as you say, giving that chance for that dialogue. And so the
 316 two lessons, at heart, are seeing if some enquiries can be curated for pupils to
 317 understand a) that there is diverse views and then, in the second lesson, why
 318 might that be? Why might different people have different interpretations? So it's

319 that kind of 'why' question. So I'll go through a lesson at a time and I'd love to kind
320 of...hear your views, with your knowledge of the class, about what you think here
321 is, you know, how do you think pupils might engage with this? What do you think
322 here is interesting? What might be challenging? So start with a bit of prior
323 knowledge, what is a parable? We'll arrive at a definition very similar to the one
324 you gave at the start. Erm and just, you know, has anyone heard of the Parable of
325 the Good Samaritan before? Write – I'm gonna provide each pupil with a pupil
326 workbook – write on the front what you think the meaning is or might be. Erm so
327 those that have encountered it before can put something; those that haven't, or
328 have forgotten, they can use the image and infer something. Then, we'll engage
329 with the text. First, erm we'll read it as a class so pupils have kind of a a conceptual
330 understanding of the narrative as a whole. Erm and then I'll invite them to read
331 through slowly, independently twice. And they can pick one, two or three of the
332 following questions erm to annotate and highlight with: what stands out for me in
333 this parable? Are there any parts that don't add up or make sense? For instance,
334 erm...the...Jewish scribe asks Jesus well, you know, 'Who is my neighbour?' but
335 Jesus never answers that question. He flips it round and says, 'well, who in this
336 parable was a neighbour to somebody else?'. And so they might be like, 'well
337 actually, he is he dodging the question?' those kind of things. Erm and also what
338 information might help us understand this text more? Who is
339

340 TA: That's that contextual stuff we were talking about before isn't it. Completely. Yeah.
341

342 Me: Yeah. Definitely and I'm hoping pupils can bring that up and then we can discuss
343 them. So we'll share erm our thoughts once engaged with that text, and then we'll
344 do something called affinity mapping. So I'll give them eighteen different cards, on
345 some sugar paper, erm about different hermeneutical issues. That's, erm
346 hermeneutics is all about interpretation.
347

348 TA: Oh I was gonna say I don't know that word so actually that's a new word for me.
349

350 Me: Yeah. Some of the cards are like 'the parable has one meaning', 'the parable has
351 more than one meaning'
352

353 TA: Right
354

355 Me: 'the parable can mean anything that we want it too'. Some are all about
356 characters, so the Samaritan was X. The Jewish erm priest should have done this.
357 Some are about us – atheists would get different interpret- would read this
358 differently to others. Erm and some are just 'other'. Erm so they can explore
359 different meanings erm group them into various things. I've suggested those labels
360 so those that link to meaning can go in that corner
361

362 TA: Yeah
363

364 Me: characters here, us there, other here. And then do some concept mapping, where
365 they'll each have their own sharpie. They can write any questions they have, they

366 can link cards, they can say 'I agree with this because...I disagree with this
 367 because...'.
 368
 369 TA: Mmmhmm
 370
 371 Me: Erm and just kind of...put down all of their views and questions and thoughts that
 372 have emerged for them through all of those cards. And then finally, at the end of
 373 lesson one, a few prompts, you know: what have you thought about through doing
 374 this activity? Which cards make you think the most? What should we think about
 375 the Parable of the Good Samaritan? And have you changed your answer from the
 376 start of the lesson?
 377
 378 TA: I like that. That's good.
 379
 380 Me: So I've done a bit of a brain dump there of lesson one. Are there any initial thought
 381 about what's interesting? What might be quite challenging? Erm...quite open.
 382
 383 TA: I think some of them will find the erm affinity map part quite difficult. But what I'm
 384 planning on doing is grouping them in sort of more mixed ability groupings so
 385 they've got some support because I think otherwise some of them will find that a
 386 little bit hard. And obviously some of them will sit back and let someone else do all
 387 the work. That's how it is in most classes isn't it? I really really like the pupil
 388 reflection. I think a /ot of them will find that challenging. But I think they'll cope with
 389 it. I don't think it will be a case of they can't do it at all, and I think it's quite nice
 390 reflexing back on what they thought at the beginning and then seeing if their
 391 opinions have changed or how their thoughts have changed. I think actually that I-I
 392 there's nothing in there that I think, you know, they they won't be able to do at all. I
 393 think it's all very very doable for them.
 394
 395 Me: Yeah. Excellent.
 396
 397 TA: It's just a different it's just a bit different it is obviously a different way of doing it to
 398 how I do it but I like it so I might be stealing it [laughs]
 399
 400 Me: [Laughing] I've got a...you know as I've...you know when you look over a lesson
 401 and you usually have a bit of time to think about it. When you have a lesson and
 402 you've had four years to think about it and make tweaks, it's just constantly like
 403 'model this, model this, don't forget to model this'.
 404
 405 TA: [Nods]
 406
 407 Me: Erm so we'll see how it goes and, you know, in our next interview, erm
 408
 409 TA: Yeah
 410

411 **Me:** I'd love to reflect with you, you know, how do we think it went erm...The second
 412 lesson erm so the learning objective for the first one is 'What should we think
 413 about the Parable
 414
 415 **TA:** Yeah
 416 **Me:** of the Good Samaritan?'. Erm the second one is, 'Why might people interpret the
 417 Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?'. So I'm gonna start, what I'm thinking
 418 is starting with this icon here on the screen.
 419
 420 **TA:** Mmm
 421
 422 **Me:** What do you think it means? What does it make you think about? And, I'd be
 423 interested to know if different pupils have different thoughts about what that
 424 means. Erm so we'll have a brief discussion about that, 'well it's one image but I
 425 wonder why there are different meanings? Erm why...you know...do we interpret
 426 that differently?'.
 427
 428 **TA:** Mmm
 429
 430 **Me:** We'll then move onto erm defining 'interpretation', you know 'what you were just
 431 doing is thinking of the meaning of that we're trying to interpret that' erm and
 432 then we're gonna do some interpretation ranking. So I'm going to give them seven
 433 interpretations erm from the course of Christian history about this text. St
 434 Augustine for instance
 435
 436 **TA:** Wow. I I wo- I would imagine that is probably going to be cha- challenging cos I don't
 437 know that we've ever – and I feel a bit bad admitting this – I don't think we've ever
 438 done anything about the changing Christian view. So that will be really interesting to
 439 see how they manage that one.
 440
 441 **Me:** I think it will be fascinating.
 442
 443 **TA:** Mmm
 444
 445 **Me:** So we'll start with Augustine, St Augustine...erm very allegorical so every single
 446 part of this parable had a meaning. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was 'life's
 447 road', the Samaritan is Jesus who anoints with oil and bandages because that's
 448 baptism and that's communion and sends to the the inn at the end which is the
 449 church and he's gonna
 450
 451 **TA:** Right
 452
 453 **Me:** come back at the second coming. So starting from that to 'just means be nice to
 454 your neighbour' to Martin Luther King about this is racism on life's road, we need
 455 to identify the priests and Levites today etc.
 456
 457 **TA:** Yeah.

458

459 **Me:** But for them, they're gonna in string have a horizontal continuum, rank them from

460 'agree the most. Disagree the most'. Erm

461

462 TA: Yeah and I was I was it's interesting what you were saying about Martin Luther King

463 cos very much for me, putting it into a modern setting is all very much about

464 inclusion, you know I, you know, I I'm probably the school's advocate for LGBTQ+,

465 erm anti-homoph- erm anti-racism and so on. So for me, I really like this as a parable

466 to put into the modern world. You know, we're not talking you know and i-i-it looks

467 at all those bullying and that unkindness that that's taking place in the world we live

468 in against erm people who are not, you know, the stereotypical white, heterosexual

469 whatever. So, I think that will be really nice, linking in with the work we've been

470 doing in PHSE as well on erm diversity and inclusion. So, I think that will be nice.

471

472 **Me:** Some extra links – oh super. So they're gonna rank them 'agree the most, disagree

473 the most' horizontally. Erm they're not gonna know who the interpreters are, it's

474 just kind of face value at that stage.

475

476 TA: Yeah.

477

478 **Me:** Erm and then they'll justify a few in their workbook. But at least two, because I

479 know in my experience that if I say two and then two finish early they're like 'oh

480 I've done two sir, what next?'

481

482 TA: Yeah. Absolutely. [Laughing]

483

484 **Me:** Definitely. Then I'll erm invite to do a vertical one. So at the top is 'twenty-first

485 century', at the bottom 'time of Jesus'. And just kind of keep them where they are

486 horizontally but move them up and down depending *when* they think that

487 interpretation happened.

488

489 TA: Mmmhmm

490

491 **Me:** Erm, you know, I'm less interested in right or wrong answers there I'm just...give

492 them an overview that different interpretations

493

494 TA: Yeah I think that that's the bit that they'll be a bit 'rabbits in headlights'

495

496 **Me:** Yeah. Yeah.

497

498 TA: cos its its they won't ever ever done anything like that so that will be really

499 interesting to see how they respond to that.

500

501 **Me:** Yeah. It will, it will. What happens next is that erm around the room, erm there'll

502 be brief profiles of all of those seven interpreters. They'll go around once, just have

503 a read. They'll have the interpretations on a sheet so they can be like 'oh I wonder

504 if that person links to that one? That interpretation links to that person'. And then,

505 I don't know if erm you've seen kind of things often like common rooms where
 506 they have 'oh I'm looking for a housemate', and they have the number at the
 507 bottom and you kind of rip the tag off
 508
 509 TA: Yeah you rip it off yeah
 510
 511 Me: That's it. So they'll do that. They'll paperclip it to the interpretation and then, in
 512 their workbook, they'll make the links that they think and also give a reason on
 513 different post-it notes. Erm 'so I think this was St Augustine's because...I think this
 514 was
 515
 516 TA: Yeah
 517
 518 Me: Martin Luther King's because...'.
 519
 520 TA: Yeah.
 521
 522 Me: We'll close with a bit of a discussion. What can we learn about interpretation of
 523 this parable from this activity? Why do you think different people...different
 524 interpretations erm and can we be completely certain about what we've matched?
 525 We've just had an interpretation and a a few sentences about Irene Matsoso as an
 526 African feminist. Can we say for sure that this is her interpretation? Erm what else
 527 do we need to know? Erm and then pupils at the end are to answer the learning
 528 objective question with some sukses success criteria
 529
 530 TA: Yeah
 531
 532 Me: Erm in their pro forma. Erm...with a few things. Can they link it with examples, can
 533 they put in their own interpretation. Erm so they're the lessons. Is there anything
 534 else about that second one that you find interesting or you think would be
 535 challenging?
 536
 537 TA: I really like the pupil reflection because we've had quite a lot of issues with
 538 unkindness in this class. Erm they've really struggled coming back post-covid,
 539 probably more than any class in the school for whatever reason. And friendship
 540 issues and things are really are are jus- they rear their head constantly. And I think
 541 this would be really interesting to see each other as neighbours within the class and
 542 see if they relate it that way. That's what I'm gonna be looking for.
 543
 544 Me: Oh great. Yeah that'll be really interesting. That will be really really interesting. I
 545 think I'll be looking out for that too as well actually now you know.
 546
 547 TA: Mmm. Yeah no they're really really struggling with each other.
 548
 549 Me: Bless 'em.
 550
 551 TA: It doesn't help that we're like two-thirds boys, one-third girls.

552

553 **Me:** [Laughs]

554

555 TA: You know it shouldn't make a difference, but it does.

556

557 **Me:** Yeah, yeah

558

559 TA: Erm...yeah, no it I I'm really really looking forward to this, I'm quite excited [laughs].

560 I'm very excited actually.

561

562 **Me:** I'm pleased you are too. I'm going for my pre-lesson haircut this Friday so [laughs]

563

564 TA: Ooooooh

565

566 **Me:** Erm so a few more questions then. If I gave this plan, and I'm aware it's just a

567 broad overview, to you or another teacher, what do you feel might be the

568 challenges of delivering them?

569

570 TA: For me, it would be the part with the different viewpoints under the different I

571 would have to really read up on who those people were, and what they meant. You

572 know when you were talking about St Augustine, that made my brain sort of

573 *really*...work because I don't have...the broad, or in depth, no not broad in depth

574 understanding of Christianity to that point. So what I would have to do lots and lots

575 of reading and work prior to it cos I don't have that same understanding that you

576 have. Erm...but the rest of it, I think I could...the first lesson definitely, that would be

577 no I wouldn't worry about that at all. And it would just be that second one. Just

578 making sure I know who these people are and actually what their beliefs mean and

579 what they, you know, so that I can teach it because if I don't understand it myself I

580 would find that really hard. Cos I don't wanna just say 'oh well this is St Augustine.

581 This is what he says' and not...understand it.

582

583 **Me:** Yeah. Thanks [name omitted]. Erm I think that answers the second one before erm

584 the next question rather. Erm you've answered the next one before erm. So, two

585 penultimate questions, erm. So, I'm trying to give pupils as much agency as

586 possible within this, so it's like their views, their discussions kind of thing

587

588 TA: Mmm

589

590 **Me:** Erm is the agency offered in an open activity such as this something that pupils are

591 used to?

592

593 TA: Yes because, like I've said, you know we're I'm very much about erm...them giving

594 their opinions and their beliefs and and values and linking erm. So, for example,

595 PHSE we do a lot of it, you know, and and in RE. Erm and actually in other subjects as

596 well, you know in English and things we, you know I try it's just my way, i- my way of

597 teaching I guess. Erm always has been because what's the point of just saying 'right

598 you've got to know this and you've got to learn this', it's because without that

599 discussion and without that *freedom* of interpretation, it doesn't necessarily go in,
600 does it?
601
602 **Me: Mmm**
603 TA: So, yeah. I I would say, you know, that's something we I do a lot with them. You
604 know even in things like history and geography. You know, try and get their opinions
605 about why they think things have happened or...erm what do they think it means?
606
607 **Me: It's so key isn't it. It's so so important. Brilliant. Erm, is there anything else you'd**
608 **like to to mention?**
609
610 TA: I don't think so. No. I-I-I'm-I'm conscious I've got to give you a break down of stuff of
611 the class and I will get that to you as soon as in fact that's on my list to do today.
612 Erm...no I think they will find it the thing that I think that where they will find *more*
613 challenging is the fact that the room will be set up slightly differently and that will
614 just blow their minds to begin with. But hopefully by the time you arrive they will
615 have got used to that
616
617 **Me: [Laughs]**
618
619 TA: but it's being mindful that that's not how the room is normally set up and they
620 struggle a little bit with change and being with different people. Erm, and like I said,
621 there are lots and lots of friendship issues going on erm...amongst our boys in
622 particular. Erm...which obviously spill into the classroom a bit. So, just being mindful
623 of that I think.
624
625 **Me: Yeah, yeah. Sure. Ok. Thanks [name omitted]. In which case, let's**
626
627 [End of recording]

School B
Class Teacher Interview One
Via Zoom
Date: Tuesday 22nd February 2022
Time: 1:30
Length: 34:55

- 1 **Me: Ok [name omitted] so could you erm tell me your role in the school?**
2
- 3 TB: Err so I'm Assistant Head Teacher responsible for Key Stage Two erm which also
4 means that I teach in Key Stage Two. So I class teach Year Five erm most of the week
5 – four days a week – I'm in class. I have a half-days leadership release time and a
6 half-day for planning, preparation and assessment which the rest of the teaching
7 staff do as well.
8
- 9 **Me: Fab. And how long have you been at the school [name omitted]?**
10
- 11 TB: Err I only joined the staff in September so I'm still reasonably new. Erm new new to
12 new to new to this to this school.
13
- 14 **Me: Oh lovely. Erm and how long have you been – if you don't mind me asking – a err**
15
- 16 TB: No not at all
17
- 18 **Me: qualified teacher?**
19
- 20 TB: Err I qualified in 2004 so coming up for eighteen years now.
21
- 22 **Me: Oh brilliant. Erm and that's, has all that time been at the chalkface, or erm, you**
23 **know, when did you become an assistant head or step into leadership?**
24
- 25 TB: Err I've done I've so this is my fourth school. So I did a year I did five years at my first
26 school as a class teacher. Erm and then I moved into a leadership position in my
27 second school erm which was Key Stage Two Phase Leader. Erm I was there for five
28 years. Err and then I was assistant head at my previous school for three years, and
29 then I took a step back erm in 201- end of 2017. Erm because, to be completely
30 honest with you, because we were having trouble starting a family and I needed to
31 focus my attentions elsewhere, other than leading a school. Erm for a few years. Erm
32 and then yeah, I-I wan- I wanted to get back into leadership erm you know within
33 the last – well, since my eldest was born. Erm so yeah, joined staff here in in
34 September so i-i-i-t's been about half-and-half. I've class taught all the way through.
35 Erm I've...had a fairly reduced timetable for three of the seven years when I was at
36 my last job. Erm so I taught a half timetable essentially and the rest the rest of it was
37 bits and pieces; erm some of it leadership stuff, some of it I'm erm erm Level Three
38 Forest School Outdoor Learning Lead. Erm
39
- 40 **Me: Nice**

41
 42 TB: and I've do some erm, I not not so much anymore, but I do some erm just Specialist
 43 Leader in Education stuff for PE as well. Erm which I'm not doing a huge amount on
 44 at the moment but erm have done erm at previous jobs. So yeah kind of, kind of a
 45 mixture I mean I've officially been senior leadership since 2009 but have, you know,
 46 taken a a small, small step back for a few years just to focus on my family for a bit
 47 and, you know, have re-joined now. So yeah, I've you know, been class teaching for
 48 seventeen, nearly eighteen, years now essentially.
 49
 50 **Me: Ah awesome! Thanks [name omitted]. And in terms of RE, what's your experience**
 51 **of RE teaching?**
 52
 53 TB: Erm yeah it-it varies. Erm I've I've I have taught RE erm a fair bit during during the
 54 course of my career. Erm it has often been a subject that's been taught by
 55 somebody else in either my PPA time or my leadership time erm over the years. So
 56 I've sort of dipped in and out. Erm I wouldn't by any means say that I was an expert
 57 in any particular area of it. Erm it's like a lot of things with primary teaching, you kind
 58 of teach it as well as you [laughs] as well as you can erm erm with the information
 59 that [undecipherable]. I enjoy teaching it, erm but it has been, you know, it's been
 60 one of those things er-er it's been easy to hand off to another teacher once a week
 61 because – certainly in this school and the last couple of schools that I've worked at –
 62 we block quite a lot of the foundation subjects so that you teach like a block of five
 63 or six lessons of science over a week. Erm but then if I'm out of class for one
 64 afternoon a week, somebody else coming in and teaching one that's part of that
 65 sequence is quite tricky, erm so RE's quite an easy one from that point of view to to
 66 sort of for somebody to take responsibility for. And obviously here, because we're a
 67 church school, it's a it's a core subject so we teach it every week. Erm so it's it's built
 68 into my curriculum and I teach it once a week. So somebody else teaches, you know,
 69 teaches other things for me in the day so I'm not in class [coughs].
 70
 71 **Me: Thanks, [name omitted]. And in terms of training, have you been on any erm RE**
 72 **specific training in your career?**
 73
 74 TB: Err not really no. Erm, I mean, we've we've done a little bit of CPD here just in the in
 75 the few months that I've been here as, you know, as-as part of our general whole
 76 staff training but erm nothing, erm nothing nothing above that really.
 77
 78 **Me: Ok. Cool. Thank you very much. Erm**
 79
 80 TB: That's ok
 81
 82 **Me: so I'd love to hear your perspective here fo-for your opinion. What would you say**
 83 **are the most important aims of RE? So why? Why RE? Why is it important?**
 84
 85 TB: I think it's, yo-you know, it's genuinely very important that children are aware of the
 86 erm you know th-th-th-th-the main religions of the world, and not just the ones that
 87 they happen to follow. I mean again here we're a Church of England school so we

have a, you know, we have a very Christian ethos here but the RE teaching does, you know, we-we do teach about religions because you know part of Christianity is that actually there is tolerance. And, you know, and-a-a-a-and it [fitting?] other people's faiths and other people's beliefs and I think that's that's really important. Erm I...think it's hugely important that children see that not everybody is the same. Not everybody has the same beliefs and the same thoughts. And that, as a result of that, actually people culturally may do different things to-to what they do. And that actually that is a really important part of the RE learning. It's about understanding the faith itself but also the, you know, the cultures and the erm traditions and the things that that go with that. Erm and I think, you know one of the key times for that as we know this is I've you know the three schools I've worked prior to here were community schools but, it you know, with a fairly strong Christian ethos anyway. Like we'd, you know, all three schools have been to the church for Harvest Festival, for Christmas, for-for-for those sorts of things – celebrate Easter. Erm and I think that's one of the key things is actually helping children to understand that those festivals that are, we kind of build our academic year around, are Christian festivals. But actually there's peo-, you know, there's people in the world who have different festivals at different times of year that are equally as important to them. Erm and that's always an eye-opener for me is when the children like, 'What, so you don't celebrate Christmas?'. It's like, 'Well no because it's not part of my religion so it's I-I don't'. I think that's that's always a-a key thing to me, and it's just that understanding of, you know, of-of-of-of what goes on elsewhere I think is really important.

Me: Mmm. It's that real sense of diversity isn't it? You know

TB: Yeah

Me: it's a pluralistic world, and RE plays a pivotal part in allowing pupils to understand that and negotiate it and navigate it.

TB: Yeah I think erm one of the key things for me as well was, certainly in the earlier part of my career – I suspect it's less of an issue now – but, erm because of, you know I qualified in 2004 so there was, there was, quite a lot of – still quite a lot of narrative in the news about erm you know the Al-Qaeda and, erm, you know and and you know those sorts of things. And, actually, trying to educate children that Islam is not about, you know, tho-tho-those terrorist acts and actually that shouldn't be being linked to that religion and understanding that there has to be erm, you know, that actually we should be tolerant of other people regardless of what their their religious beliefs are. *And* there are some people who are just not very nice people regardless of what religion they follow. Erm and I thought that was quite key 'cos there was a sort of period of time where, you know, the narrative on the news certainly was, you know, without necessarily trying to be wa-wa-was that, you know, Islam is bad. And that's, you know, that's not – not helped by George Bush – but that's erm, that's not, you know that's not how it that's not how it should be. And that's not how we should be educating our children.

135 **Me:** Yeah. Yeah. Thanks [name omitted]. That's great. Erm so I'm gonna move on now
 136 from RE to to hone in on on the parables. Erm
 137

138 **TB:** Yeah
 139

140 **Me:** So, in your view, if I said the word 'parables' erm, you know, what does it make
 141 you think of? What in your view are the parables?
 142

143 **TB:** Err straight away I mean the one that you've that you've that you've noted on there
 144 that straight away I think the one that probably most people come to is the Good
 145 Samaritan. I think that's probably one of the most one of the most well-known ones.
 146 Erm but I-I think I would probably go as far as to describe them as a, you know, as a-
 147 a-a-a story with a meaning; a story where erm, you know, something's happened
 148 and that there's been a erm, you know, the-the outcome has y-you're able to kind of
 149 d-derive how you can sort of, you know, th-th-the appropriate way to run your life as
 150 a result of having heard that story and what what you should what you should do as
 151 a result of it. So yeah stories, stories with meanings I think is probably the erm the
 152 easiest way to describe it. Which sounds a bit ridiculous 'cos if you're telling a story
 153 that doesn't have a meaning then it's a bit of a waste of time. But it is
 154

155 **Me:** [laughs]
 156

157 **TB:** that, sort of, what's the wider, you know, the wider aspects of this; it's not just a nice
 158 story – actually what what are we learning as a result of this.
 159

160 **Me:** Yeah, yeah.
 161

162 **TB:** It's a story – a story with a lesson might be a better way of putting it rather than a
 163 story, a story with a meaning.
 164

165 **Me:** Lovely. Thanks [name omitted]. Thanks. Erm and in terms of the parables, have
 166 you taught the parables before?
 167

168 **TB:** Err yes. Yeah yes and no. Erm yeah, I mean, it-it you know it's part of the teaching of
 169 Christianity yeah that, you know, that come up. Erm err err you know again an-
 170 obviously as part of my- I've been senior leadership since 2009, so I obviously do
 171 collective worship as part of that as well. So it's it's be-, you know, err err as part of
 172 that. Erm I mean in the time I've been here I've probably only done worship about
 173 four times and it- two of those I've taught from parables, so it-it's erm. Erm it-it-it
 174 yeah erm I have I have taught from them. Erm they always generate quite interesting
 175 discussion. Erm I think it's always quite interesting to see the children always kind of
 176 know what they're supposed to say, but then when you start to delve down a little
 177 bit deeper and you start thinking about why, particularly – and I know you're gonna
 178 focus on it – but particularly with the Good Samaritan it's like well actually 'Why did
 179 those other people not, you know, help? Why did it come to being this, you know,
 180 this-this-this one person who did?'. And you get into that whole conversation about
 181 tolerance, and different beliefs, and the fact that actually it doesn't matter what, you

182 know, race...you know, religion somebody is you should, you know, you should help.
183 Erm it-it ther-they're quite interesting from that point of view. And I-I think
184 they're...they're a good...way of teaching a lot of the messages from the bible. Erm, I
185 think, certain aspects of the bible can be quite complex for children to understand,
186 whereas something with a story behind it makes it far easier for the, for the children
187 to understand erm from-from-from that point of view. I was sort of try and link some
188 form of story in so that the children have got the bit of a, you know, a bit of a way
189 into it.

190

191 **Me: Yeah they're always very engaging and accessible stories aren't they. You know**
192 **everyone**

193

194 TB: Yeah

195

196 **Me: can can buy into it and explore it as a reader. Yeah.**

197

198 TB: Yeah

199

200 **Me: For sure. Brilliant. Ok. So what I'm gonna do, erm I'm going to share a couple of**
201 **things. The first thing I'm going to share erm is simply – ca-can you just let me**
202 **know if this is full screen?**

203

204 TB: Yeah that's fi- yeah yeah. Yeah I can see that

205

206 **Me: So this is the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Erm I've taken a copy of the New**
207 **International Version and just put it on a page. Erm**

208

209 TB: Yep

210

211 **Me: I'd love to just give you a moment just to have a read through. Erm and you can**
212 **read the whole thing and then erm reflect on some questions I'm gonna ask or you**
213 **could do it as you go. Erm...but if I were to give this to you and said, you know, 'can**
214 **you plan a lesson or a series of lessons erm teaching about this parable'. Erm, I'd**
215 **love to know what you might focus on. You know, what might you choose? What**
216 **aspects would you like to draw out? Err tease out? And is there anything that you**
217 **feel err pupils might find challenging? So, so two things really. What would you**

218

219 TB: Yeah

220

221 **Me: focus on with pupils? What would you find challenging? Pupils would.**

222

223 TB: Yeah. Erm I think, you know, I-I as I say, you know it's-it's-it's one of one of the
224 parables that I do know reasonably well. Err I think that probably my first thing, as
225 I've sort of already alluded to, is actually why the other – th-the priest and the Levite
226 – didn't do anything. What what, you know, and actually draw out what the
227 children's thought processes about that. What are the reasons why? Are there any
228 clues in the story – in the parable sorry I should say – erm as to why those other erm

229 people may not have stopped to help? What's the erm, you know, what was the
230 reasoning behind that? And if you, I think it's always quite interesting to get
231 children's points of view, erm on that. Erm...I and, you know, I-I'm not gonna I-I I
232 don't know I haven't taught from this one with my current class and I'm not gonna,
233 I'm not gonna ruin what's gonna happen on Thursday by suggesting
234

235 **Me:** [laughs]

236
237 **TB:** what, what I think they might say. Erm I think it will generate some good, som-some
238 good discussion for you. Erm, once we've unpicked that, we'll then look at 'Well
239 actually, hand on a minute, why the Samaritan? What makes the Samaritan different
240 from the priest an- the priest and the Levite?'. Erm, a bit of discussion around those
241 different, you know, those different beliefs. Erm and actually, I might not read them
242 the whole story to start with. Erm it's a tricky one because they would probably
243 know it, generally, and actually get to the point where you'd say, 'You know but a
244 Samaritan cam-, as he travelled, came where the man was'. Stop. 'What's the
245 Samaritan gonna do?'. Might, you know, ask them to predict, to make that
246 prediction, if they've not come across the story before. Because I suspect that a lot
247 of them would say, 'Well if two people have walked past so will the third person'.
248 Erm, see what happens. Might even ask, 'What would you do? You know, if you're, if
249 if that was your situation and you saw somebody who was in that position, what
250 would you do? Would you walk past? Would you help? Wh-Why might you not help?
251 What would your reasons be for not helping?'. Interesting side-effect of Covid is that
252 a lot of people don't wouldn't put themselves into a situation like that, at risk of
253 being infected, which is an interesting, interesting side note.
254

255 **Me:** Yeah. Ah that's really interesting. Yeah, yeah.

256
257 **TB:** Erm came out of some fir-first aid training I did just before Christmas that they've
258 completely changed the first-aid guidance, so that you don't have to do mouth-to-
259 mouth any more. Erm because the risk of infection's too great. So it-it there's a
260 tangent that I can sort of see children children going along from that point of view.
261 Erm [clears throat] ask those questions and then, get to the end, and of course
262 there's the, you know, it's always the big question, who did the right thing? Who was
263 in the right? Who, you know, and actually, and then, again what would you have
264 done in that situation? Erm and, you know, whether the children have actually
265 drawn out the meaning which, you know, is is there. You know th-th- you know th-
266 the erm as it says at the bottom, 'Who is the neighbour, the one who had mercy on
267 him'. You know, and then Jesus said, 'Well go and do likewise'. It's that, you know, it
268 is that message of actually we should, we should be kind regardless of of who that is.
269 So I think I'd I'd unpick it from that, from that point of view. Erm...and sort of learn
270 the importance of, you know that, hopefully learn the importance of actually being
271 kind and caring towards towards others regardless of, you know, of what of what
272 views they might hold. I've forgotten the second part of your question, I'm really
273 sorry. [Laughs]
274

275 **Me:** [Laughs] Ah [name omitted] this is golden. Erm. Erm I'd love to know if there's
 276 anything, then, that you feel in engaging with this text pupils might find
 277 challenging?
 278

279 **TB:** Erm prob...probably not. I mean I think not not massively. I think, as I said at the
 280 beginning, may need to have some conversation about the different religious groups
 281 that the main characters – I don't want to use the word characters but I can't think
 282 of another word [laughs] for for the main, you know, the main people in the story –
 283 erm fall into, their main religious groups. Because without that knowledge it's very
 284 difficult for children to understand.
 285

286 **Me:** Mmm
 287

288 **TB:** And I think you kind of almost have to draw a parallel sometimes and, you know, the
 289 kind of the one I-I it-it's a tricky one even, you know, even now but, you know, you
 290 don't kind of want to draw attention to things and, you know, and sort of the one
 291 I've done in the past is, 'Well imagine if it was, you know, a-a-a culture where boys
 292 and girls weren't allowed to talk to each other and you were walking along the road
 293 and you saw a girl who'd been beaten like that. Would yo-, and you know and you
 294 were a boy, would you go and help?'. And actually the children are like, 'Yeah well of
 295 course I would'. Well it's like 'and even if your culture says you can't?'. That's, you
 296 know, it's that kind of level of having to explain that, you know, these these people
 297 don't necessarily get on. Erm don't get on very well. So I think ther-ther-there needs
 298 to be that kind of level of thing. Erm...I think it often generates conversation about
 299 why somebody would be attacked. And that's a a tangent that is very easy and a
 300 route that is very easy to go down.
 301

302 **Me:** Mmm
 303

304 **TB:** Erm it is, you know, why would somebody attack another person for for no reason?
 305 And, erm, [clears throat] you know again we try and sort of stay on top of the news
 306 as a school. And, you know, the-the-the there have been some fairly erm horrific
 307 erm news events in the last couple of years where, you know, people have just be-
 308 been attacked on their way home and you--- which is, you know, totally sad. But it-
 309 we kind of, you know, that-that's I it-it's one of those areas where I can kind of see
 310 that conversation disappearing off on a tangent and moving away from the story.
 311

312 **Me:** Yeah, yeah, yeah
 313

314 **TB:** Erm, perhaps slightly more than it needs to. And I'm, you know, and I think most of
 315 us here are quite up for encouraging the children to sort of generate their own ideas
 316 and their own opinions. But it-it-it you also have to maintain the focus on the main,
 317 what the main main learning of the lesson is. And sometimes I might go, 'Look. Let's
 318 park this, and just [clears throat] it's happened, and it does happen and it's not a
 319 very nice thing to happen but actually can we have a conversation about the reasons
 320 why those sorts of things might happen once we've finished discussing the Parable
 321 of the Good Samaritan'. And actually, you can then relay it back and go, 'Ok so put

322 yourself into a situation where you're a bit older and you're out on a Saturday night
 323 and you see this sort of thing happen, are you gonna get involved? Are you gonna
 324 help?'. And there's, you know, th-th-that will potentially generate some other
 325 further discussion but it might just hold back the flow of the lesson a little bit if you
 326

327 **Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah**

328

329 TB: kind of let the children take over. Erm

330

331 **Me: It's that balance all the time, isn't it? [Laughs]**

332

333 TB: Yeah. Erm...Yeah, erm other than that I think, I mean, I-th-th the great thing about
 334 parables is that actually, you know, th-th-they exist for a reason. They exist to teach
 335 people, and they're simple enough that the vast majority of people can understand
 336 them. So I don't think – from a teaching point of view – I don't think there will be
 337 anything in there that would really s-, you know, that the children would find
 338 particularly difficult.

339

340 **Me: Yeah, wonderful. Ok, super. Erm, thank you for sharing your reflections on that**
 341 **one. Erm**

342

343 TB: No problem.

344

345 **Me: What I'm gonna do now is I'm gonna show you, kind of, just a – I love my dual dual**
 346 **coding – so, erm**

347

348 TB: [Laughs]

349

350 **Me: I'm gonna just overview my thesis really and an overview of the lessons. And I'll do**
 351 **it one at a time, and yeah I'd love your, your thoughts. You know, from your**
 352 **experience, with your class, how do you think pupils will engage with this? So this**
 353 **starts, this journey, probably five years ago. Erm when I was teaching my Year Five**
 354 **class. And I was doing some kind of research anyway for my Masters. And I became**
 355 **very acutely aware erm that – ju-just like you mentioned at the start, you know it's**
 356 **important for pupils to understand diversity – and I was becoming quite acutely**
 357 **aware that often as teachers we were given plans of how to teach these parables**
 358 **which were, to put it crudely, 'Here is the parable. Here is the one meaning of the**
 359 **parable. If pupils by the end of the lesson can parrot that meaning back to you,**
 360 **job's a good'un. There's been some successful learning'. And it got me interested**
 361 **because I thought, 'Well actually, is that the meaning of the parable?. This is one**
 362 **parable – it's quite an open text – lots of different Christians would read this in**
 363 **their own situation, their own context, and take a different meaning from it. And**
 364 **often, these parables were told – as you said – to give a moral story or maybe**
 365 **prompt some spiritual reflection. Often, parables were kind of seen as a vehicle for**
 366 **values or 'nice-ianity', but kind of taken away from the fact that it was a story that**
 367 **Jesus told is foundational for Christianity'. So wha-I went away and have done is**
 368 **plan two lessons mainly, at heart, allowing the pupils to understand that a)**

different people interpret a text differently, and b) why might that be? Why might different people take this one, page of words [on?] a text, but take different meaning from it in their own circumstances? So Lesson One, is 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?'. The start is about that prior knowledge, you know, has anyone heard of a parable before? What is it? Has anyone heard of the Parable of the Good Samaritan? And they'll have a pupil workbook each, and their first activity then is, 'What do you think the meaning is or might be? Just write it down. And if you've not encountered it before or you've forgotten, just infer from the picture that's on their workbook – what do you think this might be about?'. Then we'll do a bit of textual analysis. So I'll read it once through a-erm to the class so they've got a kind of conceptual overview of this is the parable, the narrative in its entirety. And then I'll invite pupils to read it through on their own erm once maybe twice. And they can pick one, two or three of these questions, and they'll have a relevant highlighter for each. So one of them is, 'What stands out for me? Is there anything that intrigues me here?'. It might be that the Jewish expert says, 'Well, who is my neighbour?' and Jesus never answers that. He flips it and says, 'Well, who is being a neighbour in this story?'. 'Are there any parts that don't add up or make sense? And what information might help us understand this text more?'. Because there is quite a lot of vocabulary here that might be worth explaining, you know what's denarii? What's priest? What's eternal life? What's Levite? So just then have a bit of discussion there, you know, what's some of the vocab, what stood out for people, is there anything here doesn't make sense. After that, erm there's going to be something called an affinity map. So I'm going to give pupils different sets of cards that have different statements on them, all around the question, 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?'. And there will be four headings: one is to do with meaning; one is to do with characters; one is to do with us as readers, one is to do with just-just other, you know, it's kind of like a catch-all category – 'I don't think it fits in any of those headings, I'll pop it there'. So those cards might be like, 'This parable has one meaning', 'It can have more than one meaning', 'It can mean anything we want it to'. It could be things like erm, 'The parable means *this*' or 'an atheist would get a different interpretation from this'. Or erm, 'The Good Samaritan represents Jesus, and he's taking humanity on the fallen road and taking them to the inn – which represents the church – those kind of things'. So lots of different information for pupils to ponder there. Erm and then they'll have their own sharpie and they'll write their own thoughts around it. It might be there's cards they disagree with or agree with, or they've seen some links, or it's prompted some reflections. So that's the stage where they can just kind of put their own thoughts down. You know, any questions they want to ask, any thing that's made them think or challenged them. And then, at the end of the lesson, erm I'll give them time to individually reflect: 'What do they feel they've learnt, if anything, from that activity? Are there any cards that really made them think? Why? Erm answer that learning objective question, so what should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan? Have you changed your answer from the start? Erm so initial thoughts there, [name omitted], about that activity. How do you feel your class might engage with that? Erm, is there anything that you think

415 would be useful? That would be interesting? That would be difficult? Erm over to
 416 you.
 417

418 TB: Erm yeah I think, I know, I think that'll work really well with them. Erm they are a
 419 class that like to discuss, they are a class that like to share their opinions. And I
 420 mean, as I say, I've taught RE to them every week and it-it-it is often about the rich
 421 discussion of what erm, you know, what comes out of that. We we have some I have
 422 some children in the class who are obviously, you know, from a very erm strong
 423 Christian background erm and others who who aren't. Erm but erm you know, they
 424 all, they all get on, get on well together. Erm yeah, I think, you know, in terms of the
 425 make-up of the lesson, I think that'll, that will work absolutely fine. I mean that is
 426 very much how I would, you know, run a-a-a you know a lesson have a-a you know,
 427 starter, some sort of analysis, an opportunity for them to do some work and then
 428 some reflection at the end, at the end of it. So I think, from that point of view, it's a
 429 format that they'll be reasonably familiar with. Erm, I do have a few children who are
 430 not the strongest readers in the world. Erm, so yeah reading the text as a class first is
 431 a is a must, but there may well be some children that actually will really need some
 432 support from either me or from [name omitted] who's my teaching assistant to, you
 433 know, to help them with that during the course of the lesson. But, other than that,
 434 there's no reason why erm, you know, any of that should cause any problems for-
 435 for-for any of the children at all. And I think you'll, you know, I think you'll get some
 436 quite interesting responses from them. [Undiscernible words]...yeah
 437

438 Me: Yeah, I know it's. Oh definitely, definitely. Oh thank you. Ok I'm gonna move to the
 439 next one, and I've just had the old er, 'Oh you've got forty minutes'. Erm so here's
 440 the second lesson. Erm so this one moves onto, 'Why might people interpret the
 441 Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?'. So hopefully, acting a bit of a
 442 springboard. First of all, erm, I'll show them that very icon on the screen.
 443

444 TB: Mmmhmm
 445

446 Me: So just a hand with a heart and three lines from it. And I'll ask them, 'What do you
 447 think it means? What does it make you think about?'. What I'm hopeful for is that
 448 different pupils will say it makes them think about different things. And I'll note a
 449 few of those on the board and think, 'Well actually, interesting. This is just one
 450 image, yet lots of us are thinking of different things here. It could be to do with
 451 love, or hope, or service, or courage, or bravery or or whatever. But why might
 452 that be? One image. Different people. Different meanings'. And what I'm hoping to
 453 do is see if pupils can then apply that to the text. So we'll talk about interpretation
 454 – what we're doing, just doing there, is interpretation. Erm and can we use that
 455 thinking to see why different people might interpret a text differently. So, the first
 456 thing we'll do, is erm we'll create a horizontal continuum with string. I'll give them
 457 seven real and historical interpretations from the history of Christianity, and ask
 458 them to rank them from 'agree the most' to 'disagree the most'. It might be that
 459 they agree with all of them, but just some semblance of critical thinking about, 'Ok
 460 yep. I can see that' or 'well I question that one'. Then, erm, have you seen kind of –
 461 I remember them from university common rooms – it's kind of you're looking for a

462 flat erm and it's like, 'Oh I'm looking for a housemate' and they've got those erm
 463 pieces of paper under with the numbers on and you can rip it and take it away.
 464

465 TB: Yep
 466

467 Me: So what erm around the room will be are profiles of those seven interpreters. So
 468 one of them is from Martin Luther King. One of them is from Frederick Douglass in
 469 the, you know, kind of nineteenth-century America, ex-slave. One of them is a
 470 twenty-first century African feminist. Erm and pupils will go around once, just to
 471 read the profiles. And then they'll go around again, and think, 'Ok, well I'm gonna
 472 rip their name off. What do I think? Which interpreter do I think links to the
 473 interpretation?'. Bit of a matching activity there. Erm, if there's time I'll ask them
 474 to write a written justification in their workbooks. A bit of discussion, you know,
 475 'What can we learn about the interpretation of the Good Samaritan from this
 476 activity? What do you think's led to different interpretations? Erm can we be
 477 completely certain by what we've matched? There's only a little bit of information
 478 of the interpreter – we only have their interpretation – erm to what extent can we
 479 be sure?'. And then, finally, I'll invite pupils to answer that learning erm learning
 480 enquiry question: 'Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan
 481 differently?'. Erm so I'll give them time in their workbooks to wri- construct an
 482 answer to that. Erm a few success criteria there: can they give one, well-explained
 483 reason; can they give an example from the in- matching activity they've just done,
 484 erm, and can they link it to their own interpretation? So, 'I read the parable like
 485 this and it might be because of this. But my friend Barry in the corner might read it
 486 like this because of this'. Erm. So that's the second lesson. All about why different
 487 people might interpret this text differently. Erm, thoughts?
 488

489 TB: Yeah. No I really like that. I think, erm, yeah particularly th-the two interpretation
 490 tasks I think that's always going to generate a lot of interesting conversation. Erm
 491 and it will highlight that there are a couple of children in my class who just
 492 sometimes just think what their mates think. Erm, they don't really know why.
 493

494 Me: [Laughs]
 495

496 TB: Which is [laughs] erm. Which is, you know is always, is always an interesting
 497 discussion to have. No I think that'll, I think that'll work erm I think that'll work really
 498 well. Erm again I think, you know, similar p- similar pupils – just from a logistical
 499 point of view – there's a couple of children who will struggle to write down their
 500 justifications but will actually, if you talk to them, will probably be able to to give you
 501 er-er-a, you know, a fairly well-reasoned answer but they'd find, you know, actually
 502 committing pen to paper sometimes a little bit tricky. Erm but if we think carefully
 503 about, you know, about groupings and where children ar- where children are sitting
 504 and who they're sitting with then, you know, that-that should be reasonably easy to
 505 overcome. That's not a, not a problem. I mean I, you know, I manage it day-to-day
 506 [laughs] it's not a
 507

508 Me: [Laughs]

509

510 TB: it shouldn't be a, shouldn't be a massive issue, let's b- let's be honest about it. Erm

511 yeah no I think both of those, both of those lessons are look er-th-the-they're they

512 will fit what we do in class pretty well; I don't think anything will confuse them from

513 that point of view. I think

514

515 **Me: Yeah**

516

517 TB: it will be, you know, and it will be interesting to, it will be interesting for me to watch

518 how they interact with somebody else as well.

519

520 **Me: Mmm Mmm. Oh absolutely. Ok, erm, so there's a couple more minutes before it**

521 **kicks us out. Erm**

522

523 TB: Yeah

524

525 **Me: and if you could re re-join that would be great.**

526

527 TB: Yeah of course. Yeah.

528

529 **Me: but I'll try [and conclude the interview?] before these four minutes are up. So**

530 **three more questions then erm. Has the class en-, to your knowledge, covered**

531 **diversity of interpretation before?**

532

533 TB: N-not in the time that I've been with them. Erm having said that,...we probably have

534 touched on it but not called it diversity of interpretation. Erm I think, you know, in

535 particular one of the erm activities were we looking at when I was doing the Vikings

536 before Christmas was looking at different points of view of the same, you know, of

537 the of the same th- the same [theme?] of the attack on Lindisfarne. But th-th-the

538 different points of view of the same thing. Erm and actually how that might have

539 been interpreted by different people. Erm, but I haven't really talked about it in

540 terms of that erm, you know, diversity of interpretation. Err similarly with the Battle

541 of Hastings; points of view of yo-yo-you of what, you know, what might have

542 happened? Whose points of view might have been different? How that might have

543 been interpreted by different people? But again not specifically mentioned as

544 diversity of interpretation. [Inaudible word] I don't think.

545

546 **Me: Ok. Yeah, yeah. So, so perhaps they're used to this thinking in history erm**

547

548 TB: Yeah

549

550 **Me: and RE not so much at this present stage which is, is my thesis anyway. You know**

551 **it's**

552

553 TB: Yeah I mean we d- ah we, again, we've we probably do, there probably is – y-you

554 know – because I always give the-I throw the floor open to them in RE all the time.

555 And say, 'What do you think?'. You know and actually, 'Can we, can we build on

556 that?'. And, you know, and often people will say, 'Oh I agree with that' or 'actually
 557 following on from that person's, you know, from-from this child's comment'. Erm,
 558 you know, I think they're aware of it but I don't think it – I certainly haven't ever
 559 explicitly taught it. Erm I think it-it-its just sort of comes as part of the discussions
 560 that we have
 561
 562 **Me: Yeah, yeah**
 563
 564 TB: during the course of the lesson.
 565
 566 **Me: Sure. Ok. Erm so, final two. Erm if I gave these plans to you or another teacher,**
 567 **erm...do you think there's-there easy enough to pick up and go with? Or do you**
 568 **think there's anything that there will be some challenges or time spent doing some**
 569 **thinking beforehand?**
 570
 571 TB: Erm I think, from a personal point of view, I could probably pick them up and teach
 572 from reasonably easily without without too much trouble. I mean obviously I'd need
 573 to put be, you know, a bit of time in to make sure that the resources are in place, but
 574 that's not necessarily a problem. Erm...yeah. I mean I certainly would, I would find
 575 them I-I think I'd certainly find them, you know, clear and easy enough to work with.
 576 Err you know I-I'm coming at it from a position of having been a cover teacher for a,
 577 you know, for a couple of years where I was quite often just thrown into a class and
 578
 579 **Me: [Laughs]**
 580
 581 TB: bunged some planning and asked to get on with it. Erm an-, you know, but it was in a
 582 school that I worked in so it wasn't particularly, yo-you know, I kind of knew the
 583 generally how things worked. But I-I got better in that time at reading other people's
 584 plans and just trying to work from them without, you know, sort of overthinking it
 585
 586 **Me: Yeah, yeah**
 587
 588 TB: erm. But yeah no I think they're definitely clear enough. And I think I, you know,
 589 there's always been this sort of th-th-th-the watch word with planning is-is it clear
 590 enough for somebody else to follow [laughs].
 591
 592 **Me: [Laughs]**
 593
 594 TB: If that's erm. But yeah certainly I've, I mean I've, you know I've read through while
 595 you've been talking and I-I couldn't see any reason why I wouldn't be able to-to
 596 teach from that without any trouble at all I don't think.
 597
 598 **Me: Brilliant. Ok, [name omitted]. Erm we've got a minute-thirty left**
 599
 600 TB: [Laughs]
 601

602 **Me:** erm open question. Is there anything else that you'd like to mention erm either
603 anything that you've thought of that you'd like to share, erm about these lessons?
604 Or anything else before Thursday?
605
606 TB: Erm I no I don't think so really. I think, you know, you've explained what, what
607 you're, what, what you're doing really, you know, really clearly. And, you know, and
608 the and the logic and the theory behind it and I think that's, you know, I think it's
609 very interesting. I'm quite looking forward to seeing how my class interact with
610 somebody else with me in the room
611
612 **Me:** Mmm
613
614 TB: because I don't often do that. Erm but also, you know, I'm sort of hoping that they're
615 gonna give you what you want [laughs]. [Undiscernible words amidst laugh –
616 'absolutely which is' ?]
617
618 **Me:** [Laughs] I mean the the joy of this is it's kind of untrilled. It's a test
619
620 TB: Yeah
621
622 **Me:** If it goes well, brilliant. If it doesn't, well that provides some interesting questions
623 as well. Erm
624
625 TB: Yeah. I mean that's, yo-you know, [what I meant by?] what-what you want. I mean it
626 might be that actually you get [laughs] you know you-you-you-you it doesn't give
627 you the outcome that you require but actual- that you were expecting but actually it
628 generates something that's quite useful for you thesis so you [laughs]
629
630 **Me:** Yeah, definitely.
631
632 [End of recording]

School C
Class Teacher Interview One
Date: Monday 28th February 2022
Time: 9:45
Length: 29:48

Me: Thank you ever so much for for being a part of this. What I er mentioned in my email is this first interview is erm giving a bit of information kind of about context. But also to show you the lessons and with your knowledge of your class – you’re very much the expert of the learners and-and your area – so I’d love to hear your initial thoughts about what might be useful, what might be interesting, what might be quite difficult. So erm first of all, erm can you tell me what your role in the school is?

TC: Erm a Year Five teacher.

Me: A Year Five teacher. And how long have you been at the school for?

TC: Erm this is my second year – so about a year and a half.

Me: Awesome. Erm and how long have you been a qualified teacher – that’s a year and a year and a half?

TC: Yeah, yeah, yeah erm yeah

Me: Brilliant. Erm and could you tell me a little bit about your experience of RE teaching?

TC: Erm so obviously I’ve been doing lots of training at university. And then it’s something that we do every single week in [name of school omitted], so every single Tuesday I do erm RE. Erm so I have to plan the RE for Year Five as well which has been really interesting. We’ve been using the Understanding Christianity erm book erm or folder which is *really* helpful and comes up with some great ideas. Erm but also I’ve got lots of support from [name of subject leader omitted] who who is our leader. Erm but yeah no so I teach every single w– I now teach every week.

Me: Oh that’s awesome. Have you been on any RE specific CPD or training?

TC: Erm I went on a – with the diocese – a teaching erm in a church school – erm which obviously wasn’t necessarily just for RE but that definitely did give some ideas. Erm but no, other than that, I’ve not been on any specific RE training.

Me: Sure, sure. Was that the ‘New to Teaching in a Church School’ one?

TC: Yes, yeah

41 **Me:** **Ok, awesome. Erm so the next one is moving on to erm kind of RE more**
 42 **specifically. In-in your opinion, what would you say are the most important aims of**
 43 **RE?**
 44
 45 **TC:** Erm to teach children about the – about bible stories – but also to teach them in a
 46 way where they can use it in their everyday life. Erm so not just the, not just talking
 47 loads and loads about the past but relating it to-t- stories now or to teachings now.
 48 Erm but also not just teaching one religion – to teaching about lots of different
 49 religions and erm how they how they link or maybe how they don't link. Erm just so
 50 that children can get an idea of everything. Erm but also for them to get kind of an
 51 understanding of the world around them that they might not get from other lessons
 52 or they might not be exposed to at home, depending on if they fol-follow a religion.
 53 Erm and also to kind of erm compare I suppose their lives and how they celebrate
 54 things with other religions and other children, and how things might be different in
 55 other areas of the world. Erm yeah
 56
 57 **Me:** **Ok that's fantastic – thank you. Lovely, lovely. So what in a your views are**
 58 **parables?**
 59
 60 **TC:** Erm I would say short stories with – obviously from the bible really – religious
 61 teaching but often with a moral or erm with a with a lesson behind them.
 62
 63 **Me:** **Lovely. And have you taught about erm the parables in RE before?**
 64
 65 **TC:** We haven't explicitly taught in Year Five; we do relate back to them. Erm so, for
 66 example, they've I've just planned a lesson where they're looking at repentance and
 67 we've used erm – and I can't remember what the I can't remember what the story is
 68 – the story of, is it Zac-Zacchaeus? Zaccha
 69
 70 **Me:** **Oh yes, Zacchaeus. Yeah**
 71
 72 **TC:** Yeah, yeah. Zacchaeus
 73
 74 **Me:** **in, in the tree [laughs]**
 75
 76 **TC:** So yeah. So we are – whether that counts as a parable or not I'm not entirely sure –
 77 but we do link to stories that they've heard of before from the bible but we haven't,
 78 I haven't explicitly taught a parable
 79
 80 **Me:** **Yeah. Sure, sure. Erm, ok, so. What I'm gonna do now is I'm going to show –**
 81 **eventually, erm sorry bear with me – can you see? Sometimes it freezes the screen**
 82 **when I'm-I bring things up. Can you see the Parable of the Good Samaritan?**
 83
 84 **TC:** Yes
 85

86 **Me:** **Awesome. Ok. So erm so here is the text. Here is the narrative of the Parable of**
87 **the Good Samaritan. Erm what I'd love for you to do is just to take a bit of time**
88 **reading this and**
89
90 **TC:** Mmmhmm
91
92 **Me:** **for your particular class, erm...what do you think you might focus on if you were**
93 **going to plan a lesson around this text from-from reading this text?**
94
95 **TC:** Ok... [about a minute's pause whilst TC reads]. Erm I think, if I was to focus on it, it
96 would be that that big middle section erm [I think?] so discussing around that erm
97 and getting them to 'cos they're quite good at understanding that you're neighbour
98 isn't your neighbour – how they would see your neighbour. Erm but I think actually
99 just that bit more – that thought at the end of 'which of these three is the neighbour
100 to the man who fell?'. Erm getting yeah getting them to think about, 'Well actually,
101 why is *that* man his neighbour and not the other people that walked past? Why
102 aren't they erm – why would they not be known as his neighbour?'. Erm get- so
103 they're getting them to see the fact that it's someone who supports you erm that's
104 helpful for you and not just anyone that passes by.
105
106 **Me:** **Yeah, awesome. Thank you. Thank you. Do you think there are any aspects of this**
107 **text, when pupils are thinking about it, erm that they'd find difficult?**
108
109 **TC:** Erm...I suppose that first question of, 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?'. They
110 would need erm I-I they'd need that breaking down into with a bit more explanation
111 into what that actually means.
112
113 **Me:** **Sure**
114
115 **TC:** But but but there would be, if it was something that you'd approached in a class,
116 there would a few that would be able to pick that apart and actually tell us what it
117 means. There would still be there would be a few who would need that explanation
118 because reading it three times wouldn't actually help them to understand what it is
119 that they mean.
120
121 **Me:** **Mmm**
122
123 **TC:** Erm but yeah other than that and then there there's a few erm bits of vocab that I
124 think they need a bit more explanation on. But other than that, erm, and also but-a
125 but-a Samaritan they would need – but again there would be many in the class who
126 would be able to explain what a Samaritan is. Especially with it being the Parable of
127 the *Good Samaritan*.
128
129 **Me:** **Yeah, yeah, yeah**
130
131 **TC:** Then then yeah they might just need a bit more of a a prompt I suppose with what
132 they mean by inheriting eternal life and also what a Samaritan is. Erm but they're

133 quite good with the discussion side of it so those that may be a struggling slightly
 134 would pick up on the discussion that's being had.
 135
 136 **Me: Sure. So erm understanding the vocabulary here would be really important to**
 137
 138 **TC: Yes. Definitely**
 139
 140 **Me: understanding this. Great. Great. Erm so I'd love to know your view now. Erm so**
 141 **having kind of read this err once, or-or and your previous potential encounters**
 142 **with this, tell me your opinion about meaning and this text.**
 143
 144 **TC: Erm so I would take that erm it's about being a good person. Not necessarily having**
 145 **to be, not having to help someone that you know but also being that good person**
 146 **where if you were to to like-like this is see someone you see something happen in**
 147 **the road, you see something happen erm wherever it was that you that you were,**
 148 **actually stopping and helping and not just being like the other people who just pass**
 149 **it by and ignore them. Being that person that kind of makes a, does something about**
 150 **it, makes a makes a difference and helps someone as you would want someone to**
 151 **help you.**
 152
 153 **Me: That's awesome, [name omitted]. Thank you ever so much for for sharing your**
 154 **your view and your thoughts there. Erm ok, what I'm gonna do now is I'm gonna**
 155 **stop sharing that one. Erm thank you that was really really valuable.**
 156
 157 **TC: That's ok**
 158
 159 **Me: I'm now going to erm share the lesson overview. So**
 160
 161 **TC: Ok**
 162
 163 **Me: I will go a lesson at a time. Erm I'll just kind of briefly overview them. And yeah and**
 164 **again I'd just love your thoughts err**
 165
 166 **TC: Mmmhmm**
 167
 168 **Me: with *your* class, what do you think would be useful? Interesting? Difficult? Erm ok**
 169 **so here is Lesson One. Can you see this ok?**
 170
 171 **TC: Yep**
 172
 173 **Me: Brilliant. Erm so my kind of thesis is erm this. Erm so I was a Year Five/Six teacher**
 174 **for many years and**
 175
 176 **TC: Ok**
 177
 178 **Me: I was often frustrated that sometimes I would plans for teaching a parable such as**
 179 **the Good Samaritan and it would assume that a parable had one meaning – and**

180 one meaning only – and it didn't really matter what pupils thought. As long as by
 181 the end of the lesson, they can give you that meaning that you're wanting them to
 182 parrot back at you, learning's been successful.
 183
 184 TC: Yeah
 185
 186 Me: **And there was a few things there. First of all, I was like, 'Well actually, erm is that**
 187 **the meaning of the text? Who's decided?**
 188
 189 TC: Mmm
 190
 191 Me: **Different Christians in the world read this text differently. So surely good RE should**
 192 **allow pupils to understand a) that there are different interpretations**
 193
 194 TC: Mmm
 195
 196 Me: **but also b) why might that be?**
 197
 198 TC: Yeah
 199
 200 Me: **Why do different people around the world interpret this text differently?'. But I**
 201 **also didn't want to be like, 'Ok well I'm the teacher. I have got all the knowledge.**
 202 **You're empty vessels, children. Here's the answer. That's it'.**
 203
 204 TC: Yeah
 205
 206 Me: **I wanted pupils**
 207
 208 TC: And don't have any extra thoughts on it kind of thing
 209
 210 Me: **Yeah**
 211
 212 TC: They just take what I'm saying as as word and
 213
 214 Me: **Well that's, yeah**
 215
 216 TC: not allowing them like you say to erm to think for their o- to think for themselves
 217
 218 Me: **Oh absolutely right. Erm so I wanted them to be interpreters of this text as well**
 219
 220 TC: Yeah. Mmmhmm
 221
 222 Me: **and scaffold some lessons to help them to that obviously. Erm**
 223
 224 TC: Yep
 225

226 **Me:** So Lesson One is, 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good
 227 Samaritan?'. Erm I've tried to keep it open; I don't want it to be, 'What must we
 228 think about it?'. It's well
 229
 230 **TC:** Yep
 231
 232 **Me:** based on all the things that we are looking at, from your opinion, what should we
 233 think about this text? So the starter is, 'What is a parable?'.
 234
 235 **TC:** Yep
 236
 237 **Me:** We'll arrive at a definition together. Erm
 238
 239 **TC:** Mmmhmm
 240
 241 **Me:** and think about our prior knowledge. So I'd invite them – I'm gonna give them a
 242 workbook each – and on the front will be a simm- very simple outline sketch of the
 243 parable. And I'd ask them to write what they think the meaning is or might be. And
 244 for those that maybe haven't heard it or they've forgotten it, they can just infer
 245 from the picture. Like, 'Ok, well
 246
 247 **TC:** Yeah
 248
 249 **Me:** based on our discussion this picture, what do I think?'
 250
 251 **TC:** Yeah
 252
 253 **Me:** Then I'll ask pupils to do some textual analysis. So I'll read it first as a class,
 254
 255 **TC:** Mmm
 256
 257 **Me:** so that pupils have, kind of, had a coherent overview of what the text is from start
 258 to finish first.
 259
 260 **TC:** Yeah
 261
 262 **Me:** And then I'd invite them to read it through text – erm – through twice
 263 independently. So they'll have three different highlighters. Erm they can highlight
 264 in orange any information that help them understand the text more. So they might
 265 pick out like 'Jerusalem to Jericho' or as you said, 'eternal life' or 'Samaritan'.
 266
 267 **TC:** Mmmhmm
 268
 269 **Me:** You know, 'I'm not sure what these mean.'
 270
 271 **TC:** Yeah
 272

273 **Me:** Let's highlight them to discuss'. Erm are there any parts that don't add up or make
 274 sense? So it might be at the start, you know, the expert in the law questions and
 275 tests Jesus: 'Well who is my neighbour?'.
 276

277 **TC:** Yeah
 278

279 **Me:** Jesus never answers that question. He flips it round and at the end is, 'Well who
 280 *has* been a neighbour erm
 281

282 **TC:** Mmm
 283

284 **Me:** to the person on the road?'. And also what stands out for me in this parable? Is
 285 there anything that they think, 'Oh that's interesting. That resonates with me'.
 286 Erm, for instance. Then we'll do something called affinity mapping.
 287

288 **TC:** Mmm [ok?]
 289

290 **Me:** So there'll be four different headings: one to do with meaning; one to do with
 291 characters; one to do with us as readers, and one that's just other so it might link
 292 to something else. So they'll have erm a group of different cards, such as – you
 293 know – this parable has one meaning, this parable could have more than one
 294 meaning, erm an atheist would read this differently to a Christian. Erm why is it
 295 called the Parable of the Good Samaritan? Does this influence what we think the
 296 parable is, and we're looking at a Samaritan who's good? What if it's called
 297 something different? Has a different title.
 298

299 **TC:** Yeah
 300

301 **Me:** Erm so they put them into groups and then, with a fine-liner pen, they then kind of
 302 annotate over the sugar paper. You know what do they think? What cards made
 303 them think? What questions do they have? Can they link cards? Do they agree with
 304 a particular card or do they disagree with one? And write down their thoughts.
 305

306 **TC:** Yeah
 307

308 **Me:** And then finally, erm in their workbooks, just to reflect and-and answer these
 309 questions really. Erm what's this activity made you think about? Which cards have
 310 made you think the most and why? Erm and answer the learning enquiry question,
 311 'Well, from your thinking this lesson, what do you think we should think about the
 312 Parable of the Good Samaritan? And have you changed your answer from the start
 313 of the lesson? Why? Why not?'. Erm so erm yeah quite broad really. What are your
 314 erm initial
 315

316 **TC:** Yeah
 317

318 **Me:** thoughts about this lesson and for your children? How do you think it might
 319 [inaudible word/s]?

320

321 TC: No I think it will definitely work because with the with the starter and discussing
322 what a parable is will set will set that kind of knowledge in their mind for the rest of
323 the lesson which often they need. They need that er-a put planting a seed almost at
324 the beginning and then going from there. Erm it will definitely help them with with
325 reading it as a class. Erm there might be a few that are reluctant to read it twice
326 again and actually read it if that makes sense. They can read – they can all read and
327 they'll all read the words – but whether if they're reading on their own they'll
328 actually take it in erm 'cos a few of them just read for the sake of you've told them
329 to read so they're just gonna read the words. Erm

330

331 Me: [Laughs]

332

333 TC: but it will cer- it will definitely help having it read all together slowly as a class,
334 getting them to stop and think, 'What is it that's, what is it that you're actually
335 reading?'. Erm, and then, yeah so I think. Yeah and I think if they're working in
336 groups then those that might struggle will actually bounce off those who have got
337 lots to say. So they'll start come, they might be a bit quiet – those few at the
338 beginning – erm but actually they'll just say it as and when. Hearing [even?] the
339 group of giving other ideas [?] they'll start thinking of more things off the top of their
340 heads. Erm and yeah, and I think those reflection questions will work really well. It
341 will be really interesting to see if they have changed their ideas from the beginning
342 of the lesson.

343

344 Me: Mmm

345

346 TC: Erm but also, but also really good to see how people in their group would think
347 about the parable differently. Erm and are all of their ideas the same or are they
348 getting different erm meanings from that parable as the people to the people in
349 their group. But no I'd-I it definitely looks like a lesson that will work well for those
350 children that are in the class.

351

352 Me: Yeah. Oh thanks, [name omitted]. As you say, it would be really interesting to see
353 if they've changed their mind at the end of the lesson

354

355 TC: Yeah

356

357 Me: and what it's made them think about. I think

358

359 TC: Yeah

360

361 Me: that will be really fascinating to see. Ok, erm. So here's the second one. So the first
362 one is about, you know, the text – what could,

363

364 TC: Yeah

365

366 **Me:** should, might it mean. Lesson Two it we're hoping – I'm hoping – erm will be a bit
 367 of a springboard from that
 368

369 **TC:** Yeah
 370

371 **Me:** to start thinking, 'Well why might different people interpret the Parable of the
 372 Good Samaritan differently?'
 373

374 **TC:** Mmm
 375

376 **Me:** Erm so going from the 'what' of different interpretations to 'why' is that the case?
 377

378 **TC:** Yeah
 379

380 **Me:** Erm so the starter will be erm so there's that icon there which is simply a hand
 381 holding what looks to be a heart and three lines.
 382

383 **TC:** Yep
 384

385 **Me:** So I'll show that icon on the screen and ask, 'What do you think it means? What
 386 does it make you think about?'. And, what I'm hopeful for, is that there'll there will
 387 be different ideas there. So you know one pupil might think, 'Well this is about
 388 hope. This is about courage. This is about making a difference in the world. Erm
 389 this is about spreading love; that's why there's a hand and a heart, which is a heart
 390

391 **TC:** Mmm
 392

393 **Me:** that's kind of working or maybe beating'. So that's what I'm, I'm hopeful for. And
 394 then kind of going well, 'Isn't that interesting. We've all just looked at one really
 395 simple image and yet
 396

397 **TC:** Yeah
 398

399 **Me:** there are so many different ideas about what this means'. And then ask, 'but why
 400 do we think that might be?'. Erm and seeing what what pupils come back with
 401 really. And what I'd love to see is whether pupils can then – if they can – but can
 402 they go, 'Ok well this is one text – one-one image – we have different ideas. This is
 403 why. Can we apply that to this is one text, but different people have different
 404 ideas, and this is why'.
 405

406 **TC:** Yeah
 407

408 **Me:** Erm, so we'll then go onto – we'll look at seven real-life interpreters from Christian
 409 history. Erm so one being Martin Luther King, one being a twenty-first century
 410 African feminist theologian,
 411

412 **TC:** Mmm

413

414 **Me:** one being St Augustine – seventeen hundred years ago. Erm

415

416 TC: Yeah

417

418 **Me:** and I'll invite them, first of all, to say, 'Here are seven real different readings. Erm

419 can you put them in order from agree the most to disagree the most.

420

421 TC: Ok

422

423 **Me:** You know. No no right or wrong answer. Erm but I don't want you to just read it. I

424 want to critically think; from your perspective, which ones of those do you agree

425 the most with.

426

427 TC: Yeah

428

429 **Me:** You might agree with all of them, but can you put them in a line'. Then we'll do

430 something called interpretation matching. So erm have you come across these

431 things – I remember them from university common rooms – where it's like, 'I'm

432 looking for a housemate and here's my email address'. And you can rip the tag off,

433 take it away, and then you can like email them after. Erm so around the room will

434 be basic profiles for those seven people.

435

436 TC: Yeah

437

438 **Me:** So their picture. The years that they...had that interpretation or were, you know,

439 around in. Erm and they just go around first in their threes and just read the

440 different interpretation- erm the different people. So

441

442 TC: Yeah

443

444 **Me:** 'ok this is Martin Luther King. This is Frederick Douglass. This is Brian Stiller etc.'.

445 Then they go around again and they try and decide, 'Ok, well which person do we

446 think came up with that interpretation?'. Is it that, 'We think this is Martin Luther

447 King's interpretation because it has links to racism and getting the racism for

448 instance'. Erm

449

450 TC: Yeah

451

452 **Me:** so they rip it off and match it. Erm and then if we have time, we'll do a bit of

453 discussion. Erm, you know, what can we learn about interpretation of this parable

454 from this activity? What do you think's led to different people – different times,

455 different places, different situations going on in their lives and around them –

456

457 TC: Mmm

458

459 **Me:** to interpret the parable differently. And can we be completely certain about what
 460 we've matched? Well why? Why not? Erm, and finally, I'll give them time in their
 461 workbooks to answer that learning objective question. So why do you think dif-
 462 people might interpret this parable differently? Can they give one, well-explained
 463 reason? Can they give examples from the matching activity they've just done? Can
 464 they even think about themselves and why they have interpreted the text that
 465 way, but other people might
 466

467 **TC:** Yeah
 468

469 **Me:** interpret it differently? You know, we're erm twenty-first century class living in the
 470 east of [county name omitted] in [name of location omitted], why do we read this
 471 text differently
 472

473 **TC:** Mmm
 474

475 **Me:** compared to if we gave this, I dunno, for instance, to erm a class in Ukraine at the
 476 moment. Erm
 477

478 **TC:** Yeah
 479

480 **Me:** So, erm, again wh-what are your initial thoughts there?
 481

482 **TC:** Yeah no excellent. I think it will be really interesting for them to see different erm
 483 interpretations. Different people that they probably some of them they wouldn't of
 484 heard of before. Erm but getting to know that person and also why, like you say, why
 485 would that person think this? Can they link what might have been going on in that
 486 person's life at the time as to why they interpreted the story that way? And actually
 487 how different is their interpretation to yours? And why? I suppose it's really – it will
 488 be really interesting to see what they come up with.
 489

490 **Me:** Mmm
 491

492 **TC:** 'Cos they will all have their own interpretation and hopefully there is some
 493 differences in those interpretations. But I think as a class as a whole it will be quite
 494 similar; so it will be really interesting for them to see different different
 495 interpretations that they might not ever have thought of. Erm
 496

497 **Me:** Mmm
 498

499 **TC:** and be thinking, 'Wow, that's a really, that's a really different way of thinking it'. But
 500 can they actually link to, 'Well I see why they did think that'.
 501

502 **Me:** Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely
 503

504 **TC:** Erm I think it's definitely something that they'll all be able to to take part in. They'll
 505 all they'll all understand and they'll all be erm able to, yeah, to to rank and to match

506 and then to reflect on that as well. Erm but no it will be really interesting for them to
 507 see *different*, well at least at and definitely seven of them, not necessarily
 508 necessarily different interpretations which I assume will all be really different. Erm
 509 but it would be good for them to see also that just what because how you think it
 510 ho-how you see that
 511

512 **Me: Mmm**
 513

514 TC: how you interpret it, doesn't have to be the same as anyone else. And that's ok,
 515 because these people have interpreted it all differently and it's ok that they've
 516 interpreted it differently. There's no, there's no right way at the end to say, 'Right,
 517 this is how you've got to understand this text'. Erm to actually allowing them to be
 518 yeah have their own opinion and to know that that's ok.
 519

520 **Me: Yeah. It might even challenge some of their views from the start of Lesson One**
 521

522 TC: Yeah
 523

524 **Me: 'Well actually, does it mean this? Could it mean that?'. Erm**
 525

526 TC: Yeah no definitely. It will think some of those that that do think of it deeper might
 527 start thinking, 'Well actually I do agree with that, so does that change what I
 528 interpre- how I interpret it in the first place?'.
 529

530 **Me: Mmm. Mmm. Oh lovely. So, I'd love to ask now. If I gave these for, so from your**
 531 **opinion, if I gave these plans to another teacher in another school, erm what do**
 532 **you think might be some potential challenges in delivering them? Or do you think,**
 533 **you know, by and large you could just take these plans and just run with them?**
 534

535 TC: I think I definitely could take them and run with them. I think with that starter on
 536 this one, I might have needed a bit more erm prompt I suppose. But then I suppose
 537 there's not really a right – like you said – there's not a right answer, so. Erm it-it
 538 would be more accepting that there's not a right answer and er thinking – I think I
 539 often pre-empt what maybe they could come up with
 540

541 **Me: Mmm**
 542

543 TC: erm and how I could run with whatever it is that they do decide that they think it
 544 means. Erm...[I don't?] yeah no but I think the rest of it I mean, like you say, there's
 545 not for the ranking there's not a right answer. But they do need to know them in in
 546 terms of their views because of what they think they agree with the most. Erm but
 547 no I don't I mean I don't look at any of it and think that I'd – that there'd be anything
 548 that I'd struggle with. I think it's a a very well put together plan where you, like you
 549 say, you would be able to give it to anyone and they'd be able to go off and and take
 550 that lesson. I think quite confidently as well, from my point of view, if I was to have it
 551 a week before and just see that plan, I'd definitely be able to, yeah, to form a lesson
 552 from it and confidently know what it is that I'm doing.

553

554 **Me:** **Awesome. I'm just writing some some reflections down. Erm**

555

556 **TC:** **Yeah yeah go for it [?]**

557

558 **Me:** **some of the things that you've said have ma- have really made me go, 'Ah yeah –**

559 **awesome'...Ok. Nice. Ok just erm a few more questions then. Three more that I've**

560 **got. Erm have you covered diversity of interpretation in the class before?**

561

562 **TC:** **Erm. Trying to think back erm...We definitely have but I don't think it's been done so**

563 **explicitly. It would be more of a discussion – how might people see this differently?**

564 **How might your view change? And again, think like when we do a discussion, taking**

565 **all the different ideas of actually discussing that, 'Ok we all think something's**

566 **different but there's no right answer'. But I wouldn't I wouldn't say that we've**

567 **necessarily done it as explicitly as, 'Why might people?' – as the whole lesson being,**

568 **'Why are people looking at it differently?'. Erm reflecting on, like you say, diversity**

569 **and how racism might come into it and all of that kind of thing.**

570

571 **Me:** **Sure. Thank you. Erm and, as I said, I-I wanted to plan lessons like this to give**

572 **children as much time for, you know, their own discussions, their**

573

574 **TC:** **Mmm**

575

576 **Me:** **own decision making, their own working together but also time to work**

577 **independently.**

578

579 **TC:** **Mmm**

580

581 **Me:** **Erm are the kind of – I don't kn- [?] – the agency given to children here something**

582 **pupils are used to at err [school name removed]?**

583

584 **TC:** **What do you mean? As in the way that the lesson's structured?**

585

586 **Me:** **Yeah like kind of these discussion activities and opportunities. I-s I suppose erm is**

587 **something like this likely to-to throw children 'cos they're not used to ways of**

588 **working like this, or are they used to working like this so they'll just kind of roll**

589 **with it?**

590

591 **TC:** **Erm maybe not so much with the with the different sections. We'd be more go into**

592 **the lesson and then reflect on what it is that they've learnt. Erm introdu- so**

593 **introduce an idea which is similar to what you've got that on that first lesson, and**

594 **then looking look deeper into that idea and then reflect on that idea. Erm just**

595 **because this slide in particular I suppose the the matching and the ranking might be**

596 **something that – I mean they-they've it's something that they've done before so I**

597 **wouldn't they wouldn't struggle with it. But, in terms of a RE lesson, probably not.**

598 **Erm we'd, yeah like I say, we'd usually introduce an idea, think about what that**

599 **might mean, have all of these preconceptions and then actually talk about what it is.**

600 Bring in some of the – some of the stories that so. I’m just thinking of my repentance
601 lesson this week; we’d bring in that mean- what does that mean? What do we think
602 that means? How can we – where have we got those ideas from? Actually talk about
603 what it is that that means and bringing both bible stories, and then reflect on that
604 after. Erm but yeah no it’s so it’s definitely something that they have been
605 introduced to. Erm, like I say, it will just be that ranking and matching that maybe
606 will be something different in a RE lesson for them.

607

608 **Me: Yeah. Great. Awesome. Erm so I’m looking forward to these lessons because,**
609

610 TC: Mmm

611

612 **Me: in many ways, you know, if it if it goes that there’s aspects which go really well,**
613 **that’s brilli- like something to celebrate and learn from.**
614

615 TC: Yeah

616

617 **Me: And if there’s aspects that don’t go so well or children really struggle with, likewise**
618 **that’s something to-to learn from. So erm it’s a win-win really. Erm but**
619

620 TC: Yeah no definitely and also for me seeing how, like you say, how you can structure
621 lessons differently in a RE context. And actually, like you say, seeing how the children
622 respond to that will be really good for my future lessons.
623

624 **Me: It will be really exciting. Is there**
625

626 TC: Mmm

627

628 **Me: – in my final question – is there anything else that erm that you’d like to mention?**
629

630 TC: Erm...no. I mean I don’t think that there’s anything that the children would struggle
631 with as such. Erm I think it’s quite it’s quite *broad*, but also quite narrow where
632 they’re not gonna have to go off and think *too much* on their own; the thinking’s
633 kind of been guided as much as it needs to be if that makes sense. So
634

635 **Me: Mmm**
636

637 TC: those children that might struggle to to come up with something, they’ve had
638 enough structure and enough support with with your introductions to be able to go
639 actually go off and do their own thinking from that so. But no I don’t think, I mean
640 [?] – like I say – they look, they look really good. And it looks like something that the
641 children will all really respond well to, so. I think it’s all, yeah, looking good.
642

643 **Me: Oh, thank you so much, [name omitted]. Erm so I’m gonna stop sharing. And I’m**
644 **going to**
645

646 [End of recording]

School A
Pupil Focus Group One (A1)
In person
Date: Tuesday 9th February 2022
Time: 14:11
Length: 25:43

1 **Me:** So, I've got some questions and I-I'd love to hear your views. Erm so if you'd like to
2 share and maybe just put your hand up or I might just kind of pick one of you at a
3 time. Erm before today, had any of you ever heard of the parables before?
4
5 AB: Yes
6
7 AC: Yes
8
9 AA: Yes
10
11 **Me:** Lots of yeses. Could you share which ones?
12
13 AC: Erm we've I
14
15 AB: We do some of the
16
17 AC: the story about...the whale. How, erm, this guy got eaten by a whale
18
19 **Me:** Oh Jonah and the whale. Ok so that bible story
20
21 AC: Yeah
22
23 **Me:** Ok
24
25 AC: Erm and plus we do a lot in Sunday School at my church
26
27 **Me:** Oh you do? Ok
28
29 AB: We do a lot in worship about the Good Samaritan. Sometimes you get the teacher
30 on the
31
32 AC: I've done a parable before. Oh yeah
33
34 AB: you know
35
36 AC: they're always doing parables
37
38 AB: Yeah they are. In [a cough hinders hearing some words here] yeah so I have heard of
39 the story from there
40

41 **Me:** **Ok. Super. Would you mind just erm leaving that just so it doesn't get noisy on**
 42 **there? Is that alright? I know I like to fidget as well. Ok. Brilliant. So, you've heard**
 43 **of some parables. Erm what did the lessons today make you think about? I wonder**
 44 **if you could start. Is there anything in particular that you think, 'This is the main**
 45 **thing it made me think about'.**
 46
 47 **AA:** It m-a-a it the particular thing that made me think about was like the Good
 48 Samaritan because, like, in like basically mm I don't know if e-every lesson but it
 49 always says 'the Good Samaritan' because the Good Samaritan like always like helps
 50 who is like hurt and who needs money
 51
 52 **AC:** He doesn't always help, does he
 53
 54 **AA:** Yeah I know it, I know. But it the Good Samaritan could be like if [undiscernible
 55 word/s] they want to be, evil or good
 56
 57 **Me:** **Ok. [In whisper to a pupil who was moving paper close to the microphone] Just**
 58 **pop to the side, yeah. [Normal voice] So erm how about yourself? Is there anything**
 59 **that in particular you were like, 'Yeah, you know what, I learnt this from these**
 60 **lessons'**
 61
 62 **AC:** Erm...err I learnt I-I it made me think about like how erm people people now these
 63 days are getting discriminated for such silly things as race and gender
 64
 65 **AB:** And stereotyping
 66
 67 **AC:** and that's stereotyping. And like they're getting, they're getting discriminated
 68 because of where they come from, their wealth
 69
 70 **AB:** their family
 71
 72 **AC:** their families, their background. Erm whilst the past doesn't matter, all that matters
 73 is what you do in the pre-present and how you deal with it.
 74
 75 **Me:** **Ok. So that's really interesting. So how does that link to the parable then?**
 76
 77 **AB:** Helping people
 78
 79 **AC:** Erm instead of just looking at him and he- and just saying, 'Oh, like, I-I really don't
 80 care like. Look at him he's err Jewish and we're erm...Samaritans.
 81
 82 **Me:** **Yeah, yeah, yeah**
 83
 84 **AC:** So we're not gonna help him because he's a Jewish Jewish'
 85

86 **Me:** **Ok, so that really stood out to you. And that was really clear in the lessons, you**
87 **know, you gave some really thoughtful things. Is there anything that that you'd**
88 **like to add to that? About what you learnt in these lessons**
89
90 AB: I agree with [name omitted – Pupil AC]. I think it's like sometime it's good to help out
91 with people because it's som- if you're hurt, you don't want anyone to be mean to
92 you to be honest. You just wanna get like [undiscernible word] to go
93
94 AC: 'Cos you'll be in more pain
95
96 **Me:** **Mmm**
97
98 AB: Yeah
99
100 AC: and 'cos words hurt more, more than
101
102 AB: Yeah, words hurt
103
104 AC: erm there's a saying that goes, 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, and words
105 will never hurt me'. But some people are very sensitive
106
107 AA or AB: Mmm
108
109 **Me:** **Mmm**
110
111 AC: and they get hurt easily. So maybe instead of saying bad things, you should look at
112 the bright side and be positive
113
114 **Me:** **Ok great. Thank you**
115
116 AA or AB: Yes
117
118 **Me:** **So my next question is, so we had two lessons didn't we. The lesson before the**
119 **break was all about, 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good**
120 **Samaritan?'. And one of the first things we did was I gave you the opportunity to**
121 **have a read and a look at this yourself [the parable].**
122
123 AA: Yeah
124
125 **Me:** **Now, I thought I'd give you the opportunity to look at [it] yourself. I didn't want**
126 **just want to read it and then be like, 'Right, you all heard it, let's move on'. Erm**
127 **what I'd love to know was how useful do you think this particular activity was for**
128 **you? And would it have been missed if we just didn't do this part of the lesson?**
129 **Like, how useful was it? Useful? Not useful at all?**
130
131 AC: Erm it was useful because if we didn't erm like do this activity we wouldn't know like
132 oh like, I don't know what this word means but nevermind

133

134 **Me: Yeah, yeah**

135

136 AC: Like we're not gonna do anything about it. Erm then if you didn't know what the

137 word means, you wouldn't understand the sentence.

138

139 **Me: Mmm**

140

141 AC: The sentence wouldn't make sense. And if the sentence doesn't make sense, you're

142 just gonna be like, 'Errrrrr. Erm I'm not gonna do anything about it; I'm just g- I'm

143 not even gonna tell the teacher.

144

145 **Me: Yeah**

146

147 AC: We're just gonna keep reading'.

148

149 **Me: Sure. I completely get that, thank you. How about yourself?**

150

151 AA: Erm

152

153 **Me: How useful was this for you?**

154

155 AA: I-If we didn't do this – if we didn't do this activity, we wouldn't know like what to do

156 and and like if you, say if the say if you're doing something for the teacher and you

157 have to give it back and then we're doing we- like if you don't know what the word

158 is. But if you like underline the word erm the teacher will know like you really don't,

159 like, understand it

160

161 **Me: Mmm. Ok oh thank you. So for you, you felt this was really important. How about**

162 **yourself?**

163

164 AB: For me, I think I think I agree with both of them. I would just like to do like the

165 highlighting just for the words we didn't know.

166

167 **Me: Ok. Ok lovely. Thank you. So that was that activity. Then we all moved, if you can**

168 **remember, to this one here [directs to a completed affinity map]. Now, I'm right in**

169 **saying, you were all in different – no you were in the same group weren't you?**

170 **Both of you**

171

172 AB: Me – us two were in the same group

173

174 **Me: And then you were on a another level**

175

176 AC: Yeah

177

178 **Me: erm another table. So, this was a group activity**

179

180 AC: Wait, that was a, that was a pink pen
 181
 182 **Me: Yeah, so this was a erm different table of someone. So this was a group task. First**
 183 **of all, how did you find this activity working in a group? Was it like**
 184
 185 AB: I found it fun
 186
 187 **Me: So could you explain a little bit more? So thinking about learning**
 188
 189 AB: Oh yeah I
 190
 191 **Me: was it useful?**
 192
 193 AB: Yeah I think it was useful because you could, well it was nice to write something on
 194 it.
 195
 196 **Me: Yeah, ok, yeah**
 197
 198 AB: So like being able to write on it. So then you can like like I guess you could know you
 199 were like
 200
 201 AC: Wait. Whose initials are here?
 202
 203 AB: Shh [name omitted – Pupil AC]. It doesn't matter. Yeah I think it was useful, to be
 204 honest.
 205
 206 **Me: With those particular cards, would you say they helped you think deeper about**
 207 **different things in this parable?**
 208
 209 AB: Yes
 210
 211 AA: Yeah
 212
 213 **Me: Ok, ok. Yeah**
 214
 215 AA: Erm it was fun like it was like bas- it was like a game like erm you have to like put
 216 them in the right places.
 217
 218 **Me: Mmm**
 219
 220 AA: And then when you've done it, you can like like have your...have your opinions in
 221 there
 222
 223 **Me: Yeah nice. One thing I'm really would love to know from you was our lesson was all**
 224 **about, 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?'. Out of**
 225 **ten,**
 226

227 AC: Oh
 228
 229 **Me: how much would you say this activity helped you to do that? Yeah**
 230
 231 AC: Erm probably an eight
 232
 233 AB: I've
 234
 235 **Me: Ok. I-In what way did this, do you feel it helped you answer that question about,**
 236 **'What should we think?'. We could think, it could be about anything**
 237
 238 AC: Because some of the stat-statements are really helped me think deep like the
 239 meaning, 'The parable has only one meaning'. That is kinda not true.
 240
 241 **Me: Ok**
 242
 243 AC: So I disagree with it.
 244
 245 **Me: Great**
 246
 247 AC: Parables can have different meanings, so it taught me that I can disagree and agree
 248 with some [writ?] things about 'cos not everything you see is true
 249
 250 **Me: Now, I'm just gonna pick up on that and I'm gonna come, come to you to hear your**
 251 **view**
 252
 253 AB: Ok
 254
 255 **Me: One of the main reasons I planned the lessons the way I did was I was fed up as a**
 256 **teacher of being given plans that just said, 'This is the one meaning of the parable**
 257
 258 AC: Mmm
 259
 260 **Me: as long as the pupils in your class can say that at the end of the lesson, the lesson's**
 261 **been successful'. And I hated that because I thought, 'Well, those amazing Year**
 262 **Fives that I teach, they've got their own view on this parable and I think it's**
 263 **important that they can come up with it'. Would you say that's fair?**
 264
 265 AC: Yeah
 266
 267 AA: Mmmhmm
 268
 269 **Me: Yep**
 270
 271 AB: To be honest, I-I think the same as [name omitted – pupil AC] but I'd give it bit of a
 272 higher score; I'm gonna give it a nine-and-a-half because I think it helped. So like you
 273 could learn stuff by actually trying to figure it out.

274

275 **Me:** **Ok. Great. Is there any card here that you can remember – I’m putting you on the**

276 **spot –**

277

278 AC: Me, me, me, me, me, me, me, me

279

280 **Me:** **was there any for you that you were like, ‘You know what, this *really* helped me to**

281 **think’.**

282

283 AB: I can’t

284

285 **Me:** **It’s fine if you can’t, shall I go to**

286

287 AC: I know, I know, I know

288

289 AB: I can’t remember exactly, it’s [parab-?]

290

291 AC: Ok so erm not not er about it’s not about the cards here, it’s about the car- those

292 orange and blue cards

293

294 **Me:** **Aha. We’re gonna come onto that, in a bit. Keep that in your mind; we’ll come**

295 **onto that ok**

296

297 AC: Ok

298

299 **Me:** **How about yourself? Is there – out of ten, how useful was this for you in thinking**

300 **about, ‘What should we think about the Good Samaritan?’**

301

302 AA: Well we [really?] had to think about him, about like [undiscernible – for his?] like his

303 kindness

304

305 **Me:** **What was**

306

307 AA: I wi- I will give it – I’ll give it a nine.

308

309 AB: Yeah

310

311 [unclear mutterings due to noise on table for a few seconds]

312

313 **Me:** **So, the next question then is, ‘What should we think about the Parable of the Good**

314 **Samaritan?’.**

315

316 AC: Ooh I have a good one

317

318 **Me:** **Now I’m thinking, yeah I’d love to hear, yeah go for it**

319

320 AC: So we should learn we sh- we should learn from him from him. And help those at
 321 that are in need. And and fend for ourselves.
 322

323 AB: Erm that it is good to be different and to respect everyone, no matter what they look
 324 like or who they are.
 325

326 **Me: Ok. Now I'd love to know, was that your answer at the start of the lesson as well?**
 327 **You know on the very first page, did you put the same thing? Or did you all**
 328

329 AB: No I put a different thing
 330

331 **Me: Oh ok, interesting. So it changed. Ok. Thank you ever so much everyone. I'm gonna**
 332 **move to the second lesson now. [The?] second lesson started with this [showed**
 333 **icon starter image]. And I have to say, I was blown away by all of your deep**
 334 **thinking about, you know, one image but different people thought about it**
 335 **differently. So, for the second lesson, the question was, 'Why do different people**
 336 **interpret that text differently?'. So we did a card matching activity where you**
 337 **looked at seven different things**
 338

339 AB: Yeah
 340

341 **Me: and ranked them on the string erm. I'd love to know how useful it was but also**
 342 **how difficult it was. Yeah I'll start with you**
 343

344 AA: Erm it was useful because erm like if you are a person that sometimes doesn't treat
 345 respect and kindness, m-maybe they would like change their mind erm to like
 346 actually the opposite way to be respectful and kind
 347

348 **Me: Mmm thank you. Yep**
 349

350 AB: For me, I'm not sure if it was that useful. I-I think some of it was useful, but not every
 351 single part
 352

353 **Me: Ok**
 354

355 AB: was very useful.
 356

357 **Me: So if I dig deeper, do you think it was helpful to look at...different interpretations**
 358 **of it that, actually, different people had come up with these different ideas about**
 359 **it. Was that useful or not?**
 360

361 AB: Yeah, I'd say so
 362

363 **Me: Ok. Ok yeah.**
 364

365 AC: So it was useful because when I saw the one about woman rights
 366

367 AB: Yeah
368
369 AC: and racism it made, it made, it made me me think deeply about how p-people are so
370 insecure that they decide to take it out on other people
371
372 **Me: Mmm**
373
374 AC: and why they would do that.
375
376 **Me: Ok**
377
378 AB: Yeah
379
380 AC: Because God created the people to love each other, not hate or discriminate
381
382 **Me: Mmm**
383
384 AC: But they...I guess they decide to erm not follow the rules, and live by their own
385 perspectives which is definitely fine
386
387 **Me: Mmm**
388
389 AC: if you're being kind. A so me and my mum, my mum buys clothes like every week – I
390 don't know why – and she gives my old clothes to charities. And my shoes, my bags,
391 and somet- erm may maybe she'll make a big meal for her whole workplace. And not
392 everyone is happy with that; s-some people in her workplace are like, 'Oh that food
393 stinks. Why would you bring it here? That's disgusting. Your cul- your culture food is
394 disgusting' and stuff. But other people like it. And
395
396 **Me: Mmm**
397
398 AC: it doesn't matter what they think because it's her opinion. It's her decision to bring
399 in that it there.
400
401 **Me: Yeah**
402
403 AC: They – if they don't want some, if they don't want to smell it or something, they
404 should go to a different room.
405
406 **Me: Mmm. I'd love to know**
407
408 AB: I
409
410 **Me: sorry then I'll come to you.**
411
412 AB: Ok, it's ok
413

414 **Me:** You mentioned about like racism and equality between genders; had you ever
 415 linked that to the Parable of the Good Samaritan before today?
 416
 417 AC: Yeah
 418
 419 **Me:** You had. Ok so you'd made that connection. So that wasn't particularly new for
 420 this lesson
 421
 422 AC: because Samaritans and Jewish people erm they they fight a lot because erm of the
 423 ways they worship God. Erm discriminate against each other because because of
 424 because of God. God came to this world to love, not hate.
 425
 426 **Me:** Thank you
 427
 428 AC: So that's my opinion
 429
 430 **Me:** Yeah thank you
 431
 432 AB: Going to back to what [name omitted – pupil AC] said about the food. Sometimes if
 433 you say something like about their food, it can make it off-putting and make them
 434 not want to eat it. So, like, say you said, 'Oh that curry looks gross', then that could
 435 make them feel like they don't wanna eat it
 436
 437 **Me:** Thank you. With that ranking activity, I could of decided to let you do that as a
 438 table – which I did – or I could've asked you to do that on your own. Which would
 439 you have preferred?
 440
 441 AB: I would
 442
 443 **Me:** 'Cos I think different people have different working styles
 444
 445 AB: I would prefer to work in groups because everyone has different opinions, and you
 446 can put your opinions together to make one final opinion
 447
 448 **Me:** Ok, I like that. How about yourself? Table or individual?
 449
 450 AA: Probably erm work as a group because if we don't know your like one of your group
 451 members could like help you and then you'll get how to do it and then you don't
 452 need any more help
 453
 454 **Me:** Ok, thank you. I'm gonna move on now, and I'm only gonna move on because
 455 [undiscernible two words] I know I've only got ten minutes
 456
 457 AC: Ok
 458
 459 **Me:** And I want to get as much questions as I can. Erm so, after that, we did the
 460 interpreter matching activity.

461

462 AB: Yeah

463

464 **Me: So you looked at different interpreters, which means people that have just looked**

465 **at it and come back with their own meaning, around the room. And I asked you to**

466 **try to match and think, 'Which interpretation do you think came from which**

467 **person? So which one came from Martin Luther King, which one do you think came**

468 **from St Augustine'. Erm, if I could start with you, erm how easy was it? How**

469 **difficult?**

470

471 AC: It was a little easy, a little difficult 'cos I chose one from Martin Luther King

472

473 **Me: Yep**

474

475 AC: Sorry I hiccoughed.

476

477 **Me: [Laughs]**

478

479 AC: Because it was really it was really independence, and empowering and strong. I

480 just felt like it had to be him 'cos

481

482 **Me: Ok**

483

484 AC: he's a a really erm em-empowering man and he can empower people to do

485 greater things.

486

487 **Me: Ok. Thank you. Erm with both of you, was it easy? Was it difficult to do? Was it a**

488 **bit of both?**

489

490 AB: Erm for me it felt difficult

491

492 **Me: Yep**

493

494 AB: and how the lady – I think her name's Irene

495

496 **Me: That's right – yeah – good remembering**

497

498 AB: Erm I liked her like speech about saying how it's like, like how she people shouldn't

499 be racist to black women. Erm because it's it's not nice

500

501 **Me: Mmm**

502

503 AB: and you know I think people should put their, they should put their self in other

504 people's shoes and see how they would like it

505

506 **Me: Ok so that kind of thing. Yeah – how about yourself?**

507

508 AA: Erm I think it was difficult because I had like really no clue erm about it. And erm
509 when we had to like match them together
510
511 **Me: Mmm**
512
513 AA: erm erm like I only done like, I done three b-because I I knew three of them but I
514 didn't know the rest
515
516 **Me: Ok. So some of them were quite easy to match and others were like, 'You know**
517 **what, that could be quite a few – I'm not quite sure which'**
518
519 AA: Yeah
520
521 AA/AB?: Yeah
522
523 **Me: So ultimately, what I was trying to do from the lesson – so this is from a teacher's**
524 **point of view – is to help you to see that different people interpret the parable**
525 **differently. Then go beyond and see, 'Well why might that be?'. So that was why**
526 **this was a starter [shows icon starter image], kind of one image, different**
527 **interpretations, why might that be? Just like one text, different interpretations,**
528 **why might that be? Which is why at the back of your book, I gave you that time at**
529 **the end to answer the question. Feel free to turn to the back of it [their pupil**
530 **workbook] erm to help you with this part.**
531
532 AB/AC?: Oh, I didn't do a lot of writing
533
534 **Me: So**
535
536 AC: I didn't do that much writing
537
538 **Me: the question was – and and it might be that you didn't have enough time to get all**
539 **of your thoughts down – but I'll give you fifteen seconds to think, why do *you* think**
540 **different people...interpret this differently?**
541
542 AC: Can I go last?
543
544 **Me: Yeah. Of course, yeah. I'll give you some thinking time. So why do you think**
545 **different people in the world would read this text and get slightly different**
546 **meanings at different times and different places?**
547
548 AC: I'll just read my texts. 'Cos I have no [undiscernible words due to paper shuffling] the
549 texts
550
551 **Me: If you think, 'Actually I've written it down and I've got nothing to add', then I'd just**
552 **leave that 'cos I can read that at the end of the day. But if there's anything else to**
553 **add, I'd love to hear it**
554

555 AB: Everyone has different opinions. Not everyone's the same so they think different
556 things
557
558 **Me: Ok. Brilliant. Anything else there**
559
560 AC: Erm so I feel I feel like people have different perspectives and it depends what
561 they've experienced in their lifes
562
563 **Me: Mmmhmm**
564
565 AC: 'Cos if you ha- if you had a a really sad life, you're gonna think like, 'Oh that's like
566 erm joy and happiness and some- that's gonna be like erm independence and stuff
567 like that'. But if you've had a really happy life, you're gonna think, 'Oh that's love for
568 each other and...relationships between friends'
569
570 **Me: Mmmhmm**
571
572 AB: And friendship. Yeah that's [true? Good?]
573
574 **Me: Ok, thank you. Is there anything in these lessons that you think didn't help you**
575 **learn?**
576
577 AB: Yeah it helped me learn about the Good Samaritan and how it sometimes it can
578 relate to life. Like if someone's hurt you help them
579
580 **Me: Mmm**
581
582 AB: and you don't be mean or anything.
583
584 **Me: Ok**
585
586 AC: It helped me learn that not everyone in this world can can be like very nice. You can
587 ra- you rarely see bad people but there are a lot in the world
588
589 **Me: Mmm**
590
591 AC: Erm erm one if you do one, good for one person at least, that er-er that that er
592 changing the world; you've made a difference
593
594 **Me: Mmm. Yeah, yeah, yeah**
595
596 AC: because maybe that person hasn't eaten in days. You buy him coffee or you take him
597 or her out to dinner. That is making a change in the world. So no matter what you
598 do, I feel like this lesson has taught me to keep going on and persevere
599
600 **Me: Wonderful. Well thank you so much. Erm ok, I've only got a few more questions**
601 **for, for you all really. Erm**

602

603 AB: Ok

604

605 **Me: so...yeah I think that one's done. Erm do you think – as I said you're the first Year**

606 **Fives in the country to have done this lesson**

607

608 AB: Yeah. It's pretty cool

609

610 **Me: Yeah. Erm do you feel this is important thing to think about in RE? That different**

611 **people have different interpretations. You're-You're nodding your head. Can can**

612 **you say why? Why do you think it's important?**

613

614 AA: Because it erm if you're like the one of the like first class to be with like with a erm a

615 good like teacher like who has loads of education. Erm erm it giv- it is really

616 important because erm because you can actually really learn a lot

617

618 **Me: Ok. Anything else there? Do you think this is important to have learnt about in RE?**

619

620 AC: I think it's important for people to have different interpretations because...because

621 like if everyone had the same opinion there was there was there's no point, there's

622 no point. So if everyone had the same tastes, the houses would just be plain, old,

623 ordinary. If ev-everyone thought the same, it wouldn't – because if Einstein thought

624 the same as everyone, erm you wouldn't need to go to school.

625

626 **Me: Mmm mmm**

627

628 AC: And if everyone thought the same, erm that would be a very boring life 'cos you

629 can't think for yourself and do what you please, because if you wanted the same

630 you're just gonna be blank

631

632 **Me: Mmm**

633

634 AC: and stuff like that

635

636 **Me: Thank you. Erm**

637

638 AB: Yeah

639

640 **Me: final question for you**

641

642 AB: Ok

643

644 **Me: erm in fact what do I want to ask? In fact, I will just say, is there anything else**

645 **about these lessons, either that you've learnt or how important or not that you**

646 **think them, that you'd like to add that you haven't said or I haven't asked about?**

647

648 AC: Erm so I feel like I've learnt to to be more patient

649
650 AB: Yeah
651
652 AC: and it doesn't matter how what I get for Christmas or my birthday; all that matters is
653 that I'm spending it with my family
654
655 AB: Yeah, I agree
656
657 AC: and to be grateful erm and not hurt and stuff – I-I have a healthy life. And I'm not
658 like the beaten man.
659
660 **Me: Sure. Thank you, thank you. I-I like how you linked it back to the text there. Thank**
661 **you.**
662
663 AC: Yeah
664
665 **Me: Erm anything else both of you. Yeah**
666
667 AB: Yeah so I-I think it's, well I don't discriminate or anything, but I think it's taught like
668 it's some people [undiscernible word – just?] like be like just thankful
669
670 **Me: Mmm**
671
672 AB: and to not treat others without respect. To treat them with respect because at like
673 it's just their feelings and if you're gonna hurt their feelings then there's no point in
674 even saying it
675
676 **Me: I'm going to press stop**
677
678 [End of recording]

School A
Pupil Focus Group Two (A2)
In person
Date: Tuesday 9th February 2022
Time: 14:43
Length: 25:04

- 1 **Me:** So, in the lessons we thought about the Parable of the Good Samaritan and I you
2 engaged with them really, really well. And as I said, you're the first class to ever do
3 this in the country. So I'd love to know, from your perspective, what did you think
4 you learnt? What did you find useful? What did you find, I don't know, maybe a bit
5 pointless or a bit too hard? Ok. And you know please do be honest because you're
6 your experts. So my first question is what do you feel you learnt from these
7 morning's lessons? If you had to say, 'Well the main thing I learnt Mr Parker was
8 this...', what might you say?
9
- 10 **AD:** Erm I learnt that the Parable of the Good Samaritan wasn't just about being kind; it
11 had more depth to it.
12
- 13 **Me:** Ok interesting
14
- 15 **AE:** It's about friendship
16
- 17 **Me:** It's about friendship. Yeah excellent
18
- 19 **AF:** Erm...I learnt that...I learnt that the story can actually make you feel f-and think a lot
20 different
21
- 22 **Me:** Mmm interesting. Well thank you. Thank you. So the first thing that we did, and I'd
23 love to get your thoughts of, erm we did a bit of thinking about it first of all. And
24 then when I was planning the lesson I thought, 'I could just read it out [the
25 parable] to you, and then off we go. Or I could read it and then give you time to
26 actually look at it in depth'. What I'd love to know from you is how useful do you
27 think doing this bit of the lesson was? If you thought it was useful, how so? If you
28 think, 'Actually, it wasn't needed', why do you think it wasn't important? Erm who
29 would like to to share some thoughts?
30
- 31 **AD:** Err I thought it was useful because it erm helped us to learn what the different
32 words were and if we didn't understand something you could tell us what it meant
33
- 34 **Me:** Ok. Do you feel that information was important to try to understand this?
35
- 36 **AD:** Yes
37
- 38 **Me:** Ok – thank you. Anybody else on that question has anything else to say?
39

40 AF: I found it a bit tricky since I cannot really find anything that doesn't make much
 41 sense. But then I looked deeper and realised it was actually a lot easier
 42

43 **Me: Ok, so – correct me if I'm wrong – for you, was it a case of reading it once and then**
 44 **reading it again just to try to make sense of some of those things and what stood**
 45 **out.**
 46

47 AF: [Nods]
 48

49 **Me: Yeah, great. Thank you, thank you. Ok so, after that, we then went onto doing a**
 50 **sorting card activity. So I'll get that over here. If you remember – this is random**
 51 **group's, I'm not sure which one this was – but you had the different cards and you**
 52 **were – see you're all just like, 'Ah I'm gonna try to find someone's initials and see if**
 53 **that's my writing'. But you had the different cards and you ordered them and then**
 54 **you annotated with your own thoughts or questions ok. Erm so the main question**
 55 **for the lesson was, 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good**
 56 **Samaritan?'. In your opinion, do you think this was useful in answering that**
 57 **question or not? Would anyone be able to – yeah yeah go for it**
 58

59 AD: I thought it was useful because it helped us erm realise that some people think it's,
 60 that the story is in different ways and what the different parts meant
 61

62 **Me: Ok. So there's different aspects. Were there any there erm, and it may be that you**
 63 **wrote it in your your workbook, were there any cards in particular that surprised**
 64 **you or interested you?**
 65

66 AD: Erm I know of one that said the parable only has one meaning and then there was
 67 another one that said the parable has more than one meaning
 68

69 **Me: Ok**
 70

71 AD: and I was a bit confused on that.
 72

73 **Me: Ok. What did you decide in the end?**
 74

75 AD: Erm we put that on 'other' I think in the end
 76

77 **Me: Ok and for you**
 78

79 AD: Actually I think we put it on 'us'
 80

81 **Me: Ok erm and how about yourself?**
 82

83 AE: I think erm the one the first on on the characters was a bit weird because it...was like
 84 I didn't really understand it that much
 85

86 **Me: Ok no that's fine**

87

88 AE: But it did help me

89

90 **Me: It did help you. Erm is there anything else about how useful this was in thinking**

91 **about the P- the Parable of the Good Samaritan? Yeah**

92

93 AF: Erm I think it was quite useful because I didn't really think that that deep about the

94 about the parable as I do now

95

96 **Me: Great. Thank you. So...you each answered this question [the lesson's enquiry**

97 **question] – you might want to look at that page in your workbook if you'd like to.**

98 **But if I asked you now that main lesson question, 'So what should we think about**

99 **the Parable of the Good Samaritan?', what would you say? Yeah – start us off**

100 **please. What should we think about it?**

101

102 AD: Erm...we should...we should th- when you think about the Good Samaritan you just

103 think it's like, 'Oh if someone's hurt you've got to be kind to them and help them'.

104 But it's not really that. It's if someone's hurt, you've got to be kind and you've got to

105 help them not because erm...you've got to help them

106

107 **Me: Ok thank you. Erm yes**

108

109 AE: Erm I think we should think about how we can act like the Good Samaritan and love

110 your neighbour as yourself

111

112 **Me: Ok so it's about acting erm an if you act like a neighbour, then you're like the Good**

113 **Samaritan. Thank you yeah**

114

115 AE: Some people are good and bad but some people, say there are some people are bad,

116 they could still care about you.

117

118 **Me: Mmm**

119

120 AE: And say if people are good they would care about you quite a lot

121

122 **Me: [Lovely?] awesome. Yes**

123

124 AD: So even if you don't like them you should still erm help them like the Samaritan did

125

126 **Me: Ok [undiscernible word] so the Samaritan's a bit of an example then. Lovely. Erm**

127 **so at the start of the lesson – my last question about Lesson One – you put what**

128 **you thought the meaning might be at the start and then at the end of the lesson**

129 **you then thought about had you changed your answer? Did anybody change their**

130 **initial answer? Where at the start of the lesson you said, 'I thought it might mean**

131 **this' but then at the end you thought, 'Actually, I've changed my mind about what**

132 **the meaning is'. Did any of you change your mind or change your thinking? Or did**

133 it kind of the idea that you had at the start of the lesson was the same when you
 134 left the lesson?
 135
 136 AE: I think I think that my first one was better but I don't think I should of I don't think I
 137 should change it because I like this one.
 138
 139 Me: Thank you. Ok. Is there anything else about the first lesson, for you, that you'd like
 140 to mention at this point? Anything that you thought, 'This really helped me think.
 141 This really helped me in my learning'. Or anything that you think, 'That wasn't
 142 helpful at all, Mr Parker'.
 143
 144 AD: Erm I it help me think because we got to write it down on the big sheets
 145
 146 Me: Ok so so that activity sounds like it was quite helpful
 147
 148 AD: Yeah. Like instead of just listening to it you actually get to write it down, which helps
 149 you remember about it
 150
 151 Me: Yeah. Brilliant. Thank you ever so much
 152
 153 AE: I think the one where you had to like where the people were up on the wall – I think
 154 that was a bit too tricky
 155
 156 Me: That was quite tough wasn't it. We're gonna talk about that in a moment. Yes
 157
 158 AF: I think it was very helpful helpful 'cos it made me think about about the depth of
 159 many bible stories and parables
 160
 161 Me: Mmm. What do you mean by the depth?
 162
 163 AF: Like how like how to think deeper about it
 164
 165 Me: Mmm yeah thank you. And-and they have kind of like several layers of meaning
 166 sometimes don't they these texts. Ok, so Lesson Two. This is my kind of teacher
 167 view of Lesson Two, because what I was hoping was that in Lesson Two we could
 168 think about, 'Ok, different people have different interpretations of this parable'
 169 and then us to think, 'Well why might that be?'. So I started with this starter
 170 [shows icon starter image]. So it is one image, and some people thought it was
 171 about being brave, some people thought it was about having courage, some
 172 people thought it was about this and. So one image but different people thought it
 173 meant different things. So what I was hoping to do was to help us think that just
 174 like an image like that, the same with the text; one text but different people think
 175 it means different things. And to help us think, 'Well why might that be?'. So, can
 176 you remember we had the string in the middle and you were trying to put in order
 177 different interpretations. In your opinion, do you think it was helpful to see real
 178 life interpretations and think about them in that lesson to help our thinking or not?
 179

180 AD: Erm I was a bit confused why we were doing it, then when we started doing it I
 181 realised it was really helpful.
 182

183 **Me: Oh nice. So so why do you think it was helpful erm for you in thinking about why**
 184 **different people think different**
 185

186 AD: Erm because we got to see what other people thought about it and how their ans-
 187 how they thought about it was different to what we thought about it
 188

189 **Me: Ok. Do you think that's important to see how different people think about things**
 190 **in RE? Yeah – er well why?**
 191

192 AD: ...Erm because sometimes if you have one answer and you start hearing other
 193 people's answers to it, you might be like, 'Oh yeah, I would rather say that than say
 194 this because that makes more sense to me'
 195

196 **Me: Ok. So just see different views on something**
 197

198 AD: Yeah
 199

200 **Me: Brilliant. With that activity, when you were trying to put those seven different**
 201 **interpretations in order, that could of taken place individually – so you could of**
 202 **done that on your own – or it could of happened in tables like you did. Erm I'd love**
 203 **to know from each of you, would you have preferred to do that on your own or**
 204 **would you have preferred to have keep it as it was?**
 205

206 AE: I would have preferred to keep it how it was
 207

208 **Me: Ok. Erm er could you tell me why?**
 209

210 AE: 'Cos sometimes when I have to do it on my own, it's a bit too tricky and I don't know
 211 what to do
 212

213 **Me: Ok. So was it useful to hear what other people were saying and thinking? Ok erm**
 214 **how about yourself? Would you have preferred it as a table or on your own?**
 215

216 AF: Err I would preferred I would preferred it on my own because I was arguing with the
 217 people on my table sometimes 'cos they thought I was being really annoying
 218

219 **Me: Ok. So you['d?] prefer that time just to order it yourself and other people can be**
 220 **distracting or a little bit annoying sometimes and. Ok. How about yourself?**
 221

222 AD: I would have preferred to do it on my own because erm we were, like, we had
 223 different opinions on what we where we should put it. And it was hard to figure out
 224 where to put it
 225

226 **Me: Ok**

227
 228 AD: because everyone else thought we should put it in a different place
 229
 230 **Me: Yeah definitely. Thank you. So we then went onto looking at the different people**
 231 **that came up with those interpretations around the room. So you had Martin**
 232 **Luther King, and you had erm you know other people – St Augustine and Irene**
 233 **Matsoso the the the African feminist err reader. Out of ten, how difficult was that**
 234 **activity?**
 235
 236 AE: Ten
 237
 238 **Me: You say ten – quite tough**
 239
 240 AD: Erm about five
 241
 242 **Me: You say five**
 243
 244 AE: About three
 245
 246 **Me: You say about three. Ok. Erm how, I mean, what made it tough and what made it**
 247 **easy? So we're trying to match the people with their own reading – how did you go**
 248 **about it? I'd love to know – how did you try to do it? And how did you match? And**
 249 **what was tricky?**
 250
 251 AD: Erm I tried to do it, to do the easier ones first and then the ones I couldn't erm that I
 252 was confused on. We would erm leave those to last so we could like, 'So this
 253 matches up more to this than to this person'
 254
 255 **Me: Ok**
 256
 257 AD: So we would put it with that person
 258
 259 **Me: Ok. So were you looking for clues? In what yeah**
 260
 261 AD: Yeah
 262
 263 **Me: Ok**
 264
 265 AF: I thought it was all easy since it actually just like it actually said like...the int- the
 266 interpretations kind of matched what they do
 267
 268 **Me: Mmm. Ok, so for you it was like, 'Oh ok'. You could kind of make that link quite**
 269 **easily. Thank you. Ultimately, what I wanted us to think about was different**
 270 **people have different interpretations and why was that? So why do you think**
 271 **people interpret this same text differently? Why does not everybody think, 'Oh**
 272 **this is the text and it means that'? Why do you think we might get different**
 273 **meanings from this?**

274

275 AF: Because it kind of bases on who they are, and everyone has different beliefs and

276 opinions. So that means they'll have different interpretations about the, about the

277 parable

278

279 **Me: Brilliant. Yeah**

280

281 AD: Erm I think that they have different opinions on it because some people, different

282 things have happened in their life so they might link it up to this and some people

283 might link it to that

284

285 **Me: Ok interesting. So if I gave this [the parable] to say another class in twenty years**

286 **time, do you think they'd come up with the same meanings as your class or**

287 **different ones?**

288

289 AD: Probably not

290

291 AF: No

292

293 AE: Probably different ones

294

295 **Me: Probably different ones, ok. Erm and why do you think that? I agree**

296

297 AE: 'Cos erm we're all different in our own way

298

299 **Me: Nice. Now...the main reason I wanted to teach these lessons – and, believe it or**

300 **not, I planned these four years ago and I wanted to do them for a long time – is**

301 **because I got really annoyed as a teacher in that I'd get a plan about a parable with**

302 **my Year Five and Six class and it would say, 'The parable means this one thing. Tell**

303 **your children it means this. And when they can say it back to you at the end of the**

304 **lesson, that means you've done a good job as a teacher and they've learnt very**

305 **well'. I disagreed and think that they should – good RE should allow you as pupils**

306 **and learners to express what you think. Do you agree or...?**

307

308 AD: Yes

309

310 AF: Yes

311

312 AE: Yes

313

314 **Me: Ok and and why?**

315

316 AE: I agree

317

318 **Me: Why do you think that's – from your view, you might disagree with me – but why**

319 **do you think it's important?**

320

321 AF: I think that...I think...I think that I agree because sometimes plans can be, can be a bit
 322 too like hiding yourself and not really, not really say- and not really...telling children
 323 what others think and what they think
 324

325 **Me: Ok. So you think that space for you to say and explore what you think's really**
 326 **important?**
 327

328 AF: [Nods]
 329

330 **Me: Great. Erm anybody else?...That's fine. Ok erm is there anything else you'd like to**
 331 **mention about these lessons? That I haven't asked about yet or that you'd like to**
 332 **say? Yeah**
 333

334 AD: Erm they were really helpful because they were interactive and you could do things
 335 in them. So it helped you remember because if you're just getting told something
 336 erm it's harder to remember. But if you have something to actually remember like
 337 when you got to do *this* and it was fun,
 338

339 **Me: Mmm**
 340

341 AD: it's more likely to remember it.
 342

343 **Me: Ok, thank you. [Yeah?]**
 344

345 AE: I think it was, I think it was fun because we had activities to do and it was just fun
 346

347 **Me: Great. Thank you. Yeah**
 348

349 AF: I thought it was a bit different in terms of working in a group. And one of the people
 350 in the group didn't really like me that much though
 351

352 **Me: That's one of the challenges of group work sometimes isn't it; when you work well**
 353 **with your group it's fine, but when there's difficulties it can be quite tough. I've**
 354 **been there a lot. Ok, I've got a few more questions then. Erm do you feel it's**
 355 **important for in RE to learn that different people have different interpretations of**
 356 **a text?**
 357

358 AD: Yes
 359

360 AE: Yes
 361

362 **Me: Ok erm why?**
 363

364 AD: Erm
 365

366 **Me: What do you think? So you've all said yes**
 367

368 AD: Yes
 369
 370 **Me: I'd love to know why**
 371
 372 AD: Erm seeing other people's point of view is important erm so you can understand why
 373 other people think this and it helps quite a lot
 374
 375 **Me: Brill. Thank you. How about yourself?**
 376
 377 AE: I think it's erm important that we learn more about people and ourselves
 378
 379 **Me: Have you thought about different interpretations in RE before?**
 380
 381 AE: Erm no not normally
 382
 383 **Me: Not normally**
 384
 385 AE: they're just on their own
 386
 387 **Me: Ok. Erm...I think you've you've answered a lot of the other questions. Do you feel**
 388 **you've learnt more about Christianity through this activity?**
 389
 390 AE: Yeah
 391
 392 AF: Yes
 393
 394 AD: Erm
 395
 396 **Me: Could you tell me what you – how it's helped you learn more about Christianity?**
 397
 398 AD: Well, to be honest, it's not really – this wasn't based on a religion, it was based on a
 399 story from a religion, but we didn't focus on the religion
 400
 401 **Me: Mmm**
 402
 403 AD: we focussed on the story which was nicer. 'Cos normally we would unbeing based on
 404 one religion and only do stuff from that. But doing one thing that was from *this*
 405 religion but wasn't the religion was nice
 406
 407 **Me: Ok I quite like that. Ok erm any thoughts on that question? Erm erm if it helped**
 408 **you learn more about Christianity?**
 409
 410 AF: I think it does help me think deeper about Christianity since I know quite a lot about
 411 it, but makes me think more deeper
 412
 413 **Me: Yeah ok**
 414

415 AE: I don't, I don't really know much about RE but I think I've learnt quite a lot today
 416
 417 Me: Oh good. Well I'm really pleased; it's been really fun working with you, definitely.
 418 Erm I've come to the part of my sheet that says 'bonus questions'. Ok, are you
 419 ready?
 420
 421 AE: Yeah
 422
 423 Me: Erm are there any questions you s-s-still have, or might have, about this parable or
 424 interpretations?...Is there anything that you're like, 'I wonder why?...I wonder if?'
 425
 426 AD: I wonder why they actually erm chose *that* to explain it, and they could of chose
 427 something else but they chose that
 428
 429 Me: Oh erm could you explain a little bit more because I think that's a really good point
 430
 431 AD: So you've got things like that that have happened that might of possibly could of
 432 explained it a bit more to some people
 433
 434 Me: Ahh
 435
 436 AD: So in some religions they might have something that means exactly this, but they tell
 437 it with different people in a different setting
 438
 439 Me: Yes. That's a really good point and that was one of the cards as well. Do *you* think
 440 there was a particular reason for being a Jewish person, a Levite and a Samaritan?
 441 Do you think they're important it's those characters or could you just change those
 442 characters around?
 443
 444 AD: Yeah you could change them around; it could be any one. It could be erm it's like
 445 having...nowadays that could be like a...doctor in a rush
 446
 447 Me: Mmm
 448
 449 AD: trying to get to save someone's life, walking past you when you're hurt. And then
 450 someone else walking past you, and then just a regular person coming then tryna
 451 help you
 452
 453 Me: Yeah. Ok thank you. Yep
 454
 455 AF: I think it's...well I wonder if somebody used, I wonder if you used a video in the slide.
 456 Would it *change* people's thinking if it was an animated video that doesn't really tell
 457 the story as well as the as...as the text?
 458
 459 Me: Yeah. I think that's a key point. Sometimes a video misses out lots of things or
 460 even adds lots of things. Erm that to the text or from the text. Yeah
 461

462 AE: 'Cos I think in the olden days that there wasn't that much medics and now these
 463 days we've got medics that can help us all and care
 464

465 **Me:** Yeah. And I suppose Jesus might have chose those characters because they would
 466 have made sense and been meaningful back then. But now if you were to tell that
 467 story, you know, it might be, 'Well that was two-thousand years ago – who are
 468 Samaritans? Who are Levites?'. Maybe using characters like doctors would make it
 469 more sense. Yeah, brill. Ok. Final question before you go back to your lessons –
 470 what do you think was the most important part of our lessons this morning for
 471 your learning and thinking about the Good Samaritan? We did quite a few things,
 472 lots of activities, but what do you think was the most important part for you in
 473 your learning?
 474

475 AE: I think the last one because erm you could like say what you could like choose a
 476 different one of what you picked at the first but I picked the first one
 477

478 **Me:** And when you say the last one, what do you mean? Which activity are you talking
 479 about?
 480

481 AE: Err...[under breath – it was...where were we at the]
 482

483 **Me:** Do you want to have a look through your workbook and and show me?
 484

485 AE: Yeah
 486

487 **Me:** Yes what while they're just having a look through
 488

489 AF: Erm I think that the first one was quite useful 'cos it made me think a lot erm it made
 490 me think a lot about this about this story because when I heard it before, I didn't
 491 really understand and remember it
 492

493 **Me:** Oh thank you. Erm yes which part
 494

495 AE: I think number four was the erm one that was annoy- like was really tricky as well
 496 'cos I didn't know what to pick in that
 497

498 **Me:** Erm which activity was this sorry?
 499

500 AE: Erm the one with the boxes
 501

502 **Me:** Oh ok so the end of Lesson One when you were writing your
 503

504 AE: Yeah
 505

506 **Me:** thoughts. Ok, so, you found that was most useful but also the most difficult at the
 507 same time
 508

509 AE: Yeah
510
511 **Me: depending on the question. Fab. And yes so what was the most important part of**
512 **those lessons for you?**
513
514 AD: I think the one where we went round the room taking all the tags and matching
515 them up to erm other...the things people said was most important because it was
516 looking at other people's erm opinions on it
517
518 **Me: Ok. Lovely. Well I'm going to press**
519
520 [End of recording]

School B
Pupil Focus Group One (B1)
In person
Date: Tuesday 24th February 2022
Time: 13:30
Length: 35:52

- 1 **Me:** Well thank you ever so much for being part of these interviews. Erm what I'd love
2 to know first of all is before today, had you heard of parables before?
3
- 4 BA: Yes
5
- 6 BB/BC: Yes
7
- 8 **Me:** Ok. Could you tell me which ones?
9
- 10 BB: Erm
11
- 12 BC: Err
13
- 14 BB: We've heard of the Good Samaritan
15
- 16 BC: Erm like Joseph and the Whale, erm Jonah and the Whale I think. Yeah and...[laughs]
17
- 18 **Me:** [laughs]
19
- 20 BC: I don't remember
21
- 22 BA: I think erm
23
- 24 BB: Erm
25
- 26 BA: [I?] kind of taught what parables were but not, like...put in examples
27
- 28 **Me:** Oh ok. So maybe not specific ones
29
- 30 BA: Yeah
31
- 32 **Me:** but the idea of a parable
33
- 34 BB: Yes
35
- 36 **Me:** Have you looked at them – so when you were saying you've looked at them
37 before, have they been mainly in RE? Have they been in collective worship? Do you
38 call it collective worship here or assembly?
39
- 40 BB: Erm sometimes assembly, sometimes collective worship

41

42 BC: Yeah

43

44 **Me: So have you ever looked at them in RE specifically?**

45

46 BA: Yes

47

48 BC: Yes

49

50 BB: Yes we have

51

52 **Me: Ok. Awesome. Ok. Erm so in your views then, what is a parable? W-would you like**

53 **to start and we'll go round?**

54

55 BB: Erm so it's kinda like a...it's kinda hard to explain. Erm it's kinda like a story but

56 where it's kinda like to teach you something

57

58 **Me: Ok thank you**

59

60 BA: Erm I think it's like a story with a meaning; something to teach you how to live your

61 life

62

63 **Me: Thank you**

64

65 BC: Erm a parable is erm a like erm a story that Jesus tells erm tells the disciples erm

66 how to like life a good life and erm and yeah

67

68 **Me: Ok, thank you everyone. Erm so I'm gonna start with two general questions and**

69 **then we'll go through different activities and lessons step-by-step. So do have a**

70 **think about this next one here – what did the lessons make you think about? Have**

71 **they made you think about the parables differently in any way? So have a think**

72 **and, when you're ready, if you want to just pop your hand up to let me know**

73 **you're ready. What did they make you think about? Have these lessons made you**

74 **think differently in any way?**

75

76 BB: Yes they because – when I first thought of that I was like, 'Oh it's just some, some

77 person – someone being kind to a man' but then I was, I realised that it wasn't just

78 about that. There were like quite a few morals of the story. Erm, so like, erm people

79 can be kind erm if they truly put their mind to it. Erm and like yeah

80

81 **Me: Ok, thank you. So there's kind of more, like different meanings**

82

83 BB: Yeah

84

85 **Me: you could get from it. Thank you**

86

87 BA: Erm erm I thought that like normally a story would have one meaning, but actually
88 parables normally have more than one. Erm so I found that out
89
90 **Me: Yeah oh thanks**
91
92 BC: So I-I think that erm that erm...err...I don't know
93
94 **Me: Did you want me to come back to you?**
95
96 BC: Yeah
97
98 **Me: That's fine. That's absolutely fine. Erm so I think my next question is what do you**
99 **feel you learnt over the two lessons? Is there anything else that you want to add to**
100 **your answers there?**
101
102 BA: Erm
103
104 **Me: [We had these?] these two lessons, is there anything you think, 'Yeah, actually, I**
105 **think I learnt this'.**
106
107 BA: Erm
108
109 BB: Erm I learnt a lot about like erm some new people that we did. Erm like when we
110 went went around and like and had to read about those people and see, match them
111 up. That taught me erm that. And then I really liked, like, when we like did the
112 erm...thing with like the erm best thing that we like and then the like these thing
113
114 **Me: Oh ok. Yeah**
115
116 BB: Yeah
117
118 **Me: So, had you looked at – when you've been looking at like bible texts in RE before –**
119 **have you ever looked at how different Christians have interpreted a text?**
120
121 BB: Erm I'm not sure we have
122
123 **Me: Not sure you have**
124
125 Other pupils [undiscernible]: Mmm
126
127 **Me: Did you find it useful in seeing that, how different**
128
129 BC: Yeah
130
131 **Me: In-in what way?**
132

133 BC: Err I found it useful erm erm because erm erm like er you n- you get to know God a
 134 bit more better and erm...and err yeah
 135
 136 **Me: Yeah. Ok thank you. Erm you were gonna say something about what you felt you**
 137 **learnt**
 138
 139 BA: I think I learnt like at the start, when we were talking about the Good Samaritan, I
 140 kind of only knew it as a story. And then kind of once we'd like read it and gone over
 141 it, it kind of felt like I knew it now *why* it was told
 142
 143 **Me: Oh ok**
 144
 145 BA: instead of just a story
 146
 147 **Me: Interesting. Interesting. Ok. So perhaps Jesus had a certain purpose**
 148
 149 BA: Yes
 150
 151 **Me: for that story. Interesting. Ok. So, thank you for that. We're now kind of going to**
 152 **dig into the first lesson. So that first lesson was, 'What should we think about the**
 153 **Parable of the Good Samaritan?'. So we started...by, well after a little bit of**
 154 **reflection, we started by looking at the parable and you had your three**
 155 **highlighters and were looking for various things. So those bits where you felt more**
 156 **information was needed in yellow. Those bits that you thought, 'This stands out to**
 157 **me' or 'This doesn't make sense'. Erm so I'd love to know, from your point of**
 158 **view, how useful do you think this was in the lesson in thinking about the Good**
 159 **Samaritan? Erm and would it have been missed if we decided to skip this part?**
 160
 161 Undiscernible: Erm
 162
 163 BB: I
 164
 165 BA: I think it helped because it knows like further on, say, if you're asked, 'What doesn't
 166 erm doesn't make sense to you', you can just go back to this and look. So you don't
 167 have to like think back
 168
 169 **Me: Mmm**
 170
 171 BA: and have no time to know what you don't know
 172
 173 **Me: Ok. So it gave you, correct me if I'm wrong, is it a sense of you could work out**
 174 **those bits that didn't make sense and then we could think about it as a class and**
 175 **then you could go back and say, 'Ok, I know what that means'?**
 176
 177 BA: Yeah
 178
 179 **Me: Yeah is that, understanding you right**

180

181 BB: Erm I really liked it because erm once you we talked about it and we knew what like

182 it kinda meant, it helped us with erm like all the work that we did. And it was really

183 fun as well

184

185 **Me: Oh good. I'm really pleased that you liked it. Erm did you think those questions**

186 **were useful? Were there any there that you thought, 'Yeah I'm not sure about**

187 **that' or 'That was really difficult'? Or a bit pointless?**

188

189 BA: Erm

190

191 **Me: Just in terms of, 'This stands out to me. This doesn't make sense. More information**

192 **needed'. Or you might think they're all fine and ok**

193

194 BA: It think they were all fine

195

196 BB: I think they were all fine as well

197

198 BC: I think they were all fine

199

200 **Me: Okie pokie. Erm so onto questions number two. Erm so then we worked moved on**

201 **to sorting these cards. So, in your groups, you were organising the cards and you**

202 **were writing your thoughts around it. Erm I'd love to know first of all erm...how**

203 **did your group work in sorting this? Was it useful working as a group? Was it**

204 **difficult working as a group?**

205

206 BA: I think it was useful working as a group because it kind of felt like you were part of a

207 team and you could just work together

208

209 BB: I liked it because erm if you like do it on yourself you're like, 'Ooh I don't know if this

210 goes there or that goes there'. But your friends, if they think differently, you're like,

211 'Oh yeah! That might – that's actually might be the correct answer'. And I really liked

212 it how we worked as a team and stuff

213

214 **Me: Ok. Thank you. How about yourself?**

215

216 BC: I think it

217

218 **Me: How did your team work?**

219

220 BC: err I think it's useful to have a have a team because let's say if you don't know like

221 [uncertain – pow you could sort it?] and then, erm, if you have a team erm they

222 might know what it is and then they will probably help you

223

224 **Me: Thank you so much. So, what I'm interested now is – as I said, what you say will**

225 **shape this [the lesson resources] going forward when I-I-I make it available to**

226 **more schools – the question was, 'What should we think of the Parable of the**

227 **Good Samaritan?'. So what I didn't want to do is to say, 'By the way, the parable**
 228 **means be nice to your neighbour. Everyone got that?'** and you're like, 'Yeah'. And
 229 **we're like, 'Great. Lesson done. Lesson successful'.**
 230
 231 BB: [Laughs]
 232
 233 **Me: I wanted to give it to you and say, 'Here are some different pieces of information**
 234 **which might or might not be useful; are they useful in answering the question,**
 235 **"What should we think about the parable?"'. So from your perspectives, to what**
 236 **extent do you feel this activity was useful for you? What was good about it? What**
 237 **was bad about it? Erm are there any changes or thoughts that you would make or**
 238 **suggest?**
 239
 240 BB: I really liked erm that everyone got to do it like you-you each took turns so it would
 241 be fair. Becau- and we got to like discuss it together and just like
 242
 243 **Me: Yeah**
 244
 245 BB: Yeah
 246
 247 **Me: And when it came to the writing stage, did you find that [like?] useful?**
 248
 249 BB: Yes I did. Especially when like you could read the others and you could like, 'Ooh I
 250 could like make that into my own words but sort of different'.
 251
 252 **Me: Yeah. Ok. Thank you**
 253
 254 BA: I found I found erm especially working in a group then erm when we were doing the
 255 writing because it meant, it felt like you didn't have to do all of them on your own.
 256 And you didn't even have to do all of them. And then, once you got to writing your
 257 erm answering should you, 'What should we think about erm the Parable of the
 258 Good Samaritan?', it helped because you could look at other people's erm writing
 259 that and your own and erm it would help
 260
 261 **Me: Mmm. Super. Super. Erm yourself? How did you find this activity? [Som-?] Out of**
 262 **ten, how useful was it?**
 263
 264 BC: Err it was really useful because erm erm some people don't know erm what erm
 265 what like, what the Bible is actually is. And it's good to like know what Jesus told his
 266 disciples about err and when you've wrote, erm I could I could write erm on the
 267 piece of paper. On a [or our?] big, giant paper erm erm what I what erm what I
 268 wanted erm...erm...
 269
 270 **Me: So was it quite useful for you to kind of write down the things you wanted to say**
 271
 272 BC: Yeah
 273

274 **Me:** and then think about? Thank you so much. So, Lesson One question was, 'What
 275 should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?'. Now, you've
 276 answered that question in your books already, so I'm not gonna ask you for your
 277 answer to that. What I'd love to know is, is that an easy question to answer? What
 278 *should* we think about it?
 279

280 **BB:** Some it wasn't ea- it like, at the start you had since we've heard of it you kind of had
 281 a a answer in your head, but you didn't like have it. Like you know when sometimes
 282 when a picture comes out a bit blurry?
 283

284 **Me:** Yeah, yeah
 285

286 **BB:** It's kinda like that. You have something in your brain but you're like, it might not be
 287 like proper. And then when you've actually like seen the parable, you've learnt about
 288 it, you're like, 'Ooh I've got this'. Its just goes pop into my head
 289

290 **Me:** Yeah, yeah. Oh I really like that analogy, that kind of fuzzy picture coming clear
 291

292 **BB:** Yeah
 293

294 **Me:** Thank you. Erm. How about yourselves, boys? Is it a bit of a sneaky question –
 295 what should we think about it?
 296

297 **BA:** Well, I kinda feel like...at first, when like we hadn't done it for a while, it was quite
 298 hard to remember it because it was a long time ago and that we had thought about
 299 it. Erm but once we'd done erm the like, the other parts of the lesson, it felt like it
 300 made that question a lot easier then it was. Like we just recapped it
 301

302 **Me:** Mmmhmm
 303

304 **BA:** erm understood the bits that we didn't understand, erm which meant we could carry
 305 on and answer the question
 306

307 **Me:** Ok. Fab, fab. Is there anything you'd like to add from your point of view?
 308

309 **BC:** Err at first, erm I was I-I-I didn't really know a lot about the Good Samaritan because
 310 we haven't, we haven't learnt about it in a long time. But when we finished I felt like,
 311 like I knew like what erm what I was doing. Erm on erm in the next lesson and
 312

313 **Me:** Oh brilliant. I'm really pleased. Before we move onto the second lesson, erm is
 314 there anything else that you'd like to mention about the first one?
 315

316 **BA:** Erm it felt nice when we were sorting out. When we were erm working as a group, it
 317 felt like we weren't just working on a small-piece of paper with small pieces of erm
 318 writing. It actually felt proper. Like there was a big piece of paper which meant we
 319 could spread out
 320

321 **Me:** **Mmm**
322
323 BA: and instead of like being squashed together
324
325 **Me:** **Yeah great**
326
327 BA: Erm, it felt, erm erm it had enough space. We had enough space to work
328
329 **Me:** **Great. That's really useful, thank you. Erm**
330
331 BB: Erm sometimes erm when you like erm you don't have a lot of space to write and
332 you kind of get told what to write sometimes. But here, you can like write your own
333 things, you can kinda like express yourself but with like the RE. It's really
334
335 **Me:** **Mmm**
336
337 BB: cool and I really like it
338
339 **Me:** **Oh good. Do you think that's important in RE to have the opportunity to express**
340 **your own thoughts**
341
342 BB: Yes
343
344 **Me:** **and your own views? Do you get that opportunity a lot?**
345
346 BA: Erm sometimes with it
347
348 BB: Sometimes we do and sometimes we don't. 'Cos sometimes you – it's kinda like one
349 of those lessons that you kinda need to, I don't know
350
351 BA: Sometimes it's like that's what it about, that's what it's about – now you're gonna do
352 some writing about what it's about
353
354 **Me:** **Ok**
355
356 BA: and then
357
358 BB: But I really liked the way that you did it. It was really fun
359
360 **Me:** **As you say, maybe it depends on the lesson**
361
362 BB: Yeah
363
364 BA: Yeah
365
366 **Me:** **and what you're [learning and thinking about?] . Ok so the second one then. Why**
367 **might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?**

368 So...we...started well, not started, but we had these different interpretations on
 369 cards. So if we ignore the different people for the time being. Erm so I'd like to
 370 know, from your point of view, erm how useful was that activity in looking at
 371 seven different interpretations and going from agree the most to disagree the
 372 most? What I'd really love to know is was it useful? Was it a bit tricky? Was it too
 373 easy?

374

375 BA: Erm some of it was some people were hard but some, erm, some people were easy
 376 to figure out. And, once you had done it, it really helped you with your end pieces of
 377 writing erm because it meant like you could erm use an example of a real person
 378

379 Me: Mmm. Ok, thank you. If we ignore the kind of people matching for the time being
 380

381 BA: Yeah
 382

383 Me: We'll come onto that bit [undiscernible words]
 384

385 BB: I really liked it because it's also fun but it's als- you're also learning. And I really liked
 386 it because you got to match up. Some of them were a bit harder to work out; some
 387 of them were a bit easier. But most, like, it's so it's kinda medium which I really like
 388 because those people who you find it a little bit hard
 389

390 Me: Mmm
 391

392 BB: can like understand it. And those people who want a challenge can also have a
 393 challenge
 394

395 Me: Oh ok. Super. So when looking – oh sorry go for it. Go for it
 396

397 BC: Err so erm erm some of them were a bit hard erm to like match up because erm
 398 yeah. And also erm you could you could get to know, like, people that you didn't
 399 know that were talking about the Good Samaritan and lots of Christian stuff
 400

401 Me: Mmm
 402

403 BC: Yeah
 404

405 Me: Mmm. Thank you. So if I invited you to turn to erm...let's go for this page here...So
 406 [it?] if you remember in the lesson, we first of all had the string and you had the
 407 seven different interpretations and you were org- organising them along the string.
 408 Those seven there; if you just have a quick scan over those. I tried to pick seven
 409 different people that were quite broad – so they had different interpretations.
 410 Were there any there that you thought, when you just read those ideas about
 411 what it meant, you were like, 'I don't really – I didn't really get that. I don't know
 412 what they're tryna say'? Or do you think all seven were useful?
 413

414 BA: Erm

415

416 BB: I think they were all useful

417

418 Me: **Ok. So if I were to give this to another class, do you think all of them would be**

419 **useful? You wouldn't say, or would you say, 'Well actually there's one card here**

420 **that we just didn't get. Could you find another person? Make it a bit easier'.**

421

422 BB: Erm

423

424 Me: **Do you know what I mean?**

425

426 BB: Yeah...not really. I mean, you know. I think it was fine

427

428 BA: I think erm I think that...I didn't really get this one

429

430 Me: **Erm is it the blue one or the beige one?**

431

432 BA: The beige one

433

434 Me: **Oh ok. So, 'We live in a world where we meet people of different beliefs,**

435 **nationalities and cultures. The two answers in verse 27 teaches us that loving God**

436 **means loving all. You can't do one without the other'**

437

438 BA?: Mmm

439

440 Me: **Erm. So, from your perspective, what was kind of difficult about that one?**

441

442 BA: Erm well I didn't really understand how a loving God means loving all. Erm because if

443 you love God, it you can just love God not love everyone else

444

445 Me: **Oh ok**

446

447 BA: Or you can love everyone else and not love God

448

449 Me: **Oh ok. Thank you. Erm is there anything from your perspective, sir?**

450 **[Undiscernible]. Ok. So. Thank you. Next question then. So, the sense I'm getting**

451 **was when you were going round the room and looking at different interpreters,**

452 **you found that a a good challenge. Like some of it was easy, some of it was difficult**

453

454 BB: Yeah

455

456 Me: **But it wasn't like, 'This is the easiest thing in the world'. And it wasn't like, 'This is**

457 **the hardest thing in the world'**

458

459 BB: Yeah

460

461 BA/BC? Yeah

462

463 **Me:** **Good. So it sounds like I got that just right then**

464

465 BB: Yeah

466

467 **Me:** **Erm was – do you think you would have preferred, in that activity, working as a**

468 **group or doing it on your own?**

469

470 BC: On erm in a team

471

472 **Me:** **In a team. Ok so thinking specifically about the learning then, why working as a**

473 **team do you think was better than going around on your own?**

474

475 BC: Because they can [could?] help you and erm and erm you could get it erm you could

476 do it a bit more faster if you if you done it erm as a team

477

478 **Me:** **Ok. So you could help each other**

479

480 BC: Yeah

481

482 **Me:** **And there's that speed thing as well**

483

484 BC: Yeah

485

486 **Me:** **Erm how about you both?**

487

488 BA/BB?: Erm

489

490 **Me:** **Erm individual? Would you have preferred it done on your own or [undiscernible**

491 **words] like you did?**

492

493 BA: I think it might of erm not it I think it was better as we did it as groups erm because if

494 you did it on your own, and everybody would get really mix- mixed up. And you

495 wouldn't know, like, I think there would be more crowds of people around one of

496 the pictures say. Erm so you wouldn't really be able to get to everyone. It I think it

497 would err take longer

498

499 **Me:** **Ok. Super. Would you say group as well? Or individual?**

500

501 BB: I definitely think group because well, like, just like erm [pause to allude to previous

502 speaker] said erm [laughs]

503

504 **Me:** **Nice**

505

506 BB: erm erm erm it's nic- it's to like if you don't know something, you can you can ask

507 someone and they, like, know the answer. And erm it's it's a bit it's more fun

508 because you have your friends to help you. They're always like like, 'Ooh but it might
509 go there'.

510

511 **Me: Yeah, yeah**

512

513 BB: So they're giving you, like, they're giving you kinda clues to what it could be, what it
514 couldn't be. Stuff like that

515

516 **Me: Sure. So you could help each other. You could challenge each other**

517

518 BB: Yeah

519

520 **Me: Those kind of things. Brilliant. So, I'm hearing you loud and clear; keep that as a**
521 **group activity, don't change it individual. So, I'm just really interested by your**
522 **thoughts here because as I said at the start of the lesson, this was one icon. This**
523 **was the same picture; you can see the same picture**

524

525 BB: Yeah

526

527 BA?: Yeah

528

529 **Me: [and?] you can see the same picture [and?] you can see the same picture. But,**
530 **yeah – might look like a rabbit or a duck if you look another way**

531

532 BB: [Laughs]

533

534 **Me: But, lots of you came up with different ideas. But, that hasn't changed, right? [Re-**
535 **shows the icon starter image]**

536

537 BB and BA/BC: No

538

539 BB: definitely not

540

541 **Me: So, what I was trying to do is think, 'Can we think about why different people**
542 **interpret a-a simple image differently? Can that help us think about why different**
543 **people interpret a text differently?'. So it was a bit of a test to see if it worked or**
544 **or not 'cos to be honest, I found it quite difficult to think w-what would be best**
545 **here. Erm do you think it was useful in thinking about why different people might**
546 **take a text like the Good Samaritan and think different things? Or do you think**
547 **that makes sense [referring to icon starter] but the text bit doesn't really?**

548

549 BA: Erm I think they both made sense erm to understand why different people
550 interpreted it differently. Erm because if you didn't know that, then if everyone
551 interpreted it the same it would be like everybody would be the same

552

553 **Me: Mmm**

554

555 BA: It wouldn't, it wouldn't feel right
556
557 **Me: So why do we think it is? Why – right – I'll just ask the question: why do you think**
558 **different people read the Good Samaritan differently?**
559
560 BB: I think it's because everyone's different. And if you – if we're all the same, it would
561 be really boring and everyone would think the same. And when and it's kinda like
562 like you have different opinions, you have different point of views. Just like the
563 picture that you showed us erm some people could see different – a rabbit and some
564 people could see a duck
565
566 **Me: Mmm**
567
568 BB: Like stuff like that and
569
570 **Me: And I suppose if you've never seen a duck before, you'd probably see a rabbit**
571
572 BB: [Laughs] Yeah
573
574 **Me: and if you'd never seen a rabbit before but you'd seen a duck, you'd probably see**
575 **duck. Maybe if you'd never seen racism before, you wouldn't think the text might**
576 **link to racism. But like Martin Luther King, you know, really felt racism and he**
577 **wanted to fight against racism**
578
579 BB: Yeah
580
581 BC?: Yes
582
583 **Me: So maybe that was on his mind when he was reading it - maybe**
584
585 BA?: Yeah
586
587 **Me: Erm is there anything else erm either about the icon or why you think different**
588 **people interpret a text differently?**
589
590 BA: Erm different people, I think, interpret the text differently because of what they've
591 either had done to them before or what they are doing or have done in the past
592
593 **Me: So can you think of an example?**
594
595 BA: Erm so...err if you think of Irene Matsoso erm she's a feminist. So she is fighting for
596 women's rights, so she might link it to that
597
598 **Me: Mmm. That's really interesting – thank you. Yes you were gonna mention**
599 **something**
600

601 BB: Erm s-so you know when you make a mistake, you next time, when you're doing that
602 same thing, you kinda learn from your mistake. It's kinda the same thing as this. Like
603 what you've done in the past you kinda learn so that when you do some more,
604 you're like, 'Ooh I-I think I-I know what I'm doing' and it's [undiscernible words]
605
606 **Me: Oh that's really interesting. Ok, so it's kind of who you are and your experiences in**
607 **life**
608
609 BB: Yeah
610
611 **Me: and mistakes and things you've learnt, you kind of bring to the text. And you're**
612 **like,**
613
614 BB: Yeah
615
616 **Me: 'Oh ok I see myself in what I'm reading'**
617
618 BB: Yeah
619
620 **Me: Maybe. Ok interesting. Anything else? Shall I ask my next question?**
621
622 BB: I think you [undiscernible words]
623
624 **Me: Cool. Ok so again, thank you so much for that. Erm so these become a bit more**
625 **general again now. Was there anything that you think didn't help you learn today?**
626
627 BA: I think, when you were doing the questions, Question Five I thought – I think all the
628 questions were been answered
629
630 **Me: Oh ok**
631
632 BA: of the text
633
634 **Me: Remind me what Question Five was**
635
636 BA: Erm, 'Are there any further questions you would ask about this parable?'
637
638 **Me: Ok**
639
640 BA: I think erm actually they've already answered them all there in the text
641
642 **Me: Ok, so for you it's like, up to that point, that was a bit of a pointless question**
643
644 BA: Yeah
645
646 **Me: Ok – thank you so much**
647

648 BB: I don't think there was anything wrong; I really liked it and it's just fun
649
650 BC?: Yeah
651
652 **Me: Awesome – oh, thank you. Thank you. Erm so do you feel you know more about**
653 **how different people interpret parables through these lessons?**
654
655 BB: Yes definitely
656
657 BA: Yes
658
659 BC: Yes
660
661 **Me: It sounds like, from what you've said,**
662
663 BB: Yeah
664
665 **Me: that you have**
666
667 BB: No doubt
668
669 **Me: Do you think this is an important thing to learn about it RE? If so, why? If not, why**
670 **not?**
671
672 BA: I think it is erm because if you didn't and you were going, like, going to read the
673 Bible, if you wanted to – or reading a part of it – and you needed to know what, say,
674 a parable was or an example of it, then if you didn't know that then there probably
675 would be a problem
676
677 **Me: Ok**
678
679 BA: if you really needed to
680
681 **Me: Sure. Do you think it's important to know that different people would read it**
682 **differently?**
683
684 BA: Erm yeah because if you expected to know everybody, to think that everybody was
685 the same, then people might get annoyed at you if you say that, 'This is what I think.
686 You must think the same'
687
688 **Me: Mmm**
689
690 BA: Erm I think yeah
691
692 BB: Erm [muttered something like I've forgotten/I forgot it/I forgot the question]
693

694 **Me:** Yeah that's fine. Erm so we looked at why different people interpret the parable
695 differently. So my question was do you feel that's important to learn about?
696

697 BB: Yes because like, kinda like erm he said erm, you if you like expect everyone to have
698 the same answer erm you'll be like, so, you'd be like, 'Well everyone has the same
699 answer; no one's gonna say something different'
700

701 **Me:** Mmm
702

703 BB: And it's kinda nice to know that there are different answers because then there's not
704 – basically no right or wrong answer. Erm
705

706 **Me:** Ok thank you. How about yourself, sir?
707

708 BC: I think it's really important to know it because erm because you could erm know like
709 all the, the like, erm bibl- the bible characters erm. All of them, all of them. And erm
710 you could know the bible better and then you could, erm...yeah
711

712 **Me:** Ok, brilliant. Thank you. Erm do you think it was helpful for me not to tell you that,
713 'This is the parable and it has *this* meaning. I don't care about what my thoughts
714 about it are, I'm interested in what *you* think'
715

716 BA/BB?: I
717

718 **Me:** Do you think that was useful?
719

720 BB: Yes because som- when like, so say if they're like, 'This is what the parable means'.
721 You're like, 'Well, we- could we at least, like, think about it?'. Erm and we did. So I
722 really liked it because you could like think erm for yourself. And because some
723 lessons you you're kinda like, 'Oh, well couldn't we we we kinda coulda work that
724 out ourselves'
725

726 **Me:** [Laughs]
727

728 BB: And then, and then we're like, and then once you've, if you like let the children like
729 work it out themselves it's really like useful fo- because like if n-, like if you need
730 another lesson to work out, you'll know how to do it; you'll know the information
731 that you need to know to like do it
732

733 **Me:** That's fab; thank you. Thank you. Erm so I think I... [talking to self] what was last
734 one that I just found?...Yes that was it. Do you think it's important for you to have
735 a view there? Anything else, boys, there?
736

737 BB/BA: [Undiscernable – saying no/I don't think so?]
738

739 **Me:** Anything to add? I think it was a brilliant answer
740

741 BC: Yeah
742
743 **Me: Erm. Ok. So. Let's go. You've said you haven't really looked at different**
744 **interpretations before in RE? [Unsure - Is that right, or?]**
745
746 BA: Err no not really
747
748 BB: No not, not really. We might of because erm Coronavirus is kinda like
749
750 **Me: Oh ok**
751
752 BB: Yeah. But, I don't think we have. We might of at some point but I don't think we
753 have
754
755 **Me: Sure. Erm, I think lots of these we-we've covered actually. Erm, so, were there any**
756 **questions that you have now, or still have, about the parable? Or any**
757 **interpretation?**
758
759 BA/BC?: Erm
760
761 **Me: Where you're like, 'Actually, yeah. The question that's been in my mind from those**
762 **lessons is this that I'm still thinking about or would like to ask'.**
763
764 BA: Err no I don't think so
765
766 BB: No – don't think so
767
768 **Me: [Undiscernible – thank you? Okie?]**
769
770 BC: [Undiscernible – acknowledging that they had no questions]
771
772 **Me: Ok. Final two questions – are you ready? In your opinion – and do have a think –**
773 **for your learning, what do you think was the most important part of Lesson One**
774 **and Lesson Two?**
775
776 BA/BC: Erm
777
778 BB: Erm
779
780 BA: I think the most important part of Lesson One was doing the writing and sorting
781 them [the cards] into 'meaning', 'characters' and 'us' and 'other'. I think that really
782 helped with writing and carrying on with the parable
783
784 **Me: Ok. Super. So that helped you answer that question at the end of the**
785
786 BA: Yeah
787

788 **Me:** lesson. Err doing that thinking there. Thank you. Erm yourself? What do you think
789 was the most important part out of everything we did? [then indiscernible few
790 words – in your opinion?]
791
792 **BC:** I think it was like the sorting and the...and the writing as well
793
794 **Me:** **Ok**
795
796 **BC:** and the the these as well
797
798 **Me:** **Ok so the, so the, so the card sort and the writing from Lesson One, and the**
799 **looking at the profiles and tryna to match the interpretation Lesson Two. Thank**
800 **you. And for yourself**
801
802 **BB:** Erm
803
804 **Me:** **Out of everything we did, what was the most useful for you personally?**
805
806 **BB:** I think it was the cards, for me, because...like erm we said the groups erm and it was
807 really, like, fun to learn about it and get to like kinda – it's kinda like when you s- you
808 you stick things down and you can write as well. And you also have to figure it out.
809 So it's kinda like a mystery
810
811 **Me:** **Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Super. Ok, so my last question is: is there – I've asked my**
812 **questions – is there anything else that I haven't asked you about or that you've**
813 **thought of that you'd like to to mention about these lessons or your learning?**
814
815 **BB:** Erm...erm not, not for me. Don't know about you?
816
817 **BA:** No – I don't think so
818
819 **BC:** I don't think so
820
821 **Me:** **Great**
822
823 **BB:** It was generally a nice lesson
824
825 **Me:** **Oh I'm pleased. Ok I'm gonna press**
826
827 [End of recording]

School B
Pupil Focus Group Two (B2)
In person
Date: Tuesday 24th February 2022
Time: 14:14
Length: 34:41

- 1 **Me:** **Ok. Well thank you everyone for taking the time to erm answer a few questions.**
2 **As I said, your thoughts are really valuable. Erm so this interview will take – the**
3 **last one took just over half-an-hour. Ok – goes really quick erm and then you go**
4 **back to class. So my first one is: before today, had you heard about the parables**
5 **before?**
6
7 BD/BE/BF: Yes/Yeah
8
9 **Me:** **Ok. Which ones?**
10
11 BD: Erm the the one about the man and his two sons
12
13 **Me:** **Mmmhmm**
14
15 BD: One goes away and spends all the money, and then when he comes up back, there's
16 a tea party because, the Good Samaritan and there's another one – I can't
17 remember what it's called
18
19 **Me:** **Ok. Any others, boys, that you can think of?**
20
21 BE: No
22
23 BF: No – it's just Good Samaritan
24
25 **Me:** **Yeah**
26
27 BE: Yeah
28
29 **Me:** **Erm and when you've looked at them in school before, have they been in collective**
30 **worship or assembly, or have they been in RE?**
31
32 BD: Erm so
33
34 BE/BF?: Both
35
36 **Me:** **So both**
37
38 BE/BF?: [Sometimes?] Both
39
40 BD: Yeah we often do, we, I think we do parables nearly every time in assembly

41

42 **Me: Ok**

43

44 BD: and we do them quite often in RE

45

46 **Me: Quite often in RE. Super. Erm so I'd love to go round, if I asked you what is a**

47 **parable? What's your thoughts? Erm so could I start with you, sir?**

48

49 BF: Yeah so erm it's like at story. There's about – it's like a story that has a good ending

50 to it

51

52 **Me: Ok. Super. Thank you. Yourself?**

53

54 BD: Erm it's a story that has a moral in to teach people to do things

55

56 **Me: Ok. So it's got a moral. Something to teach. Sir?**

57

58 BE: Erm well I thought it was a, like, story what God and Jes- about God and Jesus

59

60 **Me: Ok, so something about a moral. Perhaps something about God and Jesus, so**

61 **talking about Christianity. Ok, super. So, the next two questions are quite general;**

62 **so your thoughts about the lessons generally. And then we'll go through kinda**

63 **step-by-step in the lessons. So you've got your workbook – at various points you**

64 **might wanna go through, just to remind yourself. So, erm, my first question is, is:**

65 **what did the lessons make you think about today? Have they made you think**

66 **about the parables differently in any way erm from yesterday?**

67

68 BD/BE/BF: Yeah/Yeah/Yes

69

70 **Me: Ok could you explain? So-so in what ways? You know, what have you learnt from**

71 **these lessons really?**

72

73 BE: Well what I've learnt is that err – I have writ it down what I have learnt –

74

75 BF: It will be Number Four

76

77 BE: Number Four...hmm...no that's not the right one. [not completely clear – I-I don't

78 really have a reason?]

79

80 **Me: Ok erm well I'll come back to you 'cos I think there's something there**

81

82 BE: Yeah

83

84 **Me: so something like erm, you know, what-what did the lessons make [made?] you**

85 **think about? We'll come back to you in a moment [some undiscernible words]**

86

87 BD: Well it made me think about how I'd been taught about parables in the past. 'Cos I
 88 remember the from the some parable lessons in the past, erm-a it's just been erm-a,
 89 'A parable is this. You're going to learn about erm-a what a parable is', and then it
 90 you get an example of a parable, and I don't feel like it's as much as I would like to
 91 know
 92

93 **Me: Oh interesting. Ok. So what about these lessons erm were was different from that?**
 94 **If you don't mind me asking**
 95

96 BD: Well they just made you think more about the parables and what their meanings
 97 were. And it the sorting task was really good 'cos it made you actually think, 'Oh this
 98 could go in these places'
 99

100 **Me: Ok – thank you. How about yourself?**
 101

102 BF: Erm it's just, it's like changed the way I think about it 'cos it normally we jus- we just
 103 rush through it but today we've actually been able to have a proper think about it
 104

105 **Me: Oh ok. So I get the sense it was useful slowing it down**
 106

107 BF: Yeah
 108

109 **Me: taking that time to really explore the text. Ok. Do you get to do that much with**
 110 **texts in RE?**
 111

112 BD: Mmm
 113

114 BF: No we normally just rush through it
 115

116 BD: Erm-a yeah we are really – it's usually read the story and then answer maybe answer
 117 some questions on it. We feel – I feel like we do more with that in guided reading
 118 and I wish we could do it more in RE
 119

120 **Me: Oh ok. That's really interesting. Thank you. That's something your teacher was**
 121 **saying earlier as well actually. Erm yes – is there anything that you you thought of,**
 122 **sir?**
 123

124 BE: Erm I was gonna say what others have said
 125

126 **Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah. No that's fine. That's fine. Awesome. Erm ok. So, Lesson One**
 127 **then. So the big question I wanted us to try and answer was: what should we think**
 128 **about the Parable of the Good Samaritan? So I'd love to know your thoughts here**
 129 **and, as I say, do be honest. We started by looking at the actual text. So read it once**
 130 **erm for you all and then I gave you time to look and to highlight over three things.**
 131 **If you do wanna move your chair 'cos the sun's in your eyes, that's fine; feel free to**
 132 **do so. Erm so I gave you a: yellow highlighter – more information needed; blue –**
 133 **this doesn't make sense to me, orange – this stands out to me. What I'd love to**

134 know was, erm, in your opinion, was this a useful part of the lesson in your
 135 learning? Or, if we didn't include it, would that have also have been fine?
 136

137 BD/BE?: Erm

138

139 **Me: Like would it have been missed if-if it wasn't**

140

141 BD: I I found it good 'cos it meant that I properly looked at the text and it, I was like, 'Oh
 142 – that's really interesting', because if it had been a erm-a like a more modern kind of
 143 one it might have had different words

144

145 **Me: Mmm**

146

147 BD: And it just made me think about the language used. Because in the bible it was
 148 written so many years ago that it's got slightly unusual language

149

150 **Me: Brilliant. Thank you, thank you**

151

152 BF: Yeah it was quite helpful because it's it's always helpful to have like another erm run
 153 through it

154

155 **Me: Yes. That's super**

156

157 BF: Erm yeah

158

159 BE: I found it helpful as well because erm when erm you don't know what a meaning is
 160 and you highlight it, it's like telling someone you don't know what it means and you
 161 can get help on it so you can finally understand *what* it means

162

163 **Me: Brilliant. I'm pleased you said that and-and others have found it quite useful, being**
 164 **like, 'Actually, I don't know what this word means. And it would be useful to then**
 165 **discuss that after so we can think, "Ok, this is what a Samaritan is.**

166

167 BE: Yeah

168

169 **Me: This is what denarii is. This is what eternal life means". Kind of thing**

170

171 BE: Yeah

172

173 **Me: Erm out of those three, erm do you think those three were useful? Were there any**
 174 **there that you thought, 'Actually, that was a bit pointless'?**

175

176 BD: Erm

177

178 **Me: Or too hard?**

179

180 BD: I think, erm I don't want to sound mean, or a bit rude but

181

182 **Me: No, no. Be honest. Be honest**

183

184 BD: erm-a maybe with some of the, like, erm, 'This stands out to me', maybe could

185 change that to another word. Erm-a just 'cos, I don't think some children will

186 understand

187

188 **Me: Yeah**

189

190 BD: maybe what that means unless it's properly explained

191

192 **Me: Ok**

193

194 BD: Like. 'I found this interesting', or something like that maybe

195

196 **Me: Ok. That's a really good point. Thank you. Thank you**

197

198 BF: Erm it's completely fine. I don't have anything wrong with it

199

200 **Me: Ok. Ok. A-anything to add to that? Or all good? Fine?**

201

202 BE: No

203

204 **Me: Ok. Thank you. So, moving on then. We went on to this card sort activity, of which**

205 **there's an example here. So you had different cards which you put under**

206 **'meaning', 'characters', 'us' and 'other'. Ignoring the writing bits at the moment –**

207 **I'm just interested in the sorting – erm...how did your group work in sorting those?**

208 **And did that help you answer the question of 'What should we think about it?'**

209

210 BD: Erm well my group, we each took a card

211

212 **Me: Mmmhmm**

213

214 BD: We went in turn, we read it out and then we all had a good discussion and said, 'Oh,

215 I think this could go in there'. And then someone else might say, 'Yeah but it could

216 also go in there'. And then we would like decide, 'But it could be it could go in here.

217 Shall we – let's put it in here 'cos I think it works best'

218

219 **Me: Mmm. Thank you. In your groups – you were different groups, weren't you boys?**

220

221 BE/BF?: Yeah

222

223 BE/BF?: Yeah

224

225 **Me: Was it, was it a useful activity? Was it interesting? Was it difficult? Erm just tell me**

226 **your thoughts – how useful was it for you?**

227

228 BF: Erm [undiscernible word/words] yeah – it was useful
 229
 230 **Me: Ok. In what ways?**
 231
 232 BF: Like erm...don't know how to explain it
 233
 234 **Me: [Laughs]**
 235
 236 BF: but
 237
 238 BD: It was just useful?
 239
 240 BF: Yeah. Mmm
 241
 242 **Me: And on your table?**
 243
 244 BE: Yeah
 245
 246 **Me: Erm**
 247
 248 BE: We kind of found it in the middle
 249
 250 **Me: Yeah, yeah**
 251
 252 BE: because loads of people were saying, 'It will go there' and 'It might go there. It might
 253 go here'
 254
 255 **Me: How interesting**
 256
 257 BE: and it was kind of a bit confusing
 258
 259 **Me: Oh ok. Erm so that comes to my next question. Do you think doing this activity as a**
 260 **group was useful because you had that discussion? Or do you think it was, it would**
 261 **of been easier just to do it on your own?**
 262
 263 BD: I I think it was easier with a group 'cos erm-a in my group I had opportunities to
 264 actually think when someone, when I was like, 'Oh, I think it should go here 'cos it's
 265 got the word "meaning" in; it should go underneath "meaning"'. But, and then that,
 266 and then someone else in my group might say, 'Ah! But it could also go under here',
 267 and I think to myself, 'Yeah, that's better; let's put it under there'.
 268
 269 **Me: Interesting. So kinda different views from your group made you think more**
 270 **carefully or differently about cards. Yeah ok**
 271
 272 BD: Yeah it made you think, 'Oh yeah that is better than what I thought'
 273

274 **Me:** Yeah thank you. Erm and for you in your group, it sounds like you had similar
 275 discussions
 276
 277 **BE:** Yeah
 278
 279 **Me:** but did that kind of complicate it a little bit?
 280
 281 **BE:** Yeah. I'm not trying to sound rude or anything
 282
 283 **Me:** No – do. Be honest
 284
 285 **BE:** but the – I would of found it a bit better if I was on my own
 286
 287 **Me:** Yeah. No thank you. Thank you. And I wonder if that's also – might depend on
 288 different groups or how different people like to work. Like I like to work on my
 289 own quite a lot
 290
 291 **BE:** Yeah
 292
 293 **Me:** so sometimes working in a group is like, 'Yeah but I think I'm right so I'm gonna put
 294 it there', and maybe I need to, you know, work
 295
 296 **BD:** Yeah
 297
 298 **Me:** on that. I dunno. But it's just different people work differently, don't they? Erm,
 299 we then moved on to the writing around it. Erm I genuinely like to know what you
 300 thought of that. Did you think that was useful in allowing you to think about the
 301 parables? Or not useful?
 302
 303 **BD:** I loved it. I found it really good 'cos it meant I could explain how I felt yet I didn't
 304 have to talk about it, I could just write it down. And it also meant that I could,
 305 maybe, pop as I was walking past another table I could have a look and see what
 306 their thoughts were and be like, 'Oh that's really good.'
 307
 308 **Me:** Mmm
 309
 310 **BD:** I might have a go at doi- writing that down'
 311
 312 **Me:** Yeah awesome. Awesome. Boys?
 313
 314 **BF:** Erm yeah the writing was actually quite useful 'cos it helped me with like some of
 315 the other work. Like erm...for the writing bit
 316
 317 **Me:** Mmmhmm
 318
 319 **BF:** it helped me do some, do some of the writing because erm...because erm I had all of
 320 that stuff that I could just copy down

321

322 **Me:** Great. So the – correct me if I’m wrong – you’re saying that the thinking from this

323 activity helped you in the next activity

324

325 **BF:** Yeah

326

327 **Me:** [undiscernible – could of done it?] Ok great. How about for yourself? Erm

328

329 **BE:** Erm well I found it quite useful because erm well when I did the writing, it was like –

330 I don’t know really how to explain – it just helped me. Like, instead of just like saying

331 it out loud, we could just...I don’t know how to explain it

332

333 **Me:** Did you – I might be wrong – are you trying to say something like it gave you the

334 time to think about it yourself and then write it, rather than

335

336 **BE:** Yeah

337

338 **Me:** having to, like, kind of respond to people. And you want that time to think about it

339 before saying, ‘This is what I think’. Maybe

340

341 **BE:** Yeah – that’s what I meant

342

343 **Me:** Yeah. Ok. Cool. Erm sounds like [you’re?] like you’re like me, sir. Erm ok so all of

344 those activities were designed to help us answer the question: so what should we

345 think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan? Now, you’ve all written your

346 answer, I guess, in your workbook so I’m not gonna – bless you – necessarily ask

347 you now. What I’d love to know is is it a bit of a sneaky question? What *should* we

348 think about it? Is that an easy one to answer, thinking about what I was trying to

349 get us to think about in the next lesson, that different people think about it

350 differently?

351

352 **BD:** Erm...I’m not really sure. I found it nice to be able to write – I love[d?] giving my

353 opinion and writing down ‘cos I feel like then people know I’m there and that I can

354 be heard

355

356 **Me:** Mmm

357

358 **BD:** and it yeah I thought it was good that you tried to get us to answer the learning

359 objective ‘cos usually with learning objectives it’s, ‘You will, you will learn how to do

360 *this*’. But I’m like, erm I like it that it was a question – we got to answer the question

361 at the end

362

363 **Me:** Yeah ok – nice. You could answer it in your own way

364

365 **BD:** Yeah

366

367 **Me:** rather than being told, like, 'what must we think about the Parable of the Good
368 Samaritan?',
369
370 **BD:** Mmm
371
372 **Me:** for instance, is very like, 'This is the meaning'
373
374 **BD:** Yeah
375
376 **Me:** and there's no thinking about it. Ok erm boys anything from your perspective?
377
378 **BE:** Yeah I found it a bit hard answering it
379
380 **Me:** Interesting. Ok so what should we think – what, you may not know, but what was
381 hard about it from your perspective? Was it just a confusing question?
382
383 **BE:** Yeah, yeah. Just a bit confusing
384
385 **Me:** Ok. Ok. Erm is there anything else that you'd like to mention, maybe that I haven't
386 asked? Or anything else you want to say about Lesson One?
387
388 **BD:** Erm
389
390 **BE:** Erm
391
392 **BD:** I liked the way that it was different stages and you had to try and work the way from
393 bronze to gold.
394
395 **Me:** Oh ok
396
397 **BD:** 'Cos usually it's just, 'Challenge One. Challenge Two. Challenge Three'. I liked that it
398 was bronze, silver, gold and you had to try and work your way up.
399
400 **Me:** Oh awesome
401
402 **BD:** It was a bit it reminded me of the Olympics; you've got to try and work your way up
403 the medal table each time
404
405 **Me:** Oh ok. Different challenges. I'm glad you liked that 'cos that took me hours to get
406 the different pieces of card and cut them up so phew! Time well spent. Lesson Two
407 then. Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?
408 So, in your workbook, you had erm this page here
409
410 **BD:** Yeah
411
412 **Me:** So less about this part of the activity, but you remember you had the string. And
413 you had the different interpretations.

414

415 BD/BE?: Yeah

416

417 **Me: And you had to try to order them from 'Agree the most' to 'Disagree the most'.**

418 **Erm I'd love to start with getting your thoughts on that, particularly –**

419

420 BD/BE/BF?: This one?

421

422 **Me: yes that's the one, yeah. And you know you had those kind of seven cards you put**

423 **across the string. Erm what I'd love to know was...how useful do you think that**

424 **activity was? Was it useful in seeing different interpretations and going 'agree' to**

425 **'disagree'? Was it quite difficult? Yeah do you wanna start**

426

427 BE: Erm well I found it like easy and fun at the same time. Like it's kind of fun to do and

428 it teaches people in a fun way instead of always like not doing it in a fun way

429

430 **Me: Oh ok**

431

432 BE: 'Cos if you do it in a fun way, it kind of helps better for you to learn

433

434 **Me: Ok. So so for yourself, and thinking – as you said at the end – to learn, you had**

435 **those seven different interpretations. Erm in what ways was it useful for you in**

436 **thinking about them in saying, 'Well do I agree with this one? Do I agree with this**

437 **one?'. Would it have been better to have been given a list and just to read them?**

438

439 BE: Erm well...

440

441 **Me: I don't think I asked that question very well did I?**

442

443 BD/BE: [Laughs] No

444

445 **Me: No erm so you found the activity fun**

446

447 BE: Yeah

448

449 **Me: and you thought it helped you in your learning. Erm so what did you learn about**

450 **through that activity?**

451

452 BE: Well

453

454 **Me: What did it make you think about?**

455

456 BE: It made me think about...well it made me think about...what these say, it made me

457 think about what can I do to do them things more

458

459 **Me: Oh interesting. Ok so it helped you to reflect and maybe that's why you said for**

460 **some of them, 'Well actually I strongly agree with those because**

461

462 BE: Yeah

463

464 **Me: Yeah. Ok. Erm how about for yourself? How useful was that activity for you?**

465

466 BF: Erm yeah it was quite useful 'cos you get to see how other people think of it

467

468 **Me: Mmm**

469

470 BF: And and you get and erm...while you're seeing how they think, they you might

471 change your way of thinking about it as well

472

473 **Me: Interesting. So, did that happen for you personally?**

474

475 BF: Yeah

476

477 **Me: In in what way?**

478

479 BF: ...

480

481 **Me: 'Cos I found a similar thing in that I was looking at different readings for the**

482 **parable and I was always taught, 'Oh this parable means, "be nice to your**

483 **neighbour". That's it'. And then seeing those different interpretations, I was like,**

484 **'Wow – there's some really deep ideas**

485

486 BF: Yeah

487

488 **Me: here that I'd never thought about'**

489

490 BF: Mmm

491

492 **Me: Erm so is there anything that comes to mind for you?**

493

494 BF: Literally what you said; exactly the same

495

496 **Me: Interesting. How about yourself? How useful was that ranking activity from your**

497 **point of view:**

498

499 BD: Erm-a I liked because in my group we each had a couple of cards, put it where we

500 think. And then we moved each other's and then we started talking about why we

501 moved it. And erm I also love, I liked the fact that they were all quotes from people

502

503 **Me: Mmm**

504

505 BD: And I liked when we did this [refers to justification activity in workbook], the we

506 could then write down our feeli- feelings erm-a about them

507

508 **Me:** Yeah – thank you. I really liked the way your group was doing it – it was quite
509 different wasn't it? 'Cos, as you said, you got them all out and then you decided,
510 'Which ones could
511
512 **BD:** Yeah
513
514 **Me:** we move and why?'
515
516 **BD:** Erm I know that a lot of the other groups would just erm-a, 'Oh I think this should go
517 here. I think this should go here'
518
519 **Me:** Mmm
520
521 **BD:** And then erm-a I found it really interesting 'cos I went and had a look round at the
522 other tables and where they'd placed, and I was really interested in about one of the
523 quotes. Ab- erm-a erm-a where it says, 'I'm frustrated that women are invisible and
524 forgotten'. I found it really interesting that some of the tables with just boys on had
525 put it slightly lower than some of the tables with just girls on
526
527 **Me:** It's interesting, doesn't it [?]
528
529 **BD:** Yeah that's what I found really unusual. 'Cos one of the tables put it like second last
530 and I was like, 'Why would you do', I and I just couldn't understand
531
532 **Me:** Mmm
533
534 **BD:** Yet for them it must have made sense
535
536 **Me:** It's really – it raises lots of questions about
537
538 **BD:** Yeah
539
540 **Me:** interpretation. Definitely. Erm something you mentioned there which I really liked
541 was, you know, as you said all of those interpretations were from real people. Do
542 you think that's important rather than me just making up seven?
543
544 **BD:** Yes
545
546 **BF:** Mmm
547
548 **BE:** Yeah
549
550 **Me:** Like, 'Be a good person. Punch your brother in the face', those kind of things. But
551 actual people.
552
553 **BF:** Yeah, yeah, yeah
554

555 BD: Yeah that was really good 'cos some of them *you know*. You're like, 'Oh I've heard of
556 Martin Luther King.
557
558 **Me: Mmm**
559
560 BD: Ooh and that and I know that he's done a lot about *this*, so ah erm-a that's really
561 interesting
562
563 **Me: Mmm**
564
565 BD: that he said that'
566
567 **Me: Yeah super. Thank you. Ok moving on then. Erm da-da-da-da-da-da-da ok so we**
568 **then went on to this, where you went to look at the interpreters and you got your**
569 **paper clips and you put them on to that there [the interpretation matching sheet].**
570 **Erm what I'd love to know is erm again, with this activity, out of ten how**
571 **challenging or useful was this? So how**
572
573 BD/BE?: Erm
574
575 **Me: was it like really difficult to match them? Was it really easy to match them? Was it**
576 **the right level of challenge because you could match a few and be certain on a few**
577 **but a few were quite hard? What do you reckon?**
578
579 BE: It wasn't difficult
580
581 **Me: You found it quite easy?**
582
583 BE: Yeah
584
585 **Me: Quite happy. Quite easy**
586
587 BE: Yeah
588
589 **Me: Yourself?**
590
591 BF: Yeah err out of ten I would probably say on, it was quite easy, I'd give it like a one in
592 easy. And erm
593
594 BE: Oh yeah [undiscernible word/s] me too
595
596 BF: Yeah
597
598 **Me: Was it too easy?**
599
600 BF: I wouldn't say too easy
601

602 BE: It wasn't too easy
603
604 BF: [Yeah/It]
605
606 BE: because, at the beginning, I fort erm because I'm at the back and I couldn't quite
607 hear well, erm I didn't think you had to go around twice and that kind of confused
608 me until someone said
609
610 **Me: [Laughs] Like, 'Why are you going round again?'. Ok erm how about yourself in**
611 **your group?**
612
613 BD: Erm-a I really erm-a enjoyed it but I would rate it a five out of easy because erm-a
614 you could get some of them, you could match them 'cos you were like, 'Oh this is
615 going to be easy 'cos she is a fenimist', I think it is
616
617 **Me: Mmm**
618
619 BD: 'Erm-a so she'll have, probably have, the quote about the fact that women – that she
620 finds the fact that women are invisible'. Erm-a and then once you've matched the
621 ones that you know, you could kind of go round and like properly dig into the this
622 information boxes
623
624 **Me: Ok**
625
626 BD: and you can be like, 'Erm-a ah this, this man says he often likes something to do with
627 churches; oh, this quote has the word "church" in it. They might match'
628
629 **Me: Ok. Ok. So you could pick up certain**
630
631 BD: Yeah
632
633 **Me: clues**
634
635 BD: And it was nice to go round and pick up little snippets of people's conversation of
636 what they thought
637
638 **Me: Mmm**
639
640 BD: and you could think, 'Ah. I think differently to that. But yeah'.
641
642 **Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah. No brilliant, brilliant. Erm so coming down next one is this one**
643 **here. So I loved doing this with you, and you blew my mind actually because all**
644 **that is is a simple picture isn't it?**
645
646 BD: Mmmhmm
647
648 BF: Mmmhmm

649

650 **Me:** Hand. Heart. Three lines. But lots of different people came up with different ideas.

651 Erm so, you know, is this God's hand? Is this human's hand? Is this about love? Is

652 this about respect? Is this about something different? Erm and I've done this with

653 erm one other class, who said, 'Well yeah this – this is about courage and being

654 courageous and being brave'. And it's really interesting because it's just a simple

655 picture isn't it

656

657 **BD:** Yeah

658

659 **BF:** Mmm

660

661 **Me:** and different ideas

662

663 **BD:** [Erm/I?] I was thinking that maybe what you could do is, maybe to make it bit better

664 is that the teacher could give what they thought it was-was and then you can

665 compare it to the children who are going to be many years younger than them them

666

667 **Me:** Ahhh

668

669 **BD:** And you can see what they thought because the teacher's older and will know so-

670 some things that the children don't know. And it will be really interesting to see that

671

672 **Me:** That would be really interesting 'cos that links to the other activities doesn't it?

673 Different people, different times, growing up in different ways, interpreting that

674 differently

675

676 **BD:** Yeah

677

678 **Me:** That would be interesting; I might, I might do that in future ones. Yeah, thank you.

679 So, as a teacher, and a researcher, what I was trying to see was if I gave this to a

680 Year Five class as a starter – one image, different interpretations, why might that

681 be? – can they then apply that to a text? One text. Different meanings. Why might

682 that be? Erm do you think that was useful in doing that or not?

683

684 **BD:** I loved it

685

686 **BE/BF?:** Mmm

687

688 **BD:** 'cos you learnt what other people thought and especially some of the erm answers. I

689 liked the fact that someone said erm-a, 'It the heart could mean Jesus'.

690

691 **Me:** Mmm

692

693 **BD:** And someone else said, 'Oh the heart could mean respect'

694

695 **Me:** Mmm. Was it useful, in your opinion, in going from our thinking here [shows the
696 icon starter image] to why different people might read the parable differently?
697
698 **BE:** Yeah
699
700 **BF:** Yeah
701
702 **BD:** Yeah
703
704 **BF:** Yes
705
706 **Me:** Could you explain?
707
708 **BF:** Erm
709
710 **Me:** You seemed quite sure about that which is great. So I'd love to know in what
711 ways?
712
713 **BF:** Mmm
714
715 **Me:** I'll show you that in case it's useful [shows page of workbook]. So we did lots of
716 thinking about what this might mean, why different people might interpret that
717 differently. How do you think that was useful in thinking, 'Oh ok. Well if people
718 think that means something different because of this, that makes sense why
719 different people read the parable differently'
720
721 **BF:** Mmm
722
723 **Me:** So in what way? For you
724
725 **BF:** Erm people probably find it like careful [?] and it's kinda fun to see what other
726 people think about it. And erm yeah
727
728 **Me:** Ok. Yeah
729
730 **BE:** Erm I thought that it's kind of like...I forgot what I was gonna say
731
732 **Me:** Alright. I want to jump into the golden question now. So, the second lesson – and
733 in fact the first lesson was building up to this – why do you think different people
734 interpret the parable differently?
735
736 **BD:** Can I read it out? What I wrote
737
738 **Me:** Can you give it in a really, like, the main takeaway?
739
740 **BD:** Erm
741

742 **Me:** Just because I'm gonna read that this evening

743

744 BD: Yeah. Erm-a well-a I thought t- that it's because people are born in different places

745 and different times so they would have experienced different things earlier or later

746 in life. So they would have a different intake on it. Like I think if you gave that to a

747 some like grandparents, they might have something different to the children

748

749 **Me:** Mmm

750

751 BD: or the parents might have something different to the grandparents. So it would be

752 really interesting to see, 'cos someone's older, they have a different, like a totally

753 different view to someone who's, like, a child

754

755 **Me:** Yeah, brilliant. Thank you – I love that answer. Boys? Why do you think different

756 people interp- this text differently? Why do you think it means different things?

757

758 BF: Erm because we're all built differently and we all have different mind and we all

759 think different things

760

761 **Me:** Ok, thank you

762

763 BE: Yeah people have different opinions and if everyone's just all the same, and have all

764 the same answers, what's the point?

765

766 **Me:** Mmm

767

768 BE: And it'll just be boring if everyone's the same and has all the same answers because

769 you won't get to hear other people's opinions on different things and it will be one

770 big same thing

771

772 **Me:** Yeah, yeah. Thank you. Erm, so, we're coming towards the end of the. the second

773 lesson questions. Is there anything in that lesson that you think didn't help you

774 learn?

775

776 BD: Erm-a I think it didn't really help me learn, it's just I would quite like of you to given

777 us the answers for what the thing

778

779 **Me:** Oh the answers – the matching

780

781 BD: for the matching

782

783 **Me:** Yeah

784

785 BD: erm-a just to see if erm-a 'cos I think it would been interesting, like, if it was Martin

786 Luther King had been matched with something that I had thought differently.

787

788 **Me:** Mmm

789

790 BD: It would be quite interesting to be, 'Oh', to be, to erm see that

791

792 **Me: Yeah. Well after the interview, if you still want to know, I'll I'll tell you what the**

793 **answers are if you'd like. Erm boys, were there anything that you thought, 'Yeah,**

794 **yeah those bits didn't really help me learn. They weren't really useful in that**

795 **lesson'**

796

797 BE: No

798

799 BF: No

800

801 **Me: No – all good? Ok**

802

803 BE: I might[?] have said there is no right or wrong answer for the opinion ones

804

805 **Me: It's interesting isn't it**

806

807 BE: Yeah

808

809 **Me: It's really interesting**

810

811 BE: Because it's *your* opinion

812

813 **Me: Yeah but a question then, and I-I asked this to one of the tables at the front. If it's**

814 **your opinion that matters, what if I had a friend who read this text and says, 'Ok.**

815 **This is the Parable of the Good Samaritan. I think it means I need to punch my**

816 **brother in the face'. And they say, 'Well it's my opinion'. Is that right?**

817

818 BE: No

819

820 BD: No

821

822 BF: No

823

824 **Me: But**

825

826 BD: I mean an opinion

827

828 **Me: Why not?**

829

830 BD: is fine if it's not something silly, like, if erm-a the, I mean, that is kinda just a silly

831 thing to say. But if it was like a proper opinion like, 'I think this *because*', and then

832 you give a reason why you say that. I think it'd be – if it's someone did say that, I

833 think it would need, you would need to know *why* they thought that

834

835 **Me:** Yeah. But, you know, you know, that's a side question – we could go on with that
836 for a long time. But I suppose it raises the question, like, where does right or wrong
837 interpretation start? Kind of thing. Erm is there anything else that you'd like to
838 mention about the lessons? Either a question I haven't asked, or anything that you
839 think, 'Oh yeah, I'd like to to say this, sir'?

840

841 BD/BE?: Erm

842

843 BF: Erm. The lesson was really good; I enjoyed it

844

845 **Me:** Oh I'm pleased you liked it

846

847 BD: Yeah. I liked the fact 'cos sometimes I find books – you know you have RE books,
848 English books, Maths books – there's *a lot* of books. I prefer, I loved that fact that it
849 was all in like, you could just turn it for the lesson

850

851 **Me:** Mmm

852

853 BD: and then you could have like a RE folder. And you just put it in your folder

854

855 **Me:** Ok

856

857 BD: Rather than having to write it all down in your book

858

859 **Me:** Oh thank you

860

861 BD: 'Cos it got quite h- erm-a it gets quite hard when you've got to write it all down or
862 draw lines and things

863

864 **Me:** Yeah

865

866 BD: when you can just have a fol like that and slot it in like a fol- folder

867

868 **Me:** So you quite liked the workbook? And

869

870 BD: Yeah

871

872 **Me:** and the different activities. Brilliant. Erm do you feel you know more about how
873 different people read and interpret parables through these lessons?

874

875 BF: Yeah

876

877 BD: Yeah I'd have never thought about erm-a like thought that deeply before

878

879 **Me:** Oh nice. Nice. Erm do you think it's an important thing to learn about in RE? That
880 different people might read a text differently?

881

882 BE and BF: Yes
883
884 BD: Yeah
885
886 **Me: Why do you think that's important?**
887
888 BF: Because people have like different thoughts and then it's nice to know what they
889 think
890
891 **Me: Ok. Nice**
892
893 BD/BE?: Yeah
894
895 **Me: [Ok/lovely?]**
896
897 BD: I love the fact, one of my favourite things that we do in the class erm-a is that you
898 get to share your thoughts. Erm-a so I li- I like doing that
899
900 **Me: Yeah. And that's really key isn't it? Just like time to discuss**
901
902 BD: Yeah 'cos otherwise you just got, you only know your own thoughts and maybe the
903 person you talk next to. And then you kind of think, 'Oh I wish I knew this person's
904 thoughts as well',
905
906 **Me: Yeah**
907
908 BD: and more people's thoughts on it 'cos otherwise it just, you're like, 'Oh I haven't got
909 very much information about how other people thought the lesson went
910
911 **Me: Mmm**
912
913 BD: compared to me'
914
915 **Me: Yeah. Fab. A few more questions – thank you for your patience. It-it's late in the**
916 **day, and you've worked hard so thank you. Erm**
917
918 BE/BF?: [whispers] As long as it gets me out of the classroom
919
920 **Me: have you done anything in RE where you've looked at different interpretations**
921 **before?**
922
923 BF: Mmm. No
924
925 BD: No I don't think so. We-we just do the parable. Learn about the parable
926
927 BF: Well we have we-we have sometimes
928

929 BE: Yeah
 930
 931 BF: but not like we'll sometimes but not all of the the time
 932
 933 BD: Yeah
 934
 935 BF: It's like the bible how it's wr- erm written differently and then
 936
 937 **Me: Oh ok. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Sure**
 938
 939 BF: Yeah
 940
 941 BD: Yeah sometimes I feel like that, erm-a, erm-a that the RE curricu- curriculum is quite
 942 limited compared to English and Maths because erm-a we have we did erm
 943 Christianity and the story of Moses when we'd already learnt about that a couple of
 944 years ago. And I was like, 'But I already know this'. I wish there was more to learn
 945 about. So I feel like it's nice to be able to do the interpretation thing with the
 946 parables
 947
 948 **Me: Yeah. Sure. Sure. Thank you. Ok, a few more questions. Erm, are there any**
 949 **questions that you still have about this parable or interpretation?**
 950
 951 BD: Mmm
 952
 953 BE: No
 954
 955 BF: No
 956
 957 BE: No
 958
 959 BD: No
 960
 961 BE: not really
 962
 963 **Me: Cool. Erm in your opinion... – in fact, there's only two more questions – in your**
 964 **opinion, out of everything we did in Lesson One, and everything we did in Lesson**
 965 **Two, what do you think was the most important part for your own thinking?**
 966
 967 BF: Erm probably the looking at the interpretations
 968
 969 **Me: Ok – could you explain why?**
 970
 971 BD: I like
 972
 973 BF: Erm because you get to look at what other people think
 974
 975 **Me: Thank you [?]**

976

977 BF: sometimes helpful

978

979 **Me: Yeah, yeah**

980

981 BD: I like the fact that in a lot of the activities, you got to give your own opinion. You

982 didn't have to just sit and think with those thoughts; you can write them, say them

983 and I like how you gave us thirty seconds to think, then thirty seconds to talk

984

985 **Me: Mmm**

986

987 BD: 'cos otherwise it's like, 'Thirty seconds to talk'

988

989 **Me: And you're like err**

990

991 BD: and you spend about twenty of those seconds thinking, 'Mmmm'. And then you only

992 have like ten seconds to talk and you're like, 'Oh. I wish I had had more time'

993

994 **Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. Thank you. Erm sir for you, out of everything we did, what**

995 **was the most useful for you?**

996

997 BE: Erm this one

998

999 **Me: Ok so the one where you were looking at the interpretations**

1000

1001 BE: Mmmhmm

1002

1003 **Me: erm, I'm just speaking this out loud just so I know what it is on the thing.**

1004

1005 BE: Yeah

1006

1007 **Me: Erm so you had the different interpretations. You were saying whether you agreed**

1008 **or disagreed and you gave your answer**

1009

1010 BE: Yeah

1011

1012 **Me: Can you tell me why?**

1013

1014 BE: Erm well because erm you get to write down your opinion on what, if you strongly

1015 agree, agree, unsure, disagree or strongly disagree. Well whoever's reading it they'll

1016 know what your opinion is

1017

1018 **Me: Yeah**

1019

1020 BE: and yeah

1021

1022 **Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Definitely**

1023

1024 BE: Yeah

1025

1026 **Me:** and I like the fact that you can do this on your own, because if you disagreed with

1027 what you decided as a group, you could write what you thought now. Final

1028 question then, is there anything else that you'd like to mention about the lessons

1029 or parables[?]?

1030

1031 BD: Mmm they were really fun

1032

1033 **Me:** I'm glad you liked it

1034

1035 BD: Erm-a and that I liked the fact with act, with the one where you had to take them off

1036 that you got to move up and walk round the room

1037

1038 **Me:** Mmm

1039

1040 BD: 'Cos sometimes in lessons you get like sore legs 'cos you're just

1041

1042 **Me:** [Laughs] Yeah

1043

1044 BD: writing, writing, writing. Learning, writing. And it's nice to be able to get up to do an

1045 activity, rather than doing the activity sat down

1046

1047 **Me:** Mmm

1048

1049 BF: Mmm

1050

1051 **Me:** Anything else, boys?

1052

1053 BF: Erm I enjoyed learning about it 'cos it's like, I liked in, I liked learning about the

1054 parable

1055

1056 **Me:** Ok

1057

1058 BE: Mmm. Erm I think erm it was quite fun because erm like [pupil BD's name omitted]

1059 said, if you're just sitting...[pauses as realises said pupil's name on recording]

1060

1061 **Me:** That's fine

1062

1063 BE: like erm

1064

1065 **Me:** I just won't write it

1066

1067 BE: like she said erm instead of always just sitting there with a pen doing anything, you

1068 can get up around the room, move around and do different things like when you do

1069 something fun it's better; it helps me learn better

1070

1071 **Me: Nice. I think it does for all of us doesn't it? Ok, I'm gonna press stop.**

1072

1073 [End of recording]

School C
Pupil Focus Group One (C1)
In person
Date: Thursday 17th March 2022
Time: 13:16
Length: 49:44

- 1 **Me:** **Ok. Well thank you for joining me, everyone. As I said, I've got a few questions erm**
2 **just to hear your views on how useful you thought the lessons were. Erm so before**
3 **today, had you heard about the parables before?**
4
5 CA: Erm no
6
7 CC: Yeesss?
8
9 **Me:** **You hadn't**
10
11 CA/CB/CC?: The pa-?
12
13 **Me:** **The parables**
14
15 CC: Erm no
16
17 CA: I have erm 'cos like some RE lessons we've done it
18
19 **Me:** **Ok erm and can you tell me what parables you have looked at before?**
20
21 CA: Erm well so we've looked at the Parable of the Good Samaritan before. We've
22 looked at the erm the Parable of Barabbas the tax – wait, I think it was the tax
23 collector. You know
24
25 **Me:** **Ok**
26
27 CA: the one that where Jesus invited all-a erm Jesus wanted to stay at his house 'cos he
28 collected taxes and he changed his life round
29
30 **Me:** **Yeah**
31
32 CA: and ah I keep thinking of Gospel of Matthew now
33
34 **Me:** **Ok**
35
36 CA: for some reason, 'cos I've heard it a lot. But I don't don't know any others
37
38 **Me:** **Sure**
39
40 CA: Other

41

42 **Me:** Thank you. Thank you. Erm so I'd love to know, if I start with you sir, erm what is a,

43 **for you, what is a parable?**

44

45 CC: Well, I think, probably like erm maybe like a story

46

47 **Me:** Mmmhmm

48

49 CC: that like maybe happened like maybe, a that was a bit important that happened like

50 quite long ago. And that sometime maybe, like, long ago Jesus used to tell erm like

51 to his followers

52

53 **Me:** Yeah. Ok. Is there anything you both would like to add to that, you know, story

54 **that Jesus told to his followers long ago? Yep**

55

56 CB: Erm like [name of pupil CC omitted] blah erm said erm there they Jesus tells erm the

57 followers the story – oh all the different stories – and erm maybe he they get writ

58 wrote in a book maybe

59

60 **Me:** Mmm

61

62 CB: like in a bible

63

64 **Me:** Yeah, yeah

65

66 CB: to spread around the world

67

68 **Me:** Yeah sure. So yeah. So Jesus told them to his disciples

69

70 CB: Yeah

71

72 **Me:** **and then they were later on written in the bible**

73

74 CB: Yeah

75

76 **Me:** **for others to read. Yeah**

77

78 CA: So, I think Jesu- err so parables are simple stories err told by Jesus of God's, like, erm

79 about God, which I remember that 'cos you put the words on the board

80

81 **Me:** [Laughs]

82

83 CA: at the first, erm on the first bit of the session. Also, erm, so they always had a

84 meaning behind them. Like the Good Samaritan is about, firstly I think it's about

85 putting differences aside and just helping them like God and Jesus do to people

86

87 **Me:** Mmm

88

89 CA: Erm because well like differences don't always matter; this parable is a perfect
90 example
91

92 **Me: That's great – thank you. Thank you so much. So, my next question then is gonna**
93 **be quite broad. So I'll I'll give quite a broad question and then we'll go kind of step-**
94 **by-step, lesson by lesson ok. And at[?] at that point, I'll invite you to look through**
95 **your workbooks. Erm, but just have a moment to think now. What – we had two**
96 **lessons – what did they make you think about? And is there anything that you**
97 **think you now think differently or have learnt because of those two lessons this**
98 **morning? So have a bit of a think. I'll say those again. You know, is there anything**
99 **that you've learnt or anything this morning that's made you think differently?**
100 **Would you like to go first?**
101

102 CC: Erm yeah. It's made me like, well I learnt that just because like, I dunno, maybe your
103 friend or someone. Just because they don't like someone, doesn't mean you can like,
104 like it doesn't mean you have to don't like not like them and yeah
105

106 **Me: Yeah. Ok thank you**
107

108 CB: Yeah like he said. Erm and also it, like – it's hard to pronounce. If, like, you don't
109 need to be someone you're not just so you make the other person happy like in this.
110 It was like this man, who turned out to be Jesus I think, erm helped a man. This man
111 who really hurt himself erm even though he, they, them two religions fight a bit
112

113 **Me: Ok. Yeah so that's what you picked out and what you thought about. Yep**
114

115 CA: Well, it made me think differently of mainly this parable because, well, I always
116 thought of it as like erm just, whenever I was like hear about this, the the phrase,
117 'Don't be – don't try to be someone you're not', always came to mind. But now I sort
118 of understand why that, why that's there. And I understand how much, like how
119 much this the Good Samaritan sacrificed to help that man. Because if his like, maybe
120 his culture or like the other Samaritans found out, they might be really angry
121

122 **Me: Mmm**
123

124 CA: because err like they, so, since their like they believe there's like, they both...the
125 Jews think that Samaritans are worshipping God the wrong way, and the Samaritans
126 think the Jews are worshipping God the wrong way. Personally, I think that there's
127 no wrong right way or wrong way to worship God. It's just...well you've just got to
128 worship him, basically
129

130 **Me: Ok. Thank you**
131

132 CA: [Undiscernible word/s] I think
133

134 **Me:** Yeah thank you so much. Erm, and you know, interesting thinking about what
 135 we're thinking about today, that you've all taken something different from from
 136 that lesson, which is fab. So, erm so Lesson One. So the very first lesson, we had
 137 the question: 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?'.
 138 So I'm gonna start with – you might want to turn over the page in your workbook –
 139 this page here
 140
 141 **CC:** To
 142
 143 **Me:** this page here
 144
 145 **CC:** yes
 146
 147 **Me:** So, this was one of the first things we did. And, obviously, we only had an hour
 148 lesson, and so I was interested to know should I include this part or not? So I read
 149 it once as a class, and then I gave you the opportunity to read it yourself and
 150 highlight different bits. My question is, how useful was this part of the lesson? And
 151 would it have been missed if it just wasn't included? So how useful do you think
 152 this was for you in your learning and understanding and thinking about the
 153 parable? Would you like to go first this time?
 154
 155 **CA:** Erm well since it is like basically a sort of shorter, little bit less detailed version of the
 156 Parable of erm the Good Samaritan, erm I think it was actually really helpful 'cos
 157 people understood what the parable was if they didn't know it. And also, you got to
 158 think, 'What, well, this doesn't make sense; what could I do to, like, what maybe it
 159 should've said', or, like, 'I can't believe that they did that' or something. Like, erm,
 160 'cos you told me that I could add a bit, like, erm I think someone should of said
 161
 162 **Me:** Yeah, yeah, yeah
 163
 164 **CA:** something
 165
 166 **Me:** Yeah
 167
 168 **CA:** So I thought it was really helpful to lots of people, including me as well, because,
 169 well, I haven't heard, I didn't, well since today I haven't heard this parable in quite a
 170 while
 171
 172 **Me:** Mmm
 173
 174 **CA:** to be honest like three years or something. So, erm, to hear it again is actually quite
 175 really helpful 'cos you und- 'cos we understand *what* we're actually talking and
 176 learning about
 177
 178 **Me:** Mmm. I suppose it'd be hard to think about what the Parable of the Good
 179 Samaritan means if we didn't actually have a look and
 180

181 CA: Yeah
182
183 **Me: hear the story. Anything for you?**
184
185 CB: Yeah like he said, erm it helped me, it refreshed my mind with it. And I've I've
186 highlighted quite a lot and because it stood out to me and it just helped me
187 throughout the lessons. Knowing what happens erm to that man and who helped
188 him. Erm and that it just[?] refreshed my mind and I-I forgot that two people erm
189 walked by and ignored him. But then I, I think I remembered the only donkey bit. But
190 then someone, the Samaritan, erm walked by and stopped and put others before
191 himself
192
193 **Me: Ok. So is there the sense that it helped you refresh the story**
194
195 CB: Yeah
196
197 **Me: but also pick up on some of those finer details**
198
199 CB: Yeah
200
201 **Me: by getting to look closely?**
202
203 CB: Mmmhmm
204
205 **Me: Yeah? Ok – thank you**
206
207 CC: Like what she said, but basically 'cos, like, it made like since it was like, 'Ah it is'. It
208 was just, basically, just like see, 'Ah it is', it just like – I don't know how to explain it,
209 but...yeah I dunno how to explain it
210
211 **Me: That's fine. Shall I come back to yourself, and then if you can think of something**
212 **then you'd want to add then please do. Yeah anything else?**
213
214 CB: And it's much easier having it in front of you, rather than on the like the board
215
216 **Me: Mmm**
217
218 CB: because you can actually see it and you can always just come back to it and ref-, like,
219 I said refresh your mind
220
221 **Me: Yeah, yeah**
222
223 CB: and gs-s- because if it's on the board, I sometimes forget what has been said, then I
224 struggle a little bit. But then, having it in front of you all times it's really helpful
225
226 **Me: So you could refer to it**
227

228 CB: Mmmhmm
 229
 230 **Me: Yeah. Ok. Yes**
 231
 232 CC: So yeah, as I said, erm basically I said [?], 'Ah you can actually like see what we
 233 thought and everything'
 234
 235 **Me: Mmm. Mmm. Erm that's brilliant. So what I'm hearing is you found this quite**
 236 **useful**
 237
 238 CB: Yeah
 239
 240 **Me: and you think I should keep that part of the lesson in**
 241
 242 CC: Yeah
 243
 244 **Me: Erm is there anything else to add?**
 245
 246 CA: Erm also erm this also helped with the like questions in err part two of the, like,
 247 second lesson. 'Cos some of the questions like err when you know that a priest and
 248 the Levite that erm both worship God, know the ways of God, loving, kind. And they
 249 see this beaten man – just walk past him. 'None of my business, thank you'.
 250
 251 CB: [Laughs]
 252
 253 **Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah**
 254
 255 CA: It's like it's really surprising, to be honest. And you, erm, you've you just think, like,
 256 why would you do that? Would God and Jesus be happy with you just,
 257
 258 **Me: Mmm**
 259
 260 CA: erm, carrying on with a, with a skip, a jump and a hop past the
 261
 262 **Me: [Laughs]**
 263
 264 CB: [Laughs]
 265
 266 CA: half-dead beaten man on the road?
 267
 268 **Me: [Laughs] A kind of triple jump, yeah**
 269
 270 CA: Well they could just start singing, it's all from Pinocchio now
 271
 272 CB: [Laughs]
 273

274 CA: I must say it's ridiculous – you just think that they would actually take some notice of
 275 this half-dead man
 276
 277 **Me: Yeah**
 278
 279 CA: laying on the side of the road
 280
 281 **Me: Yeah**
 282
 283 CA: And then, the his en- – the man's basically enemy, just helps him. What, like what's
 284 wrong with you priest and Levite? Like
 285
 286 **Me: Mmm**
 287
 288 CA: shouldn't you really be following the ways of God and his guidance?
 289
 290 **Me: Yeah**
 291
 292 CA: And Jesus' example?
 293
 294 **Me: It raises some interesting questions of why the priest and the Levite**
 295
 296 CB: [Still laughing]
 297
 298 **Me: You set her off now**
 299
 300 CA: [Laughs]
 301
 302 CB: [Laughs]
 303
 304 **Me: Erm it's a really interesting questions of a) why the priest and the Levite would**
 305 **have not [gone on? Undiscernible due to laughing], but also perhaps why Jesus**
 306 **picked those two particular characters?**
 307
 308 CA: Yeah
 309
 310 **Me: Ok. So we moved on then to this activity here**
 311
 312 CA: It's ok [speaking to pupil CB who still laughing]
 313
 314 [Pause whilst pupil CB collects herself]
 315
 316 **Me: We moved on then to this activity here, ok. Erm, so...again, our big question is:**
 317 **what should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan? This activity here**
 318 **and, at the moment, I'm[?] just thinking about – no I'm think- I'm thinking about**
 319 **all of it actually – no, let's split it up. So you know first time, we just had the cards**
 320 **and you put them in the right order**

321

322 CB: Yeah

323

324 CA: Mmmhmm

325

326 **Me: Tell me about that. Erm was it interesting? Useful? Challenging? Difficult? Just**

327 **completely open, just that activity there, where you were putting the different**

328 **cards under the four headings. Erm, yeah. I'd love to know, what did you think?**

329 **reflections?**

330

331 CB: I thought it was a bit, like, a bit challenging at the same time as, like, interesting,

332 because I didn't know all them things about it. And then, it was also challenging

333 trying to look where they go and trying to think where

334

335 **Me: Mmm**

336

337 CB: abouts they should go on the piece of paper

338

339 **Me: Yeah**

340

341 CB: so yeah

342

343 **Me: Sure. Sure. Erm sir**

344

345 CC: Like what she said, but, erm, basically 'cos I it was quite challenging because, I mean,

346 like, as it was like new to you and you didn't really know, like, those kind of things,

347 erm it was kind of hard to think of like why you agree

348

349 **Me: Mmm**

350

351 CC: and like if you agree or not

352

353 **Me: Do you think – and this is a genuine question – when you were doing that, were**

354 **you able to seriously think about what was on the cards? Or do you think – and I**

355 **might be completely wrong here – or was it because people were thinking so much**

356 **where they *went*, you were thinking less about what was on the cards and maybe**

357 **looking for**

358

359 CB: Yeah

360

361 CA: Yes

362

363 CC: Yeah

364

365 **Me: key words?**

366

367 CA: sometimes a little bit

368
369 **Me:** **Ok**
370
371 CA: Erm I thought it was quite interesting and challenging
372
373 **Me:** **Mmmhmm**
374
375 CA: It was interesting for what everyone, like erm, interesting to find out what
376 everything, everyone had, like, everyone's opinion. Everyone why everyone thought
377 about where the card should go
378
379 **Me:** **Yep**
380
381 CA: Luckily for me, my team erm my group basically always agreed on everything. But if
382 they didn't agree – which sometimes my group actually didn't agree, erm err with
383 each other – then where would you put it if like half of them think this, and then
384 another, the other half think that? Where are you supposed to put it? So it was quite
385 challenging with the cards
386
387 **Me:** **Yeah**
388
389 CA: But, like, once – like you said – you know sometimes we sort of thought a bit too
390 much about where they should go
391
392 **Me:** **Mmm**
393
394 CA: without actually thinking about what's on, properly on the cards
395
396 **Me:** **Yeah**
397
398 CA: and then thinking about that. Just thinking about, 'Ooh I think this should go in
399 meaning when it's actually about characters'
400
401 **Me:** **Yeah**
402
403 CA: or something
404
405 **Me:** **And thinking about that then, comes onto another question, I could of given this to**
406 **you to do individually on your own, or I could of given it to you to do in in groups**
407 **erm like I did. Which do you think would have been better for you? To keep it in**
408 **groups or to have done it on your own?**
409
410 CC: I probably think to probably do it in groups because you get way more work done
411 and if you discuss it with your group, it might actually be a bit easier
412
413 **Me:** **Yeah. Ok. Ok. So you can bounce and share ideas off each other**
414

415 CC: Yeah
 416
 417 CB: Like he said as well, with that it was really hard to write, just like, to think on the top
 418 of your head how
 419
 420 **Me: Mmm**
 421
 422 CB: and also with, I would rather do it maybe in twos because it was, it would of been
 423 much easier b-with to be able to write places because people kept on writing the
 424 same things I ne- wanted to write before me. In the same place
 425
 426 **Me: Oh ok. Yeah**
 427
 428 CB: And yeah
 429
 430 **Me: Ok. So moving onto the next part then. When you had that opportunity to write**
 431 **your different thoughts down,**
 432
 433 CB: Yeah
 434
 435 **Me: erm, did that help you think about different ideas or aspects of that parable? Erm**
 436 **'cos I didn't want to just say, 'Oh – the parable could mean this. Everyone agree?'**
 437
 438 CB/CC?: Yeah [at same time]
 439
 440 **Me: But to give you different cards that had different ideas and different statements**
 441
 442 CB: Yeah
 443
 444 **Me: Erm did that – do you feel – well, to what extent did it help you think about the**
 445 **parable more?**
 446
 447 CA: Personally, I think it was one of the best bits of the lesson, both the lessons, because
 448 it *really* helped me think about well, what I thought about those
 449
 450 **Me: Mmmhmm**
 451
 452 CA: and what my group; I was able to read all of my group's thoughts on it and sort of
 453 pick those little bits of detail
 454
 455 **Me: Mmm**
 456
 457 CA: to create another bit and then another erm
 458
 459 CB: [Laughs]
 460

461 CA: and then, erm, it, well it, I just thought it went really well because like sometimes,
 462 sure, people would say, '*Get out of my way*'. Or, 'cos it was all one big bit of paper
 463

464 **Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah**
 465

466 CA: It's like is it gonna be facing one way, 'cos you can't just write it, write it sideways or
 467 upside down. But, otherwise I thought it was absolutely an amazing part because it,
 468 you get to find out what you think – truly – and yet, find out what everyone else
 469

470 **Me: Mmm**
 471

472 CA: thinks. Which is what, basically what God and Jesus would want; they would want
 473 everyone to respect each other's opinions wi- and just respect, yeah, everything
 474

475 **Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm pleased you said that because, you know, I think one of the**
 476 **benefits of working together is just what you said. You can see what other people**
 477 **have thought as well**
 478

479 CA: Mmmhmm
 480

481 **Me: Erm is there anything else that you'd like to mention about how this activity was**
 482 **you erm in your group?**
 483

484 CC: Erm well, like, at first, we were like a bit confused. But then, like, we started like
 485 going along with it 'cos then we realised that, like, if you, like 'cos like obviously, 'cos
 486 I saw like some like a lot of people, they were like hmm like. I don't know what to say
 487 it like. Erm thinking about more about which card they were gonna choose
 488

489 **Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah**
 490

491 CC: 'cos like some of the questions were quite hard to actually like think about
 492

493 **Me: Yeah. And I-I kinda noticed that there was kind of people like looking at all the**
 494 **cards, and when they focussed on one it was like, 'Oh ok – yeah', and then it helps.**
 495 **Yes – final one on this part**
 496

497 CB: I thought it was a bit tricky because, but fun at the same time. B- I thought it was
 498 tricky because you it struggles to – since you had the cards, it's hard to like not write
 499 what the cards say
 500

501 **Me: Mmm**
 502

503 CB: Erm and I struggled with one of them on there. And I, I had some inspiration from
 504 the boards erm from one of them on there. And...and erm...yeah. 'Cos [or just?] erm
 505 and then fun part and really, well it all was fun. And then the like m-most exciting
 506 part was seeing what everyone else wrote down about it and yeah
 507

508 **Me:** **Ok – thank you**
509
510 CA: I agree so much with that
511
512 **Me:** **So, that was Lesson One and then in your workbooks you then had the chance to**
513 **think about, ‘Ok – this is what I thought it could be about**
514
515 CB: Yeah
516
517 **Me:** **at the start of the lesson. Have I changed my mind? What should we think about**
518 **the Good Samaritan?’. So, I won’t talk that much about that at this stage because,**
519 **erm, you know, you’ve kind of written your thoughts down any way. So I can kind**
520 **of have a look at those at a later date. Ok – next one. In the second lesson, we**
521 **thought about: why might different people interpret the Parable of the Good**
522 **Samaritan differently? So, we started with this image**
523
524 CB: Yeah
525
526 **Me:** **What I was trying to explore with you, and again it was a test erm because it’s**
527 **quite deep thinking that we were doing today – was one image, everyone had**
528 **different ideas. Why might different people have different ideas? Can we apply**
529 **that thinking then to, ‘Ok. Just like – one image, different people have different**
530 **ideas – it’s the same for this parable’**
531
532 CB: Yeah
533
534 **Me:** **You’re reading the same story, you’re reading the same story, you’re reading the**
535 **same story [alluding to each pupil of FG in turn]. Everyone might have different**
536 **ideas what it might mean, but why might that be the case? So that was the aim for**
537 **that lesson. So we started then – have I got it here? – with having these cards. And**
538 **we got them out, ok, so, I’d love to hear your thoughts here; how useful was this**
539 **activity for you?**
540
541 CC: Erm well I mean it was like
542
543 **Me:** **I’ll I’ll just say to the, to future Mr Parker, this is the erm interpretation card**
544 **activity. In seven. Go for it**
545
546 CC: Erm so it was like, it was a bit tricky some, like, some of it because, like, it was quite
547 hard to agree like
548
549 **Me:** **Mmm**
550
551 CC: where to, what side to put it because some people said, ‘Disagree’, some people
552 said, ‘Agree’
553
554 CB: Mmmhmm

555

556 CC: So it was just, like, quite hard to pick

557

558 **Me: Yeah. So, I'm interested by that. Why do you think different people had the**

559 **different views there?**

560

561 CC: Well everyone thinks differently and...the think of...'cos some people might think

562 that, like, completely different to other people

563

564 **Me: Mmm**

565

566 CC: because they just have different opinions

567

568 CB: Mmmhmm

569

570 **Me: Does does it surprise any of you that on your tables you might have had that**

571 **discussions and disagreement? Or was it like, 'Oh crikey. Why – why can't**

572 **everyone just agree with me?'**

573

574 CB: I thought it was quite nice to have that discussion to see what people think

575

576 **Me: Mmm**

577

578 CB: And also I found the task like...it helped a lot, but we on my- we, even though it I was

579 in a group of three, erm with two other people, it was a, we didn't get it in a line

580

581 **Me: Mmm**

582

583 CB: like we wanted to, because everyone, because we, us three were just like two of us

584 want- was like agreeing with something, and then one was just like, 'Just put that

585 over there'

586

587 **Me: [Laughs]**

588

589 CC: The exact same happened to me

590

591 CB: And yeah it was really hard

592

593 **Me: Wasn't so straight forward, was it?**

594

595 CB: It no

596

597 **Me: In terms of the cards, erm I'd love to know whether when you read these cards as**

598 **a group, did they all make sense? Or were there anything that were like, there's**

599 **like too many random words there that we don't understand? Or it's a bit too**

600 **difficult?**

601

602 CA: Well erm, personally, I thought that most of the cards make sense, especially since
603 later on we found out why the pictures of the erm random people who actually all –
604 nearly all of them – faced challenges erm through, throughout their life. Like, erm,
605 my awe-inspiring speech about err, ‘No two people walk the same path’, was
606 actually from a advert about Sky Documentaries
607

608 **Me: Nice**
609

610 CA: So, erm, so like it was really interesting to see what, not just what your group thinks,
611 but about, ‘Why do other people think?’, but like what about some role models,
612 some idols, what they think. And how you can live up to that and
613

614 **Me: Mmm**
615

616 CA: how you – if you agree with them or if you just think, ‘No. But I think sort of, that
617

618 CB: Mmm
619

620 **Me: Yeah, yeah**
621

622 CA: compared to it’
623

624 **Me: Yeah sure. Erm for for both of you, either of you, erm how did you in your group**
625 **find the actual cards. Like did they make sense? Or were there some that were like,**
626 **‘Mmm I do- I have no idea what that means’?**
627

628 CB: I thought, well, most of us three in our group
629

630 **Me: Mmmhmm**
631

632 CB: we thought we basically we knew what the wor- erm that the the cards mean. Erm
633 especially one, this one here, ‘Giving money and worn out clothes to the poor’, it
634 really, it made me feel really nice because people give things to the poor and help
635 them
636

637 **Me: Mmm**
638

639 CB: to have a good life as well
640

641 **Me: Ok. Sure – thank you. Yep**
642

643 CC: Erm I found like most of them erm like quite easy to read and like like I knew what
644 they meant and everything. It was just this erm one card that we weren’t very sure
645 about
646

647 **Me: Can you remember what that card was?**
648

649 CC: Erm I think it said something about...

650

651 CA: Was it the one where, 'Giving clothes and money to people wasn't enough and you

652 wanted to go further, like the Good Samaritan cared for them properly'. Is that it?

653

654 CC: Yeah. Yeah I think that was it like

655

656 **Me: Did you wanna have a look at the cards? And just just have a nosy**

657

658 CC: I don't know if that was it

659

660 **Me: As you do so, yes**

661

662 CA: Erm

663

664 **Me: Any other reflections?**

665

666 CA: So, erm, it's quite interesting. Like I said, it's quite interesting to see how role

667 models, famous people and idols think. It's also interesting to see – I thought of how

668 people from their time would agree, like, with erm the one that says err, 'You wou-

669 you would go further and care for someone more'. Erm well people from well, yeah

670 like the person who said that erm the quote, the quote whose erm that person

671 belong to will know the - oh honestly! Erm so, like, the person from the – err God

672 honestly – the person from our time err what erm comparing to erm to someone

673 from erm the person who well said, said the quotes

674

675 **Me: Mmmhmm**

676

677 CA: erm time. And their different opinions. It just made me really think about the

678 different times, the different cultures, the different backgrounds and experiences

679 that lead up to similarities, differences

680

681 **Me: Mmm**

682

683 CA: and unique people thinking different things

684

685 **Me: Yeah absolutely. And we'll come onto that a little bit further. Did you find it?**

686

687 CC: Err yeah

688

689 **Me: Which one was it?**

690

691 CC: Erm it was the one that says, 'The parable makes us think about an important

692 question:

693

694 **Me: Oh yeah**

695

696 CC: who are the priest and the Levites in our society today?’
697
698 **Me: Ok. So so that one, for your group, was a little bit th-the hardest one to try to**
699 **answer?**
700
701 CC: Yeah
702
703 **Me: Great. Tha- thank you, that’s really useful, ‘cos I can take that kind of feedback**
704 **forward. Ok, so we then went from that activity and thinking and, if you**
705 **remember, I invited you to then actually write your own views in, in the workbook**
706
707 CB: Yeah
708
709 **Me: to this interpreter activity. So, erm I’ll flip the question that I usually ask a little bit**
710 **round here: what do you think I was trying to get you to think about through this**
711 **activity? With the interpreter profiles around the room, what do you think was the**
712 **main thing I was trying to get you to to think about or learn?**
713
714 CB: What they, this is a guess, but maybe what they done to help people to like, and,
715 like, see what they did in their past and
716
717 **Me: Ok**
718
719 CB: Yeah
720
721 **Me: and how did that help us think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?**
722
723 CB: Erm it’s...erm...like when the man erm like got hurt, erm. I think it was him who
724
725 **Me: Oh, Martin Luther King**
726
727 CB: yeah
728
729 **Me: Yeah**
730
731 CB: who was erm like fighting against the racism and everything
732
733 **Me: Mmm**
734
735 CB: And, since that man got bullied, not bullied. Erm. Like hurt and...just hurt. Erm in th-
736 the erm par-able. It just made me think a bit about that
737
738 **Me: Oh ok. So, kind of connecting**
739
740 CB: Yeah
741
742 **Me: Martin Luther King, his experiences and the bit that stood out for *him* in the text**

743

744 CB: Yeah

745

746 Me: Just like when we were taking our orange highlighter and was like, 'What

747

748 CB: Mm

749

750 Me: stands out for us?'. If Martin Luther King was to do this activity, he might be like,

751 'Oh it's that because of'

752

753 CB: Yeah

754

755 Me: Yeah. Yes

756

757 CC: Erm maybe like, the reason you probably like wanted us to do this maybe because

758 for us to think about like what they had to go through. And, so like, we like knew

759 what they had to go through and everything

760

761 Me: Mmm

762

763 CC: So

764

765 Me: And how did that – 'cos we're thinking about the Parable of the Good Samaritan

766 weren't we – so how is there a link between what they had to go through or their

767 experiences and, to use [CA's name omitted] phrase, kind of, 'Their life path'. How

768 does that link to the text –

769

770 CC: Well

771

772 Me: what we were thinking about that lesson?

773

774 CC: erm, because, like, since like they done something like for them and for like a lot of

775 people. Erm like the Good

776

777 Me: Do keep going – I'm just gonna grab something else

778

779 CC: the erm Good Samaritan, he done somethink like for one person. But, they still done

780 it, like, for like, everyone basically. 'Cos the Good Samaritan, he helped someone

781 that like, like they didn't really get on with

782

783 Me: Ok. Ok

784

785 CC: And, basically, 'cos probably Martin erm they were [?] like

786

787 Me: That's it – Luther King. Yeah

788

789 CC: Yeah. Erm he probably, like, even if he was like he had a religion and he like went
 790 against like, he didn't like, like, another religion. Well maybe like his religion didn't
 791 like another religion, he would probably, like, do that 'cos they basically went
 792 through the same thing
 793

794 **Me: Yeah. Ok. Thank you. Sir – any other points there[?]?**
 795

796 CA: Erm so well, since all of erm, like I said earlier, err it was interesting to see what all of
 797 those idols – the people – all like maybe erm these people were new to other kids;
 798 like what they did and how they're famous. And to see, like, how some of – how
 799 those cards were actually the quotes from them
 800

801 **Me: Mmm**
 802

803 CA: Erm, also, erm it was really interesting to see how, like, erm what problems they
 804 faced on, well, the path through lif-life, and how they broke free of those problems
 805 and just carried on. They, and they just persevered and they've well they've shown
 806 the world what they can do
 807

808 **Me: Mmm**
 809

810 CA: and nothings gonna stop them
 811

812 **Me: Yeah, no thank you, thank you. Ok – got about six more questions or so. Erm how**
 813 **easy was it, for you in your groups, to match these? I think we had a bit of a**
 814 **discussion. If I get my sense, and you can tell me if this was wrong for you, I got the**
 815 **sense that some of them were easy to match**
 816

817 CB: Yeah
 818

819 **Me: some of them were difficult to match**
 820

821 CB: Yeah
 822

823 CA: Mmmhmm
 824

825 **Me: Anyone want to-to add or challenge my initial ideas there?**
 826

827 CB: We found, like you said, some of them easy and some of them hard because some of
 828 them made sen- they made a lot more sense to be paired up with. And they kinda
 829 said the same thing
 830

831 **Me: Mmm**
 832

833 CB: But then some of them at, 'cos like, we only had two left but some of them were a
 834 bit tricky to like see because there was, like, two of th- those two people who done
 835 the same thing. And then you had to match that, them things up on what they done

836

837 **Me: Yeah, yeah, sure. Yep**

838

839 CC: Erm 'cos like some of them, like, basically what she said [?], like they were, like, they

840 were some of them were like simple, but then others, like, it was quite hard because,

841 I mean...to like remember. Like when we went around reading them, like, couldn't

842 really remember, like, which one was which 'cos they all done somethink good. And

843 all of them were like the good deed. So didn't really know like who done what. But

844 yeah – got through

845

846 **Me: Yeah – oh [?] thank you**

847

848 CA: Erm personally I felt it was pretty easy 'cos, like, to match them up with the quotes

849 'cos most of them said, err, like there was the quotes and then there was there.

850 Then you got the information from that, that basically well, like, since M- err Martin

851 Luther King err the one that said, erm, about racism, like people faced racism say in

852 like their path – the road that erm the Jew went across was basically the road that

853 they're following in. And and we still have like equal world. Err and he campaigned

854 against racism, so

855

856 **Me: Mmm**

857

858 CA: he was probably gonna be a match

859

860 **Me: Yep**

861

862 CA: Also, erm like there was this guy, erm there was the question, there's the thing that

863 erm there was the err – he was next to [pupil name in class omitted], you know, well

864 – yeah he was next to [pupil name in class omitted] on the wall

865

866 **Me: Mmm**

867

868 CA: You know erm

869

870 **Me: Yeah – St Augustine**

871

872 CA: Yeah. Erm

873

874 **Me: No. No it wasn't**

875

876 CA: No it was erm. Beard, like white beard

877

878 **Me: Oh Al-Adolf Jülicher**

879

880 CA: Yeah that guy

881

882 **Me: The black and white photo**

883

884 CB: Mmmhmm

885

886 CA: Err he – it said on his thing he thought that the like something about he thought that

887 the parable wasn't about God; it was about something else. And in the, there was a

888 quote that said about the the parable not being about God. And some, and

889 something else

890

891 **Me: Ok so you could see that link there**

892

893 CA: Yeah

894

895 **Me: Yes – anything else?**

896

897 CB: Also, when we we went, so when we were trying to match things up, the ones we

898 felt like hard about 'em we needed to read again. Someone would, from our group

899 of three, would go off

900

901 **Me: Mmm**

902

903 CB: and read over most of them. And then we, if we get stuck again, we'll just one of us

904 would just go over, make make sure we've got them right

905

906 **Me: Yeah. Yeah**

907

908 CB: And keep going over to make sure

909

910 **Me: That's good, good. And that's one of the reasons why I wanted you to look at all of**

911 **them first**

912

913 CB: Mmm

914

915 **Me: before you go to one and be like, 'Yeah I think that's that one'. And then you go to**

916 **someone else and you think, 'Oh dang – no it could be someone else'. Ok. So, as I**

917 **said, we started by looking at this [shows icon starter image] and...my next**

918 **question is really, at the heart of the lesson: why do *you* think different people**

919 **that parable differently? Now sir you gave a really good answer in the lesson**

920

921 CA: Yeah – about the flower and seed, wasn't it?

922

923 **Me: so I'm – yeah, ye- erm yeah. So, you know, about different people, different**

924 **backgrounds, different contexts, different journeys which shapes how they**

925 **interpret the parable, wasn't it?**

926

927 CA: Mmm

928

929 **Me:** Erm, but for both of you, I'd love to hear your thoughts erm because I didn't get a
 930 chance to ask you in the lesson. Why do *you* think different people – say, these
 931 two included [shows some of the interpreters considered in the second lesson] and
 932 people in the class – interpret this parable differently? Why do you think one text,
 933 but that person, that person, me, you might read that differently and get a
 934 different meaning?
 935

936 **CB:** Because we're all different and we all see things differently. So if we were to read
 937 that, we would all have a different, like, well we would have a different, well, in our
 938 head we will have a dif- different picture
 939

940 **Me:** Mmm
 941

942 **CB:** of like what happened. And then if you was gonna write that on a piece of paper,
 943 everyone would have a different answer normally
 944

945 **Me:** Mmm
 946

947 **CB:** because we all think differently, even though we have the same like lesson or we
 948 have, we have the same text. We all will still read it the same but we all think about
 949 it differently
 950

951 **Me:** Thank you. Sir?
 952

953 **CC:** Well, 'cos, like, I think that probably us 'cos...[undiscernible words] but 'cos we'd all
 954 like read it, like, like we all see it the same way but
 955

956 **Me:** Mmm
 957

958 **CC:** like, the way that like the, erm, like, I forgot was his name was. The person that
 959 helped
 960

961 **CA:** The Good Samaritan
 962

963 **CC:** Yeah. Erm he basically helped him. And, like, yeah. And that, like, the people that
 964 had to face like rac- racism, they had to go through that and – but they had to go
 965 through stuff different but kind of like that
 966

967 **Me:** Yeah, yeah
 968

969 **CC:** So they probably – if they were reading it, they probably see it, like, the way that
 970 maybe not other people would because they have different, like, ways of seeing it.
 971 But
 972

973 **Me:** Ok
 974

975 **CC:** they would see it a bit differently

976

977 **Me:** Thank you. Ok. I'm conscious of time, so I'm gonna go through a few more

978 questions here. Erm did your thinking about this parable change today?

979

980 CB: Yeah

981

982 **Me:** Ok. So you're straight up. Ok – in what ways?

983

984 CB: Yes because I always used to thought when we learnt about this, it was a long time

985 ago and I forgotten quite a lot about it, erm when...wait what was the question

986 again?

987

988 **Me:** Has *your* thinking about this parable changed today?

989

990 CB: Yes, because I used to think, like, there was, there was like – now I can actually see it

991 in my mind. And now I'm a bit older, I can like think about it in my head and get the

992 right idea up in my head and then if – it's really hard to explain. Erm if you want, and

993 then...and then if erm

994

995 **Me:** Do you want to have a moment to think about your answer?

996

997 CB: Yeah

998

999 **Me:** Yep

1000

1001 CA: Erm well yes my ans- my, you know, my thoughts about the Good Samaritan parable

1002 was changed. 'Cos I used to just think that it was about friendship, basically, when I

1003 was in Year One, Two and Three

1004

1005 **Me:** Mmm

1006

1007 CA: But, now I really understand that it's not just about friendship, it's about putting

1008 aside differences and tension between two people, tribes, cultures, like countries as

1009 well

1010

1011 **Me:** Yeah ok

1012

1013 CA: Even just to help each other and what they – what the Good Samaritan sacrificed.

1014 Like, maybe, the frien- like the err trust of his family and things to help that beaten

1015 man who got robbed and things

1016

1017 **Me:** Yeah. Sure, sure. And I suppose thinking that tension between people might be

1018 different in different times and places

1019

1020 CA: Yep

1021

1022 **Me:** So, it would be, that might be the reason why it's

1023

1024 CA: might be bigger. Might be like countries

1025

1026 **Me: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yep**

1027

1028 CB: I think, I think a bit of the same about C6, erm...and

1029

1030 **Me: [Laughs]**

1031

1032 CB: and when erm, like, C6 said, he always used to thinking it – think about it like

1033 differently. I done that too and now I can get the, like I said, get the right image in

1034 my head. And also I used to think it was, like, about a man who was walking on the

1035 the this path, barefooted, and then some people walked up and just started hurting

1036 the man. And then he was left on the side of the road. And then, straightaway, one

1037 person came and they went to a hospital

1038

1039 **Me: Oh ok. So it's added extra characters and extra bits**

1040

1041 CB: Yeah

1042

1043 **Me: Sure. Erm, ok. Thinking about Lesson One and Two, is there anything that you think**

1044 **didn't help you learn? Or any parts that you think, 'Actually, that wasn't so useful if**

1045 **I'm being completely honest'?**

1046

1047 CA: Erm, there was a question in it. Err you know those question boxes at the end; the

1048 six question boxes

1049

1050 CB: Oh yeah

1051

1052 **Me: Yeah**

1053

1054 CA: Yeah about, 'I agree', err 'I strongly agree', 'I strongly disagree', 'disagree' err and

1055 sort of 'unsure'

1056

1057 **Me: Yep**

1058

1059 CA: Erm the bit where there was a question, where it said err, 'Do you think we should

1060 campaign against priests and Levites to stop, like, the un- unrespected erm and just

1061 cruelty we've seen?'

1062

1063 **Me: Yeah**

1064

1065 CA: I didn't reall-, so I answered it, but I didn't really think it helped that much 'cos God,

1066 the whole religion of God and Jesus is about love, respect and friendship – our three

1067 core Christian values of our school. And saying we should campaign against holy,

1068 like, members of basically the holy church family, is a bit, you know like it sort of

1069 shifts your belief between, 'I believe in this. No – now I don't. Now I do. Now I don't'.
 1070 Sort of, in-between it
 1071
 1072 **Me: Yeah. Oh thank you. Thank you. Yep**
 1073
 1074 CB: I did like this bit of the lesson, but I found it the trickiest and it's like
 1075
 1076 **Me: So, so this is the bit**
 1077
 1078 CB: yeah
 1079
 1080 **Me: about erm ranking the interpretations**
 1081
 1082 CB: yeah
 1083
 1084 **Me: 'strongly agree', 'strongly disagree'. Ok**
 1085
 1086 CB: And like, some of them I – so most of them I said that I-I agree. But then – now I'm
 1087 thinking about it now – maybe I don't a-disagree
 1088
 1089 **Me: Yeah**
 1090
 1091 CB: And it's, like, I need to look at it once more what I didn't do. But I didn't go onto
 1092 these ones here. But these were the main ones what I struggled with throughout this
 1093 whole less- – the lessons
 1094
 1095 **Me: Sure. No thank you. Thank you. And, and sir it sounds like there was, there wasn't**
 1096 **anything for you – he's distracted, he's looking at the plane – [laughs]**
 1097
 1098 CA: [Undiscernible words – Could rupture the science building [?]]
 1099
 1100 CB: [Laughs]
 1101
 1102 **Me: Ok. We've got four minutes ok. So a few more questions. Thank you for your**
 1103 **patience; we've been here about forty-five minutes. So**
 1104
 1105 CB: Have we actually?
 1106
 1107 **Me: Yeah. Erm**
 1108
 1109 CB: It feels like twenty
 1110
 1111 CC: It really does
 1112
 1113 CA: And in the past three hours, for once I've been in a plane for a, and I've been on a
 1114 plane for a day
 1115

1116 CB: This is only? Feel fair [?] like yeah
 1117
 1118 **Me:** So erm what are your thoughts about this style of learning in RE? So I said at the
 1119 very start, I got annoyed as a teacher that it was like, 'Ok. I'm a teacher. The
 1120 Parable of the Good Samaritan means this. Tell that to your class, and if they can
 1121 parrot that back to you at the end of the lesson, that's good'
 1122
 1123 CB: Mmm
 1124
 1125 **Me:** What do you think about this style of RE where I've given most of the thinking to
 1126 you? Do you think this is good RE? Do you think this is challenging RE? Do you
 1127 think this is rubbish RE?
 1128
 1129 CC: Well, honestly like, not like, not being[?] rude to my teacher or anything but I think
 1130 that was a bit better than the normal RE I actually do
 1131
 1132 **Me:** Ok. But in but in – can you say in what ways?
 1133
 1134 CC: Yeah because like
 1135
 1136 **Me:** 'Cos I've been planning this lesson for four years and that's a lot more time than
 1137 she has so [laughs]
 1138
 1139 CA/CC?: So
 1140
 1141 CA: Cut her a little slack
 1142
 1143 CC: Erm 'cos, I'm like, I mean we got to do like a lot more stuff than we do in like erm in
 1144 our groups
 1145
 1146 **Me:** Mmm
 1147
 1148 CC: and I think that it was just fun being able to do all of that, like, stuff and a lot of
 1149 learning
 1150
 1151 **Me:** Ok. So do you think that that group work helped your learning about this?
 1152
 1153 CC: Yeah
 1154
 1155 **Me:** Brilliant. Erm so both of you, you know, this sort of – ultimately, we had lessons,
 1156 but it's about how much you've learnt
 1157
 1158 CA/CB?: Yeah
 1159
 1160 **Me:** So, for you, what are your thoughts about this style of learning for RE?
 1161

1162 CA: I think it's actually incredibly well planned, and, I know you've done it for four years,
 1163 but still. Erm it's absolutely incredible 'cos, like, sometimes teachers – they sort of
 1164 like say err, 'Answer this question', and then just like after two seconds – they just
 1165 don't give any time [?] and then, erm, the teacher just says it like. With this, you've
 1166 given time and effort in erm, like erm, te- actually teaching the lesson erm. I thought
 1167 it boded really well. And like I, I can, likewise I don't really believe in, like, any
 1168 religion but this has actually made me thought about th- Christianity *much more*
 1169 than I ever would have planned to in my life. So
 1170
 1171 **Me: Oh brilliant. Thank you**
 1172
 1173 CA: [Claps] Bravo. Bravo. Take my hat off
 1174
 1175 CB: Not like C6 said, erm about you've been planning it and it's actually really well
 1176 planned out and you've thought about it erm and how you have done it. I really like
 1177 how – normally I don't re- – normally our RE lesson goes on for one hour
 1178
 1179 **Me: Mmmhmm**
 1180
 1181 CB: not two hours. But I really liked how – I don't really see, like, a God in this sort of way
 1182 normally. But then now it's made me think more about it. And, also, I don't
 1183 normally like RE, but this lesson has really made me thought more about it and made
 1184 me more intereste- interested about it
 1185
 1186 **Me: [Undiscernible]**
 1187
 1188 CB: And it's, it's really nice and – yeah
 1189
 1190 **Me: Oh thank you. So, so I'm hearing it's – the lessons you're quite happy with and you**
 1191 **think –**
 1192
 1193 CB: Yeah
 1194
 1195 **Me: I haven't heard anything that you think, maybe a few of the cards, like, sir you**
 1196 **mentioned about that was quite a hard one to understand. But, by and large, I'm**
 1197 **getting the sense there's not anything that you think, 'This part was rubbish; get**
 1198 **rid of it'. It was like, you seem quite happy**
 1199
 1200 CC: No it was quite good
 1201
 1202 **Me: A few more questions then. Erm this one's quite short: have you ever – so we**
 1203 **looked at a text and different interpretations befo- – have you ever done that in RE**
 1204 **before?**
 1205
 1206 CB: Mmm
 1207
 1208 CA: Mmm not really. Erm like erm I think we've done the Good Samaritan

1209

1210 CB: We've done it once

1211

1212 CA: like once or twice and we've barely just – we've just thought about, 'Oh this guy was

1213 good because he showed friendship' in like Ye- Year Three

1214

1215 **Me: Ok so it's, so it's been quite narrow**

1216

1217 CA: But, but I don't, like, I know we've sort of evolved from that age, but it it's much it's

1218 – I think it's really good that erm that we've been given lots of time. And your

1219 patience is marvellously. 'Cos some people in our class are erm just straight away,

1220 when the questions like are they think a tricky questions asked they're, just, off the

1221 switch goes. And they're just like ignoring it. And when like, erm, so I thought I think

1222 like the erm, sort of this lesson sort of got people off their feet. Of- like so thinking

1223 about erm the erm the subject much more now, I think

1224

1225 **Me: Yeah ok, ok. Erm sorry to rush you both, but just for this question, have you – in RE**

1226 **– looked at different interpretations before? Is it a yes or is it a no?**

1227

1228 CB: Erm I'm not sure because we've looked at this text before. It wasn't big

1229

1230 CC: Yeah

1231

1232 CB: but we also did highlight it, but not much. And we had to a-, it was a bit tricky 'cos

1233 you had to highlight what you thought – I can't really remember – what you thought

1234 was part, a part of like Jesus' life

1235

1236 **Me: Ok**

1237

1238 CB: And erm it was really different words to what I'm used to and it's different. But then

1239 this one here, it was really – it was quite easier

1240

1241 **Me: Ok**

1242

1243 CB: to and to know what you think

1244

1245 **Me: So, in other RE lessons, have you looked at a story and been like, 'Oh look. This is**

1246 **what one person means. This is what another person means. This is what another**

1247 **person means'?**

1248

1249 CB: No

1250

1251 CA: No. Sort of, sort of not

1252

1253 CB: I don't know

1254

1255 **Me: Ok. No – sort of. Ok, erm. Do you think it's an important part of RE**

1256

1257 CB: Yeah

1258

1259 **Me: to learn about the fact that there are these key Christian stories, and that different**

1260 **people think different things?**

1261

1262 CB: Yeah

1263

1264 **Me: Yeah. Would you like to say why? Why do you think that's important?**

1265

1266 CB: Because

1267

1268 **Me: Rather than saying, 'This is what it means! Yeah – nod, smile. All good? Let's go to**

1269 **break'. Erm thoughts?**

1270

1271 CB: Yes because if – it's easier because people normally re- – some of our class get a bit

1272 bored when we're in a RE lesson 'cos it's, like, we just have to answer loads of

1273 questions

1274

1275 **Me: Ok**

1276

1277 CB: Well with this one, it went on for longer but I liked that because we got to do like

1278 these cards. We got to do little challenges what we don't normally do. And it, I felt

1279 like it really helped me I-learn a bit more, because I normally – I'm a bit clueless

1280 when I, erm, have learning. Like, if I have English, I can't really do it because I'm not

1281 that clever. So yeah

1282

1283 **Me: So you like that idea to spend a lot of time thinking about something deeply. I'm**

1284 **aware that it's almost time for you to go. So, my final question is, is there anything**

1285 **else that you'd like to mention about the lessons and your learning and your**

1286 **thinking that I haven't asked or you'd like to add? Or that you haven't said?**

1287

1288 CA: Erm personally I thought that, like, a bit like my erm sort of bit about like, erm, like

1289 the nature of life's path and the flower and different seeds, like I think you should

1290 sort of erm, like, sort of ask like, 'Can you link the, sort of, your reason behind like

1291 can there be a-a reason behind your reason? Like, linking to something?'

1292

1293 **Me: Mmm ok**

1294

1295 CA: Just say in like, might sort of help people focus more 'cos sometimes, when someone

1296 just asks a direct question like, 'Answer this right now', erm sort of like that, it takes

1297 them a while to figure it out and for it to click

1298

1299 **Me: Yeah sure**

1300

1301 CA: But when sort of used to try to link it *to* something, like I've done it be-fore, erm, it
1302 sort of, it helps them – it helps them focus and you also helps them answer it a bit
1303 quicker
1304

1305 **Me: Yeah – thank you. Yes**
1306

1307 CC: Well, I mean, you know the one where we had to like – so there were all those lines
1308 and we had to like to write about, like
1309

1310 **Me: Oh – right at the very end?**
1311

1312 CC: Erm yeah
1313

1314 CA: This bit?
1315

1316 CC: Yeah that's a bit that I, like, 'cos
1317

1318 **Me: So it's the final activity, isn't it? Yeah**
1319

1320 CC: 'cos sometimes I don't really, like, 'cos like even though I've been listening,
1321 sometimes I just don't get it that well. But 'cos that's what happened at first, but
1322 then I started to get it and then
1323

1324 **Me: Oh ok**
1325

1326 CC: I started
1327

1328 **Me: Yeah. Thanks, that's really valuable. That is quite a hard activity, isn't it?**
1329

1330 CA/CB?: Yeah
1331

1332 **Me: I agree with you; that takes time to get you head around. Erm, last but not least,**
1333 **yeah**
1334

1335 CB: Erm I real- I think this...main bit was
1336

1337 **Me: So they're the questions at the end of Lesson One. Yeah**
1338

1339 CB: erm really good because some of our fellow classmates erm struggled with a bit on
1340 the last question
1341

1342 CA/CC?: Yeah
1343

1344 CB: But when, with me, I just thought in my head, 'What would I normally say?', and
1345 then I'll just improve it a bit because I don't normally add that much information. But
1346 with this I think I've actually added a quite a lot of information in. And I got onto
1347

1348 **Me: So that was Question Three**

1349

1350 CB: Yeah. And then on Question Four, I found was quite easy erm and yeah

1351

1352 **Me: Thank you. Ok. At that stage**

1353

1354 [End of recording]

School C
Pupil Focus Group Two (C2)
In person
Date: Thursday 17th March 2022
Time: 14:28
Length: 34:27

- 1 **Me:** Well, thank you ever so much everyone for joining this. As I said, I'd love to hear
2 your views on how you think the lessons went. So, first of all, erm – before today,
3 have you heard of the parables before?
4
- 5 CD: No
6
- 7 CF: No
8
- 9 CE: I did hear it from a friend and that's mostly it
10
- 11 **Me:** Ok, so you haven't looked at it in RE before that you can remember?
12
- 13 CE: Not really
14
- 15 CD: No
16
- 17 CF: No
18
- 19 **Me:** Ok. Erm so we looked, at the start, what is a parable? Erm would any of you be
20 able to share your thoughts? What is – in your mind – a parable?
21
- 22 CF: Erm, a parable is like a story, like, the Good Samaritan, like, meanings and that
23
- 24 **Me:** Ok so it's a story perhaps with a meaning. Is there anything else that you can add
25 to that, girls?
26
- 27 CD: Erm
28
- 29 CE: I think it's like a bible story
30
- 31 **Me:** Ok
32
- 33 CE: like something like Jesus said in the bible something
34
- 35 **Me:** Brilliant. So, a story that Jesus told, that we can find in the bible today, that has a
36 meaning perhaps, you know, it's not just a story just for fun. Ok, super. So I'm
37 gonna start quite broad about your thoughts about the lessons, and then we'll go
38 through the lessons step-by-step. So you've got your workbook if, at any stage, you
39 want to refer to some of your thoughts or the activities. Erm, so, broad question to

40 **start with: what did the lessons make you think about? Have they made you think**
 41 **differently about the parables in any way? From the start of the day to-to now?**
 42
 43 CE: Erm it made me feel a bit like confused a bit
 44
 45 **Me: Oh ok. In what way?**
 46
 47 CE: 'Cos like, at first I did not know a word anyone was saying
 48
 49 **Me: Ok**
 50
 51 CE: Then when, like, people explained it, then it kinda made sense
 52
 53 **Me: Oh ok. Super. Yeah**
 54
 55 CD: Erm, I basically think that too, 'cos erm – so at first, I had an idea what like a parable
 56 was or, like, any of that
 57
 58 CF: Yeah
 59
 60 CD: And then, once we got through the lesson a bit more, I was like, 'Oh. Now I know,
 61 like, what that means and everything'
 62
 63 **Me: Ah ok. Super. How about for yourself?**
 64
 65 CF: Erm, so first of all, I-I was like, well, I didn't know what the parable was. And then,
 66 then we would learn about it, even more and more. And now I get what a parable is
 67
 68 **Me: Ok. Ok. Super. Thank you. Erm so what do you feel you learnt the most over those**
 69 **two lessons? We had two lessons; for you individually, what was like, 'Ok – the**
 70 **main thing I learnt was X'?**
 71
 72 CD: The main thing I kinda learnt was the story 'cos last time I heard it, I did not know
 73 *anything* – probably 'cos I was really young
 74
 75 **Me: Mmmhmm**
 76
 77 CD: And then today I actually, like, learnt something else. 'Cos I just thought there was
 78 two men and I kinda thought, erm, the person who was helping the man walked past
 79 and just left him alone
 80
 81 **Me: Oh ok. So it gave you more opportunity**
 82
 83 CD: Yeah
 84
 85 **Me: to think more carefully about what was included in the story and things like that.**
 86 **Ok. How about yourself?**

87

88 CF: Erm the thing I learnt the most – well one of the most things – was probably to do
 89 with, like, what a parable is and stuff and the Good Samaritan story
 90

91 **Me: Ok – thank you**
 92

93 CE: Erm the main thing I learnt was that, so, erm I didn't know that, at first, when people
 94 thought that there was like right and wrong ways to erm like believe in God and like,
 95 erm follow God. But now like, 'cos I realised that like erm some people are like erm
 96 disagree about how they erm follow God. And now I understand that at the people
 97 think of like two sides of it
 98

99 **Me: Oh interesting. So, for you, the fact that different people think different things
 100 about the parable is something that you learnt and didn't know before? Is-is that
 101 kinda right, saying that?**
 102

103 CE: Yeah
 104

105 **Me: Awesome. So the first lesson, erm – we'll go through this step-by-step as I said –
 106 erm was all about, 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good
 107 Samaritan?'. And, if you remember, we started by looking at the actual story. Erm,
 108 so you might want to turn to your page in your workbook here. Erm what I'd love
 109 to know is – obviously, we only had two lessons. And I wanted to think, 'What
 110 would be most useful?'. So, from your point of view, how useful was hearing the
 111 story and then doing this activity with your own highlighters? Do you think that
 112 was useful to help you understand and start thinking about it? Or do you think it
 113 wouldn't have been missed if we decided not to do this part?**
 114

115 CD: Erm, I think it kinda helped because usually we don't really do that, and I'm just like
 116 stuck in the middle of the lesson not knowing it and anything or like what it means
 117

118 **Me: Ok**
 119

120 CD: And, like, we kinda went through, erm, well most just [?] what the things meant. And
 121 now, like, once you went further in the lesson, I realised as well, oh there's
 122 somethings that I *did* highlight and what they do mean
 123

124 **Me: Ah fab, so that really helped you for the later bits in the lesson. Thanks, [name
 125 omitted]. How about yourself?**
 126

127 CE: Erm I kind of like agree with [CD name omitted] because, at first, I didn't know a few,
 128 a load of words. But then, when we gone further in the lesson, then I was just like,
 129 'Oh yeah. I really get this, it makes some perfect sense now'
 130

131 **Me: Oh nice. Ok. Erm how about for yourself?**
 132

133 CF: Erm, it helped because when, when you was reading it you could see and flow along
 134 the words as well and when when you're highlighting it, you can, like, sort of
 135 understand. Like, you can sort of think to yourself what the words means and that
 136

137 **Me: Ok. So that time to pick out, 'Ok this bit doesn't make sense yet. This bit doesn't**
 138 **make sense yet', and then we could talk about it as a class, couldn't we? What the**
 139 **different things meant**
 140

141 CF?: Yeah
 142

143 **Me: Erm is there anything you think could be improved in that part of the lesson?**
 144

145 CF: Mmm
 146

147 CE: I have one thing
 148

149 **Me: Yeah please**
 150

151 CE: Erm when we were doing it, erm when like we were doing this bit, I didn't really,
 152 like, get a few words in it. So then when, like, it was just a bit hard to understand
 153

154 **Me: Mmm**
 155

156 CE: a bit what the words meant when you don't know what they mean
 157

158 **Me: Yeah, yeah. And there are a few on the other page that we covered [referring to**
 159 **the definition page in the pupil workbook]; do you feel there were some other**
 160 **words in there, that we didn't cover in this, that it would have been worth**
 161 **explaining?**
 162

163 CE: I think we did a few words, but like mmm I just think we could of gone over the
 164 words that people didn't know
 165

166 **Me: Yeah 'cos erm I noticed you've put 'reimburse' and 'do this and you will live'**
 167

168 CE: Yeah
 169

170 **Me: So maybe a bit more time looking at some of the other words that had been picked**
 171 **up might have been useful?**
 172

173 CF: Yeah
 174

175 CD/CE?: Yeah
 176

177 **Me: Yeah thank you. Anything else on that activity before we move on?**
 178

179 CD: Mmm no not really.

180
 181 [Some undiscernible words – from CD or CE]
 182
 183 CD: They were all really good though
 184
 185 Me: **Ok. Thank you so much. And then, we went onto this activity here, didn't we? So,**
 186 **there were four different labels: 'meaning', 'characters', 'us' and 'other'. My**
 187 **reflection is it would have been useful if I spent more time explaining what**
 188 **'meaning', 'characters', 'us' and 'other' were. Erm 'cos I know that some found**
 189 **that quite difficult, just like, 'What do you mean by 'us', sir? What do you mean by**
 190 **'other'?' But in terms of this activity, you were working in groups erm thinking**
 191 **about, 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?', and they**
 192 **[the cards] had different bits of information on. Out of ten, how useful do you**
 193 **think that activity was in organising those cards and putting down your own**
 194 **thoughts?**
 195
 196 CE: Erm I
 197
 198 CD: Probably, like, an eight out of ten, because it gave us loads of like facts as well about
 199 it
 200
 201 Me: **Mmmhmm**
 202
 203 CD: and like we had the chance to think in our groups about, erm, what we all thought
 204 and everything like that. And like where it should go
 205
 206 Me: **Ok**
 207
 208 CE: I would give it a slight seven out of ten, err because it wasn't anyone's fault, it was
 209 just my group's fault because they didn't know, really listen. And then they kept on
 210 doing stuff that other people have done, like writing the *exact* same words
 211
 212 Me: **Oh ok**
 213
 214 CE: But that was, like, none of your fault; it was just my group's, really
 215
 216 Me: **Sure, sure**
 217
 218 CF: I'd say like [about?] eight or nine out of ten, 'cos like it helped you understand like
 219 what why-why it would be about the characters and that
 220
 221 Me: **Ok. So the sense I'm getting is the different cards were useful in helping us think**
 222 **about different facts and information that you could then reflect upon. Erm you**
 223 **mentioned an eight; what would of brought it to the ten? You know, what was**
 224 **kind of difficult or not so useful about it for your group?**
 225

226 CD: Erm, it was mostly just the words because on the characters and the meaning and
 227 the answers and things, like we kind of just had to guess on what it said in the
 228 thingys. And, like, if it did say the word 'meaning' in it, we just guessed that it went
 229 in the 'meaning' section
 230

231 **Me: Ok**
 232

233 CD: But erm, the characters – if there was characters in it, then we would obviously think
 234 it goes in the characters and everything. Erm, but that's just what it wasn't like an [?]
 235 ten out of ten though
 236

237 **Me: Oh ok. So...I kinda noticed that as well. I'll say something; can you tell me if I'm**
 238 **completely wrong or if you think, 'Yeah, yeah – I agree'? My thought was that the**
 239 **first part of matching was quite difficult and people spent more time deciding**
 240 **where it should go, rather than what was actually on the cards**
 241

242 CD/CE?: Erm
 243

244 CF: Yeah a little bit
 245

246 **Me: Is-is that fair or am I g-? Tell me if you think I'm wrong**
 247

248 CE: My table was just, like, picking one and just writing it. They wouldn't choosing, 'Oh I
 249 have to write it down there' or anything; they just, like, got on with it. But they just
 250 didn't listen to what you had to say about it
 251

252 **Me: Ok. Ok. Thank you. Erm how about your-yourselves? Do you think that's fair? Or**
 253

254 CF: Yeah
 255

256 **Me: Yeah**
 257

258 CF: Yeah
 259

260 CD: I think that, erm, on my table we didn't really, like, just erm not read it and that. We
 261 took like our time and just read it carefully and then thought about, erm, where it
 262 would go
 263

264 **Me: Yeah**
 265

266 CD: We didn't just, like, not read it and just put it in a random one
 267

268 **Me: Yeah. For sure**
 269

270 CE: There's one more thing
 271

272 **Me: Yes. Please**

273

274 CE: Erm, when we were doing it, erm on my table like, 'What was the meaning? What

275 was the characters? What's 'us'? What's 'other'?'

276

277 **Me: Mmm**

278

279 CE: And then everyone was just getting confused. And then, like, and then we ask, and

280 then it didn't really make sense after that 'cos nobody was listening

281

282 **Me: Mmm**

283

284 CE: Then we started listening and saying, 'What's that?'. It was just really annoying

285

286 **Me: Ok. Yeah, yeah**

287

288 CE: 'Cos like, me and [name omitted] listened, but like the boys in our class are – didn't

289 listen

290

291 **Me: Ok. I think sometimes with [undiscernible word] activities, some people are like,**

292 **'Oh it's brilliant that you can work in a group because you can hear other people's**

293 **ideas'. And sometimes when group work doesn't go so well, it's just like, 'Oh I wish**

294 **I could've just done this on my own or with a partner**

295

296 CE: Yeah

297

298 **Me: because', yeah. No I totally get that; I've totally been there. So, next thing then. So,**

299 **our question was: what *should* we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?**

300 **And I won't...ask you about that now, because you hopefully have written that in**

301 **your your book in kind of Question Three: In your opinion, what should we think**

302 **about**

303

304 CD/CE?: Yeah

305

306 **Me: it? Erm but I'd love to know, from just that first lesson, you know at the very start I**

307 **asked you to write your thoughts – about what you think it might mean at the start**

308 **– did any of you change your mind? Or were you like,**

309

310 CD: Erm

311

312 **Me: 'Ok, at the start of the lesson I thought the parable meant this. But now, through**

313 **doing this activity and the thinking, I've changed my mind about what I think it**

314 **could mean'?**

315

316 CD: I didn't really change my mind, I was taking like what I thought from erm the picture

317 [at the front of the workbook] and erm it I just put like, 'Someone gets hurt. And

318 then erm the person, like' – I don't, I don't know how to pronounce the name, like

319 Sam-

320
 321 **Me: Oh – Samaritan**
 322
 323 CD: Yeah, Samaritan
 324
 325 **Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah**
 326
 327 CD: ‘erm helps them’. And that’s basically the, what I saw from the picture. So I just did
 328 that
 329
 330 **Me: Thank you**
 331
 332 CE: Erm I – I heard the story before, so I just like there’s two other people that did not
 333 help. But then the other thing I thought was still right at the end because it was just
 334 helping other people in their time of need
 335
 336 **Me: Mmm**
 337
 338 CE: Because he helped – not like the young person in the picture who actually just left –
 339 he actually helps. So I actually thought I was right about the first thing
 340
 341 **Me: Ok, ok. Erm for yourself? So you you mentioned that you didn’t know at the start**
 342
 343 CF: Yeah
 344
 345 **Me: so did the lesson help you come to a an idea of, ‘Ok – I think the parable might**
 346 **mean this’**
 347
 348 CF: Yeah
 349
 350 **Me: Ok so-so for you, if I asked you that learning question – what should we think**
 351 **about this parable? – what would you say to someone?**
 352
 353 CF: Erm...I’d say...
 354
 355 **Me: You can look in your workbook if erm – did you write an answer for that one?**
 356
 357 CF: For this one?
 358
 359 **Me: Erm yeah erm so that – Question Three here. You’re more than welcome to to**
 360 **have a look at your answer there**
 361
 362 CF: I said, ‘We should think that if anyone is hurt and you can see ‘em, go over them
 363 them [?] and help them. And als- and also, think about how we show how how the
 364 person showed mercy’
 365

366 **Me:** Ok. So it-it helped you to think about your own ideas about it. Ok. Fab. So then we
367 came onto the second one. Ok, the second lesson was: why might different people
368 interpret the parable differently? So, I'll walk us through – oh I've got two pens,
369 nice – erm, so we started with this, didn't we. One image – everyone sees the
370 same image. But different people came out with different ideas. Erm and we
371 started thinking, 'Why might that be?'. So some people said, 'Oh it's because
372 different people have different perspectives or opinions or different backgrounds.
373 Erm and that might be why one person thinks it means this; you might think it
374 means this, you might think it means this. I might think it means something
375 different'. And what I was trying to do was to help us think that, 'Ok – just like one
376 picture, different ideas. The parable is just one text, you know; we're all reading
377 exactly the same words there. But different people – you, you, you – and other
378 people like this [shows an interpreter profile image], like these two and the other
379 five, have different ideas about what it means. Ok. So that was the lesson, and we
380 started by looking at these seven different interpretations and putting them in
381 order. How useful do you think this activity was, in looking at what different
382 people – different Christians – think the text means? Erm, just have a bit of a think.
383 Erm was it useful? Was it interesting? Was it challenging? Was it hard? Was it
384 annoying? Erm – what do you think?

385
386 **CD:** Erm well I think that it was, erm, kind of good because we all got to, like, read it and
387 then erm go through it and then either like think if we agreed or disagreed with it
388 'cos erm yeah – I just really liked that activity
389

390 **Me:** Oh nice. Nice. How about you?
391

392 **CE:** I liked the activity but, like, it was just my group that wasn't like paying enough
393 attention and we could like didn't get them all done
394

395 **Me:** Ok
396

397 **CE:** But I thought, other than that, it was really, really good
398

399 **Me:** Ok, thank you. So the activity was fine; it was useful to see different views and
400 decide what you thought
401

402 **CE:** Yeah
403

404 **Me:** How about if your goop [?] 'cos you had a group of three in the corner didn't you?
405

406 **CF:** Yeah. I found it useful because you could read it and understand what one's more
407 important
408

409 **Me:** Yeah
410

411 **CF:** like, and what one's not as port- as important as the most important one
412

413 **Me: Nice**
414
415 CD: It's also erm really good because you could of[?] seen, like, what other people
416 thought of it and everything like that. And not just, like, what people in the room
417 thought of it and just random people erm that like ages ago or now or something like
418
419 **Me: Mmm**
420
421 CD: thought like
422
423 **Me: Oh thank you. Were there any cards there – I'm trying to work out whether the**
424 **kind of texts and ideas on these are just right for us to understand, or if some of**
425 **them are a bit, like, too difficult. Like they're[?], 'Mmm – what does that mean?'**
426
427 CE: There was one, like, I didn't not get
428
429 **Me: Ok. Do-do, can you remember which one it was?**
430
431 CE: Yeah. It was that one; I just didn't get that little black bit at the bottom. Why is it
432 there instead of just connected that
433
434 **Me: Oh yeah. So did the, like, the actual text bit make sense?**
435
436 CE: The text made sense, it's just the black writing
437
438 **Me: Oh sure. So that's like the verse 27 was just there**
439
440 CE: Yeah
441
442 **Me: Ok. So that Brian Stiller one was just a bit confusing. Ok. Wer-were there any other**
443 **cards in your groups that were, or were they ok?**
444
445 CD: Erm
446
447 CF: Ok
448
449 CD: they were ok and I didn't really understand that one 'cos erm it says
450
451 **Me: Oh – Solentiname**
452
453 CD: yeah. And then it says, erm, like that's not enough; you just have, like, to do it, like,
454 Samaritan did and really care for people
455
456 **Me: Yeah**
457

458 CD: But I didn't really understand that. Like, I get like, like, they wanted to erm help a lot,
 459 but giving money and worn out clothes, like, once a year will like help kind of like the
 460 poor. And like tonnes of people do it
 461

462 **Me: Ok**
 463

464 CD: so erm. Like it's caring 'cos you could of just like gave it to like someone else or just
 465 threw it in the bin
 466

467 **Me: Yeah, ok. Interesting. So, I get the sense that you maybe disagreed with that one.**
 468 **Or, yeah ok**
 469

470 CD: I just didn't understand like why
 471

472 **Me: Oh you didn't understand. Ok**
 473

474 CE: I would not, like, buy a brand new top and then do this, 'Oh I'll give it to the poor'.
 475 I'd like wear it for a while and if I like outgrew it, then I'd give it to the poor. I
 476 woudn't, like, get a new top, like loads of fancy clothes and just like give it *straight* to
 477 the poor
 478

479 **Me: Mmm. Oh thank you. Do you think it was useful – 'cos I was thinking, I could just**
 480 **give this to you and say, 'Read them' – do you there was, it was useful for you to**
 481 **think, 'Ok. What do I think? Do I agree? Do I disagree?'. Was that useful in**
 482 **anyway? Or was that a waste of time? Wh-what do you think?**
 483

484 CF: Erm – I think it was quite useful, like, you could just, like, for a minute just read them
 485 and try and understand and stuff. And then you can like [?] ask you that to see if see
 486 what they mean. Then, after a couple of minutes, you can start going on the activity
 487

488 **Me: Ok. Thank you. Anyone else there?**
 489

490 CE: I found it useful, like, [undiscernible word/s – well with?] some te- some like RE
 491 teachers just do this: 'You have to read 'em, put 'em in a timeline' and then just, like,
 492 walk away or something
 493

494 **Me: Mmm**
 495

496 CE: But like, it just really helps
 497

498 **Me: Yeah. Do you think, because some RE I get frustrated that it's like, 'Do this. Learn**
 499 **about this', but it's not enough of, 'What do you think?'**
 500

501 CD: Yeah
 502

503 **Me: 'What do you think?'**
 504

505 CD: I just think like that is important to ask about what you think, not just like get
506 straight on to something [undiscernible words] complete about like, about like yo-
507 they have to think and like erm. 'Cos like most of the time you just get [?] straight on
508 with it – do this, do that and like you have to just, erm, get on with it and do, like,
509 what like the teacher thinks and thing [think?]. But erm you actually get like time to
510 think about, and then like, you it under- like you understand it a bit more
511

512 **Me: Great. Great, great, great**
513

514 CE: I agree with that a lot
515

516 **Me: Ok – agree. Is there anything you'd like to add there?**
517

518 CD/CE?: Erm
519

520 **Me: Is it part of good RE – giving you a chance to think what you think?**
521

522 CE: Yeah
523

524 CD: Certainly [?]
525

526 CE: because like I actually found it really useful that you gave us time to think about
527 what we wanted. Not like just the teaching saying, 'You have to do this' and then like
528 just think what the teacher would want us to, like, think about. It's just hard that
529 way
530

531 **Me: Yeah, yeah. No thank you. So, I'm really passionate about that part so I think I'll**
532 **keep that in – giving you lots of opportunity to think, 'What do you think about**
533 **that?'. So we then did this activity here, where we looked at the different people**
534 **that came up with these different ideas across Christian history. So, you know,**
535 **Martin Luther King – a bit of information. Irene Matsoso, who's an African feminist**
536 **erm and her ideas. So the sense I got from asking you in the class was some of**
537 **these were easy to match, some of them were a bit harder to match. Would that**
538 **still be fair from what I gathered? Or**
539

540 CE: The only thing I would change is, like, about like how many we do because when we
541 actually read all of 'em and had to go round again, all my group was just like all
542 confused
543

544 **Me: Oh ok**
545

546 CE: because, like, we were reading and then like loads of people around us, so it was
547 kinda hard to see the piece of paper
548

549 **Me: Mmm**
550

551 CE: And then, at the end, we got about three done and that's it because like

552

553 **Me:** **Oh ok**

554

555 CE: it took so long to read 'em all because loads of people were around the same one

556 you were

557

558 **Me:** **Oh ok**

559

560 CE: It was really hard to concentrate and try to get 'em all done and then come round

561 again

562

563 **Me:** **Ok. That's a really good point. So how – if I were to do this lesson again, what do**

564 **you think I could change to make that, this part of the lesson easier?**

565

566 CE: You could change maybe don't pick 'em off because if when you pick 'em off they all

567 get ripped

568

569 **Me:** **Mmmhmm**

570

571 CE: But, maybe like a just a little tiny bit more time

572

573 **Me:** **Ok – so more time to do some thinking there. Ok, sure. Is there anyone else who**

574 **would like to add anything else about this part of the lesson?**

575

576 CD: Erm I really liked that bit but I just didn't un- really like, understand why we did it

577 though

578

579 **Me:** **Ok**

580

581 CD: Erm 'cos erm we already did the little like 'agree' or 'agree'. Erm but I did like

582 reading what erm they erm said and we had to like match 'em

583

584 **Me:** **Ok – thank you. So...we, th-that second lesson was all about, 'Why do different**

585 **people interpret the-the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?'. So, what I**

586 **was hoping to do – and I'd love to hear your thoughts about how effective this**

587 **actually was – is going back to this activity, one image – we all think different**

588 **things, why might that be? To there's the Parable of the Good Samaritan, there are**

589 **these seven people who lived different lives, different times, different places,**

590 **came up with different ideas. If I were to ask you now that whole lesson question,**

591 **why do you think different people interpret the parable differently? Do you think**

592 **from those lessons you're at a place where you can answer that quite well? Or do**

593 **you think that's still quite a difficult question? So, why do different people read**

594 **this differently, or think it means different things?**

595

596 CF: Maybe because some people believe in, like, Christianity and that. And oth- some

597 people aren't part of Christianity so they'll believe different things and that

598

599 **Me:** **Ok. So it could be beliefs. Yeah – so different people have different beliefs so they**
600 **might focus on different things. Yeah – thank you. Erm anything else? Why do, like,**
601 **why does Martin Luther King focus on a different meaning than Irene?**
602

603 CE: Probably because they had different backgrounds, ‘cos he was bullied when he was
604 younger
605

606 **Me:** **Uhhuh**
607

608 CE: but she – I don’t know what she did. But if there was a book about him I’d read it
609 ‘cos I’m interested in what he’s done and like
610

611 **Me:** **Mmm**
612

613 CE: all the different things. But I think like all that was good, but they just different
614 backgrounds like *that* was from a long time ago ‘cos it’s in black and white [referring
615 to Jülicher’s interpreter profile]
616

617 **Me:** **Mmmhmm**
618

619 CE: And then that one probably early days, like early right now – present
620

621 **Me:** **Yeah it’s quite – it’s quite modern. Yeah. Yeah ok. Erm how about yourself? So**
622

623 CD: Erm I kinda think the same as [CF name omitted] ‘cos like people have different
624 beliefs so they would focus on different parts of this and how they think of it ‘cos
625 some people might think erm, ‘Oh he said that so the meaning of that was blah,
626 blah, blah’. And then, like, someone else would probably think a different meaning
627 behind that erm words or something
628

629 **Me:** **Ok – thank you. In your RE so far in school, have you ever taken a text and thought**
630 **about what different people – like a different s-story in RE, or a different parable –**
631 **and thought**
632

633 CE: Y-yeah
634

635 **Me:** **these are what different people think it means? Have you ever done that before?**
636

637 CF: A little bit once
638

639 CE: Yeah I’ve done it a few times because like when the teacher says, ‘Think about it
640 more into it’, and then, like, I think about it and say, ‘What who do you think would
641 say that?’. Because like loads of people could say the same thing, but like who do
642 you think came up with it?
643

644 **Me:** **Yeah – ok. Ok. Can you – can any of you remember kind of what stories in RE that**
645 **you’ve done a similar piece of work to this?**

646
 647 [some undiscernible thinking noises]
 648
 649 **Me: So here's a story from the bible or the Torah, and this is what *different* people**
 650 **think**
 651
 652 CE: I do remember one but it was in Year Two I think
 653
 654 CD: Yeah
 655
 656 **Me: Ok**
 657
 658 CE: It was like really, really close to this one
 659
 660 CD: It was erm it was – I don't think – it was really close to this one
 661
 662 CE: Yeah [undiscernible – like? I knew it?]
 663
 664 CD: but I just remember where it's like feeding like the wine and bread or something like
 665 that
 666
 667 **Me: Ok**
 668
 669 CD: [Undiscernible – Actually that's?]
 670
 671 CE: That person by the tree. The person by the tree in
 672
 673 **Me: Oh, Zacchaeus**
 674
 675 CE: the – there was a different story. There was a person by the tree and then they were
 676 poor weren't they or something
 677
 678 CD: Yeah I don't know
 679
 680 CE: I've forgotten err like loads of it. I can't remember – there was like a poor person by
 681 a tree
 682
 683 CD: But I remember, I remember it was in erm collective worship. There was like, erm, so
 684 apparently there was like erm the poor people I think it was. And then, erm, I think it
 685 was Jesus – he like came to like help erm them. And then like, I think it was just
 686 about like the manners and like one of them like didn't say thank you. I can't
 687 remember it properly 'cos it was like in Year Four or something
 688
 689 CE: Yesss
 690
 691 CD: Yeah that's just all I remember about that one
 692

693 **Me:** Oh ok. Ok. Erm so the sense is maybe in RE before you've done similar stuff to this,
694 but not all the time
695

696 CE: There's – I think we, like there was one in assembly – not in Year Four – but like the
697 assembly in like that school over there
698

699 **Me:** Ok
700

701 CE: Erm
702

703 **Me:** Your infant school
704

705 CE: Yeah infant school. Did – we did assembly. Like we had a assembly and then, like, we
706 just learned about who had manners and who's, like, polite about – it wasn't Jesus
707 who gave, like, this bread and wine – but then it was close to Jesus. Like
708

709 **Me:** Ok
710

711 CE: he believed in it really, like, yeah
712

713 **Me:** Yeah. Sure. Sure. Do you think it's important, as part of RE, to learn about what
714 different people think? So, I said at the start of the lesson, the main reason for my
715 research is I got annoyed at plans that were like, 'Ok. The Good Samaritan means
716 this. Tell that to your class, and if they tell it back to you, they've done lots of good
717 thinking'. And I was like, 'Well, if different people think it means different things,
718 shouldn't you explore that with your class so they understand that? And also, I
719 want them to think about it; I don't want to just tell them something, that's really
720 dull isn't it?
721

722 CE: Yeah that's that's
723

724 **Me:** By the way, this story means this. Yeah – everyone happy? Yeah?'. 'Cos it might
725 not – it might be completely wrong
726

727 CE: It's just, like if I pulled out a book from a, like, a section of the library, then – and
728 then I said, 'Everyone agree on this', and then I'll go I'll probably just say, 'Yeah',
729 because then they'll just [?], because if they do that, then they just copying the other
730 person who's actually saying it
731

732 **Me:** Yeah. Do you think it's it's important or useful to know that different people think
733 different things about
734

735 CF?: Yes
736

737 **Me:** a parable?
738

739 CD: Erm

740

741 CE: Yeah

742

743 CD: I think yes because like you don't just think about erm what you think, like, yourself.

744 You get to see about what other people think and like their stories about it. And like

745 so then you actually can think of like different things like, 'Oh yeah, kind of that

746 works as well'. And then like, you have like more ideas like going in your head about

747 it

748

749 **Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Now [?] awesome. Anything you'd like to add to that?**

750

751 CF: Erm, it's good to like hear about other people's ideas because you can see what they

752 think and you might agree with them or something, with what they said but not

753 quite agree on the other bit

754

755 **Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Sure**

756

757 CF: and get a little bit more, more information

758

759 **Me: Yeah – thank you. I think it's also interesting to be like, 'Ok well you think that –**

760 **why do you think that?'. So it's not just 'what' but it's 'why'. Erm ok so from those**

761 **two lessons then, is there anything that you think wasn't so good? Or you think,**

762 **'Yeah this didn't help me learn'?**

763

764 CD: Erm

765

766 CE: Erm. Not much really. I just didn't really get the point of this really

767

768 **Me: Ok so your reflections at the end of the affinity map**

769

770 CE: Yeah

771

772 **Me: Ok – could you tell me a little bit more why?**

773

774 CE: Err I don't really know; I just, like, I don't really get all these questions. When we

775 were doing this question. But then all of a sudden I didn't, like, know we had to do

776 the other sheet. And I didn't get done all the sheet and it just like bothers me

777 sometimes

778

779 **Me: Ok**

780

781 CE: I don't know why, I just

782

783 **Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah**

784

785 CE: got this thing that I need to like do it

786

787 **Me:** [Laughs] *I have to finish it, all the time. Ok. Cool*
788
789 **CE:** Yeah
790
791 **Me:** **Ok. So, is there anything else that you'd like to add about those lessons that I**
792 **haven't asked about?**
793
794 **CD?:** Erm, no
795
796 **Me:** **Ok. So what do you think was the best part of the two lessons for you? And when I**
797 **say, 'the best' part, I mean like...the thing that helped your learning and your**
798 **thinking the most**
799
800 **CD:** Erm I definitely [undiscernible words] think that it's that [like?] story thing and like
801 where we highlighted it, 'cos it just helped me a lot to erm, in like in the middle of
802 the lesson, like if I was just a bit stuck on like some of the questions or something, I
803 could always like look back and just like read it through a bit. And I'm like understand
804 it again, and then it like gave me enough time to think about, like, what would that
805 mean? And what would that mean?
806
807 **Me:** **Yeah. Sure, sure. Anything else?**
808
809 **CE:** Erm I liked when we were doing that, I just wish
810
811 **Me:** **Which one sorry? The ranking or the**
812
813 **CE:** I liked doing both of them
814
815 **Me:** **Ok**
816
817 **CE:** So I liked doing them on the timeline
818
819 **Me:** **the interpreter matching**
820
821 **CE:** but I just wish that my group was, like, listening
822
823 **Me:** **Ok**
824
825 **CE:** a lot more
826
827 **Me:** **Ok. Sure. Sure. Erm, ok. I have a few more questions then; not too many actually.**
828 **Erm what are your thoughts about the style of learning in RE? So I was thinking,**
829 **'What's the best way to do it?'. So I was thinking, 'Ok. We could do lots of group**
830 **work. Lots of discussions. Lots of ranking. Lots of moving about'. Did you think that**
831 **was – 'cos I-I get the sense from you it was like you quite liked it but the**
832 **group was a bit difficult to work with**
833

834 CE?: Yeah
835

836 **Me: Did you like having the opportunities to discuss? Or do you think there would have**
837 **been some parts that you think, 'I'd much rather have just done that on my own?'**
838

839 CD: Erm I liked the fact that we could actually like discuss between the group 'cos erm,
840 erm, it would help a lot of our knowing 'cos if we were just in the lesson and then,
841 erm, some of it might link back to what someone else said in the group or something
842

843 **Me: Mmm. Mmm**
844

845 CE: Yeah. I like what I like working with my group. Like it was a bit hard, but it's – it was
846 just really, like, good working together. But there was like one thing, erm, we didn't
847 discuss it at all. Like, I wanted to discuss and then like all my other groups were just,
848 were going on. And I was just like can we? Like, I didn't say it 'cos then, it's just like
849

850 **Me: Is this for the affinity map activity?**
851

852 CE: Yeah. And then no-one like, everyone was like listening, but like everyone wanted to
853 get on with it
854

855 **Me: Ok**
856

857 CE: so, like, we would get it done and then we wouldn't get, like...then we wouldn't just
858 – then we could get a bit done, like, s- I just wanted to get a bit done
859

860 **Me: Yeah, yeah**
861

862 CE: And then talk about it
863

864 **Me: Sure**
865

866 CE: 'cos like I've always been like that
867

868 **Me: Wanted to share your thoughts and ideas and**
869

870 CE: Yeah I like sharing my thoughts but I just don't want to, like, get none of it done and
871 just discuss it the whole way through. And then get to write it and then we write
872 about three words and then we have to go or something
873

874 **Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Sure. No I completely get that. Nice. Erm...ok. Are there any**
875 **questions that you now or still have about this parable? So we looked at the**
876 **parable, didn't we, and we spent two lessons thinking about it and different ideas**
877 **about it. But we only had two lessons; we could of gone on and on and on. Erm but**
878 **are there just kind of – it doesn't have to be – are there any questions that you just**
879 **thought, 'You know what, I thought this in the lesson and I'm still thinking it; it**
880 **hasn't been answered'?**

881

882 CE: Yeah I – when we were doing the timeline

883

884 **Me: Mmm**

885

886 CE: well, well not the timeline but, still, it was interesting because like I had a load of

887 questions like, ‘Who would say this?’. Like, before we did all of that, erm like all the

888 things on the wall, I did not know who said it him [?]. I was like, ‘Is this just making it

889 up? Or did someone just say this?’, or

890

891 **Me: [Laughs]**

892

893 CE: And then I just put ‘em on. But then my group got distracted and then – gone down

894 the drain

895

896 **Me: Ok. Ok. [Laughs] Good phrase**

897

898 CE: Go to the toilet

899

900 **Me: For you guys, are there any other questions that you th- you just had of the**

901 **parable? It was like, ‘Oh – I found this interesting. Or I wonder why?’?**

902

903 CD: Erm I really found it interesting like when we, erm, did those thingys of like when we

904 had to like put them onto, like, the ‘meaning’, the ‘characters’ and thing

905

906 **Me: Oh affinity mapping**

907

908 CD: but it just told us a lot more about the story and what was actually, like, in the story

909 and about erm little, like, meaning things behind it

910

911 **Me: Mmm. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Lovely. Ok. So...in essence, we’ve come to the end. Err I’ll**

912 **just give you the opportunity again in case there’s anything I haven’t asked about**

913 **or you’ve thought, ‘Oh I wish I added that to a previous response about these**

914 **lessons’. So if there’s anything else that you’d like to add or mention erm I thought**

915 **I’d still give you that time**

916

917 CE: I did – I liked erm what was it? I liked doing that

918

919 **Me: Mmm**

920

921 CE: I did because like, but then when I was doing it

922

923 **Me: The affinity mapping, yeah**

924

925 CE: Yeah. When I was doing it, I just like, really, like tried to listen to my group but it’s

926 kind of hard when your group doesn’t listen to you

927

928 **Me:** **[Laughs]. Ok. Cool. So**

929

930 [End of recording]

School A
Class Teacher Interview Two
In person
Date: Tuesday 9th February 2022
Time: 15:40
Length: 19:40

- 1 **Me:** **Ok. So the first one's quite generic. Erm what do looking back at the two lessons,**
2 **erm I'll go into more depth kind**
3
- 4 **TA:** **Yep**
5
- 6 **Me:** **of lesson by lesson. General feelings erm. What did you think about the activities**
7 **in the lessons? Do you think they helped the class in their learning? Erm and if**
8 **so...in what ways? What were some of the challenges?**
9
- 10 **TA:** **Ok. I just started writing a few bits down, and then I got distracted and didn't so**
11 **we'll see how far I get. Erm...I really, really liked the beginning so the first first**
12 **activity. The first-right-so thinking of the first lesson. Giving them a 'What do I think**
13 **before you delve into it?' I really liked that because I think it it's something for them**
14 **to then reflect back on at the end of the lesson, and that's something I'm now**
15 **pinching as a strategy cos I really liked that. It's not anything I've ever thought of**
16 **which is just so simple isn't it. I think the scaffolding of the text, with the coloured**
17 **highlighters, was super cos that's what we spoke about before wasn't it. That, you**
18 **know, there are gonna be some pieces of vocabulary that they would struggle with**
19 **and that didn't make them feel as if they were silly not knowing something. It gave**
20 **them the opportunity to say 'well actually I don't know and it's ok not to know'. So**
21 **that was really positive. And, for those children who might not know but who are too**
22 **scared to ask, it was a really good opportunity for that. Erm and it was quite**
23 **interesting some of the vocabulary that I didn't even consider**
24
- 25 **Me:** **Oh yeah**
26
- 27 **TA:** **to have been an issue**
28
- 29 **Me:** **Like 'pity'. I wasn't**
30
- 31 **TA:** **Yeah.**
32
- 33 **Me:** **expecting 'pity'.**
34
- 35 **TA:** **Exactly. So and I think that was quite nice. And things like 'expense'. Again, I**
36
- 37 **Me:** **Yeah.**
38
- 39 **TA:** **wouldn't have ever considered that as a theme – a piece of vocabulary that they**
40 **wouldn't have known. But again, it shows how language poor a lot of our children**

41 are. So, again, it just reiterates everything we know about children in, particularly in
 42 deprived areas, where they haven't got that cultural...capital as, you know, to use
 43 the jargon. But it's really key that you can see those gaps can be fitting. But I liked as
 44 well the fact that they could, they could use some things in orange. So 'Yes I know
 45 this bit'

46

47 **Me: Mmm**

48

49 TA: so again it was really positive. So I liked that. That was good.

50

51 **Me: Great**

52

53 TA: Erm...then we did...the sorting didn't we?

54

55 **Me: Yeah.**

56

57 TA: The bronze, silver, gold. Now the only thing I would say is that some of them were so
 58 desperate to get to gold that they really rushed through it.

59

60 **Me: Mmm**

61

62 TA: Cos it was almost '*I want to be on gold*'.

63

64 **Me: [Laughing]**

65

66 TA: And I think for just a few of the children – and thinking about that group at the boy-
 67 back with the two boys that were...yeah...messaging around considerably. There's was
 68 a case of 'Come on! Let's get going! Let's get through it', rather than really stopping
 69 and thinking so. Really critical and it, you know, maybe it's a case of not letting them
 70 know there's silver and gold until they've done the bronze. Because they're too keen
 71 to *rush* on

72

73 **Me: Yeah**

74

75 TA: rather than really thinking about the bronze. And for some of them, that was enough
 76 challenge. Erm...they didn't then need to go on because actually, what I noticed with
 77 that group, they boys really couldn't deal with the goo- silver and gold because they
 78 hadn't really thought about the bronze ones to begin with.

79

80 **Me: Yeah. Yeah, for sure.**

81

82 TA: So that was just a little bit critical and I like being critical because it was lovely
 83 [laughs]

84

85 **Me: Please do. Yeah, yeah, yeah.**

86 TA: Erm but it got them thinking. It got them talking which again is really important isn't
 87 it. That, within a group, they could talk about something specific to the subject

88 rather than it being spoken to them. It was more about their thoughts and
 89 processes. So, I really really enjoyed that. Erm...and then what was *absolutely* lovely
 90 when they were then doing the concept map, they did need that recap of actually
 91 what's required of them cos that blew their minds a little bit [laughs].
 92

93 **Me: Yeah. Yeah.**
 94

95 TA: So just a bit of explanation. But, then we had some clear thinking and bringing in
 96 other things like... erm 'Child C' who then erm could talk about linking it to race and
 97 linking it to racism and gender equality and...stuff like that which is obviously that
 98 *prior* knowledge and that *prior* experience coming in, which was really nice to see
 99 that those connections were being made from prior learning. Erm...cos that's what
 100 you hope for isn't it [laughing] that they actually can remember things and bring
 101 them back
 102

103 **Me: Yeah**
 104

105 TA: So I think that was key, the fact that they had that prior knowledge from PHSE but
 106 also from previous RE lessons where we'd looked at different views about, you
 107 know, living a good life and 'How do Chr-Christians feel about you know believe?'
 108 and Humanists and those interpretations...due to belief were already kind of
 109

110 **Me: Mmm**
 111

112 TA: churning a little bit, but it drew that out.
 113

114 **Me: Yeah**
 115

116 TA: Which was really really nice to see. Erm...what I would say – and I can't remember
 117 which activity I thought this for, it could've been the second lesson, so I'm jumping a
 118 bit here –
 119

120 **Me: That's fine**
 121

122 TA: that some of the text was just too wordy for some of our children. Those with poorer
 123 literacy
 124

125 **Me: Yeah**
 126

127 TA: it was just too much. Erm...so...they were ok because they were in mixed ability
 128 groups, but, you know, X [name omitted] for example, just did not understand what
 129 some of the statements even meant so it needed a lot of discussion about what this
 130 actually means before he could then put it onto the continuum.
 131

132 **Me: Yeah. For sure, for sure.**
 133 TA: So it's just the sort of literacy side of things.
 134

135 **Me:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.
136
137 TA: Erm...and then finding the different interpretations and matching them with the er
138 [laughs] the people, that blew my mind a little bit.
139
140 **Me:** [laughs]
141
142 TA: Some of them were *really* easy and really obvious
143
144 **Me:** Yeah
145
146 TA: So the Martin Luther King one and the...the ex-slave whose name escapes me
147
148 **Me:** Oh, Frederick Douglass
149
150 TA: Yeah
151
152 **Me:** Yeah
153
154 TA: So they were quite close and really, really made you think 'well actually why would
155 one be
156
157 **Me:** Yeah. Yeah
158
159 TA: one and not the other?'. So I found that challenging
160
161 **Me:** Mmm
162
163 TA: Erm...and so some of them just, you know, that was hard for them. But again that's
164 good to give them some challenge
165
166 **Me:** It was – I was pleased that...all the children were challenged by that, even those
167 that seemed to stand out as the 'highers'
168
169 TA: Mmm
170
171 **Me:** they were like 'but there there's this one that I can't do'
172
173 TA: Yeah
174
175 **Me:** Erm. And it was interesting in the focus groups, you know, some found them easier
176 than others
177
178 TA: Mmm
179
180 **Me:** definitely. Erm but at least there was a few that they felt they could match easily
181

182 TA: Mmm and the one that I thought was *really* interesting and talking to a lot of the
 183 children, that idea and I think it was it Brian Stiller I think. The idea that 'you say
 184 you're a Christian but actually are you living a Christian life?'

185

186 **Me: Yeah. Yeah.**

187

188 TA: That I could just explore *for ever* with them

189

190 **Me: [laughs]**

191

192 TA: because I found, you know, a lot of them found that hard to comprehend, that 'well
 193 why would somebody say they're Christian if they're not living a good life'.

194

195 **Me: Mmm**

196

197 TA: And I that's now made *me* think as a teacher that, do you know what, when I do that
 198 unit next year – if I'm in Year 5 – I would probably bring him into that unit

199

200 **Me: Ahh**

201

202 TA: because actually

203

204 **Me: Awesome**

205

206 TA: that's a really interesting...concept. That actually, yes we say we're Christian, and
 207 we're living a good life as God intends, but are we doing that or are we just saying

208

209 **Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah**

210

211 TA: you know. Because as some of the children were saying...well you can give money to
 212 charity but it doesn't make you a good person does it? So yeah, it wa- that that I
 213 really liked. So

214

215 **Me: Mmm**

216

217 TA: I've taken something from from that myself. And I want the answers, please.

218

219 **Me: [Laughs]**

220

221 TA: Cos I don't know which was which [laughs]

222

223 **Me: I'll give them after. Sure.**

224

225 TA: Yeah

226

227 **Me: So, erm, if I then focus in on that that first lesson. So that was all about 'What**
 228 **should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?'. I'm really mindful that**

229 this is quite difficult to do because I think it would be useful to actually see what
 230 pupils wrote down
 231
 232 TA: Mmmhmm
 233
 234 Me: and were able to in the time. Erm, but just from your perspective, do you think
 235 that lesson was...you know how *effective* do you think it was in allowing pupils
 236 that openness to be like 'what should we as pupils think about this?'
 237
 238 TA: I think the opportunity was there for them to be open. I think some of them stru- will
 239 probably struggle to give their own interpretation because they almost feel that
 240 they're doing it wrong if they say something different. And I think that's where we as
 241 the teaching profession have possibly made things too narrow for children. The
 242 whole... 'this is what it means. Learn the message'
 243
 244 Me: Mmm
 245
 246 TA: Rather than 'well what do you think the message is?'. And I think that's made *me*
 247 consider how I teach – not just RE but teach – actually we need to be far more open-
 248 ended, rather than 'this is what it means, learn it parrot fashion and off you go'.
 249
 250 Me: Mmm
 251
 252 TA: And I think historically that's how we've taught RE isn't it?
 253
 254 Me: Mmm
 255
 256 TA: Erm, so...I do wonder whether some of them will just still stick with 'you have to be
 257 nice to everybody' kind of thing.
 258
 259 Me: Yeah. Sure, sure. Erm is there anything else in Learning Enquiry One that you'd like
 260 to add before I move onto the second one?
 261
 262 TA: I would be interested to see if any children raised any further questions.
 263
 264 Me: Yeah. Yeah. You and me both.
 265
 266 TA: Yeah. Cos again I think they would find that quite difficult because in their mind it'll
 267 be 'well I know what it means, therefore I don't need to ask anything'
 268
 269 Me: [Laughs] Yeah
 270
 271 TA: But I wonder if you asked them that at the end of lesson two, whether you might get
 272 further questions
 273
 274 Me: Yeah. Yeah.
 275

276 TA: Because now they've considered that there are different interpretations, they might
 277 think 'well actually why does... why does he say that?
 278
 279 **Me: Yeah**
 280
 281 TA: Or why does she say that?' So I wonder if that might give you a different slant on
 282 their questions, or if they might have more questions following on from the second
 283 lesson.
 284
 285 **Me: Definitely. One pupil, erm in the second focus group erm...I think he he like took a**
 286 **bit of time and then just thought... 'but *why those* characters? Why Levite? Why**
 287 **priest?**
 288
 289 TA: Mmm
 290
 291 **Me: Why Samaritan? Because that wouldn't make sense now. Like couldn't it be a**
 292 **doctor, who you'd expect to help.**
 293
 294 TA: Mmm
 295
 296 **Me: That would make it more meaningful and relevant to today'. And I thought, yeah,**
 297 **you know, that's a that's a really valid point.**
 298
 299 TA: Mmm
 300
 301 **Me: Cos it's quite a contextual story. You've gotta yes**
 302
 303 TA: Absolutely and and [pupil name omitted – Pupil 3 in Focus Group One], when we
 304 were talking about it, was very much you know 'would it be somebody of colour and
 305 a white person for example?'
 306
 307 **Me: Yeah. Yeah.**
 308
 309 TA: Because, you know, obviously that's very pertinent to her thinking isn't it.
 310
 311 **Me: Yeah**
 312
 313 TA: So. Yeah. Interesting.
 314
 315 **Me: It is interesting. So the second one then, that was kind of thinking about why might**
 316 **people interpret**
 317
 318 TA: Mmm
 319
 320 **Me: the parable differently?**
 321

322 TA: What I really really liked was the way you led into the interpretations. It was always
 323 a little sort of step at a time wasn't it
 324

325 **Me: Mmm**
 326

327 TA: so I really liked that. So 'okay we've got a picture. What do we think this means?
 328 Why might we think differently?' so it gave them that idea of what interpretation
 329 might actually mean prior to 'these are the interpretations'.
 330

331 **Me: That seemed to work really well**
 332

333 TA: Yeah
 334

335 **Me: as a last minute add.**
 336

337 TA: No I liked that. It was good.
 338

339 **Me: There was a completely different starter and yeah that seemed to work quite well.**
 340

341 TA: I think it was useful for them.
 342

343 **Me: Yeah**
 344

345 TA: Cos it kind of processed what was coming next
 346

347 **Me: Yeah. To what extent do you feel – from what you observed and engaged with –**
 348 **that pupils were able to make the link between 'okay one piece of art, different**
 349 **interpretations, why might that be?' to 'now we're applying that to text'.**
 350

351 TA: I think that mo- most of them could see that. Could see that...people interpret things
 352 differently and again, it links back to some of the previous stuff we've done this year
 353 in RE for example, looking at erm the extracts from the bible in the erm 'Is God holy
 354 and loving?' unit. Because again it was 'well what do you think this means? And
 355 what'...and we talked about it then. So they'd had a little inkling of that prior, so it
 356 wasn't completely new
 357

358 **Me: Yeah**
 359

360 TA: But I think they *could* see that link because we often talk about, you know we are
 361 different and therefore we see things differently.
 362

363 **Me: Yeah**
 364

365 TA: Erm so I think I would say most of them would get that.
 366

367 **Me: Yeah**
 368

369 TA: And did get it.
370
371 **Me: Sure. Sure. Ok. I think we discussed a lot about that learning enquiry, kind of**
372 **initially**
373
374 TA: Mmm
375
376 **Me: But is there is there anything else that you'd like to share kind of your thoughts on**
377 **that second one? Erm I think it was the more difficult of the two.**
378
379 TA: Yeah definitely and I think that's because of the texts
380
381 **Me: Yeah**
382
383 TA: that they were given, those short erm interpretations you know there were a lots
384 and lots of erm language in there which again som-, you know, a number would have
385 found tricky, for example, 'who ignores the bruised and wounded?...Condemn
386 them'. You know there was words words in there that I think some of them would
387 have found really challenging. Erm but once I could paraphrase it to them, they got
388 the gist of it
389
390 **Me: Yeah**
391
392 TA: if that makes sense?
393
394 **Me: For sure.**
395
396 TA: Erm but yeah I would say that would be the only kind of thing I would say 'mmm it
397 needed a little bit of adult input'
398
399 **Me: Yeah**
400
401 TA: for some of the children, for the less able.
402
403 **Me: Ok**
404
405 TA: Erm but it was interesting cos they were all obviously starting at number one
406 [referring to justification of agree, disagree etc in workbook], and cou- couldn't just
407 pick two out of thin air [laughs] that was just too difficult for them.
408
409 **Me: [Laughs] It was. Ok. I think we- we've done that one erm. Do you think there were**
410 **any aspects that you think could have been improved? Kind of in in any sense in in**
411 **that lesson. You mentioned a little bit about, you know, perhaps...thinking more**
412 **carefully about texts on the interpretation cards.**
413
414 TA: Yeah maybe just being a sim- simplified version perhaps for less able pupils. Erm...I
415 think having groups of four meant moving around [for interpreter matching activity]

416 was too many and if I'd realised, and maybe that was my fault, if I'd realised quite
417 what it was gonna entail perhaps I-I didn't register that. Four of them together was
418 too many cos you get two going off and two going off in a different direction
419
420 **Me: Yeah**
421
422 TA: and that working cooperatively was a little bit challenging for some of them.
423
424 **Me: Mmm**
425
426 TA: And it tends to be that half the table work together and half the table work together.
427
428 **Me: [Laughs]**
429
430 TA: But that's just logistics isn't it more than anything.
431
432 **Me: Yeah**
433
434 TA: So maybe that may have been better as pairs rather than groups. But they worked
435 really well on that and they enjoyed that.
436
437 **Me: Mmm**
438
439 TA: Erm so that part of the lesson I thought was great and it th- that's where some real
440 high level thinking was going on wasn't it
441
442 **Me: Mmm yeah, yeah, yeah**
443
444 TA: Making connections, definitely.
445
446 **Me: Yeah**
447
448 TA: Erm...and it was really interesting you could see very clearly those that sort of almost
449 had that 'lightbulb moment' didn't they?
450
451 **Me: Mmm**
452
453 TA: 'Well that person thinks that, therefore this must be their interpretation'
454
455 **Me: Yeah**
456
457 TA: Erm yeah but some of them were really quite challenging weren't they
458
459 **Me: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Ok two more questions.**
460
461 TA: No it's fine. No it's just I've got a text come through
462

463 **Me:** [Laughs] Erm is there anything you think might be useful from this enquiry to
 464 incorporate into other areas of RE teaching? [Undiscernible – either?] Why or why
 465 not?
 466

467 **TA:** Definitely the ‘what do you think?’ at the beginning and then revisiting ‘do you still
 468 think the same? Why or why not?’. I think that’s really I think that would be brilliant
 469 in *all* RE lessons. Because actually you can see how thinking and connections are
 470 developed through the teaching. I think it’s making me far more conscious about
 471 making things far more open-ended rather than ‘right, *this is what it means*’ and off
 472 you go. Because actually that doesn’t challenge them to think for themselves and to
 473 make those links. I really like, an- this is something I do do, is getting them to link it
 474 to their own belief system and their own values and
 475

476 **Me:** Mmm
 477

478 **TA:** and their own maybe faith. So again that’s the kind of thing that I think really does
 479 go through well in RE teaching. Linking it to themselves. But also linking it to the
 480 wider world and I think, having those examples of erm sort of racism and sexism, is
 481 really pertinent to the children isn’t it for the world that they live in?
 482

483 **Me:** Yeah
 484

485 **TA:** Erm and bringing in diverse people, which is so important isn’t it that yes ok this is
 486 about, you know, the holy book that was written X years ago, but actually we’ve got
 487 people *now* saying ‘well actually I’m not sure that’s really what it meant’.
 488

489 **Me:** Mmm. Mmm
 490

491 **TA:** So I think that’s really useful and interesting and I would like to see that far more in
 492 RE. That, you know, the ‘well what does it actually mean in the modern world’.
 493

494 **Me:** Yeah. Yeah. It it comes from an idea of ‘reception history’ and if you imagine like
 495 the key interpretations over time like the peaks of a mountain
 496

497 **TA:** Mmm
 498

499 **Me:** and it’s kind of ok, you know, Augustine is very, very symbolic. You know the road
 500 means life and the Samaritan is Jesus, the inn is the church
 501

502 **TA:** and there’s Jesus and he’s [undiscernible] them in, yeah
 503

504 **Me:** Yeah and then we come back to Jülicher, who is like ‘well the parables mean one
 505 thing and certainly not about God, it’s just a moral message’. And a few years later,
 506 something else. I like to think that this is like, pupils are now on their own area of
 507 the mountain thinking
 508

509 **TA:** Yeah

510

511 **Me:** 'right well we've we're looking back at interpretation over time, over history. But

512 **now, for us, in this particular place and time, this is what we think'**

513

514 TA: Yeah because one of the children, I cannot remember who it was, said to me 'well

515 what do they mean the bible's got nothing to do with God? That's just ridiculous and

516 we all know the bible's about God' [Laughs]

517

518 **Me:** [Laughs]

519

520 TA: And that was good but it got them thinking

521

522 **Me:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah

523

524 TA: You know. An- an- and I thought that was really interesting. You know it was almost

525 like 'ooh don't be so ridiculous. Of course the bible's about God'.

526

527 **Me:** [Laughs]

528

529 TA: 'Why else would we have it?!'. [Laughs]

530

531 **Me:** Fab. So final question then. Is there anything else you would like to to mention?

532

533 TA: I don't think so. I really really enjoyed it and I cannot believe how quickly two hours

534 went. It was just

535

536 **Me:** It was more like two-and-a-half [laughs]

537

538 TA: Well yeah but it just phenomenally quick. But the children were so engaged. They

539 really were.

540

541 **Me:** Mmm

542

543 TA: Erm so it clear- it shows to me that this is clearly a way in which to develop RE

544 teaching because I think too often, if we're not careful, it's very teacher-led and...not

545 as much thinking from the children. So, I really like it as a style of RE teaching and

546 I've definitely taken some pointers from it. Definitely. You might be getting lots more

547 messages from me, Ryan.

548

549 **Me:** [Laughs]

550

551 TA: 'How do I do this?' [Laughs]

552

553 **Me:** Ok

554

555 [End of recording]

School B
Class Teacher Interview Two
In person
Date: Tuesday 24th February 2022
Time: 3:21
Length: 39:53

- 1 **Me: Ok. So I'll start quite general, and then I'll go into kind of learning activities step-**
2 **by-step.**
3
- 4 TB: Yeah
5
- 6 **Me: Erm but just broad question. Erm, what did you think of the activities? Did you feel**
7 **they helped the class in your learning? Erm and if so, in what ways?**
8
- 9 TB: Yeah erm I really liked them. Erm I mean I thought I probably would, I mean, seeing
10 your lesson plan the other day when you, erm, when-when you, erm, when you
11 shared it with me when we were talking online. Erm, I thought they were really
12 good. Pitched absolutely right for the, for the children. Erm, you know, they
13 understood what you were asking them to do; there wasn't any confusion which
14 was, you know, wh-which was was great. Erm and they engaged, I, they engaged
15 with them really well from the very beginning. Erm 'cos it's often tricky when, I mean
16 they're quite used to not having me as their teacher because I am pulled from class
17 every now and again for other things. Erm, so the fact that they were absolutely, you
18 know, they were they knew you were coming in, knew what you were doing and
19 were quite happy to, you know, to-to contribute to you. Erm I thought the activities
20 were nice and interactive; there was lots of opportunity for them to discuss, write
21 erm – you know – express their views, have those conversations and, you know, they
22 understood that, you know, it was made very clear and they understood that
23 actually there were no right or wrong answers. That their opinion was, was their
24 opinion. Erm and that, you know, that that counted, and they were free to express
25 what they what they felt, erm, as a result of that. I-I-I yeah I thought they...I thought
26 they were pitched very well and the children were erm, you know, wer-were
27 fully engaged for the whole time, for both lessons. I fe-fe-felt that they were very
28 engaged. Yeah, so, yeah.
29
- 30 **Me: Yeah, great, great. And from talking to them, they seem to have valued that time**
31 **for that discussion**
32
- 33 TB: Yeah
34
- 35 **Me: and to hear other views and things. So, so that's great. Erm and, talking to you in**
36 **the first interview, you know, it sounds like that's something that you're you're**
37 **keen on as well**
38
- 39 TB: Yeah
40

41 **Me:** that dialogue, that conversation

42

43 TB: Try to. Erm, yeah [laughs]. I think they're a bit conversationalised out by this afternoon.

44

45 **Me:** [Laughs]

46

47 TB: They sort of peaked for you this morning and as they've gone, '[gasp of relaxation, tiredness, relief]'. [Laughs] Fair. Erm yeah generally we-we, you know, we try an- I

48 try to give them the opportunities as far as possible to, you know, to have lots of

49 conversation and to express their views, you know, in-in an appropriate way in class.

50

51 So yeah, erm, you know.

52

53 **Me:** Yeah it's good that. So erm we'll-we'll-we'll go through Lesson One then. So

54

55 TB: Yes

56

57 **Me:** that's all about, 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?'.
 58 Erm so we started with a bit of time for textual analysis. So I thought it was key to
 59 go through the story first

60

61 TB: Yeah

62

63 **Me:** then give them that time and space. Then moved on to the card organisation, and
 64 then gave them time to reflect on their own thoughts and, erm, and consider those
 65 cards. Erm and then answer some questions, you know, 'How did this activity
 66 made you think? Erm what cards made you think the most? Have you changed
 67 your answer?'. Erm so with that lesson in particular, do you think pupils were able
 68 to answer that question, 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good
 69 Samaritan?'.
 70

71 TB: Yeah I haven't, I mean I looked as they were going around. I haven't really

72

73 **Me:** Yeah, [fan-?] of course that's one of the things [referring to not having had a
 74 chance to look at their workbook responses]

75

76 TB: delved in to the – yeah – into the erm sort of the outcomes and such. 'Cos erm but,
 77 you know, I-I as you did I was I was going around and looking at what the children
 78 who what the children were writing and having some conversation with them about
 79 it. But yeah I th- I think they I th-th- I really think they have. Erm there were some
 80 interesting questions coming out of it. Erm that, you know, I-I had a conversation but
 81 yeah with the children. What was really interesting for me, was the over-arching
 82 view of it from from the children, was that actually a lot of them hadn't thought
 83 about the fact that there might be other points of view.

84

85 **Me:** Mmm

86

87 TB: Which I guess is what you're after [laughs].

88

89 **Me:** [Laughs]

90

91 TB: Erm but er, to be totally honest with you, I mean I, you know, as I said, in my, you

92 know, in the first interview, in the I, you know I probably hadn't either really ever

93 considered the sort of the wider you-you know er-er-er implications of, you know, of

94 the story. So it was really interesting to be able to erm listen to those conversations

95 with the children; let them have those conversations and I-let them draw out their

96 own conclusions. And it was – what one of the things that was key for me was one of

97 one of the children who's possibly one of the ones who's more reticent to write

98 quite often, put their hand up and said, 'Can I answer more than one of these things

99 on this on this bit of paper?'. And I said, 'Yeah Mr Parker said he wants you to put as,

100 you know, write down as much you as much as you can. So if you've got an opinion

101 *on any of those cards*, write what you feel'. And they went, 'Oh great' and got on

102 with it.

103

104 **Me:** [Undiscernible – right? Nice?]

105

106 TB: Erm which is really nice. So I think they in particular felt that kind of sense of

107 actually, you know, I-my point of view is valid here.

108

109 **Me:** Mmm

110

111 TB: And I-I'm I'm allowed to make it. And I think, you know, two-fold: that is what you

112 were looking for but it's also kind of empowered the children to think, 'Oh I can do

113 that in other things'. So yeah I thought it was a really st- th-th-th-th-the affinity

114 map in particular I thought was a really strong, a really positive activity which I will

115 probably steal. For-for-for future lessons.

116

117 **Me:** Yeah. Do, do. Yeah.

118

119 TB: Erm it's quite resource heavy but that's certainly no- that's not an issue. But erm.

120 Erm yeah I thought it was a really powerful tool. Erm...and...I know one of the

121 children kind of had a quick run round at the beginning of break time and had a look

122 at what the other children had written.

123

124 **Me:** Oh really?

125

126 TB: Just 'cos they were quite interested in what the other children had written.

127

128 **Me:** Yeah I think I might know who you mean.

129

130 TB: Yeah [laughs] I suspect you do

131

132 **Me:** [Undiscernible words – it's like yeah?] They told me. [Laughs]

133

134 TB: Yeah. Erm which doesn't surprise me with that particular child, but it was just
 135 interesting that actually, you know, they th-th-they were already kind of thinking
 136 that next-step of actually other might think differently to me. Which is
 137

138 **Me: Yeah. And, if it's the same person that we're thinking about, they they mentioned**
 139 **to me – were they in the focus group?**
 140

141 TB: Yes they were in the focus group[s]. Yes.
 142

143 **Me: Yeah. They said they found it really interesting how, with the feminist theologian,**
 144 **she went to those groups that were just purely boys**
 145

146 TB: Mmm
 147

148 **Me: and she was like, 'How have they put it [the feminist theologian's interpretation]**
 149 **second last? But isn't that interesting that they haven't had the same experience I**
 150 **have**
 151

152 TB: Yeah and actually that was a con- 'cos she said to me, 'I'm gonna go and have a look
 153 at the others – see where they've put things on that continuum' and I said, 'Yeah,
 154 that's absolutely fine; I don't have a problem with that'. But I said, 'You might be
 155 quite interest-' – I-I I'll be honest with you – I said, 'You might be quite interested to
 156 see where the groups that are predominantly boys have pl-
 157

158 **Me: Yeah. Yeah.**
 159

160 TB: have placed that'. Erm and she kind of looked at me and I said, 'I'm not saying what
 161 they're doing is right, I'm just saying that
 162

163 **Me: [Laughs]**
 164

165 TB: actually it might – that their view might be different.
 166

167 **Me: Mmm**
 168

169 TB: That's, you know, it-it and it's worth you considering that erm as you go round'. And
 170 she, you know, an- yeah she, you know, she-she-she did! Yeah
 171

172 **Me: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Great. Awesome. Erm yeah, thank you ever so much. I,**
 173 **you know reflecting of that, I was quite pleased that I didn't think anyone found it**
 174 **too easy. I don't think anyone found it too hard.**
 175

176 TB: No
 177

178 **Me: And I think everyone was thinking**
 179

180 TB: I was really pleased because I-I while you were while you were teaching while you
 181 were talking and you-you'd set the task with the bronze cards and then explained
 182 where the silver and the gold were, I-I had in my mind that there would probably be
 183 at least one group who would have rattled through the bronzes and gone onto [the
 184 well?] onto the silver and the gold very quickly. And, if you hadn't said, I probably
 185 would have gone, 'Look, listen very carefully to the instruction. You've been
 186 explained this; actually, the bronze cards are the ones that you need to focus on,
 187

188 **Me: Yeah**
 189

190 TB: you know, for the most time'. But you did, and actually I was really pleased to see
 191 that some of the, you know, the children who are, you know, often expect to rush
 192 through something hadn't.
 193

194 **Me: Mmm**
 195

196 TB: Erm and had actually, you know, had actually thought carefully about it. But yeah I
 197 think, you know, I-I-I there was that kind of it-it the level of challenge was pretty
 198 much spot on. I would say that it-it did challenge every child to have to to have to
 199 think. And listening into some of the conversations that the teaching assistant was
 200 having with that group as well, erm, it was quite interesting because ther- at least
 201 one of the children in that group is one who doesn't often express their view. And
 202 having that sort of, you know, freedom to be able to do that made them feel a lot
 203 more empowered during the course of the lesson.
 204

205 **Me: Yeah**
 206

207 TB: And, but also to see that other children find things hard.
 208

209 **Me: Mmm**
 210

211 TB: Because that is a child who finds a lot of things hard and will often default to, 'I can't
 212 do it'. So being able to see that other children were also finding it hard I think
 213 empowered them more,
 214

215 **Me: Oh interesting**
 216

217 TB: which was really interesting
 218

219 **Me: Yeah**
 220

221 TB: for me to kind of just sit and kind of earwig on that conversation. I said to you the
 222 other day, watching somebody else teach my class is always interesting because you
 223 get those conversations and things that you wouldn't normally as a class teacher.
 224 What do you think are happening and actually sometimes it kind of goes, 'Oh that is
 225 going on. Right'. [Laughs]
 226

227 **Me:** [Laughs]
 228
 229 TB: Erm but yeah that was very interesting from my point of view. To just be able to sort
 230 of see some of those children who find lots of aspects of academia difficult
 231
 232 **Me:** Yeah
 233
 234 TB: seeing other children finding it difficult as well
 235
 236 **Me:** Yeah. Yeah.
 237
 238 TB: 'Cos that doesn't always happen.
 239
 240 **Me:** Is there anything else about Lesson One? You'd like to mention
 241
 242 TB: Erm. No I don't think so. I think, no. I think it was yeah I-I really liked it as a as a
 243 format, but also the activities in themselves. And, erm, I mean if you don't mind I
 244 might keep hold of a copy of this [the dual-coded overview].
 245
 246 **Me:** Please do. I've copied it from someone else, so yeah [that is, the idea of 'affinity
 247 mapping' as a teaching and learning activity] [laughs]
 248
 249 TB: Yeah an-an-and use it in future because I think, you know, it is a – you know – it-it-it-
 250 it's got me thinking and actually if it's got me thinking then it's gonna get the
 251 children thinking as well. So, yeah. Erm I thought it was great; I enjoyed it a lot.
 252
 253 **Me:** [I appreciate it?] Good. Erm, so, second one then
 254
 255 TB: Yeah
 256
 257 **Me:** Erm so very much building on the first one. So, going from, 'This is the text. Let's
 258 explore it. Let's investigate it' to, 'Ok why might different people interpret the
 259 Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?'. Erm so we started with this one [the
 260 icon from the icon starter]
 261
 262 TB: Yeah
 263
 264 **Me:** I found this interesting
 265
 266 TB: Absolutely fascinating
 267
 268 **Me:** The the main reason I found this fascinating was I thought, 'If I gave – or if you
 269 gave – this symbol to them to think about in a lesson that wasn't RE
 270
 271 TB: Yeah
 272
 273 **Me:** would they have come up with God, Jesus, thingy. So it's, yeah

274
 275 TB: I wa- I was thinking exactly the same, because a-th-th- a couple of groups that I
 276 talked to, when you set them that task t-to talk about that-that symbol, if I'd just
 277 given that at the beginning of a normal Thursday morning
 278
 279 Me: Yeah
 280
 281 TB: and said, you know, 'What what's this?', yeah. I wonder what the outcomes would
 282 have been. Whether they would have been
 283
 284 Me: Mmm
 285
 286 TB: so much talk about God and Jesus and the, you know, and th-the parables. But you
 287 know coming in that second part of-of a lesson where they *knew* it was a RE focus
 288
 289 Me: Yeah
 290
 291 TB: Erm I yeah I wondered about that as well. Erm, and again that set me thinking that I
 292 might drop that in every now and again and just say, 'Oh, you know, this is – you,
 293 know – wh-what's this symbol mean? You know wh-wh-what does it say to you?'.
 294
 295 Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah.
 296
 297 TB: Erm but it's a very interesting, fascinating discussions. Some really, I thought, some
 298 very deep thinking in there as well about what those, you know, wh-what the
 299 children thought. And even as I was those I ru-rubbed your things off the whiteboard
 300 this afternoon so
 301
 302 Me: [Laughs]
 303
 304 TB: but to put other things and I was like, 'There's some quite insightful stuff in there, I
 305 should leave that up really'. But it's like actually I need to use, need to use my
 306 classroom. Erm but yeah ver-, you know, fascinating their-their-their points of view
 307 on it.
 308
 309 Me: Mmm
 310
 311 TB: But yeah I-I would be really interested to do that again with a different symbol and
 312 see what
 313
 314 Me: Yeah
 315
 316 TB: they come up with. Erm but yeah I yeah
 317
 318 Me: Yeah. I wasn't quite expecting it. Now I was thinking lots of things that it could –
 319 potentially I might, you know, get from pupils.
 320

321 TB: Yeah
322
323 Me: I wasn't expecting such – I dunno – Christol-Christocentric responses. 'Oh it's God
324 and Jesus –
325
326 TB: Yeah
327
328 Me: of course it is'. I was like, 'Well is it? Well, ok. Yeah'. And that popping up across
329 different tables as well.
330
331 TB: Mmm
332
333 Me: I mean some may have been influenced by the first answer and thought, 'Ok
334
335 TB: Yeah
336
337 Me: I'm just going to that'
338
339 TB: I yeah I think, I think so. But I think, you know, because of th-the nature of the way
340 that you were choosing the children, erm, a-it didn't seem to me like anybody had
341 changed their answer quickly to-to-to kind of fit what you wanted. And you had
342 made it very clear that actually any answer would be considered and that nothing's a
343 wrong answer erm which I, you know, which I think is key. I also wonder if you did
344 this at a non-denominational school whether you'd get
345
346 Me: Yeah
347
348 TB: different responses. If I did that at my last school whether I'd get different responses
349
350 Me: Yeah – interesting
351
352 TB: then, then we do here. I mean an-and as I said I, you know, my class is very diverse.
353 Erm they're not a erm th-th-they're not predominantly Christian class. I mean, you
354 know, we are a CofE school but we're also a community school.
355
356 Me: Yeah
357
358 TB: It-so-you know we're you know because yeah it's a small community [a?]round here
359 so. Yeah, but really interesting that erm and very interesting the err conversation I-I
360 had with one of the other children when you showed the image of the duck-rabbit
361 and and
362
363 Me: [Laughs]
364
365 TB: and she, she was adamant that it was a rabbit.
366
367 Me: Oh really?

368
 369 TB: Which, you know, and I-I can see both.
 370
 371 **Me: Yeah**
 372
 373 TB: Erm and, you know, lots of people can't. I can see both. But I also know that that
 374 particular child has got a rabbit at home and therefore will have seen
 375
 376 **Me: Ahhh**
 377
 378 TB: that. But, you know, making that point and saying to her, 'That is what precisely's
 379 being said here. Is that actually some people will see that differently
 380
 381 **Me: Yeah**
 382
 383 TB: and while you can't see anything other than a rabbit, there will be other chil-children
 384 in the room who can't see anything other than a duck.
 385
 386 **Me: Yeah**
 387
 388 TB: And there will be some children who maybe can't see anything.
 389
 390 **Me: Yeah**
 391
 392 TB: Who-who s-, you know, who see nothing in that. And there will be of some, there
 393 will have been some children who...will have just seen a hand holding a heart and
 394 are able to go, 'Er I-I [sound and associated action of that's what I see/it is]'
 395
 396 **Me: That's what it is. Yeah, yeah**
 397
 398 TB: Yeah I-I-I don't know. I mean I asked – I was playing Devil's advocate a bit with the
 399 group I was working with – and said, 'Is it definitely a heart?'. And one of them went,
 400 'Yeah, yeah, yeah' and then went, 'Oh, actually'.
 401
 402 **Me: [Laughs]**
 403
 404 TB: [Laughs] I was like, 'And is the is the black bit definitely a hand?'. 'Yeah yeah. Oh errr'
 405
 406 **Me: [Laughs]**
 407
 408 TB: Is yeah yeah, you know, it's that kind of I-I was sort of deliberately being obtuse to
 409 try and get them to think about it a bit more.
 410
 411 **Me: Yeah. [I love that?] fantastic. Yeah. Yeah.**
 412
 413 TB: But, erm...that was after they'd already offered some fairly insightful things [laughs]
 414 so. Erm

415

416 **Me:** [Laughs] Ok that's super. So yeah, as as I kind of, you know, had that brief chat

417 with you erm in the lesson as well. It was we want pupils to think, 'Well, there is

418 this diversity'.

419

420 **TB:** Yeah

421

422 **Me:** And so engaging with different interpretations – to rank them – and then look at

423 the profiles as a way to see, and test really, whether pupils can answer that

424 question: well *why* is that that difference in diversity? Kind of applying our,

425 applying the thinking there [that is, from the starter] to a text. So, erm, kind of

426 having a look at those different parts of that lesson, erm what do you think worked

427 well? Was there anything that was difficult or challenging? Erm yeah it-your-your

428 [undiscernible end of sentence]

429

430 **TB:** Yeah again I mean I think I-I-I really like the activity. I liked I loved the idea of that

431 continuum on the table and the children having the opportunity to erm to erm...you

432 know, to to identify where where they were and different ways in which, in which

433 they, in which they did that. In some groups, it was, 'Oh we need to discuss this one

434 in d-detail'. And one of the other groups had said, 'Well we've all decided where we

435 think that should go and then we're gonna, you know, we're gonna have a discussion

436 about

437

438 **Me:** Yeah

439

440 **TB:** you know, whether we, whether we move them'. Erm...there was one particular one

441 that...I was asked by a lot of th- a lot of the children that they didn't – they didn't

442 fully understand.

443

444 **Me:** Mmm

445

446 **TB:** Erm which was quite an interesting one because once I was able, you know, if I

447 drilled down a little bit and explained it a bit better they went, 'Oh ok yeah that

448 makes sense now'. And then and then they could start to think about where it was.

449 But it was the, it was the, th-the one with the statement of that the erm the Good

450 Samaritan is Jesus and the

451

452 **Me:** Oh

453

454 **TB:** inn is the church.

455

456 **Me:** Augustine's one

457

458 **TB:** Yeah

459

460 **Me:** everything has a meaning

461

462 TB: Yeah.
 463
 464 **Me: The horse is the incarnation because [it's?] flesh [laughs]**
 465
 466 TB: Yeah and – and I think that was the point where some of them started to think a
 467 little bit more abstractly about
 468
 469 **Me: Yeah**
 470
 471 TB: what, about the what the responses were. But when I, you know, when I was able to
 472 say, 'Well actually, you know, if you know Christians believe that, you know, th-that
 473 erm, you know, Jesus is coming to save us. And that it-it you know, and that-that the
 474 church is, you know, people go into to church to, you know, to-to-to look for help.
 475 Erm and that actually Jesus is or God's going to return and, you know, and-and-and
 476 that, you know, that's how it works'. Erm and once I'd explained it they went, 'Oh
 477 right. Ok, I understand that', and were able to erm, yo-you know, to-to sort of work
 478 within that. It was interesting that that was then the oldest of th-the, you know, of
 479 th-th-the points of view.
 480
 481 **Me: Mmm**
 482
 483 TB: But that kind of echoed with me. That actually that shows that there was that
 484 deeper thinking going on that they hadn't, you know, that they were not just
 485 thinking superficially about what was, you know, about what the stories were. But it
 486 was interesting it was that same one that, erm, that-that caught a lot of them.
 487
 488 **Me: Yeah. Yeah**
 489
 490 TB: Erm really liked the, th-you know, the round the room erm idea. Erm...what was
 491 interestin- again interesting for me to observe was that some of them were so
 492 excited, they just wanted to tear the bits of paper off
 493
 494 **Me: [Laughs]**
 495
 496 TB: and, you know, and put them in the right place even though you'd said you need to
 497 go and read them first.
 498
 499 **Me: Mmm**
 500
 501 TB: And that is something that I know my class aren't great at. Is that actually, 'I need
 502 you to do this *first* and then do the next activity'.
 503
 504 **Me: Yeah**
 505
 506 TB: Erm I think they all got there and I think they all did what they needed to do. But I
 507 think they they were kind of almost the first time round they were rushing it because
 508 they then wanted to rip of the bit of paper. So it, you know, it-it I mean it-it-it erm

509 but I think they all got to that point where they worked out who, you know, they all
510 work- they all did work out who it was they thought had interpreted the story
511
512 **Me: Yeah**
513
514 TB: in a different way. So, you know, as an activity it worked really well.
515
516 **Me: Mmm**
517
518 TB: Erm...it-I-I again, isn't it, you know, it's a style of activity that I that I really like. So it-it
519 was erm, you know, it was it was a positive from that, from that point of view. I think
520 that was, you know that was, that was good. Erm...I'd 'cos [name of TA omitted] had
521 gone for lu- 'cos she was on lunch duty I'd gone I'd gone to work with the group that
522 she was working with at that at that point when they were writing down the
523 interpretations, and actually I-I did have to explain quite carefully to one
524
525 **Me: Yeah**
526
527 TB: of the children in that group that they needed to use that information from round
528 the outside of the room to help them. Erm and they *really* struggled. But that's not a
529 criticism of the materials or the lesson; that's just them.
530
531 **Me: Mmm**
532
533 TB: And I don't think they did struggle; I think it was, suddenly, you're being asked to
534 write something down again and now your *back* into that mindset of, 'I can't do it',
535 rather than having that conversation first.
536
537 **Me: Mmm**
538
539 TB: Erm so that was, that was quite interesting for me; that I'd watched them interact
540 with that task and had interacted really quite well
541
542 **Me: Mmm**
543
544 TB: and then suddenly as soon as they're asked to write something they were like, 'No.
545 Can't do it'.
546
547 **Me: Mmm**
548
549 TB: Again, which was a shame because actually they'd done so well up to that point. But
550 as a, you know, as a general, you know, as a as a general learning experience I
551 thought it was a really positive one for all the children.
552
553 **Me: Yeah. Yeah**
554
555 TB: And it generated a load of discussion.

556

557 **Me: Mmm**

558

559 TB: Erm because they *were* really having to think. I mean a couple of them were fairly

560 obvious but they were really having to think carefully about who might have said

561 each of those things. It was

562

563 **Me: Yeah**

564

565 TB: yeah, it was a an interesting erm an interesting, you know, erm-er-er methodology I

566 think.

567

568 **Me: Yeah. And I-I was pleased with the focus groups because I don't want it to be too**

569 **easy**

570

571 TB: No

572

573 **Me: I didn't want it to be too hard. And it seemed that...well the pupils told me that the**

574 **challenge was right because there was like three or four that they could do quite**

575 **easily**

576

577 TB: Yeah

578

579 **Me: and there were others they were like, 'Oh crikey. Yeah I-I don't know. But I can**

580 **make an informed decision**

581

582 TB: Yeah

583

584 **Me: but I'm not one-hundred percent sure'. Erm something I reflected on like in a few**

585 **kind of post-reflection notes is erm, just kind of personally really within this**

586 **research, of...I definitely made the choice to sacrifice some discussion after that**

587

588 TB: Mmm

589

590 **Me: about, you know, how easy was it to match? How difficult? How certain can we**

591 **be? To try to get pupils to write things down that I could take away and analyse.**

592

593 TB: Yeah

594

595 **Me: And I think, if I had my own class, I think it would have been worth maybe – and,**

596 **you know, those lessons were a bit longer than an hour weren't they, really**

597

598 TB: Yeah but that's not an issue. I mean [laughs]

599

600 **Me: Yeah. Yeah. But I wonder whether if they were split across three lessons – you**

601 **know obviously you've got the whole curriculum, finite time and everything –**

602 **whether they would do, having that chance for that discussion and then the**
603 **writing might have provided [undiscernible – better?] reflections?**
604

605 TB: Yeah I-I-I I wonder, I mean, if it like you say if it had been your own class you may
606 have approached it slightly differently. I think if that had been me in class, you know
607 working with that, I may well have erm had a group discussion and recorded some
608 things on the flip chart.
609

610 **Me: Yeah**
611

612 TB: And, you know, er-er-erm, you know, we're kind of moving – not here as a school,
613 but generally, you know, in primary education – is moving towards a-a hopefully
614 slightly towards a culture of not having to record things in books just for the sake of
615 having to record things in books.
616

617 **Me: Yeah**
618

619 TB: You know, we're not here to appease Ofsted or SIAMS or, you know, subject leaders
620 or se-se-senior leaders or whoever it is who's coming into school. And actually, to my
621 mind, particularly with a subject like RE or PSHE or somet- we've had a citizenship
622 lesson this afternoon and they've not written a single thing. Erm because actually
623 the rich discussion is vastly more important than doing a task for the sake of doing a
624 task.
625

626 **Me: Mmm**
627

628 TB: As you've said yourself, you needed some evidence of what the children had
629 produced
630

631 **Me: Yeah**
632

633 TB: So that was, you know, that was the end point. And I don't see that as being a
634 problem; and I thi-, you know, and I think it was a relevant written task. But I wonder
635 if it was my own class – or your own class – whether I would have had that slightly
636 more open discussion at the end bit, recorded some ideas on the flip chart, and then
637 gone, 'Actually, last thing, now I'd like you to record your- now that you've seen
638 other people's responses and you've got, you-you know, you should have had plenty
639 of time to form your own opinion on this now. Now I'd like you to record'.
640

641 **Me: Yeah. Yeah**
642

643 TB: Erm and that mi- that might have been a way of doing it.
644

645 **Me: Mmm**
646

647 TB: But, yeah. Constraints of time. Nature of your research. You-you-you-you-you know I
 648 don't think it was the wrong way of doing it erm, but it-it might be something that I
 649 might do a bit differently if I was gonna do it again
 650

651 **Me: Yeah, yeah**
 652

653 TB: If that's, you know, I don't want you to think that was a criticism at all
 654
 655

656 **Me: Oh no, no, no, no. Not at all, not at all.**
 657

658 TB: because I thought the lesson was fantastic. And you know, genuinely, I thought it
 659 was very good. But erm, yeah, just I think sometimes – particularly with some of the
 660 children in my class – they do benefit from having that opportunity to have a bit of
 661 discussion before they do any writing. Erm it's something I've learnt fairly quickly
 662 with them, you know, having had them since September. That they-they need...they
 663 need something to hang their writing off. And we do an awful lot of shared writing
 664 and, you know, discussion and recording things on the flip charts and having it
 665 dotted around the room and giving them those opportunities to
 666

667 **Me: Mmm**
 668

669 TB: so they've shared their thoughts.
 670

671 **Me: Yeah**
 672

673 TB: But it helps the more reluctant ones to go, 'Oh ok. What I'm thinking's ok'.
 674

675 **Me: Yeah. Definitely**
 676

677 TB: Because I think with something that's open-ended like this...and again fr-, you know,
 678 we're going back to the discussion that you and I were having at lunchtime about the
 679 im-impact lockdown's had on children's learning behaviours. Erm because of the
 680 nature of lockdown learning, they had to be able to produce some form of written
 681 content. So there was always an end point for it so that we could see what they were
 682 doing because we were because we were – with th- I mean I wasn't here during the
 683 lockdown and certainly in the school I was working at. And then we come back to
 684 school and it's a bit more open-ended
 685

686 **Me: Mmm**
 687

688 TB: and, but they've also had sort of, you know, nine months of not being able to bounce
 689 their ideas of somebody else, off their peers
 690

691 **Me: Yeah that's true**
 692

693 TB: and that's a big deal for some children. I mean I think these guys were in Year Two
694 the last time they didn't have a disrupted year because of Covid. Erm and learning in
695 Year Two and learning in Year Five are a bit different. And some of those skills that
696 they would have built up during the course of Key Stage Two
697

698 **Me: Yeah**
699

700 TB: Year Three Year Four, they missed out on. Erm
701

702 **Me: It's a It's a big part of the context isn't it.**
703

704 TB: Mmm
705

706 **Me: You know I've been thinking, if Covid didn't happen, you know, what effect would**
707 **this have on how pupils would engage with such as this. And, you know, we'll**
708 **never really know**
709

710 TB: No
711

712 **Me: It's just a interesting question to ponder**
713

714 TB: Yeah I, you know, and I suspect there will be people doing, you know, some- you
715 know writing, you know, writing thesis questions now
716

717 **Me: Mmm**
718

719 TB: on the, you know, on th-th-th-the erm, you know, wel-th- education's response but
720 also the effect that Covid's had on primary education [of course?] well all education
721 in the last, in the last two years. It's certainly, you know, it's something that I think
722 here we're quite interested in and we're, you know, we're we're looking – forever
723 looking – at our curriculum and why the gaps are and why they're there
724

725 **Me: Yeah**
726

727 TB: and how we facilitate that. But, I think, one of those things is that lack of interaction
728 with other children for that period of time, has had an effect on how the children
729 work independently. If that it sounds ridiculous because they have been working
730 independently for a year, basically, but without those other ideas th-they kind of rely
731 on what's going on in their own head.
732

733 **Me: Yeah**
734

735 TB: And there has to be a lot more to tha-, there has to be a lot more open discussion
736 [laughs]
737

738 **Me: [Laughs] Definitely. Ok, fab. Erm so this question then is. So in-in essence, you**
739 **know, can pupils understand erm or broaden their understanding of the 'what' and**

740 the 'why' of different interpretations. Erm, you know, to what extent do you feel
 741 the lessons did that? Was it more they were used to – well, for instance, do you
 742 think we cracked the 'what' better than the 'why'? Or vice versa? Or
 743
 744 TB: I'd-I
 745
 746 Me: They're quite tough questions
 747
 748 TB: Yeah I'd like to do this again with a different parable.
 749
 750 Me: Mmm
 751
 752 TB: [It] genuinely I'd like to do it again with a different parable and see if we can have
 753 similar, similar conversations. Err I mean obviously that's gonna require a certain
 754 amount of research on my part [laughs] to be able to find, you know, the-the-the I
 755 mean it's all there but erm. But it-it would al-, you know, maybe not with a different
 756 parable but [undiscernible stutters] with something totally different and actually,
 757 you know, I-I-look at it. But yeah I think erm it has definitely set some thinking about
 758 the way they think about things and that actually...yo-you shouldn't always just
 759 assume that what you're being told is the only way of looking at something.
 760 Erm...and I think...that is a way er-er-er, you know, a direction that education's been
 761 mov-, primary education certainly been moving in in the last few years anyway. Is,
 762 you know, empowering the children and I know, not that we've done it, but I know
 763 from experiences with other people that I've had with Ofsted, that actually Ofsted
 764 are vastly more interested in what the children think now than they were two
 765 frameworks ago
 766
 767 Me: Yeah
 768
 769 TB: where the children were numbers. Which i-i-is, you know, annoying. Erm-er-er I
 770 think what you've done with my class today is proven to them that they are
 771 definitely capable of independent thought. And that actually looking at things
 772 differently is, you know, is always a, you know, is alwa-always going to be seen as a
 773 positive thing. And that they don't always have to necessarily comply with one
 774 person's opinion
 775
 776 Me: Mmm
 777
 778 TB: erm and that they can, you know, they can they can draw their own thought process
 779 from it. But also that they need to justify their own thought process for it; they can't
 780 just go, 'I think this because *yeah*'. And that's-that's-*that*, they actually have to be
 781 able to back that up with some form of evidence. Erm...and I think they did it very
 782 well. I think, you know, I think it was a – I think it's definitely shown me that they
 783 can...look at different points of view. You know it's-it-it's opened my eyes a bit
 784 today; I was quite it was enjoyable.
 785

786 **Me:** Mmm. And with the answers that you were, or discussions that you had, erm again
787 – you know – it would be useful to actually like analyse these [the workbooks]
788 properly, but what about that ‘why’? Of like, ok, kind of I know some students I
789 found it was quite hard for them to go, ‘Ok, well yeah different people have
790 different interpretations with their different opinions
791

792 **TB:** So do I, yeah
793

794 **Me:** but when I’m trying to give example of that, it’s some of them found it quite
795 difficult to say,
796

797 **TB:** Mmm
798

799 **Me:** ‘Ok, well, you know Martin Luther King thought that...’ and then they some of
800 them couldn’t quite then go [undiscernible last few words as overlaps with TB’s
801 response] answers
802

803 **TB:** Yeah and I think some of that is actually probably down to the cultural shifts that
804 we’ve had, you know, as a nation in the last, in the last twenty or thirty years. It’s
805 that e-e-e probably when I was at school, why did Martin Luther King think
806 differently? Simple answer was because he’s black. And his point of view was not
807 appreciated by many people in that point in time, but also because his life
808 experience is different. Likewise, with erm and I-I-I-I I’m terribly embarrassed that in
809 fact I can’t remember th-the feminist-ist’s erm erm.
810

811 **Me:** Yeah – Irene Matsoso
812

813 **TB:** Yeah erm...that, and that you know, it takes us back to that continuum when the
814 child in the class went round to look and see but, you know, so she or she, you know,
815 that child understands feminism and the, you know, women’s rights and things like
816 that but it, you know, again, our children are now – they don’t notice the differences
817 between boys and girls. They don’t notice the differences between, you know,
818 between-between race, between gender, between – you know – erm-you-er you
819 know ethnic background or any of those. I you know I think even even to the point –
820 I mean I started teaching in 2004 – I think even children who were in my class then
821 who are now in their late twenties probably...had slightly different views on things
822 than children now.
823

824 **Me:** Mmm
825

826 **TB:** Erm and because we are now a vastly more opening and more welcoming culture, as
827 a country, people don’t notice difference. So therefore, actually it’s difficult for them
828 to look at a picture
829

830 **Me:** Mmm
831

832 TB: and go, 'Why might this person find this situation to be different for them?'. I mean
833 they-my class are *absolutely* horrified when you tell them about Rosa Parks. They're
834 like, 'What?! What? That doesn't, you know,
835
836 **Me: Yeah**
837
838 TB: that doesn't make any sense to me'. You know, they don't see that. You know it-it-
839 it's erm. So I think there's probably som- a little bit of that
840
841 **Me: Mmm**
842
843 TB: but also I think it's probably a little bit of life experience
844
845 **Me: Mmm**
846
847 TB: of actually, you know, they've not found themselves in a situation where somebody
848 has disagreed with them necessarily.
849
850 **Me: Mmm**
851
852 TB: Erm partly 'cos of age, partly 'cos they've not been anywhere for the last two years.
853 Erm
854
855 **Me: [Laughs]**
856
857 TB: but also because at this kind of age, you you often do follow the points of view of
858 your parents or your teachers. And I'm very open with the children and say, you
859 know, my I-I don't share my political points of view or anything like that in class
860 because it's not their, you know, it's none of their business but, you know
861
862 **Me: Well your football points of view**
863
864 TB: Well yeah, yeah.
865
866 **Me: with Ray Parlour, you know [laughs]**
867
868 TB: [Laughs] It's more a commentary on the fact that that book is not it's not something
869 to do with Ray Parlour it's just not appropriate for him to be reading [laughs] it's.
870 Erm but yeah it-it's there isn't that...err they-hav- I don't I don't know, you know, as
871 you said they're Year 5 they're not *quite* in that place where they've formed that
872 opinion yet
873
874 **Me: Mmm**
875
876 TB: and I think some of that probably comes at secondary where you end up with a
877 much bigger group of people. But then unfortunately you also realise that not
878 everybody is very nice.

879

880 **Me: Yeah**

881

882 TB: Erm...yeah I-I-I it should be a positive thing; that we're in a positive place where

883 there's tolerance t-t-to all. But actually, it's not always

884

885 **Me: Mmm**

886

887 TB: in terms of their education, it's not always ideal. 'Cos sometimes you do end up in

888 that situation where you're like, 'Well why is that different?'

889

890 **Me: [Laughs]**

891

892 TB: And I don't find myself having to explain that it's different because of the colour of

893 somebody's skin, and I'm thinking, 'I must sound like the world's biggest racist here'.

894 But actually, that is what happened historically and I can't hide from that. Erm and I

895 can't hide from the fact that women weren't able to vote until, you know, th-the,

896 you know, th-th-the twentieth century. It is, you know, this is, you know, this is these

897 are things that are unimaginable to children.

898

899 **Me: Yeah. Yeah**

900

901 TB: And I think that's why they find it difficult to-to see those, you know, to ask that

902 question, 'Well-well why? Why's that different? I don't get it'.

903

904 **Me: Yeah. Yeah. For sure. For sure. Yeah that's really useful. Really useful. Erm, I think**

905 **in terms of anything that you felt the class or pupils found difficult erm we may**

906 **have covered, unless there's anything else that you think**

907

908 TB: I don't think so. Erm, no. I-I-I think they were, they were on board with you and they

909 and they, you know, they-they-they did everything that you asked them to and they

910 did it to the best of their ability. I don't think – apart from the things we've already

911 covered – I don't think they found anything particularly tricky. It was all very well

912 explained, so, you know, and clearly resourced so they knew what they were doing;

913 it was, you know, there was no-no issue from that point of view [laughs]

914

915 **Me: [Laughs] Good.**

916

917 TB: Good

918

919 **Me: Erm next one then. Were there any aspects – and you may wanna take this – I've**

920 **been very acutely aware that I've been delivering the same lesson and I've kept it**

921 **the same to keep it valid and reliable**

922

923 TB: Yeah, yeah, yeah

924

925 **Me:** but, of course, you'd usually do it from a position where you know your class and
 926 you know pupils' needs and things. So, through what you've seen today, if you
 927 were to facilitate it with your class, erm you know are there any aspects that you
 928 would tweak? Or
 929

930 **TB:** Erm I think as I've already said, I probably in that the sec- the last the final part of
 931 Lesson Two have that sort of open discussion, record on the flip chart, you know and
 932 erm but jus-just to give them that kind of forum to be able to kind of express what
 933 they want to express and go, 'Oh that is ok then I can say that'. I think that would
 934 probably, probably help them a bit. I probably wouldn't teach two lessons back-to-
 935 back if I'm honest [laughs] I'd prob-probably do
 936

937 **Me:** [Laughs]
 938

939 **TB:** I'd probably do one today and one tomorrow just 'cos, you know, otherwise it's a lot
 940 of RE in a day. But erm that's, you know, that's the nature of your, you know, th-th-
 941 the necessity of your research. Erm I don't know that I would apart from that to be
 942 honest erm because I think the activities were open-ended enough that you could've
 943 let them run for a bit longer if you wanted them to, or you could've cut them shorter
 944 if you wanted them to; there wasn't gonna be any, you know, there-there's no issue
 945 with that. Erm with the affinity map y-you could've quite easily said, 'Right you're all
 946 done on the bronze now. Now I want you to look at the harder questions and the
 947 silvers and the golds'. And actually, but you didn't need to. Erm actually if it'd
 948 become obvious that they were really struggling with the bronze then, you know,
 949 that might have been a point where you come back and go, 'Right let's take one,
 950 discuss it together and see what we can come up with'. But I don't think you needed
 951 to. Erm, but again, knowledge of class; I might have read you those and gone 'oh no
 952 some of those might be really tricky' but then I'm of- I'm often wrong. You know,
 953 you often think the children can't do stuff and then you teach the lesson and then
 954 go, 'Oh actually you can'. And I think – something I've learnt in the last few years is
 955 that, you know, looking at other people's planning and going, 'Oh well they're never
 956 going to be able to manage that' and then going, 'Well it's not my lesson – I don't get
 957 the choice to say that'.
 958

959 **Me:** Mmm
 960

961 **TB:** And then realise they can. But then I've also had it the flip where I've taught
 962 somebody else's class and they've gone, '*How did you get this out of my class?*'.
 963

964 **Me:** [Laughs]
 965

966 **TB:** And I was like, 'What'd you mean? Good or bad?'. And they're like, 'No. This is
 967 amazing. How did you get this out of them?'. And I was like, 'Because I'd given them
 968 the opportunities to, you know, to-to feel empowered'. So no I-I-I don't think I would
 969 change a-very much about either of them. And, you know, from a normal point of
 970 view when you said, 'Oh yeah the lessons were a bit long' well actually I generally
 971 teach RE in the afternoon where you've got that longer period of time

972

973 **Me: Mmm**

974

975 TB: so you can have that slightly, you know, erm more open-ended lesson.

976

977 **Me: Yeah, sure.**

978

979 TB: Erm and don't worry about it running over

980

981 **Me: Yeah**

982

983 TB: you know it-it-it's tricky this morning you were limited by breaktime and lunchtime

984 erm and also the need for you to get everything done in a day. But, I, yeah I don't

985 know that I would change

986

987 **Me: Yeah**

988

989 TB: very much there

990

991 **Me: 'cos that's got me thinking because, you know, I'm primary trained but I taught in a**

992 **middle school**

993

994 TB: Yeah

995

996 **Me: and you had your hour and then they move on.**

997

998 TB: Mmm

999

1000 **Me: And so there's no opportunity to spread it out because then you've got Year Eights**

1001 **coming in**

1002

1003 TB: Yeah

1004

1005 **Me: and then you've got Year Fives coming in and then Year Sevens and [undiscernible**

1006 **end of sentence due to overlapping response of teacher]**

1007

1008 TB: I think and I think that's where there's a big difference between primary secondary.

1009 Erm and I-[I mean?] over the years I've trained secondary senior leaders erm but as,

1010 you know, as part of the for the Trust that I used to work for. And erm as part of that

1011 training th-th-the group used to go and visit the secondaries where the facilitators

1012 were training, and then they'd come to me and and they'd be like, '[language of

1013 confusion] so you've taught five lessons today, like in, you know, in-in you know t-to

1014 one class? Yeah you've not moved round'. And I was like, 'No, I've I've just taught my

1015 class today. Err this is what we've done. This is how it's happened'. 'And you're

1016 expected to mark all that work?'. 'Yeah most of it's already been done 'cos I've done

1017 it during the lesson'.

1018

1019 **Me:** [Laughs]
 1020
 1021 TB: Or you know whatever. 'Erm and then what are you doing after school?'. 'Oh I'll go
 1022 off and coach swimming for an hour and then I'll be', you know, and-and there is
 1023 that kind of 'Oh you really *do* have a relationship with your class; they're not just
 1024 children who turn up and you teach for an hour and then they go away again'. 'I was
 1025 like no-no – these *are* my children.
 1026
 1027 **Me:** Yeah
 1028
 1029 TB: I am responsible *fully* for their education, you know, apart from the hours where I'm
 1030 on leadership time or PPA'. Erm and yeah sometimes in lessons you know you do go,
 1031 'Yeah do you know what, shall we park that for today and we'll come back to it
 1032 tomorrow'. Or we'll, you know, we'll we'll we'll, you know, we'll, you know, we'll
 1033 extend that one or, you know, 'that one didn't work'. Or, you know, it-it's far easier
 1034 to do that erm and I think, you know when you have your own class you *can* be a
 1035 little bit more open-ended and just let that discussion
 1036
 1037 **Me:** Yeah
 1038
 1039 TB: run a bit longer. And, you know, I – both lessons probably could have filled an
 1040 afternoon quite easily with them
 1041
 1042 **Me:** Yeah
 1043
 1044 TB: without without too without too much trouble and ah will have got similar
 1045 outcomes. So I think, you know, t-the timing isn't necessarily an issue it's just the
 1046 way that you you've, you know, the way the way you organise it. But yeah it's
 1047 interesting I hadn't thought about them, you know, middle school being the same
 1048 actually that's
 1049
 1050 **Me:** Yeah, yeah. What's left of them anyway [laughs]
 1051
 1052 TB: Well yeah there's not many left are there. Even even Suffolk are moving away from
 1053 them now. They've they've gripped on.
 1054
 1055 **Me:** Yeah
 1056
 1057 TB: Grim death for years [laughs]
 1058
 1059 **Me:** [Laughs] Oh erm. Ok, two more questions then.
 1060
 1061 TB: Yeah
 1062
 1063 **Me:** Erm is there anything you think would be useful from this enquiry to incorporate
 1064 into other areas of RE teaching?
 1065

1066 TB: Err I-I ge-ge-genuinely think that anything related to any, but not necessarily even
 1067 just the bible, but any – you know – erm any of the sacred scriptures, any of tho-
 1068 those, you know, erm I don't want to use the world stories again but they're you
 1069 know but are you know key to...the understanding of a religion or a you know or-a
 1070 or-a particular aspect of religion. That you-you actually probably should always be
 1071 looking at other points of view. You know, whether all people view things as being
 1072 the same as being the same. I think that's really – it's really opened my eyes to the
 1073 fact that that's a key thing. That yes these religious texts exist and they contain
 1074 these, you know, language stories, you know, words, you know, whatever, but
 1075 actually not everybody will interpret them in the same way. Erm...and yeah that very
 1076 definitely needs to be incorporated I think into the RE curriculum as-as a whole. I
 1077 think it needs to be incorporated into the curriculum as a whole. But, you know, RE
 1078 sp-, you know, specifically; particularly with regards to, you know, to Christianity.
 1079 And I say that very carefully, that I work in a church school and everybody's views on
 1080 things will may be slightly different. But actually we ought to give the children the
 1081 opportunity to have those discu- those open discussions
 1082
 1083 Me: **Yeah, for sure. For sure**
 1084
 1085 TB: Yeah erm yeah I-I yes. I think there's a lot that could be used erm right across the RE
 1086 curriculum. I think not just in Christianity but the other – obviously we have a strong
 1087 Christian focus because of the nature of the school
 1088
 1089 Me: **Mmm**
 1090
 1091 TB: but erm, you know I was teaching about Judaism last term and actually that would
 1092 have been really interesting for children to have done this with the Torah.
 1093
 1094 Me: **Mmm**
 1095
 1096 TB: I think erm, you know, and some of those, er-er you know, even some of the things
 1097 we were talking about like we were talking about the Jewis, you know, Jewish
 1098 sabbath and they were like, 'Oh so it's Friday night'. And it's like, 'Yeah but it's the
 1099 same as you having your Sunday lunch. You know, that it's that kind of, you know,
 1100 level of thinking'. And they're like, 'Well why do they do that?'. And I went, 'Well
 1101 that's what the Jewish belief is'. But actually when you start to dig down into, you
 1102 know, different levels of Jewishness
 1103
 1104 Me: **Yeah, yeah, yeah**
 1105
 1106 TB: there will be families who are Jewish but who don't have Friday night dinner and
 1107 who don't observe not having any any anything electrical switched on a Saturday but
 1108 just take it as being a weekend. But yeah, it's erm. Yeah I think it's a erm it's a really
 1109 key part of any sort of religious teaching, that actually you have to understand that
 1110 not everybody's point of view is the same
 1111

1112 **Me:** Yeah. I think it's both a key responsibility for us involved in primary education but
 1113 also quite a pedagogical challenge.
 1114
 1115 **TB:** Yeah
 1116
 1117 **Me:** And that that – there is such diversity – which views do you say are 'premier
 1118 league? You've got to find that curriculum time.
 1119
 1120 **TB:** Yeah
 1121
 1122 **Me:** It's, but – you know it's
 1123
 1124 **TB:** It's a it's a core subject [undiscernible words] in a CofE school.
 1125
 1126 **Me:** Mmm
 1127
 1128 **TB:** You know it's-it's-it's-it's one that is it's mandatory that we teach every week. Erm
 1129 erm and we are looking here at, you know, some slight changes to our curriculum
 1130 just to try and, you know, make it well make it a bit more interesting and a bit easier
 1131 to teach. But actually I think this is a – it's an enq- it's a-a-a approach that I will
 1132 probably use to try and develop my own teaching of it rather than, you know, maybe
 1133 a whole-scale curriculum change. Although, if it works, it might be the sort of thing I
 1134 push through. Wave my Assistant Head hat and go, 'Well I've been doing this and
 1135 actually it would be quite nice to...' [Laughs]
 1136
 1137 **Me:** [Laughs] Excellent. Erm ok final question. Erm and it's just is there anything else
 1138 that you'd like to mention? Anything I haven't asked? Or anything that you think, 'I
 1139 wish I said that earlier'?
 1140
 1141 **TB:** No I don't think so. I think you've been really open with what you're doing and why
 1142 you're doing it and the importance of it and erm a-a-and as I say today's kind of
 1143 opened my eyes to some different ways of thinking from, you know, from my own
 1144 point of view in terms of, you know, how I approach the teaching of RE. As I said in
 1145 my, you know, in the first part of my interview, you know, I have taught it over the
 1146 years but it's also something that's been taught by somebody else [laughs] for quite
 1147 a lot of the time. And it's-it's really set me thinking about actually how I can make
 1148 that learning more interesting for the children so I'm kind of convince-. You know I
 1149 feel I'll probably say thank you for that erm from that, from that point of view.
 1150
 1151 **Me:** [Laughs]
 1152
 1153 **TB:** And I know you'll, you know, you'll you'll you'll send us a erm you know a-a-a
 1154 summary of the research but I would really be interested to see
 1155
 1156 **Me:** Yeah
 1157
 1158 **TB:** how, you know, how your, you know, what-what-what your findings are

1159
1160 **Me: Yeah of course**
1161
1162 TB: Erm because actually if we are going to have a pedagogical change *here*, having
1163 some you know research-base to it would be
1164
1165 **Me: Mmm**
1166
1167 TB: would be very useful I think
1168
1169 **Me: Yeah**
1170
1171 TB: I suspect that [name of head teacher omitted] would be quite keen to – to be
1172 involved in that as well
1173
1174 **Me: Yeah**
1175
1176 TB: Yeah
1177
1178 **Me: Great. So – wow forty**
1179
1180 [End of recording]

School C
Class Teacher Interview Two
In person
Date: Thursday 17th March 2022
Time: 3:32
Length: 21:43

- 1 **Me:** **Ok. Erm well first of all, you know, just a massive thank you for**
2
3 TC: You're more than welcome
4
5 **Me:** **your welcome and and letting me trial this with your lovelies**
6
7 TC: Yeah
8
9 **Me:** **Erm so if I start quite generic**
10
11 TC: Mmmhmm
12
13 **Me:** **and then we'll just kind of go through in more detail kind of one at a time**
14
15 TC: Yep
16
17 **Me:** **erm how you think it was from your perspective. 'Cos I think sometimes it's one**
18 **thing being in the moment**
19
20 TC: Yeah
21
22 **Me:** **particularly with a class you've never met before**
23
24 TC: Yeah
25
26 **Me:** **and then being a little bit removed and kind of observing things from your**
27 **perspective**
28
29 TC: Yeah
30
31 **Me:** **so erm**
32
33 TC: No they were really, they were really engaged from the beginning. Erm, like you say,
34 it's always different when there's someone new. But, even just the children that
35 wouldn't usually be so into the questions that you might have been asking really
36 engaged in what they were doing. It's it's it was all in a different erm way to how we
37 might usually teach a lesson. Erm lots of resources which kept them engaged. Erm
38 but no I could tell that they fr- right, like I say, right from the offset they were they
39 were all really in to what they were doing. They were all listening and engaged with
40 what you were telling them and using that knowledge, and taking previous

41 knowledge and listening to each other. But no I mean they really did, they really did
 42 just kind of throw themselves into it. And
 43
 44 **Me: Mmm**
 45
 46 TC: which is which is really good to see actually
 47
 48 **Me: Great**
 49
 50 TC: And, erm building off from each other's ideas as well. 'Cos once someone says
 51 something – which they do as a class – but actually it was, 'Carrying on from what so-
 52 and-so said, I'm adding this to it' which was really good. So shows that they were
 53 paying attention, they were listening.
 54
 55 **Me: Yeah. Yeah**
 56
 57 TC: Erm but no they seemed really – and going through all of their different erm
 58 opinions and, although for a few of them it was difficult for them to be able to take
 59 their own opini- opinion for something so broad. Actually, they there was there were
 60 lots of them that were really going into their own opinion and then developing that
 61 further and as well. Yeah.
 62
 63 **Me: Yeah. Yeah. Awesome. So, obviously we're kind of shooting from the hip here a bit,**
 64 **because we haven't looked at like they what**
 65
 66 TC: Yeah
 67
 68 **Me: they've actually written and and put in their workbooks. But, from like earwigging**
 69 **on the conversations, the interactions you had**
 70
 71 TC: Mmm
 72
 73 **Me: erm I wonder if you have any kind of main takeaways of, 'I think pupils learnt or**
 74 **thought about this deeper'. Is is there anything that**
 75
 76 TC: Erm I think overall, in terms of with the first session, where they were talking about
 77 at the end erm what has has your opinion changed? Or what what does the parable
 78 mean? A lot of them were taking away the fact that it says, 'to be a good person and
 79 to help people and no matter what your differences might be' which was excellent
 80 well [?] it's the majority of what I've heard. Erm and definitely with the second
 81 session as well, they were using what they'd looked at around the room
 82
 83 **Me: Mmm**
 84
 85 TC: with the different opinions and thinking, 'Well they think something different to erm
 86 someone else because they've seen racism or they've seen a different path in life'.
 87

88 **Me: Mmm**
89
90 TC: Which is really good. So they were but I could tell that they all, at first, erm had a
91 great idea a great understanding after the first session with what the Good
92 Samaritan parable was actually about.
93
94 **Me: Mmm**
95
96 TC: And with the second one they were really achiev- like, like they were supposed to,
97 thinking about, 'Well how do people interpret it in different ways?', depending on
98 who they were.
99
100 **Me: Yeah**
101
102 TC: Which was really good to, yeah, really good to erm to see. And
103
104 **Me: Yeah. Yeah**
105
106 TC: yeah they were, they were definitely using what they had written for their own
107 response in the first session using that in their second session to think about
108
109 **Me: Mmm**
110
111 TC: why do people think different things because they'd discussed it as a table as well
112
113 **Me: Yeah. That's awesome. I got a kind of sense, particularly in these focus groups, of**
114 **they seemed – to them there's like a logical sequence**
115
116 TC: Mmm
117
118 **Me: you know particularly for erm the first, like, textual analysis bit. Erm they said they**
119 **found that really useful**
120
121 TC: Mmm
122
123 **Me: which I thought was good. It's like a) to either refresh themselves of what**
124 **happened in the story or to pick up more details**
125
126 TC: Yeah
127
128 **Me: of what happened in that narrative. And they're like, 'Well actually, that was really**
129 **useful for what came next in the affinity mapping and**
130
131 TC: Yeah and actually it was interesting because at the beginning there was a few that
132 actually had- did- that kept their hand down when you asked if they'd heard of the
133 parable before.
134

135 **Me: Yeah. Yeah**
136
137 TC: So, for them, that was key to have that to start with. With
138
139 **Me: Yeah**
140
141 TC: actually reading it, so they knew what it was. But even those that who did keep their
142 hand down and hadn't read it before, eve- by the end of the first session eve-
143 definitely the second session, even though that was the first time they've heard it
144 they'd-they'd got so much from it and you could tell from their responses.
145
146 **Me: Yeah**
147
148 TC: So even though it was a short time when where there were there the first time
149 they'd seen it, the first time they'd ever even heard of it, they actually gave such
150 good responses from that as well.
151
152 **Me: Yeah**
153
154 TC: So it didn't really hinder
155
156 **Me: Mmm**
157
158 TC: what they what they maybe they were thinking.
159
160 **Me: Yeah, awesome. Ok so, we'll we'll jump in and go kind of step-by-step then.**
161
162 TC: Mmm
163
164 **Me: So the first lesson – what should we think about the Parable of the Good**
165 **Samaritan? – erm...I suppose I wanted to keep that question quite open.**
166
167 TC: Mmm
168
169 **Me: I didn't want to say, 'We must think this**
170
171 TC: Yeah
172
173 **Me: or, 'It means this – erm here's your must, should, could' kind of thing.**
174
175 TC: Yeah
176
177 **Me: Erm, so what did we do. So we had the starter, 'What is a parable?', kind of prior**
178 **learning. Then textual analysis. So, trying to read it completely as a class so they**
179 **had a kind of an idea of this is a complete narrative,**
180
181 TC: Mmm

182

183 **Me:** rather than get them just to jump straight in with these questions.

184

185 TC: Yeah

186

187 **Me:** Erm then the affinity map. Just over there.

188

189 TC: Yeah

190

191 **Me:** So organising the cards, erm into different categories, and then putting down their

192 thoughts and reflecting. Erm what did you think about the effectiveness of kind of

193 those steps in that enquiry? Do you think they were able to answer that question

194 by the end? I know I've got a few thoughts about that one

195

196 TC: Erm I think it did work really well because at the beginning with the erm, like you

197 say, it was very open. And even from the beginning of, 'What is a parable?' that was

198 really open as well [laugh]; it wasn't kind of much guidance which worked really well.

199 Erm, and then, like it-it says arriving at that definition they definitely did as a class

200 and with your input and bringing all the different pieces together. Erm and then with

201 the textual analysis, like I said earlier, they they needed that because there were so

202 many of them that either hadn't read it before or kind of vaguely knew parts but

203 actually needed to see it with the writing and have their own copy. Erm and actually

204 reading through, like you said, they needed to read through it all together 'cos that's

205 what we do in class anyway. And a lot for a lot of them maybe, erm, the lower

206 attainers wouldn't of taken it all in. If you had just said, 'Right, go off and read it

207 yourself' they wouldn't have got half

208

209 **Me:** Mmm

210

211 TC: as much as what they did done

212

213 **Me:** No

214

215 TC: because they wouldn't have been able to take it all in and read it. But then the

216 chance for them to go through with the different colours and to get any more

217 information that they might have needed erm actually looking at the words and

218 thinking, 'Well I don't actually know what that means' and asking for some help.

219 Erm, and then going onto the affinity map. I think, at first, there were a few groups

220 that struggled with understanding what where they picked it up and they were all,

221 'So what does it even mean?'

222

223 **Me:** Mmm

224

225 TC: and that part. So it's erm, it was good for those that had the confidence to actually

226 ask, 'Well what does that mean?'. But I know for some of my children, they might

227 have a-actually sat back at that point and either let somebody else do the work

228 because they understood, or weren't confident enough to put up their hand and say,

229 'I don't actually understand what this part means'. And that might of then hindered
 230 how much they got from it. Erm and I think with that part and then going onto the
 231 next part with the annotations, if they didn't understand what it was that was what
 232 was written they were gonna struggle to give their opinion to it
 233
 234 **Me: Yeah**
 235
 236 TC: Erm so I think from from what I could see, most groups did kind of pick up a card and
 237 if they were a bit like, 'I don't know what that means' they would, they would ask.
 238 Erm but I just wonder if maybe there were a few that possibly...misunderstood or
 239 maybe misinterpreted
 240
 241 **Me: Yeah**
 242
 243 TC: because they didn't really understand. So then they found the next part a bit more
 244 difficult because
 245
 246 **Me: Mmm**
 247
 248 TC: but obviously that's all down to timings; you've don't have all the time to talk
 249 through them all. Erm but maybe that then hindered the annotations that were
 250 there because they might not of understood fully what it actually meant
 251
 252 **Me: Yeah. Yeah**
 253
 254 TC: in the first place. So it was hard for them to give their opinion.
 255
 256 **Me: Absolutely**
 257
 258 TC: But from what I could see, when I was going round and-and supporting it, it was
 259 almost [?] like, 'Right, ok, well which one *do* you understand – let's focus on that one
 260
 261 **Me: Yeah**
 262
 263 TC: for the annotations' 'cos then you know that the annotations are true to what they
 264 know rather
 265
 266 **Me: Mmm**
 267
 268 TC: than just what they're assuming it means and moving on very quickly through that.
 269 Erm
 270
 271 **Me: Sure. There's that kind of interesting – and I suppose quite a nice pause – when,**
 272 **you could tell there's like like a minute where they were set the task and they're**
 273 **like, 'Crikey we've got like *ten* different cards here'**
 274
 275 TC: Yeah

276
 277 **Me:** and you think, all of them were like, ‘...where do I start?’.
 278
 279 TC: But actually reminding them, ‘Read one at a time and go from that point’
 280
 281 **Me:** Yeah
 282
 283 TC: rather than trying to do it all at one point.
 284
 285 **Me:** Yeah
 286
 287 TC: It’s easier to go through as a – and actually it was really interesting because they
 288 were working as groups, they actually had to think about what everyone else was
 289 saying as well.
 290
 291 **Me:** Yeah
 292
 293 TC: It’s not just their opinion. It was, ‘Ok well do we *all* agree that it’s going into
 294 characters? Do we *all* agree that it’s meaning?’.
 295
 296 **Me:** Mmm
 297
 298 TC: And eve- and I know some groups said, ‘No I think it’s there and I think it’s there’;
 299 they had to compromise and they had to give each other their reasons as to why
 300 they thought it went there
 301
 302 **Me:** Yeah. Yeah
 303
 304 TC: which was, again, it was that was brilliant in that the talk about the sa- about the
 305 erm the text as well because they were bringing it back to that. They had to they had
 306 to discuss it in terms of the knowledge of what they’d just learnt.
 307
 308 **Me:** Mmm. Mmm
 309
 310 TC: So making sure they were all erm sharing the same knowledge which was – no it was
 311 really interesting
 312
 313 **Me:** Yeah. Nice. Erm so again I think it will be through looking at that [referring to
 314 affinity maps] and looking through the workbooks about, ‘To what extent were
 315 pupils able to answer that question in an informed way?’. Erm and we kind of
 316 mentioned in the lesson – we had a bit of a chin-wag didn’t we –
 317
 318 TC: Yeah
 319
 320 **Me:** about the open-ness. For some, they absolutely loved.
 321
 322 TC: Yeah

323

324 **Me:** For some, they were like, 'Oh...

325

326 TC: Might of needed that little bit more

327

328 **Me:** it's so open'.

329

330 TC: Yeah. Well not that they needed more guidance, but actually where maybe in other

331 lessons or other experiences they've been given more guidance actually, having the

332 freedom to have their own opinion was a completely new thing. And,

333

334 **Me:** Mmm

335

336 TC: 'Oh there's no guidance at all; it really is just what I think',

337

338 **Me:** Yeah

339

340 TC: some of them, like you say, are a bit overwhelmed by that

341

342 **Me:** Yeah

343

344 TC: because there's so much to think about and they've got so many opinions that they

345 needed to narrow it down into one.

346

347 **Me:** Oh definitely. And there's lots of agency in that lesson because not only are they

348 like, 'You can choose any card', but it's like you *could* be like, 'Agree/disagree.

349

350 TC: Yeah

351

352 **Me:** Or we could ask questions or you could link'.

353

354 TC: Yeah

355

356 **Me:** I think that threw a some of them. Particularly at the start

357

358 TC: Yeah. But I think, like you say, for those that are very open-minded, they they loved

359 that because it was like, 'Wow. I really can do what I want.

360

361 **Me:** Yeah, yeah [laughs]

362

363 TC: and like, whatever I think about this I can write. And it doesn't have to be like I agree

364 or disagree, like you say, I could ask a question there'.

365

366 **Me:** Yeah

367

368 TC: And, I'm sure with – like you say – when you look at through some of them,

369 hopefully there's some really good erm some thoughts.

370
 371 **Me:** Yeah. Nice. So, we then went onto the second one.
 372
 373 TC: Mmmhmm
 374
 375 **Me:** Erm so building, very much, on the first one – why might people interpret the
 376 Parable of the Good Samaritan differently? So we started with the icon starter.
 377
 378 TC: Mmm
 379
 380 **Me:** Erm so I've got them here. We started with the icon starter. We started with then
 381 giving them time to rank those cards.
 382
 383 TC: Yeah
 384
 385 **Me:** Erm and then looking at the interpreter profiles. And then giving their own written
 386 reflections. At heart, trying to g- allow pupils just to think, 'Ok. There is this one
 387 text. Different people, different walks of life
 388
 389 TC: Mmm
 390
 391 **Me:** interpret it differently. Why might that be? Erm from your perspective, and your
 392 observations, discussions, ear-wiggling, erm what were your thoughts about that
 393 enquiry? Did it did it do what I set out to do? Or were there some aspects that
 394 were quite challenging?
 395
 396 TC: No I think it d- – like you say – definitely set out and did what you wanted it to do.
 397 Erm it was a completely new thing for the children to almost, like you say...there's
 398 there were so many reasons as to why people could interpret it differently.
 399
 400 **Me:** Mmm yeah, yeah, yeah
 401
 402 TC: Erm and going from one to the other those those reasons could have been
 403 completely different. Well they were – they went from Martin Luther King to erm a
 404 feminist. And there were so many different things that actually they walked over and
 405 went, 'W-w-well they think something *completely* different and now I've gotta get
 406 my head round that'. But, I think that worked so well because even in that awe
 407 moment of, 'They they do think something completely so different', that actually
 408 shows them that there are so many interpretations for this and that's ok. And
 409
 410 **Me:** Yeah, yeah, yeah
 411
 412 TC: even though the children in the class all think something different that's normal,
 413 because all of these people think think different things.
 414
 415 **Me:** Mmm
 416

417 TC: Erm and they really took on board why people thought different things.
 418
 419 **Me: Mmm**
 420
 421 TC: So why Martin Luther King, for example, thought differently. Well because not only
 422 did – was he around at a different time to what we are, he was of a different
 423 background and he was of a different ethnicity so he faced different things.
 424
 425 **Me: Mmm**
 426
 427 TC: And I think, for a lot of them, they then used prior knowledge. Erm I know one of the
 428 children, for example, was saying well he faced racism and that was a whole, a whole
 429 different thing because they were bringing in their knowledge of what they'd known
 430 before.
 431
 432 **Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah**
 433
 434 TC: Erm to bring into those inper-interpretations. But I definitely think t- by the end of
 435 the lesson they had achieved what you'd wanted them to. The thought they could
 436 think about different erm interpretations and why they were different. I think just
 437 for some of them, they struggled then – and as we discussed in the class – they
 438 struggled then to put that onto paper because
 439
 440 **Me: Yeah, yeah**
 441
 442 TC: that was such a good discussion erm but obviously for the purposes of this [the
 443 research and the need for physical data to take home] they did need to get it written
 444 down. But I think for some of them, that struggle with that, 'Ok well I know all of
 445 these things and I know why they think differently but I'm really struggling to put
 446 that onto paper'.
 447
 448 **Me: Yeah**
 449
 450 TC: Might not of shown up as well
 451
 452 **Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Absolutely.**
 453
 454 TC: Erm but obviously completely understanding that it needed to be on paper for the,
 455 for the analysis.
 456
 457 **Me: And sometimes it's like, you wanna do like a WAGOLL, you know, 'What a good**
 458 **one looks like'. And maybe draft an answer**
 459
 460 TC: Yeah
 461

462 **Me:** Erm and sometimes you've got time and there's value in that. There's also the,
 463 'Will there be some that [k]no[w?] that's – I found it hard to kind of think of
 464 putting an example that then wouldn't limit what they might think.
 465

466 **TC:** Yes
 467

468 **Me:** 'Cos they might use that exact example
 469

470 **TC:** And and exactly from my own experience, not only with this class, that would be –
 471 they'd read that and think, 'Well can I take that?'.
 472

473 **Me:** Yeah, yeah
 474

475 **TC:** Because if that opinion is what you've put, then that opinion must be right. But then,
 476 forgetting the fact that it doesn't have to be right and it's
 477

478 **Me:** No
 479

480 **TC:** it's what *you* think. Erm
 481

482 **Me:** Mmm
 483

484 **TC:** So yeah err no I do agree. I do think if you'd have put a 'what you wanted it to look
 485 like', a good example on there I do think that probably would of hindered the
 486 responses you got
 487

488 **Me:** Mmm
 489

490 **TC:** because they wouldn't of, it would've been based on what you'd put in your
 491 example, rather than what they actually think which
 492

493 **Me:** Yeah
 494

495 **TC:** which wasn't what they were thinking as such.
 496

497 **Me:** Yeah, yeah [laughs]
 498

499 **TC:** Erm but no they were, there was lots of good discussions. It was good to see them
 500 walking around. They were really taking in what all of your sheets around the room
 501 were saying. Erm and putting that in, again, using the first lesson to help their
 502 responses as well. And thinking of, well now they know what the parable actually is,
 503 why would people deve- – why would people think about it in a different way?
 504

505 **Me:** Yeah. Nice.
 506

507 **TC:** Erm but no it was, as I say, there were – I do definitely think you got, hopefully,
 508 seeing in the results as well

509

510 **Me:** [laughs]

511

512 TC: you got what you wanted to from that. Because yeah they-they did seem to get to

513 that end point really well

514

515 **Me:** Yeah. I was pleased that it seemed like...most if not all pupils were challenged and

516 were thinking

517

518 TC: Yeah

519

520 **Me:** at their own kind of

521

522 TC: Yeah

523

524 **Me:** what was right for them

525

526 TC: Absolutely

527

528 **Me:** Do you feel there was anything in particular – I mean, from previous trials,

529 sometimes with that ranking cards erm sometimes they found some of the

530 language a bit difficult. But asking them in the focus groups, they certainly for the

531 six I spoke to

532

533 TC: Yeah

534

535 **Me:** they were like, 'No it was fine. It was just some of the interpretations

536

537 TC: There were a few, that maybe there were a few words that they, like you say, they

538 they didn't understand. But, but with the support that was in the room, once they

539 understood what that was they-they were off

540

541 **Me:** Yeah. Definitely

542

543 TC: and they were ready to go. Erm I think, and I mean nothing – it's not against your

544 lesson – I just think the only they thing that they might of struggled with is if you get

545 certain children that struggle to listen to each other's opinions.

546

547 **Me:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah

548

549 TC: Then there's that whole thing of – and as someone said in the class, 'How are we

550 gonna do this? [referring to a question regarding the interpretation ranking activity]

551 We've all got different opinions, so how's it ever going to be right?'

552

553 **Me:** [laughs] I was like, 'And that's exactly the point!'

554

555 TC: Exactly. And actually then you, then you have to say them, 'Well, that's the whole
556 point. You need to work together to
557
558 **Me: Yeah**
559
560 TC: to talk about why *you* think something different to you and get to a middle ground
561 and find what-ve find where you're gonna put it. You've got to justify what it is that
562 you're saying
563
564 **Me: Mmm**
565
566 TC: erm to be able to argue that's where you think it should go'.
567
568 **Me: Yeah**
569
570 TC: Erm, but again I think that's just children and also working in groups. Working with
571 people that have different opinions to them.
572
573 **Me: Mmm**
574
575 TC: Erm but I think, actually, there's beauty in that because they were talk- they were
576 having to discuss it a lot more. They were having to justify why they think that.
577
578 **Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah**
579
580 TC: Erm but no. I do think, like I say, yeah I think it worked well
581
582 **Me: Yeah. Nice. So-so building on from that then, were there any aspects – and it could**
583 **be, you know, in terms of anything. I'm talking resources, I'm talking vocab, I'm**
584 **talking maybe just like logistics of some of the activities. Erm were there any**
585 **aspects from your opinion that you think could of been improved?**
586
587 TC: Erm the only thing I would say was at the end – and as we've just discussed – with
588 them reflect- with the children reflecting on their erm th-the final question. L-
589 they'd, like we just said, th-th-th having an example probably wouldn't have been
590 useful because they would've used that. But if time allowed for further erm
591 discussion, I think some of those that were sitting back and maybe thinking, 'I don't
592 know what I'm going to write', would of benefitted from that.
593
594 **Me: Yeah**
595
596 TC: Because erm once you kinda put the-the-the work out and said, 'Right this is what
597 they're going to do. They're going to write this', and they'd seen how much – not
598 that they had to fill the page – but they'd seen how many lines there were, erm. I
599 think maybe for some of them, they would of benefitted from, 'Ok so what's some
600 possible things that we could've put in here.
601

602 **Me:** Yeah
603
604 TC: Or what could we – what might you be thinking? Or what examples could we use?
605 What does it mean by *use examples from the matching activity*? What examples
606 have we got from that?'.
607
608 **Me:** Yeah
609
610 TC: Maybe just, like I say, just a bit more of a discussion point. Erm
611
612 **Me:** Sure
613
614 TC: before they were set off to write. But obviously I'm aware that time didn't allow.
615 And you needed and – like you say – it needed
616
617 **Me:** [laughs]
618
619 TC: to be, it did need to be written down so. But I think, for the majority of them, they
620 did get on well with that. I just wonder if maybe you'd have got some more
621
622 **Me:** Mmm
623
624 TC: erm thoughtful responses from *more* of them
625
626 **Me:** Yeah
627
628 TC: if that might have needed that extra support with the discussion points.
629
630 **Me:** Yeah. Yeah and, as you mentioned in the lesson as well, like if you had that
631 conversation with them
632
633 TC: Mmm
634
635 **Me:** they could probably articulate their recent thinking.
636
637 TC: Yeah
638
639 **Me:** It's just then being faced with that blank page
640
641 TC: Yeah. Throws a lot of them.
642
643 **Me:** of, 'Aaaah. I've got eight minutes to write down this. Here's my success criteria'
644
645 TC: And I've got to write that – how do I how do I take what's in my head and write it
646 onto a piece of paper?
647
648 **Me:** Yeah, yeah, yeah

649

650 TC: That's, but that's a general struggy- struggle with, erm, any

651

652 **Me: Upper Key Stage Two class**

653

654 TC: Yeah, absolutely

655

656 **Me: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. Ok nice. Erm ok. Two more questions then.**

657

658 TC: Mmm

659

660 **Me: Erm is there anything that you would think would be useful from these enquiries**

661 **to incorporate into other areas of RE teaching? Erm if so, why? If not, you know,**

662 **why not?**

663

664 TC: Erm I mean we try to, if we're looking at a new piece of text – especially in RE – erm

665 so if we're looking at err erm a story from the bible or whatever it might be, we will

666 try to give them it so that they can see it, as you've done, which – again – works well.

667 Erm I like the idea of highlighting things and doing it in colours and seeing what it is

668 that stands out or what doesn't understand, or what maybe more information

669 should have been provided. Erm...and I think the ideas of actually having those

670 different interpretations in whichever, in whichever way the resources work, or

671 whichever way those are, would be really helpful because, like you say, it's really

672 important that children see that yes, although this is the teaching, if everyone reads

673 that same page it's not to say that everyone's gonna have the same opinion on it.

674

675 **Me: Mmm**

676

677 TC: So I think actually looking at different interpretations would be really beneficial in

678 other areas of RE because they would be able to erm see those other interpretations

679 and understand why those people think something completely different to maybe

680 what somebody else has thought or what they think. Maybe there isn't enough of

681 that in RE. Erm

682

683 **Me: Yeah**

684

685 TC: 'Cos I think sometimes some children, or even some teachers, are led to believe,

686 'Well that's the teaching so that's how it's to be taught. And there's one defin-

687 definite definition for it, or one definite erm interpretation. And that's it because

688 that's how it was written and that's how it was intended'.

689

690 **Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah**

691

692 TC: But actually, we are all allowed our own opinions. And, like you say, everyone from

693 different walks of life are going to have their own opinions. So

694

695 **Me: Yeah, yeah**

696
697 TC: it would be really good to bring that into the teaching, the teaching for the children
698 so that they know that that's ok
699
700 **Me: Yeah**
701
702 TC: and they know that it's not a written rule that that's what it means. Erm so yeah, I
703 think, definitely for myself as well erm something to think about when planning
704 future RE lessons and thinking about how things can look different to others.
705
706 **Me: Yeah, yeah**
707
708 TC: Yeah
709
710 **Me: And they certainly they-they seemed to really valued the opportunity that, like,**
711 **their thoughts and their opinions, there was time for that**
712
713 TC: Yeah
714
715 **Me: and it really mattered.**
716
717 TC: Yeah
718
719 **Me: Erm**
720
721 TC: There was a lot of discussion points allowed and given in your planning where it was,
722 'Well, what do you think?' and, 'Over to you' and 'Tell us what you...'.
723
724 **Me: Mmm**
725
726 TC: There was so much of that which worked really well because, as I said earlier, they-
727 they bounced off of each other's ideas and you got children who might not of ever
728 thought of that. They listened to someone else and think, 'Oh actually, no I do agree
729 but I think this as well'.
730
731 **Me: Yeah, yeah, yeah**
732
733 TC: And they then had the voice to be able to say that. There were so many points
734 where they were allowed to talk to each other or share with the class about what
735 their opinion was.
736
737 **Me: Mmm. Mmm. Fantastic. Ok erm so finally then. Is there anything else that you'd**
738 **like to mention? It could be that I haven't asked or erm something's come up erm.**
739 **If there's anything else about the lessons or anything erm now's your chance**
740
741 TC: I don't think so. Erm...I don't, I can't think no. I think anything that well, like I say,
742 that anything that I was mentioned I've mentioned. Erm

743
744 **Me:** [laughs]
745
746 TC: no, can't of can't think of anything else that there is.
747
748 **Me:** **So there we'll stop**
749
750 [End of recording]

Appendix Twenty-eight: Reflective journal

Started January 2021

Chapter 1: Introduction

I found this fruitful to write semi-autobiographically. This allowed me to reflect on my own journey in RE, the questions which emerged in practice and through MA reflection, and why this research is important.

Chapter 2: Post-secular society

This chapter certainly allowed me to build upon my understanding of post-secular society which developed within my MA dissertation. Key changes are:

- In MA, aspects considered were that the post-secular refers to the erroneous nature of the secularisation thesis as well as the return/influence of religion in society. It was through engagement with Beckford's literature review in the second draft that I understood that there exists a plethora of understandings of the post-secular/post-secularism. In my thesis, therefore, I had to be selective and follow particular understandings which were teased out in further depth within the structuring of the chapter; post-secular (non-) religiosity and epistemic ability then had a driving place within the thesis.
- The emergence of worldviews due to the CoRE report (between my first draft (2017) and second draft (2020)) was a constant source of tension. Do I place worldviews central to my thesis or allude to it? Part of the tension was due to the fact that the worldviews paradigm was gaining momentum yet lacked theoretical and pedagogical consensus (at least, up to January 2021).
- I developed a more nuanced understanding of epistemic ability and post-secular (non-) religiosity. Non-religiosity became more important – less reference was made pupils engaging with truth claims of religions (as opposed to instrumental purposes for RE) but more focus on 'the what and why of diverse positionalities'.
- In the second draft, comments from supervisors helped me to be more specific in terms of the literature I was drawing on (e.g. some key Western literature)
- [Corrigan] We should understand the postsecular not *nounally* but *adjectivally*, used to indicate not that a certain society or text *is* (or is not) postsecular outright or in some essential way but rather that it has postsecular characteristics, on a continuum between trace and quintessence.
- In the final read through, I wondered whether changing language from 'religious and secular citizens' to 'religious and non-religious', or 'theistic and atheistic' might be better. Does the former claim a distinct binary when I have argued they are more both/and?

Chapter 3: Post-secular child

This chapter allowed me to build upon my understanding of pupil agency and the implications of post-secularism for RE which developed within my MA dissertation. Key changes were:

- My understandings of 'pupil agency'. At the start of my PhD research, this essentially was perceived as 'pupils are competent agents – therefore pedagogies in RE should be pupil led/acknowledge that they can engage in bricolage'. Through critical reflection in engaging with literature, my understanding of pupil agency, how it is enacted and how it can be identified has developed (e.g. pupils can exercise their agency passively or in a conforming manner; that agency is both enabled and constrained by contextual factors). Certainly, there is more to pupil agency than I first considered and this became a real area of interest for me and informed my thinking and the trialled enquiry.
- Interesting to discuss with supervisors that these conversations re: agency may not be overly considered at an academic level but are happening all the time at a local level (i.e. schools). Of course, teachers/school leaders may not be referring to this as 'agency', but instead as pedagogy, pupil engagement, teaching and learning, learning environment, pupil voice etc. There is often a gap between academic terms/discussions and those considered at a local level. This has implications for any research that has schools as its audience.
- Reading and conversations with supervisors allowed me to realise the connected nature of pedagogy, epistemic ability and perception of pupils for visions of an educated citizenry. This applies both to myself and to other educational endeavours I pondered over English educational history.
- I also became quite taken with Davis' (2014) question of how can we enable 'much more expansive encounter[s]'. This acted as a purposeful line in helping me to conceive of how such encounters might look with regards to primary parabolic enquiries.

Chapter 4: Post-secular RE

- MA and trialled enquiry primarily equated 'post-secular RE' with greater attention to diversity with pupils taking the lead role in bricolage through navigating a number of classroom resources (including others and myself). From my subsequent teaching practice and engagement with parabolic scholarship, a development in my thinking was that it is potentially more important for pupils – in developing their epistemic ability – to focus on the why. This includes reflexivity on themselves and their own positionality.
- Aldridge's hermeneutical triangle particularly developed my thinking – an influence, alongside Gadamer.
- One thought: why was this 'post-secular classroom' and not 'post-secular RE' for so long? Post-secular classroom would have entailed a consideration of spatial aspects which were not needed in this study.
- The second draft was a lot tighter. It proffered an application of epistemic ability to RE which synthesised post-secular (non-) religiosity, epistemic ability, pupil agency and post-secular conceptions of the child.

- Between the first and the second draft, there was an intentional move away from truth claims. The focus moved away from looking at the theological meanings of the text, towards more hermeneutical questions of 'what' and 'why'
- My section of religious literacy was moved from Chapter Six to Chapter Four to root my conceptualisation of post-secular RE contextually and explain the importance of my thinking here. The second draft, written Spring-Summer 2021, was definitely informed by (and helped develop my understanding of) the Ofsted RE research review and its focus on substantive, disciplinary and personal knowledge.
- Biesta's domains was introduced in the second draft, and I found it really useful.
- The question arose, during the writing of the second draft, of how we can actually allow pupils to become conscious of their positionality, particularly as it is quite often deeply rooted and unacknowledged. Cooling raised this.
- The second draft of this chapter saw me moved towards a more explicit application of the tools of sacred text scholarship within an appropriate hermeneutic.
- Behind, within, in front applied as a way to allow both horizons of text and reader to be taken seriously in sacred text enquiry.
- A key development of thinking occurred through engaging with Phillipson and Wegerif's definition of dialogic learning. Defining it as speaking/reasoning across/through helped me clarify what and to what end dialogic learning could be employed in allowing pupils to explore interpretive diversity (and diversity more generally).

Chapter 5: Parabolic enquiry: in scholarship and schools

A focus at the start of the study was to consider a way in which pupils could engage with theological readings of the parable. As I progressed, I felt that engaging with diverse theological readings only did not make sense in the light of a) parabolic scholarship and b) post-secular (non-) religiosities and epistemic ability. The subsequent study focused more on the 'what and why' – theological and non-theological readings – to help develop pupils' hermeneutical literacy.

I found this area fascinating – there are so many different viewpoints, key debates and interpretive issues which parabolic scholarship drew attention to. It was then interesting to contrast this with the practical exemplifications offered for practitioners – often one meaning only. Titles and framing texts have really stood out, as has 'which character/s do we resonate with?' and how the answer to this differs in different places.

In the second draft, I went deeper into reception history and changed from a focus on parables in RE from 1950s to a smaller, more focussed period of post-1988. With regards to reception history, my views – through reading and reflection – changed/were challenged as follows:

- Selections of reception history are subjective and ideological; led to greater reflection on my own selection for LE2
- Hypothetical first reception allows reception history to walk, in a credible way, between historical-critical approaches (first reception) and reader response without prioritising one or the other. This balance is also reflected in Gadamer's fusions

- From reading, reception history is traditionally, perhaps, more formalised and systematic than I had first appreciated
- Have I, in the LE2 examples, essentially created my own summit-dialogue in a way which also happens to exemplify different paradigm shifts in parabolic scholarship?
- Historical-critical approaches are broader than I thought from my first draft – in the first draft I thought these approaches sought ‘the one, original meaning of Jesus’ but Thiselton helped me realise that historical-critical approaches are much broader.
- On reflection, I felt that ‘within’ the text approaches had limited application for my post-secular RE enquiry. I therefore have chosen to focus on ‘behind’ the text (via historical-critical approaches) and ‘in front’ (via reader-response). This also links closely to Gadamer’s fusion of horizons. Alterations were therefore made to acknowledge this in Chapter Four.

I considered whether ‘Evangelists’ might be better phrased as ‘Gospel authors’ to account for the fact that they may not of had one author per Gospel. I decided to keep the terminology Evangelists as it can be plural too (i.e. there could be two Markan Evangelists)

Chalmer’s article on Calvin’s margin annotation on the ‘Jews and Samaritans did not like each other’ prompted reflection on the importance of reception history. Would I have amended the hermeneutical cards in the light of this? Perhaps reception history could be a key focus for a secondary enquiry which builds on this.

Fragmented manner (Bowie and Coles, 2018) removed from ‘predetermined, exclusivist and instrumental manner’ as parabolic enquiries surveyed in second half of chapter did not really present parables in fragmented manner per se. Is it worth saying this in text?

Chapter 6: Philosophical Methodology

I really enjoyed writing this chapter. Key development points were:

- Engaging with questions of ontology and epistemology in depth. Context is key.
- Gadamer and Dewey were influential here. ‘Historically effected consciousness’ and the situated nature of ‘knowledge and the knower’ and ‘pragmatism’ in order to answer some questions respectively.
- I liked the analogy of sculptor of conclusions as opposed to archaeologist.
- Literature review into religious literacy identified for me that this is a contested and moving area; this was not known in this depth before.
- Developments were made to the learning enquiries, which are detailed in appendices

- A source of deep rumination was a purposeful starter in LE2 which would set the ground for rich thinking regarding why different people might interpret the parable differently. This activity needed to be an appropriate step to eventually allow pupils to reflect on their positionality and their engagement with the text. Based on feedback from KW, I/we thought about whether a) there might be a better starter activity than the holiday starter or b) whether an additional step might be taken. An art 'icon' deemed as potentially more effective.

Chapter 7: Research method

This chapter allowed me to explore a tighter link between my ontological/epistemological positionality and research methods than I was able to in MA research. I could also go into further depth into data collection, ethical issues etc. than I had previously been able to.

- Although I may have mentioned in AER originally that: schools selected will also have agency embedded within their pedagogy. I was unable to ascertain this due to C-19. Furthermore, changes to pedagogies due to C-19 restrictions implicated pedagogy in a number of instances. A further question I have is, how would I have ascertained this information re: pupil agency meaningfully? Almost a research thesis in itself!
- Research methods developed over time – detailed in appendices
- Deciding on themes: lots of routes considered, but eventually decided on thematic analysis via 'pedagogic episodes'.

Chapters 8 and 9: LE1 and LE2

- Approaching thematic analysis through 'pedagogic episodes' helped me to structure my analysis and gain a in-depth familiarity with the enquiries and associated data

Appendix Twenty-nine: Ethical consent forms

Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) Consent Form

Title of study: Post-secularism and parables in the primary school: an appropriate hermeneutic?

Rationale for research

In my PhD research (Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham),⁵²⁴ I am exploring the teaching of the parables in the primary classroom. Arguing against Ronald Goldman's influential view that pupils cannot understand parables until they are thirteen/fourteen years of age, I propose that the post-secular paradigm calls the English Religious Education (RE) community to look afresh at textual engagement in the primary setting in a way which brings rich hermeneutical possibilities and questions to the fore. In particular, enquiry into the diversity of interpretation is an aspect often missing from RE curricula and classrooms, despite its stress in publications such as the *Church of England Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education* (2019) and the *Understanding Christianity* resource.

I contend, in this study, that questions emerging from parabolic scholarship can purposefully inform parabolic enquiry in the primary RE classroom, and wish to trial a sequence of learning activities which allow pupils to consider why different people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently. Furthermore, I am interested in exploring pedagogical approaches which allow pupils a greater agency in their learning. I would like to ascertain whether the activities will allow pupils to create meaningful constructions in their parabolic enquiry or if it will prove too 'open' with little clarity. It is hoped that the conclusions from this research will inform discussions and practice with regard to parabolic enquiry in primary RE.

Aims of study

In this study, I am exploring the use of parables in the post-secular RE classroom. The aims of the research are to:

- explore post-secular definitions of religiosity and childhood, and the pedagogical implications this may have for the RE practitioner;
- examine both historic and contemporary use of the parables in primary education in England alongside the debates prevalent with parabolic scholarship; and
- consider ways in which primary pupils can enquire into the diversity of parabolic interpretations, as well as why these varying readings might exist.

Methods of data collection

A sequence of learning activities (led by the researcher as a 'drop down' morning or afternoon) will be trialled with Year Five/Six pupils in four Church of England schools in the Diocese of St Albans. These lessons will be designed to identify ways

⁵²⁴ My supervisors are Dr Karen Wenell (Lecturer in New Testament and Theology – [REDACTED]) and Dr Sarah Hall (Lecturer in Religious Education – [REDACTED]).

in which pupils exercise their agency in their shared parabolic enquiry and their subsequent understanding of parable interpretation. To this end:

- Photographs of pupils' work will be taken as a record, as well as notes pertaining to pupil engagement, decisions and responses to the stimuli. This data will be gathered by myself, the class teacher and, where possible, an independent religious educator who is experienced in observational practice;
- After both lessons have taken place, two separate focus groups of three/four pupils shall be used to gather their feedback and thoughts on the lessons (a duration of forty-five minutes each); and
- The class RE teacher shall be interviewed before and after the trial lessons to ascertain their views regarding the potential and perceived effectiveness of the lessons respectively (a duration of thirty minutes each).

In order to recruit schools, an email will be sent to headteachers during Summer/Autumn 2020 (please see affixed), with a view that the research can take place in schools during the 2020/21 academic year. This details the purposes of the research, the methods of data collection and the criteria for participation. If interest permits, schools will be selected which represent a range of contexts (e.g. urban/rural). If possible, there will also be a number of trial studies during the Summer Term 2020.

In line with the University of Birmingham's ethical guidance:

- Participation in the research is voluntary, and DBE consent can be withdrawn at any time up to 24th September 2023 without giving a reason, with all data collected from schools being destroyed;
- All participants (schools, class RE teachers and pupils (through parents/legal guardians)) will be recruited in line with their voluntary informed consent. Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the interviews, or refuse to answer any question;
- All participants will be anonymised in the study, to maintain confidentiality. No names of pupils will be recorded;
- Statutory safeguarding guidelines will be followed in line with the *Keeping children safe in education* (2019), with the researcher raising any concerns;
- The class teacher interviews and pupil focus groups will be audio-recorded and transcribed (typed out). Only the researcher (Mr R Parker) will hear the audio-recording and all data collected in the study will be stored securely in line with the University of Birmingham Code of Practice for Research. All data collected will be destroyed ten years after the study has been completed; and
- All data collected will be used for the purposes of this research only. It will be accessible only by myself.

The proposed research has been ethically approved by the University of Birmingham Ethics Committee. Requests for further details of the study and/or the conclusions of the research shall be made to the headteacher (which will be provided by the researcher). All school safeguarding procedures shall be adhered to. The researcher has Enhanced DBS clearance (child workforce) for the purposes of educational research.

The conclusions of the study will be provided to the Diocesan Board of Education and participating schools as a two-page summary report. This will also include a link to the full study.

DBE Consent

We confirm that we have read and understand the participant information leaflet for this study. We have had the opportunity to ask questions if necessary and have had these answered satisfactorily.

☐

We give our consent for Mr R Parker to undertake this research within Diocesan schools.

☐

We understand that the permission granted is voluntary and that the Diocesan Board of Education is free to withdraw this permission at any time before 24th September 2023, without giving a reason. We acknowledge that all data collected will be destroyed.

☐☐

We understand that all schools, teachers and pupils shall remain anonymous.

We understand that all safeguarding guidelines will be followed, with the researcher raising any concerns.

☐

Name:

Signature:

Date:

If you have any questions about this research, please contact:
Mr R Parker – [REDACTED]

This information is being collected as part of a research project concerned with the use of texts in RE by the Department of Theology and Religion in the University of Birmingham. The information which you supply and that which may be collected as part of the research project will be entered into a filing system or database and will only be accessed by authorised personnel involved in the project. The information will be retained by the University of Birmingham and will only be used for the purpose of research, and statistical and audit purposes. By supplying this information you are consenting to the University storing your information for the purposes stated above. The information will be processed by the University of Birmingham in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018. No identifiable personal data will be published.

School Consent Form

Parables in the primary school

Rationale for research

In my PhD research (Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham),⁵²⁵ I am exploring the teaching of the parables in primary religious education (RE). Following recent calls that that pupils should understand the diversity that exists within Christianity,⁵²⁶ I wish to trial a sequence of learning activities which allow pupils to explore why different people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently. It is hoped that the conclusions of the research will support primary RE teachers in their planning and teaching to further develop religious literacy in pupil learning.

Methods of data collection

A sequence of learning activities (led by the researcher as a 'drop-down' morning or afternoon) will be trialled with Year Five/Six pupils in Church of England schools in the Diocese of St Albans, during the 2021/22 academic year. These lessons will be designed to identify ways in which pupils exercise their agency in their enquiry and their subsequent understanding of parable interpretation. To this end:

- Photographs of pupils' work will be taken as a record, as well as field notes pertaining to pupil engagement, decisions and responses to the stimuli. This data will be gathered by myself, the class teacher and, where possible, an independent religious educator who is experienced in observational practice;
- After both lessons have taken place, two separate focus groups of three/four pupils will be used to gather their feedback and thoughts on the lessons (a duration of 45 minutes each);
- The class RE teacher will be interviewed before and after the trial lessons to ascertain their views regarding the potential and perceived effectiveness of the lessons respectively (a duration of 30 minutes each).

In line with the University of Birmingham's ethical guidance:

- Participation in the research is voluntary, and consent can be withdrawn at any time up to 24th September 2023 without giving a reason, with all data collected from the school being destroyed;
- Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the interviews, or refuse to answer any question;
- All participants will be anonymised in the study, to maintain confidentiality. No names of pupils will be recorded;
- The class teacher interviews and pupil focus groups will be audio-recorded and transcribed (typed out). Only the researcher (Mr R Parker) will hear the audio-recording and all data collected in the study will be stored securely in line with the University of Birmingham Code of Practice for Research. All data collected will be destroyed ten years after the study has been completed; and
- All data collected will be used for the purposes of this research only. It will be accessible only by myself.

⁵²⁵ My supervisors are Dr Karen Wenell (Lecturer in New Testament and Theology – [REDACTED]) and Dr Sarah Hall (Lecturer in Religious Education – [REDACTED]).

⁵²⁶ Church of England Statement of Entitlement (2019).

The proposed research has been ethically approved by the University of Birmingham Ethics Committee. A letter will be provided for legal guardians which details the 'RE drop-down morning/afternoon' with an option to 'opt-out'. Requests for further details of the study and/or the conclusions of the research shall be made to the headteacher (which will be provided by the researcher). All school safeguarding procedures shall be adhered to. The researcher has Enhanced DBS clearance (child workforce).

The conclusions of the study will be provided to the school as a two-page summary report. This will also include a link to the full study.

School Consent

I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information leaflet for this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions if necessary and have had these answered satisfactorily.

☐

I consent to participating in the research as stated above.

☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time before 24th September 2023 without giving a reason. If I withdraw my data will be removed from the study and will be destroyed.

☐

I understand that the school, teachers and pupils shall remain anonymous. In order to preserve anonymity, the school will not share specific details of involvement in the research beyond 'participating in research linked to textual enquiry in RE'.

☐

I understand that all focus groups will be audio-recorded and transcribed (typed-out).

☐

Only the researcher (Mr R Parker) will hear the audio-recording and all data collected in the study will be stored securely in line with the University of Birmingham ethics policy. All data collected will be destroyed ten years after the study has been completed.

I understand that the focus groups and interviews will be analysed in the above study.

☐

I understand that all safeguarding guidelines will be followed, with the researcher raising any concerns.

☐

Name: (Headteacher)

Signature:

Date:

Name: (Chair of Governors)

Signature:

Date:

If you have any questions about this research, please contact:
Mr R Parker – [REDACTED]

This information is being collected as part of a research project concerned with the use of texts in RE by the Department of Theology and Religion in the University of Birmingham. The information which you supply and that which may be collected as part of the research project will be entered into a filing system or database and will only be accessed by authorised personnel involved in the project. The information will be retained by the University of Birmingham and will only be used for the purpose of research, and statistical and audit purposes. By supplying this information you are consenting to the University storing your information for the purposes stated above. The information will be processed by the University of Birmingham in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018. No identifiable personal data will be published.

Teacher Consent Form

Parables in the primary school

Rationale for research

In my PhD research (Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham),⁵²⁷ I am exploring the teaching of the parables in primary religious education (RE). Following recent calls that that pupils should understand the diversity that exists within Christianity,⁵²⁸ I wish to trial a sequence of learning activities which allow pupils to explore why different people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently. It is hoped that the conclusions of the research will support primary RE teachers in their planning and teaching to further develop religious literacy in pupil learning.

Methods of data collection

A sequence of learning activities (led by the researcher as a 'drop-down' morning or afternoon) on the Parable of the Good Samaritan will be trialled with Year Five/Six pupils in Church of England schools in the Diocese of St Albans, during the 2021/22 academic year. Photographs of pupils' work will be taken as well as notes on the decisions they have made in constructing an answer to the enquiry questions.⁵²⁹ If possible, an independent religious educator will join the lessons to assist with this data collection.

Following the lessons, I wish to take two small focus groups (3/4 pupils each) to get their views on what they learnt and whether they think these are useful activities that other schools should do.

Teacher interview

I would also like to interview yourself, the class teacher, both before and after the lesson. With your knowledge of the class, I would like to get your views on how useful you think the lesson activities might be and, following the lessons, how effective you feel they were in allowing the class to arrive at an informed response to each enquiry question. To this end, participation in the research would entail that you remain with the class during the lessons. Each interview will take no longer than thirty minutes each, with the latter taking place within 48 hours of the lessons.

In line with the University of Birmingham's ethical guidance:

- Participation in the focus group is voluntary, and consent can be withdrawn at any time up to the 24th September 2023;
- Participants have a right to withdraw from the interviews, or refuse to answer any question;

⁵²⁷ My supervisors are Dr Karen Wenell (Lecturer in New Testament and Theology – [REDACTED]) and Dr Sarah Hall (Lecturer in Religious Education – [REDACTED]).

⁵²⁸ Church of England Statement of Entitlement (2019).

⁵²⁹ 'What should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?' and 'Why do different people interpret a parable differently?'

- All participants will be anonymised in the study, to maintain confidentiality;
- The interview will be audio-recorded, with the interview transcribed (typed out). Only the researcher (Mr R Parker) will hear the audio-recording and all data collected in the study will be stored securely in line with the University of Birmingham ethics policy. All data collected will be destroyed ten years after the study has been completed; and
- All data collected will be used for the purposes of this research only. It will be accessible only by myself.

The conclusions of the study will be provided as a two-page summary report. This will also include a link to the full study.

If you have any questions about this research or would like further details, please contact the researcher (Ryan Parker) at [REDACTED]

Teacher Consent

I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information leaflet for this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions if necessary and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐

I consent to participating in the research as stated above. ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time before 24th September 2023 without giving a reason. If I withdraw my data will be removed from the study and will be destroyed. ☐

I understand that the school, teachers and pupils shall remain anonymous. In order to preserve anonymity, the school will not share specific details of involvement in the research beyond 'participating in research linked to textual enquiry in RE'. ☐

I understand that all focus groups will be audio-recorded and transcribed (typed-out). ☐

Only the researcher (Mr R Parker) will hear the audio-recording and all data collected in the study will be stored securely in line with the University of Birmingham ethics policy. All data collected will be destroyed ten years after the study has been completed.

I understand that the interviews will be transcribed and analysed in the above study. ☐

I understand that all safeguarding guidelines will be followed, with the researcher raising any concerns. ☐

Name:

Signed:

Date:

This information is being collected as part of a research project concerned with the use of texts in RE by the Department of Theology and Religion in the University of Birmingham. The information which you supply and that which may be collected as part of the research project will be entered into a filing system or database and will only be accessed by authorised personnel involved in the project. The information will be retained by the University of Birmingham and will only be used for the purpose of research, and statistical and audit purposes. By supplying this information you are consenting to the University storing your information for the purposes stated above. The information will be processed by the University of Birmingham in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018. No identifiable personal data will be published.

Legal Guardian Consent Form

Parables in the primary school

Aim of study

My name is Mr Parker and I am currently studying for a PhD at the University of Birmingham. I am very interested in the teaching of religious education (RE) and how pupils can understand that different people interpret a text differently.

As part of my research, I will be leading two exciting RE lessons for [adapt for context – Year 5, 6, X class] as part of the school's curriculum. The first lesson will involve pupils thinking about what the Parable of the Good Samaritan might mean, with the second lesson focussing on why it means different things to different people.

After the lessons, I wish to ask a selection of pupils some questions to get their views on what they learnt and whether they think these are useful activities that other schools could do. These groups will be chosen by the headteacher, and the interviews will be audio-recorded. Pupil work from the activities will also be photographed, so that I can read their written responses after the lesson.

I am a qualified primary teacher, with many years' experience of teaching in a variety of schools. I also have an up-to-date DBS.

In line with the ethical guidance from the University of Birmingham:

- Permission for your child/children to take part in the focus group is voluntary, and you can withdraw consent at any time up to 24th September 2023 without giving a reason. If consent is withdrawn, all data gathered will be destroyed and not used in the study. This also applies for the analysis of pupil work;
- No names of pupils will be taken or used in the study, to maintain confidentiality;
- Pupils in the focus group will be told of their right to withdraw from the interviews, or refuse to answer any question;
- All data collected will be used for this research only; and
- Only the researcher (Mr R Parker) will hear the audio-recording and all data collected in the study will be stored securely in line with the University of Birmingham ethics policy. All data collected will be destroyed ten years after the study has been completed.

The findings of the study will be provided to the headteacher as a two-page summary report, and will include a link to the full study. These will be available upon request to the headteacher.

If you have any questions about this research, would like further details or are interested in the findings, please contact the headteacher.

Legal Guardian Consent

I **consent** to my child's work being analysed as part of the research.

☐

Code to go here

I **consent** to my child being interviewed as part of the focus group.

☐

I confirm that I have read and understood the information given above about the study. I have asked any questions I may have and have had these satisfactorily answered.

☐

I understand that I have the right to withdraw consent, quoting the participant code, at any time before 24th September 2023 without giving a reason. If I withdraw, data gathered will be removed from the study and destroyed.

☐

Name:

Signed:

Date:

This information is being collected as part of a research project concerned with the use of texts in RE by the Department of Theology and Religion in the University of Birmingham. The information which you supply and that which may be collected as part of the research project will be entered into a filing system or database and will only be accessed by authorised personnel involved in the project. The information will be retained by the University of Birmingham and will only be used for the purpose of research, and statistical and audit purposes. By supplying this information you are consenting to the University storing your information for the purposes stated above. The information will be processed by the University of Birmingham in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018. No identifiable personal data will be published.

Appendix Thirty: Pupils' responses to the statement 'I think meaning of the Parable of the Good Samaritan is/might be...'

Pupil Code	Meaning might be... (LE1)
A1	...no matter who you are it is not too late to help someone
A2	...he a good man
A3	...telling people to take care of people even if you don't like them
A4	...a person who helped a man on the side of the road. The man got helped by a good Samaritan
A6	...I think its help people that aren't your friends and if someone needs help you should help them
A7	...friendship
A10	...I don't know
A12	...it don't matter how you are Help everyone
A16	...a story about a man who was hurt and another person helped him so the meaning is help your neighbour no matter what
A17	A person helping who was hurt
A18	...is where there's a man who's lying on the road who has hurt himself so lots of people go past not helping then a man comes along and helps. The meaning is even if you don't know them it's good to help
A19	Be kind to others even enemies
A21	...there is a bit of good in everyone
A22	...where there is a man on the road who had just been beaten up. Then there is a Samaritan who is the enemy to the man but I think this means 'not all enemies are bad'
A23	...that even if you don't like a person for some what reason and that person is in danger or trouble don't just ignore them but help them
A24	...to help people in need
16/25	
B1	...to always care for people who you know and don't know and even if they're a stranger and they're hurt still care for them
B2	...about a man who is walking and gets beaten up. Two people pass him and do not help him. Then a Samaritan comes walking by. The Samaritan usually didn't help them but he cared for the man and helped him
B3	...to care for everyone and not just people you like. I think this because the Samaritan believes in different things to the man yet he still helps him. But the people who do believe in the same things as the man just walk past him
B6	...that someone got hurt and 3 people come to him and the first one looked at him and hurting him were and then the 2 one saw him and ignored him and the 3 one help him and ride him or her on a donkey
B7	I think the more of the story is to help people even though you not friends with or help people in need
B8	...a good person helping others but the other people are not responding nicely
B9	A person warning from a pair of bandits and beat him up and leaving him to die
B12	...a story teaching us to help people even though they are different
B13	...about a good Samaritan who helps people in need but the other Samaritans are evil and turn this man
B17	I think that a man got injured really badly and two people ignored the injured man and then one man came up to him and helped him even though they were both enemies
B18	...about caring for people even if they are your enemy
B20	...In the picture it looks like a man on the ground and a man in the distance so maybe 1 man or 2 walked passed a man and the 3rd came along and helped on a donkey

B21	...I think it is about two different people who are supposed to hate each other but the Samaritan helps a hurt man
B22	...to help and care for others in need not just someone you like. I think this because the Samaritan is different to the man who saved him yet he still helped him and cared for him even though the Jews and Samaritans don't get along
B24	...about a man who got hurt by people and has been left on the side of the path and that three or two people walked by and ignored but the last one came put it on his donkey and helped him
B25	...That two people walked past the beaten up man, but one person called a Samaritan, who Jews don't get along with stopped by and helped him
B26	...I think it might be to always be kind and don't be horrible to other people
B28	...About a guy who helps an injured guy, takes him to an inn and saves him
B30	...To always be kind and help others even if they worship a different God or come from a different country
19/30	
C1	...even if you are against each other still care for each other
C4	...I don't know at the moment
C5	...robbers attacked the man and then they wounded him and left him alone. A priest walked by and walked past him. Then the Samaritan walked the man said he's never going to help me but he did he gave him pills and bandages and took him to a hospital
C6	...about putting differences and tension between people aside to help them like God and Jesus did
C9	...Is to put others before yourself
C10	...no matter how you look, you should still help and care for them
C11	...Jesus helping people and giving them food and water
C12	...Whatever you are doing you should stop and help the hurt and that means you have a kind heart
C14	...Someone gets hurt and Samaritan helps them
C15	It might be helping over people in their time of need. I read that there were two other people that did not help
C16	...about a man who is hurt and someone help him and so he is being caring and thinking about someone else
C17	...A man riding on a donkey trying to help someone who is hurt and he is showing respect
C18	...The Samaritan helps an injured man and takes him to a hospital even though they have different religions
C19	...to be kind and help the ones in need
C20	...I think the meaning of the Parable of the good Samaritan might be caring for people and helping them if they need it
C22	/
C23	...a story about something religious/related to Jesus/god or when someone gets injured and a god came to save them, but other than that I really don't know. :)
C24	...about a man who got robbed and hurt and a priest and someone else didn't help the man and then this kind person came and helped his wounds and let him stay in an inn
C25	...I think the meaning might be to show there's good in the world and to show being kind costs nothing
C26	...I don't know
C27	...I don't know maybe helping people
C30	...someone who helps the poor and feeds them and makes sure they won't pass away
22/30	

Green – pupil in a focus group

Appendix Thirty-one: A table showing the pupil placement of cards during the card sorting activity in LE1

	Card	Number of times sorted across all affinity maps	Meaning	Characters	Us	Other
Bronze	The parable has only one meaning. It is...	23	17	0	5	1
	This parable has more than one meaning.	21	14	0	6	1
	Jesus was trying to teach that we should treat everybody as our neighbour. It's about loving and caring.	23	9	2	11	1
	The meaning of the parable is that we can't have good without evil. The Samaritan could only help because the man was robbed.	24	14	1	5	4
	The Samaritans and Jewish people did not get on. They disagreed passionately about the right way to follow God.	23	2	17	0	4
	Priests and Levites were considered to be very holy and knowledgeable about Jewish religion. They were looked up to as examples to follow.	24	2	16	3	3
	The Samaritan would not have been considered as a neighbour to Jewish people.	23	0	17	2	4
	This parable could be retold using different characters today.	23	2	11	5	5
Silver	This parable can have more than one meaning.	20	14	0	5	1
	Each character and place represents something. The Good Samaritan is Jesus, who saves 'broken and sinful humans' on life's 'road'. The robbers are the devil.	20	6	13	0	1
	The road between Jerusalem and Jericho was known as a dangerous one to travel along. Thieves wandered the road frequently.	18	6	0	0	12
	This parable only makes sense if we read the rest of Luke's Gospel as well. If you read a random chapter in the middle of a book, you don't get the full story.	18	3	1	10	4
	The title of the parable makes us think of the 'Good Samaritan' only. It should have a different title.	21	2	1	9	9

	The Samaritan should have left the beaten man like the holy people before him.	19	3	7	5	4
	An atheist would get a different meaning from this parable than a Christian.	18	7	1	9	1
	We need to think about what Jesus' original followers would have thought about this parable for it to make sense to us.	20	1	1	16	2
Gold	A parable can mean whatever you want it to mean.	6	3	0	2	1
	If the meaning of the parable is to 'love your enemies', Jesus would have told the story of the 'Good Jew' helping the wounded Samaritan. Jesus gave the example of the Samaritan for a reason.	3	2	0	1	0
	Priests were not allowed to touch dead bodies. They were following their religion by avoiding the man they thought might be dead.	5	0	1	2	2
	This is a cleverly written story by Luke. It is symmetrical in lots of ways. For instance, the priest and the Levite walked past, but the Samaritan and the innkeeper helped.	2	0	0	0	2
	It is not clear who the neighbour is meant to be in this parable. Is it the Samaritan or the beaten man?	4	0	3	1	0
	If we just have Jesus' story in verses 30 - 35, and ignore why he told it to the expert in the law, we get a different meaning.	5	3	1	1	0
	Our beliefs and experiences shape what we think when we read this parable.	3	0	0	2	1
	The parable makes us ask ourselves who we are like, 'Are we like the Priest, the Good Samaritan or the beaten man needing help?'	5	0	0	5	0

Appendix Thirty-two: Transcriptions of pupils' affinity mapping annotations

Card	Responses	Number of responses
The parable has only one meaning. It is...	○ I Disagree with This Because a parble can mean multiple things (A1) ○ To Help everyone (A12) ○ The meaning Is Love your neibor as yourself (A16) ○ it has multiple meanings so I disagree (A18) ○ is to Love and cer for yor naber (B9) ○ I think that it has more then 1 meaning (B12) ○ I think the meaning is to treat eachother with respect (B13) ○ I agree because it's trying to teach us to be kind to each other (B21) ○ the one that has the Samaritan in (B25) ○ I Dissgre Because theres more than one meaning (C15) ○ I disagree because it Should have maybe another meaning just to explain it in a more detailed way (C20) ○ I disagree because people Have difrent opinions not Just one so People might think that a parable might only Have one meaning but other people might think it has lots (C23) ○ I disagree, It should be in oppinion because not every person would think it has one meaning. They might think it has 3 or 2 or more (C26) ○ I Don't (C30)	14
This parable has more than one meaning.	○ I disagree (A17) ○ I disagree with this I think it has multiple meanings (A18) ○ I agree with this one because it can be your on opinion (A21) ○ Yes parables can have more then one meaning (eg: not to be selfish or boastful) (B3) ○ I agree because each and every biblo story has probaly more than 1 meaning (B8) ○ To Lorn to do lis and Help pepal in need (B9) ○ I dont think so because one man helped the Jewish man and the others left him om the road (B13) ○ I agree because Parables don't just have to have one meaning. Parables can have a lot of meanings (B22) ○ How could there be anther meaning for on parable? (B25) ○ I think this is true because Just one parble dostent has to hove one meaning (B30) ○ I agree there is one meaning because there is more than one teaching (C5) ○ I agree because there's more that 1 way to live and Jesus and God try to teach us better ways to live with inspiring stories (C6)	15

	○ I agree but I also disagree because to me it has more than one meaning but to other it can have other meanings (?) (C11) ○ I agree because there is more than one meaning to the story because everyone has a different meaning and How to explain the story! (C16) ○ I agree with this because there are lots of meanings in Just one parable (C23)	
Jesus was trying to teach that we should treat everybody as our neighbour. It's about loving and caring.	○ I agree we should be caring (A2) ○ I agree because we have to treat people with kindness (A17) ○ I agree with this and think you should treat everyone with respect and kindness (A18) ○ I agree with this because say you treated somebody with respect you would want them to treat you the same way (A22) ○ I agree with this because if no one was loving and caring then the world would be a horrible place (B2) ○ I think that they should be more nice to each other (B13) ○ I think that everyone should be treated the same way (B17) ○ I agree with this because it is good to be kind to people then they will be nice to you back (B18) ○ I agree because if nobody liked each other it would be a horrible place to live in (B21) ○ I think loving and caring for people you don't even like is good because they don't mean to be unkind (B24) ○ I agree with this because we can't be mean to everyone and we need to care for people and his teachings told us why (C1) ○ and they should treat each other nicely (C16) ○ yes I agree if you were hurt you would want your neighbour to help you. everyone should be loving and caring (C18) ○ I agree because you should treat everybody in a nice way And nobody Should be treated in a bad way (C20) ○ I agree because every body deserves to be treated the same even if they're different (C22) ○ I agree with this because Jesus is loving, kind and is always trying His best and is always Helping and teaching people How to be better people and How to treat other people better (C23)	16
The meaning of the parable is that we can't have good without evil. The Samaritan could only help because the man was robbed.	○ I disagree because evil will never win only heroes (A17) ○ I disagree because the Samaritan helped him because he was kind (A22) ○ I don't think that the Samaritan helped because he was robbed I think he helped because God told him to and if he didn't do it he would be punished by God (B1) ○ I agree with this because if the Jewish man was not hurt then the Samaritan would not need to help (B2)	9

	○ I agree because you can't help someone if they don't need help (B21) ○ I don't agree because it was the Samaritans disision to help the Jew. He didn't have to help but he was kind and helped (B24) ○ I think this is wrong because if he was not robbed he woul be fine and not need help (B30) ○ I agree, especially where it says 'we cant have good without evil' because not everyone can be good without having a little bit of evil (C14) ○ I think with out evil then there would be no good No pain no Beauty (C15)	
The Samaritans and Jewish people did not get on. They disagreed passionately about the right way to follow God.	○ We should know whats in the past aswell (A6) ○ it's what they think but I would treat every one equally (A18) ○ Just because you don't worship/believe God in the same way doesn't mean you can't be friends (A23) ○ I think he should listen to God and do it the right way (B6) ○ The Samaritan ceard and did not care about what other people thoult[?] (B12) ○ I think theres not real any diffrent bewteen how you worship God (B13) ○ I think that they should all pray together (B17) ○ Why would a Samaritan Have Diffrent oppinions by one god? (B25) ○ I think there is no right or wrong way to worship God, only how it is shown (C6) ○ I agree because they have maybe not got along in the past but the samaritans are much nicer (C16) ○ why cant they follow god the same way and get on? (C22) ○ Each person has there own religion they belive in and they might think different of God (C26) ○ its good to read this beacause they can Start to think I should be a bit nicer so I agree (C30)	13
Priests and Levites were considered to be very holy and knowledgeable about Jewish religion. They were looked up to as examples to follow.	○ Just because they were considered holier than others doesn't mean they should be treated differently (B3) ○ I...think that it is important to know because not everyone seems the same on the outside to the inside (B7) ○ why would Levites and preists think they are more important than Jesus (B25) ○ I disagree because in the story they came back from the temple in Jerusalem so they should be helping the injerd man (C5) ○ I disagree because the priest and levite know the ways of kind, loving God but they didn't help the injured Jew (C6)	5
The Samaritan would not have been considered as a neighbour to Jewish people.	○ I think this is important because it shows a neighbour can be anyone (B2) ○ I agree because Samaritans and Jews didn't get on (B3) ○ I think that its important to know this because it tells you to be kind eventhough your not friends (B7)	13

	○ The Samaritan could just left him. This teaches (B12) ○ I think Samaritans and Jewish people could be at peace with each other (B13) ○ I think that Samaritans and Jewish should NOT be enemies and be like friends (B17) ○ because there not the best of friends (B24) ○ yes because even know the Jews were nice with the (C4) ○ I agree because they hated each other very strongly and if the Jewish was in that position he might not help him (C5) ○ I agree, because they did not get along. They disagreed about the right way to follow god. So no one would think that they would be neighbours (C14) ○ They both love god and that should be the thing that brings them Together (C18) ○ this stands out because it seems like these people are enemies (C19) ○ I disagree because even if they believed something different about god you should still be nice to them so it was quite nice of him/Samaritan to do that (C20)	
This parable could be retold using different characters today.	○ for Example: people of different race or people of different genders (A1) ○ I agree with this because many things like this has happened (A3) ○ I disagree because it has characters in it (A17) ○ I agree with this because the characters can change but the Parable has to be the same (A23) ○ It can be told a little different with different people because it depends how you tell the story (A24) ○ I agree you can use anyone in this way (B3) ○ I would call the people Joe, Andrew, Peter and Mary (B6) ○ I agree as long as same story and it has the same meaning (B8) ○ I wonder what characters should be used in this parable (B13) ○ I think you could add any-one to this story/parable in the way it is set out (B22) ○ why would they tell another story with different people? (B25) ○ Jesus could have chosen any characters but he chose these. You could change it (B30) ○ Yes I agree because it is an easy story to be told again with different people (C11) ○ I Agree With [pupil C11 name omitted] Because anyone can be in it (C15) ○ I agree (C16) ○ yes as long as two of the characters have a reason to hate each other (C18) ○ I agree because you can swap any one for the Samaritan if they are nice like him (C19) ○ I disagree because if you tell a story from the bible you have to use the same characters (C24)	18
This parable can have more than one meaning.	○ It doesn't have one meaning it has multiple like Jesus would 'teach' us to be evil but we should only do good things to do in life (A6)	13

	- o yes I agree (A18) - o I think this is in 'Us' because it's our opinion to believe that (A22) - o [linked to the gold card 'A Parable can mean whatever you want it to mean'] These cards link because they both mention how a parable can have lots of meanings; A parable wouldn't have a meaning that is like I'm going to buy a cat because it doesn't mention that in the story - when I mean this I mean no silly meanings (A23) - o I agree with this because it can be your opinion on wat it can be (A24) - o I would put more than 1 meaning (B6) - o I agree because it talks about diffrent, diffrent stuff (B8) - o I think that might be true because lots of people have diffrent oppinions (B25) - o there can be one BIG meaning, but there's always going to be smaller meanings with reasons (C6) - o I agree with this because it could be difrent menas to difrent pepol and more than one to some pepol (C11) - o I agree because there can be more than one meaning in your opinion but some people can find only one. I found never give up and no matter what you are doing go and help like the Samaritan. But you will only do that if you are kind-hearted (C12) - o It can Have more meaning than one I agree with this statement (C15) - o I agree everyone has their own opinion on this story it could have lots of different meanings (C18)	
Each character and place represents something. The Good Samaritan is Jesus, who saves 'broken and sinful humans' on life's 'road'. The robbers are the devil.	- o I agree, because robbers are bad and Jesus good but I disagree with broken humans because Jesus doesn't have healing powers. Jesus Just is a good religious man (A19) - o I think this is hard to explain (B26) - o I agree with that 'the robbers are the devils' because devils are nasty and rude, so are robbers (C14)	3
The road between Jerusalem and Jericho was known as a dangerous one to travel along. Thieves wandered the road frequently.	- o I agree with this text, because If there weren't a man at the side of the road then it wouldn't be dangerous to travel on (A4) - o Im kind of in the middle of this because They dont get along (B20) - o I agree because there was loads of rocks to hide behind and attack them (C5) - o I agree because the Samaritan got beat up by the thieves and got robbed (C19) - o I agree because it is a 18 mile walk and along the way there are big caves and rocks thieves can hide in/behind so it is a dangerous road (C24) - o they probulary said we should not help him because we mig go beat up (C27)	6
This parable only makes sense if we read the rest of Luke's Gospel as well. If you read a random chapter	- o I agree with this Statment Scince there might be a connection Which Makes it make sense (A16) - o Yes you can't just open a random page (A18)	9

in the middle of a book, you don't get the full story.	- o yes I agree with this because if you read the rest of the story it will make more sense (A24) - o Why would you go into the middle of the parable? (B25) - o I agree with this because we dont know what happens before and why he came (C1) - o I agree that I does not make sance if you don't read Luke's gosel (C4) - o I agree because if you open a book to a radom chapter you won't understand what's happening because you've skiped the start (C5) - o I agree with the card because it wouldn't really make sense without a beginning and you would want to know what happened at the start (C10) - o I agree because when you read something and you don't know whats happening then you can just head on and you will get it (C17)	
The title of the parable makes us think of the 'Good Samaritan' only. It should have a different title.	- o I disagree with this because I think we are meant to think about him (A16) - o Yes mabye you could call it somthing like spread kindness (A18) - o It makes me wonder what the main character in this parable is? This would affect the name of the parable (B2) - o I agree with this because if it was titled 'the Bad Robbers you would think about the robbers (B3) - o I don't agree because that is all about the good Samaritan (B8) - o I think the tittle the good Samaritan is good because Samaritans and Jews are not friends. A samaritan helped a Jew (B24) - o I think the Good Samaritan is a good title because it shows that even though Jews and Samaritans are not friends they are friends in this story (B26) - o It could be called the guy who saved lives [I suspect the card fell off before taking a photo] (B28) - o I disagree because it gives us a idea of what could happen and the Samaritan was good (C10) - o I agree because in the story there was a lot to think about the title Shouldn't be just one person it should be about everyone (C18) - o I don't agree because the title tell what the book is about (C22)	11
The Samaritan should have left the beaten man like the holy people before him.	- o they shondn't of theft him there becos his famliiy cod of felt bad for him and sad (A7) - o no I don't agree you should help anyone no matter who they are threat them with respect (A18) - o I disagree with this because you can't leave a man/woman there like that, you have to help not leave them (A19) - o Someon could have left him there (B12) - o I disagree with this because if he left the Samaritan God wouldnt bless him (B18)	8

	○ I Dont agree with This card because if you see someone hurt you shoud always respect and care for them (B20) ○ This isn't right you help people if their right infront of you (B28) ○ I disagree because the samaritan was very nice as if he didn't the man might have died (C10)	
An atheist would get a different meaning from this parable than a Christian.	○ I disagree because I think atheiists can help their neibor too (A16) ○ I'm not sure about this card because you have to know what an atheist is (Person that doesn't believe in God) Also if this is another story an atheist might think it is just a story (B3) ○ I igree because people have diffrent opions on things (B24) ○ An atheist would have a diffrent opinon on this because it just shows that to help people in need (C9) ○ I agree, because someone that doesn't belive in God and Jesus might not think it is real at all (C26)	5
We need to think about what Jesus' original followers would have thought about this parable for it to make sense to us.		
A parable can mean whatever you want it to mean.	○ you cant mack it wat you want it to be (A12) ○ You can make it persinale (A21) ○ I think if I wanted to call this parable I would call it A Honest Samaritan (B6) ○ I dont think this is true because if there is a parable and it say's something that's true you can't just change it to whatever you want (C25)	4
If the meaning of the parable is to 'love your enemies', Jesus would have told the story of the 'Good Jew' helping the wounded Samaritan. Jesus gave the example of the Samaritan for a reason.		
Priests were not allowed to touch dead bodies. They were following their religion by avoiding the man they thought might be dead.		
This is a cleverly written story by Luke. It is symmetrical in lots of ways. For instance, the priest and		

the Levite walked past, but the Samaritan and the innkeeper helped.		
It is not clear who the neighbour is meant to be in this parable. Is it the Samaritan or the beaten man?	○ I think that Both of them are the neihgbours Because see the man tiyeinng down better gave him corage and in return Helped Him (A1) ○ I think it's the Samaritan as he helped the man (A23) ○ You could argue that even of them are the neighbour because the Samaritan helped the beaten man but the beaten man didnt do anything so I would say that the samaritan was the neighbour (C9)	3
If we just have Jesus' story in verses 30 - 35, and ignore why he told it to the expert in the law, we get a different meaning.		
Our beliefs and experiences shape what we think when we read this parable.	○ I think this is true because It Makes Me believe more in Christianity (A16)	1
The parable makes us ask ourselves who we are like, 'Are we like the Priest, the Good Samaritan or the beaten man needing help?'		
Focus Group pupils: A1, A3, A7, A16, A17, A18, B2, B3, B7, B18, B20, B28, C6, C14, C15, C16, C17, C26		

Appendix Thirty-three: All pupil responses to the reflective questions at the end of LE1

Questions	Responses
What have you learnt about the Parable of the Good Samaritan from doing this activity?	I have learnt that no matter who you do good to just remember if you do good the favor will always be returned (A1) Some people are good and bad (A2) I already knew a lot about the parable (A3) I learnt that the Samaritans don't mix with the Jewish people, also that pity is like your sorry for them (A4) I've learnt that you should help people if they need help if you don't know them and there not your friends (A6) that people are good and bad (A7) that some people are good and some people are Bad (A10) I have learnt a bit more on the good Samaritan that you should Help everyone in need (A12) I have learnt that it can have more than one feeling (A16) I've learnt about the good Samaritan that when the good Samaritan sees someone's hurt he helps them (A17) To Treat everyone with respect and kindness no matter if you do not like them or they are not your friend (A18) ...that someone is kind and caring (A19) There is all ways a bit of Good in everyone (A21) I have learnt that it's okay to be different and that we should treat everyone equally. Just like the story (A22) ...even if I don't like them I could still help them if they're in danger or trouble (A23) ...that everyone has a bit of good in them (A24) ...even if you don't want to help someone that's hurt and want to be like the other people, don't care for them, help them and you'll get a reward for it later (B1) I have learnt why Jesus told the parable and who it was meant for. Also Jesus told us to love your neighbour (B2) That just because you have different beliefs doesn't mean you can't be friends (B3) ...that you can tell anyone who doesn't know you can tell them (B6) The Meaning and the Moral (B7) Being good is affective. To be more kind (B8) always Help people up if they are hurt (B9) I learnt it is good to help others if you are different to you (B12) I have learnt Samaritans can help Jewish people even if most Samaritans and Jewish people don't like each other (B13) That if you see someone hurt on the street then Help them/it (B17) Caring for people even though they are your enemy (B18) I have learnt that you should always respect others (B20) You should be kind to everyone (B21) That even if you're different to all the others, that doesn't mean you should get treated differently (B22) To love and care for others even if you don't like them (B24) that not all Samaritans are mean (B25) I have learnt the meaning and the moral of the 'Good Samaritan' (B26) The full meaning behind it (B28) That Jesus could have used any body for the story and we can't have good without evil (B30)

	I have learnt that even if you don't like someone still do the right thing that God would want you to do (C1) I have learnt that they Samaritan save the woonded man From death (C4) I learnt that you don't need to be from the same land to help each other in difficault times (C5) I have learnt that all things have meaning and purpose so he must follow the good samaritan's example and care for everyone and everything, no matter how great the tension between us (C6) I have learnt about the Parable of the good samaritan by that you should allways help others in need (C9) I have learnt that no matter how you look you still could help other people if they needed it (C10) that if you see some one in trobol or danger should always go and help them but only if you have the things need to help them (C11) I have learnt that he is kind-hearted by stopping what he was doing to help the poor man and he wouldn't give up until he was fully healed (C12) I have learnt that the Samaritan and Jewish People did not get on well together, I have also learnt the meaning of neighbour (C14) I Learnt that the good smariten helpted the Ingered man (C15) I have learnt that the samaritans are not friendly with the Holy people are there are different meaning to the story (C16) Ive learnt that Just because another person doesent like someone else that doesent mean you dont have to like them because in the parable his kind of people didnt like the Jewish but that didn't stop him from liking Jews (C17) I have learnt that you should always help anyone in need and it doesn't matter who it is you should help them (C18) I have learnt that the Samaritans and the Jews were enmys and to help ones in need (C19) I have learnt that the Jews and the Samaritans did not get on just because believed a different belief in god religion (C20) I have learned that the samaritans helped him even though he was a strager and they didnt know him (C22) I have learnt that there is more than one meaning in a parable and that the story about the parable of the good Samaritain is where a man was going from Jerusalem to Jericho but then He got attaked by robbers and beated Him up leaving Him Half-dead and lots of other stuff that I have leont but I wont be able to fit it in sorry (C23) I learnt that the priest and the Levite didn't help the man even though they are close to god (C24) I have learnt that there were two men befor him who were selfish and didn't care about the dieing man but then the samaritan came he packed up the cuts, he put him on his own donkey and he used his own time to take the man to the hospitals (C25) The thing I have learnt from this lesson is that everyone has there own opinion in the parable of the good samaritain (C26) every thing because I didn't know it was a thing (C27) it is good to help people and be a nice neighbor (C30)
Which card/s made you think the most? Why?	...the one that say's it's not clear who the neighbour is mean to be in this parable. I personally think it is bothe because the beten man gav e him courage to help him and in return He saved him (A1) The Samaritan should have left the man...If they'd left the man, the man would die half naked cos they took his clothes (A2) A lot of the cards made me think but the one that made me think most was the Samaritan should have left the beaten man like the holy people before him (A3) The road to Jerusalem and Jericho is dangerous to walk and travel on (A4) if we Just have Jesus' story in verses 30-39 and ignore why he told it to the expert in the law we get a different meaning (A6) if they theft him there the dince[?] and his family will be sad (A7) I thiike nefayos are bad pepol because he leave him to die (A10)

	...the Smarton shod have left the beaten man (A12) What made me think the most is how the meaning can be different because I thought the meaning will never change (A16) Well It is good to be respectful kindness and help people (A17) The ones that say about what meaning of the parable like, This parable has more than one meaning, and if I were to answer that I would say Yes it does have more than one meaning in my opinion (A18) The first one I did, each character and place represents something, because I do agree but also not (A19) The Meaning one's made me thinck the most (A21) The card that said 'Jesus was trying to teach that we should treat everybody as our neighbour' and 'It's about loving and caring' (A22) The card made me think the most is 'A parable can mean any you want it to mean' because it can mean any thing you want to mean but it won't mean like punching your brother in his face because that is unacceptable (A23) the silve card's because they were more tricky (A24) The one that made me think the most was the one that said 'Jesus was trying to teach that we should treat everybody as our neighbour. It's about loving and caring. It's my favourite because you should love your neighbour as much as you love yourself (B1) The card that made me think the most was the one that said we can't have good without evil because if nothing evil happened then noone would need to be good (B2) The card that said...An atheist would get a different meaning from this parable than a Christian. because it made me think about it from the angle of an atheist (B3) I picked A parable can mean whatever you want it to mean because I thought we can name it anythink and seeing people's ideas (B6) Only one but it was a bit confusing this is what it siad each character and place represents something. The good samaritan is Jesus, who saves 'broken and sinful humans on life's road. (B7) Card: The Samaritan would not have been considered as a neighbour to Jewish People. it didn't make the greatest sense. It needed more information (B8) alot of lem helpt me Lorn about the good Smaritan (B9) The parable has more than one meaning, because there are so meny meanings that we can lean to follow (B12) Browns because they asked us questions that even though they were ment to be easy you still had to think were would you put them (B13) None because if you know the story Really well you'll know the answer to them all (B17) Jesus was trying to teach that we should treat everbody as our neighbour (B18) The Samaritan should have left the beaten man like the holy people before him because you should respect others and the Samaritan was being respectful (B20) There was a card that said the parable had one meaning. It made me think most because the meaning was you had to be kind to everyone (B21) The card that said this Parable has more than one meaning. Because well theres way more than 1 meaning to the Good Samaritan so theres way more to find out about (B22) The meaning of the parable is that we can't have good without evil. The Samaritan could only help because the man was robbed. This one because it was asking us to think if you should help the ones you hate and I thought no because love your neighbour as yourself (B24)

	the Samaritan helped the Jew because Jews and Samaritans don't get along (B25) The card that made me think the most was the one that talks about each character and each place represents something. Because it was hard and tricky so it made me think a lot (B26) A Parable can mean whatever you want it to mean because you can't change a story which only has one version (B28) The meaning of the parable is that we can't have good without evil. The Samaritans could have only helped because the man was robbed. It made me think because if he had been robbed the Samaritans could have not cared for someone if he had been robbed (B30) The card that made me think the most is The Parable has more than one meaning because it makes me think about how many meanings there are (C1) the card that made me think the most was This Parable only makes sense if you read the rest of Luke's gospel (C4) The card that made me think the most was the parable only has one meaning because everyone thinks differently in different ways (C5) The one that said 'The Parable has only one meaning' because everything has a big meaning but lots of opinions can topple that one big meaning and shift it into smaller more explanatory ones (C6) The cards that made me think the most are the ones that have two sides to them because it shows that people can believe different things (C9) The card which made me think the most was the one where it said: The parable makes us ask ourselves who we are like because it made me think about what I would have done (C10) (the parable could have more than one meaning) because for some people it could have more than one meaning but for others it couldn't and when it said can have more than one reason it really got me thinking (C11) The card that made me think the most is the one about without evil we wouldn't have good because it is true and without that evil the Samaritan never would have helped the man as he would be fine and the story would never be told (C12) The card that made me think the most was the one that says: The Samaritans and Jewish people did not get on. They disagreed passionately about the right way to follow God.' Because I believe that there is no right/wrong way to follow God (C14) the one that made me think about the most is without evil there's and good. Because if there's no pain there's no beauty (C15) The card that makes me think the most is the one that says The parable has more than 'one meaning because it makes me think people are all different (C16) the card that made me think the most was a meaning card because it was saying you don't know what will happen until you head on in a book or a bible story (C17) The card that made me think the most was (This parable can have more than one meaning) because it made me think that anyone who the story would have a different opinion (C18) the card that made me think the most is the Samaritans and the Jews did not get along because it made me think did they have wars or fight over how they should worship God (C19) The card which made me think the most was Jesus was trying to teach that we should treat everybody as our neighbour because you should be nice to everybody and it just grabs by attention (C20) The one where it says the Samaritans and Jewish people didn't get along made me think the most because why don't they get along and follow God the same (C22)

	I think the card that made me think the most is the one that says "Jesus was trying to teach us that we should treat our neighbours well and be loving to them" and other stuff because it shows How much Jesus loves us and wants us to be loving (C23) the card that made me think the most is The parable can have more than one meaning because theres other cards that sai about how theres only one meaning and theres more than one meaning si it confused me (C24) The card that made me think the most is 'a parable can mean whatever you want it to mean' because if there's something true in the bible you cant just cross it out and write what you want it to mean (C25) The card that made me think the most was the one where it said "An atheist would get a different meaning from this parable than a Christian" because not everyone believes in God so they all think about different things compared to Christians (C26) Im not shore my first one because I wasent evarly shure how to write it (C27) there was one in particular that I really liked because it made me think, you should allways be nice to each other and be a good Samaritan (C30)
Answer the LO question: in your opinion, what should we think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan?	Respect your neighbours and friends. Not being mean (A2) The good Sarmitain isn't selfish he isn't called good Sarmitaian for a reason (A4) we should think about helping homeless people and people that need help (A6) we shod be happy (A7) we sholde be happy (A10) to Help evreyone in need (A12) We should think about how we can act Like the good Samaritan and love your neibour as yourself (A16) We should think about him as a helpful person and respectful (A17) That it is good to be different and to respect everone no matter what they look like or who they are (A18) Everyone should be kind and generous to others (A19) Good in everyone (A21) I think this should remind us to not discriminate and to not judge a book by its cover. Enclude everyone! (A22) I think you should think that it teaches you how to live rightly. In other words, don't just ignore someone in danger remember treat someone the way you want to be treated (A23) I think we should respect everyone the same you get treated (A24) We should think that no matter who we are, no matter where we come from we should always love our neighbour. Even if you hate someone you should care for them when they are sad or hurt (B2) That you should always kind to people no matter who they are (B3) that someone helped him and he took him in the hotels the innkeeper look after him (B6) That anyone can be kind if they truly put there mind to it (B7) First I really enjoyed reading it. it made me want to read more. Thanking that the good samaritan helped the injured person (B8) a amazing storey to Help pepol lorn to onays Help pepal up wen ingord (B9) To help other if they are diffrent to you (B12) we should feel surprised cause mostly samaritans wouldnt even think about helping a Jewish but this man did help a Jewish (B13) To help Someone if you see there hurt and to not get into bad action (B17)

	Love and care for people that is hurt (B18) I think we should think its a good thing because we could learn something from it (B20) That even though you hate each othr you should help them (B21) That you should always be kind no matter who they are and what they look like (B22) That you shold love your neighbour as you love yourself (B24) to Not Just leave someone, to help them (B25) We should think about the meaning and moral because thats one of the main things that the story is about (B26) About helping injured people (B28) a good story that we should fowlow but not the vicors part (B30) We should think that the Samaritan did not like Jews but still helped him and why he did that, he was the one who listened to God and did what he said (C1) I think we should think about the Smaritan coming out of his way to save someone (C4) I think we should help anyone who's down or hurt also we should show them great care (C5) I think we should look up to the good samaritan and put differences aside to help people like He did (C6) I think that the parable of the good Samaritan is a good story because it helps to understand to help and care others when they need it (C9) I think we should think about the good Samaritan like being kind and we should all be like him in life (C10) that if you see someone that needs some help You should help them only iF you the things nesesry (C11) If you have a kind heart like the Samaritan then you would stop whatever you were doing to help (C12) In my opinion we should think that we should always care for people (C14) that you should help other people and your self at the same time (C15) I think the parable of the good Samaritan is that he just puts over people before himself in all good ways (C16) We should think that he is a good person and that just because they dont like eachother you can still give them a hand (C17) You should think about how nice the good Samaritan was and how people just walked past a half dead man (C18) I think we should think of the Samaritan oy a good and kind man who worships God (C19) I think that we should treat others the same even if we don't believe in the same part of God and shouldn't be against eachother (C20) I think we should think that if someone needs help and is hurt we should help them (C22) I think we should talk about the Parable of the Good Samatain (C23) we should think about how what good people put out in the world we should do it back (C24) we should think about how that man took up his own time to save someone's life (C25) we should think that if anyone is hurt and you can see them go over to them and help and to also think about how he showed mercy (C26) that its verry good to remember/helping outer people (C27) it means you Should help those in need and heal them (C30)
Have you changed your answer from the start of the lesson? If so, in what ways/s? What changed your thinking?	I still think that the Samaritan is a good man. My answer is the same (A2) no I haven't (A4) I have not changed it (A7) I have chage my mind because of there friendship (A10) I wont (A12)

	No I haven't changed (A16) The good Samaritan could be evil or good (A17) kind of in some ways before I thought the Samaritan was being I guess bullied but now I think the same as I did before. Did you think anything different? (A18) No, because being kind is important (A19) No (A21) No I haven't because I think it's right to help people even if you don't know them (A22) Accutally, I have not changed my answer from the beginning of the lesson (A23) Ive not changed my answer (A24) Yes, I have changed it from a story to an explanation. This is because I just remembered the story and now I know the reason why it was told (B2) Yes because in some lessons by some of my past teachers they have only told us what a parable is and what it means then given us an example (B3) well I didn't change my answers (B6) no but I explianed it in a different way (B7) I didn't but I would like to because I wrote that people were not responding with thanks but I that the injured person said thank you (B8) No (B9) I have changed it because there was lots of informashir (B12) I havent but when we were reading I remberd the story (B13) No I still think the Same answer (B17) I didnt change it because I think it is right to help people even if you have a deep hatred with them (B18) no I havent I still have it no reson (B20) No it hasn't, but some parts of the story I didn't know! (B21) No but I explianed in a diffrent way (B24) yes, because I've learnt that not everyone can be bad (B25) kind of because im not really sure (B26) My answer has'nt changed (B28) not because it is still about caring for others (B30) I have not changed my answer because the Samaritan still helped the Jews even though they are against each other (C1) yes because I hadent read it before and now I have read the howle thing (C4) I have not changed my answer from the start (C5) I think he should look up to the good samaritan and put differences aside to help people like did (C6) No (C9) No my answer hasn't changed from the beginning of the lesson (C10) it has not changed (C11) No, because if you have a kind heart like the Samaritan then you would stop to help (C12) No, my answer is still the same (C14) Yes I have lot Because I thought the samarenten walked past (C15)

	Yes I have changed my awnswers from the begining because now I know more about the story and that 2 men just left the man on the floor (C16) the thing that changed my thinking was how the Samaritan very kindly helped the Jewish person (C17) I have changed my thinking now I think the meaning of the good samaritan is that a man from a different religon was hurt and a very nice man went to help when others just walked past him. It's a loving and caring story (C18) I haven't changed my anwser because at the start I had an idea in my head that I think still now (C20) No my answer stayed the same (C24) I have not changed my answer (C26) Iv changed it because iv'e never red tha story before (C27)
Are there any further questions you would ask about this parable? Why do you think these questions are important?	No (A2) not really (A4) No (A7) I have no queschones (A10) None (A12) because it is good for people to be respectful and kind also a good friend to other people evan if they are people you don't know (A18) Why didn't the preist help? The reason why I think this question is important is because priests, I think, is ament to heal others. So why not help? (A19) No (A21) No...I think these questions are helping us to be kind and gratefull (A22) I don't have any questions A24) No further questions (B3) because it's important to Christians (B6) No (B7) why did they robb that pirific person (B8) to lorn the bibal and wat gesus tort to his desipals (B9) I would ask why did that one Samaritan help a Jewish (B13) Mayb so if we see someone like him we should help them (B17) Why did the Samaeritan help the Jew and the questions are important because it made me think more of God (B18) What happened to the Jew afterwards? I think this is important because we might like to know if he is okay (B21) Why did the preist and the Levite just leave the man to die than to help him (B25) No. Because you need a good think (B28) No I don't have any question (B30) I would ask why did the Preist and levite not help (C1) Yes wiy did the Jews not like the Samaritan (C4) No (C5) I have not because following God and Jesus's example leads to greatness (C6) My question is that why did'nt the priest and lievite didn't help because if they follow gods rules (C9) I ould ask why didn't the priest or Levites help when they are the most religous people (C10) Not really because I know the story and I don't have any further questions (C12)

	Why did the Samaritan help the Jewish person if they don't like each other? (C17) I would ask why didn't the priest help the hurt man? Why did the Samaritans choose to help the man? I think there is important because the priest could have helped but he didn't (C22)
This activity made me think because...	It made me think about respect (A2) you learn more stuff every lesson especially this one. (brilliant!) (A4) existed because it was fun (A7) about other people (A10) Amazing :) (A12) It made me think about the meaning and how the story links to putting yourself before others (A16) not every person is the same everyone is different even twins they might look the same but they have different fingerprints (A18) It is not how you treat other people (A21) It made me think to be a better person and to be kind to people I know and don't know (A22) What if I don't like them at all as they have been treating me badly would I still help them? (A23) the Samaritan help the half dead-man (A24) It got me to use my opinion and it made me think in more detail (B3) It was fun, and made me think (B6) it was fun as well as learning (B7) I really enjoyed it and I really mean it (B8) it is nice to help our neighbors (B9) There are a lot of details and interesting (B12) because if you hated or were meant to hate someone why would you help them (B13) Some of those cards take some thinking to do (B17) God, Caring, helping, enemies (B18) We thought about it a lot and carefully did the cards (B21) It was telling us to love and care for others even if you don't like them (B24) No one has left the man to die (B25) The questions were big (B28) I had never read the story before (C4) it has made me think that you should always be kind because someone might be grumpy and so might you. You don't approach the person with bad attitude because that will make them grumpier but if you approached them nicely you might make them happier than before (C5) It made me think in to the story more and understand it (C9) This activity made me think because about how the Samaritan helped and the Priest and Levite didn't (C10)

Appendix Thirty-four: Pupil responses to the question ‘What have you learnt about the Parable of the Good Samaritan from doing this [affinity mapping] activity?’

A1	I have learnt that no matter who you do good to just remember if you do good the favor will always be returned
A2	Some people are good and bad
A3	I already knew a lot about the parable
A4	I learnt that the Samaritans don't with the Jewish people, also that pity is like your sorry for them
A6	I've learnt that you should help people if they need help if you don't know them and there not your friends
A7	that people are good and bad
A10	that some people are good and some people are Bad
A12	i Have learnt a bit more on the good Samaritan that you should Help everyone in need
A16	I have learnt that It can have more than one feeling
A17	I've learnt about the good Samaritan that when the good Samaritan sees someone's hurt he helps them
A18	To Treat everyone with respect and kindness no matter if you do not like them or they are not your friend
A19	...that someone is kind and caring
A21	There is all ways a bit of Good in everyone
A22	I have learnt that it's okay to be different and that we should treat everyone equally. Just like the story
A23	...even if I don't like them I could still help them if they're in danger or trouble
A24	...that everyone has a bit of good in them
16/25	
B1	...even if you don't want to help someone that's hurt and want to be like the other people, don't care for them, help them and you'll get a reward for it later
B2	I have learnt why Jesus told the parable and who it was meant for. Also Jesus told us to love your neighbor
B3	That just because you have different beliefs doesn't mean you can't be friends
B6	...that you can tell anyone who doesn't know you can tell them
B7	The Meaning and the Morel
B8	Being good is affective. To be more kind
B9	always Help people up if they are hurt

B12	I learnt it is good to help others if you are different to you
B13	I have learnt Samaritans can help Jewish people even if most Samaritans and Jewish people don't like each other
B17	That if you see someone hurt on the street then help them/it
B18	Caring for people even though they are your enemy
B20	I have learnt that you should always respect others
B21	You should be kind to everyone
B22	That even if you are different to all the others, that doesn't mean you should get treated differently
B24	To love and care for others even if you don't like them
B25	that not all Samaritans are mean
B26	I have learnt the meaning and the moral of the 'Good Samaritan'
B28	The full meaning behind it
B30	That Jesus could have used anybody for the story and we can't have good without evil
19/30	
C1	I have learnt that even if you don't like someone still do the right thing that God would want you to do
C4	I have learnt that the Samaritan saved the wounded man from death
C5	I learnt that you don't need to be from the same land to help each other in difficult times
C6	I have learnt that all things have meaning and purpose so he must follow the good Samaritan's example and care for everyone and everything, no matter how great the tension between us
C9	I have learnt about the Parable of the good Samaritan by that you should always help others in need
C10	I have learnt that no matter how you look you still could help other people if they needed it
C11	that if you see someone in trouble or danger should always go and help them but only if you have the things needed to help them
C12	I have learnt that he is kind-hearted by stopping what he was doing to help the poor man and he wouldn't give up until he was fully healed
C14	I have learnt that the Samaritan and Jewish People did not get on well together, I have also learnt the meaning of neighbour
C15	I learnt that the good Samaritan helped the injured man
C16	I have learnt that the Samaritans are not friendly with the Holy people as there are different meanings to the story
C17	I've learnt that just because another person doesn't like someone else that doesn't mean you don't have to like them because in the parable his kind of people didn't like the Jewish but that didn't stop him from liking Jews
C18	I have learnt that you should always help anyone in need and it doesn't matter who it is you should help them

C19	I have learnt that the Samaritans and the Jews were enemies and to help ones in need
C20	I have learnt that the Jews and the Samaritans did not get on just because they believed a different belief in god religion
C22	I have learned that the samaritans helped him even though he was a stranger and they didn't know him
C23	I have learnt that there is more than one meaning in a parable and that the story about the parable of the good Samaritan is where a man was going from Jerusalem to Jericho but then He got attacked by robbers and beat Him up leaving Him Half-dead and lots of other stuff that I have learnt but I won't be able to fit it in sorry
C24	I learnt that the priest and the Levite didn't help the man even though they are close to god
C25	I have learnt that there were two men before him who were selfish and didn't care about the dying man but then the samaritan came he picked up the cuts, he put him on his own donkey and he used his own time to take the man to the hospitals
C26	The thing I have learnt from this lesson is that everyone has their own opinion in the parable of the good samaritan
C27	every thing because I didn't know it was a thing
C30	it is good to help people and be a nice neighbor
22/30	

Appendix Thirty-five: Pupil responses to Question Four at the end of LE1 – ‘Have you changed your answer from the start of the lesson? If so, in what ways/s? What changed your thinking?’

	Pupil views at the start of the lesson regarding meaning(s) and the PGS	Responses to Question Four
A1	...no matter who you are it is not too late to help someone	/
A2	...he a good man	I still think that the Samaritan is a good man. My answer is the same
A3	...telling people to take care of people even if you don't like them	/
A4	...a person who helped a man on the side of the road. The man got helped by a good Samaritan	no I haven't
A6	...I think its help people that arent your friends and if someone needs help you should help them	/
A7	...friendship	I have not changed it
A10	...I don't know	I have change my mind because of there friendship
A12	...it don't matter how you are Help everyone	I wont
A16	...a story about a man who was hurt and another person helped him so the meaning is help your neighbour no matter what	No I haven't changed
A17	A person helping who was hurt	The good Samaritan could be evil or good
A18	...is where there's a man who's lying on the road who has hurt himself so lots of people go past not helping then a man comes along and helps. The meaning is even if you don't know them it's good to help	kind of in some ways before I thought the Samaritan was being I guess bullied but now I think the same as I did before. Did you think anything different?
A19	Be kind to others even enemies	No, because being kind is important
A21	...there is a bit of good in everyone	No
A22	...where there is a man on the road who had just been beaten up. Then there is a Samaritan who is the enemy to the man but I think this means 'not all enemies are bad'	No I haven't because I think it's right to help people even if you don't know them
A23	...that even if you don't like a person for some what reason and that person is in danger or trouble don't just ignore them but help them	Accutally, I have not changed my answer from the beginning of the lesson
A24	...to help people in need	Ive not changed my answer
16/25		
B1	...to always care for people who you know and don't know and even if they're a stranger and they're hurt still care for them	/

B2	...about a man who is walking and gets beaten up. Two people pass him and do not help him. Then a Samaritan comes walking by. The Samaritan usually didn't help them but he cared for the man and helped him	Yes, I have changed it from a story to an explanation. This is because I just remembered the story and now I know the reason why it was told
B3	...to care for everyone and not just people you like. I think this because the Samaritan believes in different things to the man yet he still helps him. But the people who do believe in the same things as the man just walk past him	Yes because in some lessons by some of my past teachers they have only told us what a parable is and what it means then given us an example
B6	...that someone got hurt and 3 people come to him and the first one looked at him and hurting him were and then the 2 one saw him and ignored him and the 3 one help him and rided him or her on a donkey	well I didn't change my answers
B7	I think the more of the story is to help people even though your not friends with or help people in need	no but I explained it in a different way
B8	...a good person helping others but the other people are not responding nicely	I didn't but I would like to because I wrote that people were not responding with thanks but I that the injured person said thank you
B9	A person warcking from a pair of bandits and beat him up and leaving him to die	no
B12	...a story teaching us to help people even though they are different	I have changed it because there was lots of information
B13	...about a good Samaritan who helps people in need but the other Samaritans are evil and turn away from this man	I haven't but when we were reading I remembered the story
B17	I think that a man got injured really badly and two people ignored the injured man and then one man came up to him and helped him even though they were both enemies	No I still think the same answer
B18	...about caring for people even if they are your enemy	I didn't change it because I think it is right to help people even if you have a deep hatred with them
B20	...In the picture it looks like a man on the ground and a man in the distance so maybe 1 man or 2 walked passed a man and the 3rd came along and helped on a donkey	no I haven't I still have it no reason
B21	...I think it is about two different people who are supposed to hate each other but the Samaritan helps a hurt man	No it hasn't, but some parts of the story I didn't know!
B22	...to help and care for others in need not just someone you like. I think this because the Samaritan is different to the man who saved him yet he still helped him and cared for him even though the Jews and Samaritans don't get along	/
B24	...about a man who got hurt by people and has been left on the side of the path and that three or two people walked by and ignored but the last one came put it on his donkey and helped him	No but I explained in a different way

B25	...That two people walked past the beaten up man, but one person called a Samaritan, who jews don't get along with stopped by and helped him	yes, because I've learnt that not everyone can be bad
B26	...I think it might be to always be kind and don't be horrible to other people	kind of because im not really sure
B28	...About a guy who helps an injured guy, takes him to an inn and saves him	My answer has'nt changed
B30	...To allways be kind and help others even if they worship a diffrent God or come from a diffrent conuty	not because it is still about caring for others
19/30		
C1	...even if you are against each other still care for each other	I have not changed my answer because the Samaritan still helped the Jews even though they are against each other
C4	...I don't know at the moment	yes because I hadent read it before and now I have read the howle thing
C5	...robbers attacked the man and then they wounded him and left him alone. A priest walked by and walked past him. Then the Samaritan walk the man said he's never going to help me but he did he gave him pil and badenges and to him to a hospital	I have not changed my answer from the start
C6	...about putting differences and tension between people aside to help them like God and Jesus did	I think he should look up to the good samaritan and put differences aside to help people like did
C9	...Is to put others before yourself	No
C10	...no matter how you look, you should still help and care for them	No my answer hasn't changed from the beginning of the lesson
C11	...Jeaus helping pepol and giving them food and water	it has not changed
C12	...Whatever you are doing you should Stop and help the hurt and that means you have a kind heart	No, because if you have a kind heart like the Samaritan then you would stop to help
C14	...Someone gets hurt and Samaritan helps them	No, my answer is still the same
C15	It might be Helping over people in there time of need. I read that there were two other people that Did not Help	Yes I have lot Because I thought the samarenten walked past
C16	...about a man hew is hert and Someone Help him and so he is bieng careing and thinking about Someone else	Yes I have changed my awnsers from the begining because now I know more about the story and that 2 men just left the man on the floor
C17	...A man riding on a donkey trying to help Someone who is hurt and he is showing respect	the thing that changed my thinking was how the Samaritan very kindly helped the Jewish person
C18	...The Samaritan helps an Ingered man and takes him to a hospital even though they have different religions	I have changed my thinking now I think the meaning of the good samaritan is that a man from a different religon was hurt and a very nice man went to help when others just walked past him. It's a loving and caring story
C19	...to be kind and help the ones in need	/

C20	...I think the meaning of the Parable of the good Samaritan might be caring for people and helping them if they need it	I haven't changed my answer because at the start I had an idea in my head that I think still now
C22	/	/
C23	...a story about something religious/related to Jesus/god or when someone get injured and a god came to save them, but other than that I really don't know. :)	/
C24	...about a man who got robbed and hurt and a priest and someone else didn't help the man and then this kind person came and helped him and let him stay in an inn	No my answer stayed the same
C25	...I think the meaning might be to show there's good in the world and to show being kind costs nothing	/
C26	...I don't know	I have not changed my answer
C27	...I don't know maybe helping people	I've changed it because I've never read the story before
C30	...someone who helps the poor and feeds them and makes sure they won't pass away	/
22/30		

Appendix Thirty-six: Pupils' written justifications of their interpretation ranking

Interpretation	Pupil responses	
Giving money and worn-out clothes to the poor once a year isn't 'loving your neighbour'. We need to go further, like the Samaritan did, and really care for people. (Solentiname)	Strongly agree	I agree because theres people out there that need that stuff (A6) I strongly agree because the poor don't get enuth food and water exetru (B12) I strongly agree because giving worn out clothes won't keep the poor warm (B25) I strongly agree because it is doing a lot for the person if there homeless or not (C5) Otherwise they will suffer in the cold and have no shelter and you are recycling cloths and not buying things you like the look but you know it's not good (C26) i agree because if theres Something you dont want give it to the poor (C30)
	Agree	You don't Have to give much but give some (A12) I agree with this because you have to love and be respectful to your neighbour and you have to at least give them some...[?] (A17) I agree with this but I don't strongly agree I think it is fine to give people clothes you don't want but i don't agree we should go further (A18) I Agree becouse it is better than noffing (A21) I agree because the poor should get more but some people have money but can't give it away (A23) I agree with this parable because were helping the world (B6) Because imagin if you were a poor person and all you got was a few pennys and some ripped closes (B7) I agree because the amount of the money we give is't even good to buy a coffee (B8) I agree with this because you should help your neighbour and make them (B18) Because The poor dont have anything and when its cold or There hungry They will need Them (B20) I agree because the Samaritan in the story was very kind but you could also do that (B21) I strongly agree because I feel like the Poor dont get enogh and they get treated diffrently because of this (B28) I agree because people love helping the poor and they help Poor people live (C16) you would like to be cared for if you was homeless (C19)
	Unsure	I'm unsure because giving money doesn't help homeless or injured giving clothes helps them stay warm (A4) I am unsure with this Statement because kindness comes in many forms so you can be kind any way (A16) I'm unsure because you are still giving stuff to people in need but once a year is not enough (A22)

		I'm unsure because giving clothes out is good but we need to give more things (B1) I am unsure because yes I agree that we should give away things but some people might not have that opportunity to (B3) I'm not sure because I't could just be a scam for money (B17) I am quite unsure because yes I do agree that we Should donate used clothes but some people don't get an opportunity to donate (B22) I'm unsure because giving clothes is good but I don't know if we should go further (B24) I'm unsure because giving clothes is good but I don't know if we should go further (B26) I am unsure because I think that giving worn-out clothes is enough because at least we give them something (C1) I am unsure because giving worn out clothes is being kind and so is what the Samaritan did (C10) because it is good to give money and [?] to the poor but not everyone can really create for people (C11) I am unsure because Sometimes money and worn out clothes is all people can give but on the other side some people can care like the Samaritan did (C12) I am unsure with this interpretation because Giving money and worn-out clothes is helping and it makes the poor happy also tons of people donate things every year (C14)
	Disagree	It does not matter what you do to help all that matters is you help (A1) I disagree (A3) I disagree because you can give clothes and money and still love your neighbour (A24) I disagree because if lots of people do small things it will end up being a big help to the community. If you try to do something to big you might fail and not want to try again (B2) I disagree because if everyone Gave money and ex clothes then that is a lot (B30) giving money and worn-out clothes to the poor is caring for them because you are helping them and sacrificing things for them (C6) I disagree because even if you give something to the poor as big or as small as you want your still doing your part (C9) I Dissagree Because not every one has as much money as each other (C15) Giving clothes to people who can't afford them is a big thing because anyone Who is poor is thankful for anything they can get (C18) I disagree because if we give them something they should be happy for what they have (C22) I said disagree because even if you do anything for the homeless you are still being a nice person by given them clothes and money (C24)
	Strongly disagree	Strongly disagree (A10)

		I strongly disagree because you are being more helpfull to poor kid's [?] because at least your neighbour's have shelter fresh food and water but the poor dosen't (C25)
The 'road to Jericho' where the man was robbed is a symbol for our lives. Many people today face racism daily as they travel through life; we need to change the 'road' to be a better, safer place for all. (Martin Luther King)	Strongly agree	I strongly agree with this text because I am from a diffrent race and I get looked at wied so never give up I have Experienced this it doesn't feel good but stay strong (A1) we [?] pepluel cindey (A2) people should stop racism becaus There are bad people out there but not all of them are (A6) we trit people with kind (A7) We need to treat pepol with kindnes (A10) We need to stop racism (A12) I strongly agree with this scince we need to make the world a better place (A16) I strongly agree because on the road of Jericho it's the symbol for our lives (A17) I agree nobody should be going through life were people are being racist and mean to them people we need to stop this (A18) I defintly agree because racism should stop because everyone is perfect in their own way (A22) I Stongly agree because the world has not been very safe recently (A23) I strongly agree because we need to make the world a safer and better Place (B1) Because everyone should be treated the same (B7) People don't need to go through that saddness and fear of going outside (B8) I really agree with this because I think racism is really bad (B18) we need people To be safe because people could die (B20) I strongly agree because it's unfair for other people (B21) Evryone should be treated the same (B24) I strongly agree because you Should Be safe on road's Not unsafe (B25) I strongly agree with this because racism is really really bad and so is beating people up (B26) I strongly agree because racism is a bad thing and we need a to change and go on a different road to stop racsism from happening (C1) I agree because our world is Facing a Qwite lot of racism (C4) I agree because racism is wrong and cruel and all people should be treated equally (C6) I strongly agree because if you change the world to be a better place people won't be scared to walk down the road (C9) I agree because many people still face racism and we do need to make the 'road' safe for everyone (C10)

		I agree because racism and evil is not nice so we definitely need to make life better and safer (C12) I strongly agree with this interpretation because Racism should end now and we should all live peacefully (C14) I Strongly agree Because then Every one is safe that way (C15) I strongly agree with this because people can't Just do this just because the colour of there skin (C19) I strongly agree because know one wants racism in there life because it is very wrong (C24) I strongly agree because people are facing racism and it's really how they haven't done anything at all (C25) we do not want people to get robbed on the way to church and back and we don't want racism anymore (C26) I strongly agree with this interpretation because people still have have (?) racism (C27)
	Agree	I agree because it is a symbol of life. if you were a robber all the good people are getting robbed robbers can put them self in peoples shoes and be like us (A4) Many people are bullied and have unkind things said to them we need to change the road for future generations (B3) I also agree cause we should try to protect other as much as we can (B13) Many People get hurt or bullied and have unkind words said to them so we need to try and change roads for a better future (B22) I agree because People went on them rocky cliffs and they get robbed in the story and People probably were scared about it (C16) I agree because then lots of people will be getting hurt and if it safe you won't get hurt (C22) I agree because people don't get robbed So you can put a Sign of a White and black person shaking hands and no were for people to hide So no one gets robbed (C30)
	Unsure	I am unsure because we have a choice, change the road or change the people. Some people might not like doing one thing or the other (B2) I am unsure with this parable because I don't think the road should be changed (B6) I'm unsure because the roads have changed since then (B28)
	Disagree	I Disagree because it's safer (A21)
	Strongly disagree	
Each character and place represents something. The Good Samaritan is Jesus, who saves 'broken and sinful humans' on life's 'road'. Jesus brings humans to the	Strongly agree	I strongly agree with this one because it is true bring them back from the past (A4) I Strongly agree with this quote (A23) I strongly agree because Jesus is saving us (B6)

church (the inn) to recover and become better people, before coming back to collect them in the future. (St Augustine of Hippo)		I Strongly agree because you should go to church to Pray for God (B17) I strongly agree because lots of people get hurt on the wrong road and Jesus comes and helps the people who get hurt and He brings them to church (C16) I strongly agree with it because What Sues [?] Saying (C27)
	Agree	Because if Jesus helped then the people would want to be like Jesus (B8) I agree because the Good Samaritan is a good human being who will always help others in need (B13) I because I like this idea and Jesus is telling this story (B21) God and Jesus does do that and this parable is just like that (B24) I agree because you should take care of people (B25) I agree (B28) I agree because Jesus is like the Good Samaritan in the way that he explained (B30) I agree because God is the spirit that led him to the inn (C5) I agree because the Good Samaritan helped the injured man and Jesus helps anyone no matter what their beliefs (C9) I agree (C19) I agree because Jesus made him and that's why he helped (C22) If he didn't the world will have more bad people if they are not learning (C26)
	Unsure	I'm not 100% sure about this like it's good to be caring to others but sometimes people should take them on their journey because they could have a more comfortable home to go there for the time being (A18) I'm unsure because it could be that or it could just be a story Jesus told to teach everyone to help everyone (C10) I am unsure because they didn't well explain it (C24)
	Disagree	I disagree because Jesus doesn't have healing powers (A19) I disagree because it doesn't symbol that it symbolizes what people want it to (B3) I disagree because it doesn't symbol that it symbolizes what people can't do (B22) I Dissagree and unsure Because it might Be God or it might not be and someone is being nice (C15)
	Strongly disagree	I strongly disagree because you don't know what Jesus made it to represent (B2) I strongly disagree because the Samaritan is his own person, he is not Jesus (C12)
The parable makes us think about an important question: who are the priests and Levites in our society today? Who ignores the 'bruised and wounded'? We should condemn them, and campaign	Strongly agree	I strongly agree because if they were in that situation they would want help and if they didn't have it they would be left badly damaged (C5) because if it keeps going on there will be no fairness and if that happens there will be on and on fighting (C17) Anyone Who just can't be bothered to help the wounded Should have a consequence (C18)

to end to the unfairness we are seeing. (Frederick Douglass)		If your out walking and you see someone injured you just walk past and make them suffer because if you were them you would not like it (C26)
	Agree	I agree because they should know the ways of God but they didn't help the Jew (C6) I agree because everyone Has different opinens so that means people might think about that question but maybe others wont (C23) If no one liked each other the world would be chaos because no one would like anyone (C26)
	Unsure	I'm quite unsure about what to say but I agree (A23) I am unsure because it is unfair but then it could start being bad for the other people (B21) I'm unsure because we shouldn't ignore the hurt and we should know who the levites and priests are and they should help the hurt (C10) I am unsure because if everyone gets angry over it, it could lead to bad things but if we just leave it we will still have lots of unfair people (C12) I am unsure because if they don't want to help they don't have to but they should help (C22)
	Disagree	I disagree because you should help People even if they are not in a service [?] society (C20)
	Strongly disagree	
We live in a world where we meet people of different beliefs, nationalities and cultures. The two answers in verse 27 (<i>'Love God with all you have and love your neighbour as yourself'</i>) teaches us that loving God means loving all. You can't do one without the other. (Brian Stiller)	Strongly agree	I Strongly agree because you can't Stop something without more people (A23) I strongly agree because it is 100% true that we live in a world with people who Have diffrent belifs, nationallities and cultures because Nobody is the same so they Have diffrent things (C23)
	Agree	I agree because if you love everyone, then your doing what God wants you to do (B21) I agree because you should treat others how you want to be treated not how you don't want to be treated (C9) I agree because you can love God and love others to not like the priest and Levites that belive in God but ignored the man (C10)
	Unsure	Because not everyone would want to like everyone (C26)
	Disagree	I disagree because you can love God with all you have without the other (C12)
	Strongly disagree	I disagree because what you worship God and someone is cruel to you just because you believe in and love God (C6)
The Good Samaritan parable has nothing to do with God at all. Jesus simply teaches his listeners to love all	Strongly agree	
	Agree	I agree this story is mainly about loving all people the message has just been put into a story (C18)

people, using people and places that they would have known. (Adolf Jülicher)	Unsure	Now Jesus isn't alive but in 20AD he was so I'm not Sure (A19) I'm unsure because teachers Help us Nowadays to love and care (B25) I am unsure because the peron telling it is Jesus but in the story there is no mention of God (B30) I am unsure Because I think a good Samartan Does Belive or he Does not (C15) im unsure because although Jesus was in the parable of the Good Samatain God wasnt but Jesus was made by god because god made Jesus (C23)
	Disagree	I disagree because I feel that God does have some thing to do in the parable (A23) I Disagree becuse when the he asked Jesus (B13) I disagree because I think he teachis it to show what to do (C4) I Disagree because Jesus would'nt evan have been on earth if it was'nt for god (C9) because if he had noting to do with god Jeasuse would not be teching it (C11) because god told his people that because all he wants is for everyone to be nice so he taught the it (C17)
	Strongly disagree	I strongly disagree because Jesus <u>and</u> God wants you to be kind (B21) I strongly disagree because it does have something to do with God and that is that the Samaritan cared for him just like how God cares for us (C1) I Strongly disagree becuse God is important to us and he built us to b like us (C20)
This parable highlights that we should not treat other groups of people differently. Yet, I'm frustrated that women are invisible and forgotten in this parable, just like in my society. I don't like this. (Irene Matsoso)	Strongly agree	I strongly agree because there is know female charitars in this story or many others in the Bible (B3) I strongly agree because other people get treated better than others and that's not right (B21) I strongly agree because it is very mean to ignore people like women and you can find a lot of Parables like this in the Bible were they don't inculed women (B22) I strongly agree because all people Should be treated the same (B25) Of course I agree because sexism is just as bad as racism because it disrespects people stupidly (C6) Wemen should be notest and treated the same as men they are = (C11) I strongly agree with this interpretation because women should be noticed and respected just men (C14) because we may all be different but that is unFair if only men get treated well because women are here and they have the right to not get told what to do (C17) everyone Should be equal therefore men shouldn't get all the atension (C18)
	Agree	I Agree beause Just having men in there is not right when we could have a mix (B30)

		I agree because woman are forgotten like we are not here and men get all the credit. But that was in the past so if we were in the past I would say that, but I still agree it is wrong for women to be left out (C12) I agree because in the story the jews were against the Samaritan so there for thats why I think this scenario (C20) I agree because women should be seen and treated the same as men (C22)
	Unsure	I'm unsure because in those days women weren't treated like today (A23) I am unsure because it was just an example but someone times women do get left out (C5) im unsure again because women and men and other Should all be treated all the Same I think (C23)
	Disagree	
	Strongly disagree	

Appendix Thirty-seven: Pupil responses to the LE2 enquiry question, 'Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?'

Pupil	Response to the enquiry question, 'Why might people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently?'
Class A	
A1	...people have different opininons and Prespectives an this is because some people have expereinenced things in they life and it is not fair to treat people Differently For Exaple Irene Matsoso thinks it is not fair how people Discriminate girls cause the are not as strong as girls
A2	Undecipherable
A3	Different people link it to different things depending on whats happened in their life
A4	...it is a good story of the Bible and if it weren't a good story then noone will read it. This is like Frederik doglous readding this text and came with a different text compared to other people who read it
A6	Everybody has a different opinon like Fredrick Douglass and Martin Luther King Jr
A7	people link the story towas inport to them
A10	peopl link the story to what's inpot ton to them
A12	maby because thay want to mack it to a grenda swap of race soup so it can mack them comfotible with it
A16	different people follow different values for example Martin Luther King wanted racism to end and to treat others how you want to be treated which is similar to my values that every body are equal and nobody should laghf at each-other because of their looks
A17	other people think that the Good Samaritin is a helpful person But Frederik Douglass was a black American Person
A18	Everyone has different opinions but personally I think The Parable tells me to treat everyone the same evan if you don't know them and everyone is different so you should be happy who you are on the inside and the outside. Irene Matsoso says she's frustrated that Woman are invisible and forgotten in this parable and she also says that it's the same in her society and says she dosen't like this from my perspective I agree sometimes Woman or girls are forgotten and somtimes feel like they are invisible
A19	Nobody can have the same opinion but can have different opinions. I know that Irene Matsoso has a different opinion to Augustine because you don't always think the same
A21	Because things might be happning at home at school and Just aneweere and being a christian, Huminist or muslimes
A22	Irene Matsoso may think differently to the Good Samaritan. In my opinion, I think it means to be kind to everyone by my friend may disagree and say 'no I think it means something else'
A23	People have different perspectives and personalities and it effects the way they think. Someone may have a quite dark personality so they may think differently about the parable than someoe who is joyful most of the time
A24	it's there opinion because some people might have different belives
Class B	
B1	everyone is different and has different point of views. If you think of something someone else won't think of that because we are all different
B2	different people have different opinions, different personatilis, different veiws, thoughts, ideas and backgrounds. Depending on where you live, what school you go to and what religion you follow. Some interprtations are fall of questions and some are full beliefs. Some people interpret it and think you should give like Brian Stiller. Martin Luther King was treated with racism so he interpreted it by talking about changing the road so that would stop racism. Irene Matsoso is a feminist so she talked about that women were not included in this parable

B3	we all live in different places, we all born at different times. So we'll experience different thing earlier or later in life than others. We are all different we'll all have different personalities, different thoughts and feelings just because we're different in some way or another doesn't mean we can't be friends. The Solentiname farmers were all different yet they came together. I have had to experience different things to others yet they've still helped me get through those hard times. My Great Gandparent will have experenced different things to me. The reason that we have different opinions is because we've delt with different things had different experencie and that's why we interpreate differently
B6	they want to problaby know what might happen next if it did happen. I would love to know what happens next. I think the meaning of the parable is about the what happened in the olden days and you can read it and read it. I liked the Good Smaritan, I like the story
B7	Everyone has a different opinions and different piont of views. So say if I like the couler blue and you didn't that would be an opinion. I think the parable was about being kind to others and helping people in need
B8	people have different veiws, different personality, different thought. Like the woman that was a femenist and the other people different. The Parable didn't have any woman but the other people thought of different things. I have different answers other people have different answers. For example I read a book and someone else read that book I liked it, but the other person didn't that is different thought
B9	pepal fingch the good smaritin is a bout Helping uvers do wat the god smaritons beycose evrey is different. Yuver pepal irene matsoso and mayd women not fogoten and Fedrick Duclos stopt slavarey and soks fraws mad a safer plas werits is saf
B12	we all have have diffrent views on every thing if we didn't have diffrent opinions there no point of doing it. EG Augustine said church is the best place to get that help and Jülicher said God is not the best to worship
B13	because we are all diffrent and some people might be confused at the beging. When we started to read the story some remerberd and some still didn't reconise the story of the Good samaritan, some people Agree and disagree with others
B17	Mayb Irene Matsoso had enough of men treating women like there Invisible/not alive
B18	People have diffrent opinions and thoughts. People have diffrent ideas. Martin Luther King said that racism should be illegal
B20	Difrent people have difrent opinions and if you read a text people will say theere own ideas and people gets diffrent opinions. Like Martin Luther King it Dosent matter if you have Black, white skin it was racisim back then
B21	People have different opinions and they might look at the story in a different way. People also don't have the same thoughts as everyone else so they might think of something different too. People also sometimes have unique personalities
B22	Everyone lives a very different life. We were all born at different times, different days, different months and even different years. So that means we all experience different things that either help us or make us upset. We are all different. We have different pesonaites or opinions, different thoughts and feelings, just because some of us have different looks or races doesn't make you any less special. You should help others when there down or have had a rough day. Why we all have different opinions is becuase we have delt with different things had different experience and thats why we interprete differently
B24	I think diffrent people interpret the parable of the good samartian diffrently beacause evryone is diffrent no one is the same not even twins! People have diffrent opinions and diffrent point of views. Everyone has a diffrent personalities and diffrent thoughts and ideas. I think the Good Samaritan is a good example because it is about a Samaritan that helps a Jew who was robbed and left on the side of the road. He took the man to a inn so they could take care of the man in there
B25	All difrent people have diffrent beleifs to others because all people are born diffrenly to us. What Martin Luther King though that we should'nt treat others diffrently. Then Brian Stiller thought that No one should be left bruised and wounded and left to die. And then Irene Matsoso said 'the samaritan is like Jesus, Heals the wounded and takes care of them
B26	Everyone has a different opinion and different point of view. So say if I liked pizza and you didn't that would be a different opinion. Martin Luther King and Fredrick Douglass have different opinions
B28	We are all built difrently meaning we all have differen thoughts. For example Solentiname Farmers wanted to make the road a better place by stopping racism. I agree with them making it a safer place. The meaning is saving lives. Because we are all diffrent

B30	evryone is diffrent and comes from diffrent places. People have diffrent personalty and mind. It would be boring if evryone had the same idea and thoughts as evryone else. Evryone lives in diffrent environmnet so will have diffrent lives and opinon on things. Only one of the people mentioned girls wich show people have diffrent opinons. Onter one thought of it the Jesus it shows that he worships God when other poeple don't. People haveing diffrent likes can leed to diffrent opinons
Class C	
C1	everyone has diffrent mindsets and they could think the Good Samariatn was based on racism, people come from diffrent backgrounds so when they read the story they might think its got nothing to do with God but I think the parable is about that you should help every one even if you are against them every person is equal so you should help
C4	Some people mite have not heard of the story so thay would proply think difrently to people who have read it. because if you put ten pepole ina room ther not all going to come up with the same answer becace we all have difrent branis and opinions. Martin Luther King was older than us a experunc racism
C5	they have diffrent backgrounds and expirences to other people like racism they might say a really nasty thing to you or if I ask a class in a 100 years they will have a different opinoin because rules will be chanded. But if I ask somone in the 1900s they will have a diffrent exprience because rules were strict in that time
C6	no 2 people walk the same path, some are shown the way when others are challenged. Some trudge along, whilst others parade through. Frederick Douglass faced racism in slavery and paused on life's road, but he rebelled and kept wandering on the seemingly endless path that is life.
C9	I think that different people interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan differently because everyone has a different perspective on things so to me it means putting others before yourself but for others it might mean treat others how you want to be treated but Martin Luther King has said something completely different becuase he is from 1960's America
C10	God made us all differently and we all think the story of the Good Samaritan mean different things and teaches us a different lesson. For example like Martin Luther King thought that in the story where the man was robbed is a symbol for our lives
C11	because they are difrent pepole and difrent thing's has happened to them for exampol Martin Luther King thoght to Stop raciism but Irene Matsoso wented to stop the invisibility of woman
C12	everyone is unique, they have their own mind, their own opinion so they might see things in a different way. Like, Someone said 'The road to Jericho where the man was robbed is a symbol for our lives. Many people face racism daily as they travel through life; we need to change the 'road' to be a better, safer place for all'. I do agree with that but I said 'If you have a kind heart you would stop and help the poor or hurt'
C14	We all have different minds, diffrent backgrounds and been through different experiences. Also because we are all different people, We are not all the same
C15	Evry one sees things Diffrently like what I see is some thing I bet is going to be Diffrent for someone eles. If saw a person how was a clown and I fout it would be scary because of there Backgrounds. Martin Luther King was Bulled because he was black but if I asked [name omitted] then it would be Diffrent
C16	Martin Luther King talks about relshion race and over thing and that stands out to me also people are all diffrent that is what I really like about Martin Luther King. I think different people interpret the parble of the Good Samaritan differtly because everybody is diffrent in some way and it is uneek and also we have different backgrounds in our life like people do different things like jobs
C17	I think different people interpret the parable of the good samaritan differently because they all have different ways of seeing something and the reason they do is because they have different stuff going on in life
C18	everyone has a different mindset like Irene Matsoso who saw the parable as an afence to Women because there are only men in the story. People in the past present and future will all have completely different opinions on this parable, like I think it is to do with love and compassion, but because everyone thinks differently they might say some thing different
C19	we all have different back rounds we were all brought up diffently and we look and do different. An example is me an usain bolt we were born in different places and brought up different
C20	It think that it is because we have diffrent lives and feelings and expirences because if somene came from the Victorian times they wouldn't have the same answers and opinions as us. They would have a diffrent Perspective

C22	we are all different and we all have our own problems, and we are all different ages and come from different times in life, and they used to treat people differently then they do now
C23	Everyone Has different opinions, thoughts and ideas and Personalities/body/No one is the same and like Martin Luther King thinks "The road to Jericho where the man was robbed is a symbol for our lives, many people today face racism daily as they travel through life, we need to change the road to be a better, safer place for all". but Brian Stiller thinks something different because they are different people that Have completely different lives
C24	we all think differently because when God created us he made everyone different and have their own opinions that means like we think differently. If everyone had the same brain if they answered a question but it's wrong there would be no one to correct it so nothing would get done in life
C25	everybody has their own mind, like if you showed two different people a heart one of them might think it represents friendship and the other caring but the thing is that it doesn't actually represent one thing it represents multiple things
C26	they might not believe in God so they will think something else compared to a Christian so like what Brian Stiller said "Giving money and worn-out clothes to the poor once a year isn't 'loving your neighbour'. We need to go further, like the Samaritans did, and really care for people". He said that so the people will give clothes so those that have been robbed
C27	they are different people and they have different brains, might think differently and lived in different times
C30	they might want to not be the same as everyone else and be themselves. So they can help others instead of being just the same. and might have experienced different things