Teacher's notes

A visit to a mosque

Objective
- Describe a mosque using some correct terms and explain how it is used, including the importance of some of its characteristic features

Prior knowledge
The students should learn the technical terminology within the study of Islam. They should also use religious buildings and artefacts as sources.

QCA link
Unit 8E A visit to a place of worship

Scottish attainment targets
Other world religions
Strand – Sacred places, worship and symbols
Level C

Background
The Arabic word for mosque is ‘masjid’, meaning ‘place of prostration’. Most purpose-built mosques have a dome, which is a traditional feature of Islamic design; it is sometimes said to represent the world. Most purpose-built mosques have a minaret (‘place of fire’ or ‘place of light’) – a tall, thin, circular tower with an open gallery at the top from which the muadhin makes the adhan (call to prayer). It was originally used as a type of watchtower. The minbar is a platform from which the Imam addresses the congregation, usually during Friday prayer. At other times, Muslims pray individually, but Friday prayer is a time of communal worship (for men). Muslims are required to provide a place in which to pray which is pure and clean and not used for any other purpose. A prayer mat creates such an area. The qiblah is the wall which faces Makkah. It has a niche called a mihrab.

Starter activity
Ask the students about any places which are special to them. What makes them special? Focus on places associated with specific activities. Ask them where they would go if they wanted to think about or reflect on anything, for example, to sort out worries or relationships or to remember someone who has died. What qualities does the place have?

Activity sheets
‘Mosque features’ Ask the students how they can tell that a building is a mosque. What special features does it have (inside and outside)? Discuss why it has these features; relate them to the purpose of a mosque and explain how they help Muslims to worship God, for example, there are prayer mats because Muslims stand, kneel and prostrate themselves during worship. They should use the word bank to label the picture of the mosque and then complete the table.
‘Mosque sense’ helps the students to prepare for a visit to a mosque. Ask them to make notes on the table as to how to behave in a mosque.
‘In the mosque’ can be used for observations during a visit to a mosque. Ask the students to sit quietly, looking, listening, noticing any smells and experiencing the atmosphere of the mosque.
‘Questionnaire’ helps the students to prepare for note-taking by articulating what they know and what they want to find out upon their visit to a mosque.
‘Mosque detectives’ focuses on the similarities and differences between a mosque and any other place of worship the students have visited. Help them to focus on features which are linked with Muslim belief, such as the decoration of windows or walls (no human or animal images, as these could be considered to be idols). Compare this to a mandir, where murals (representations of gods and goddesses) are an integral part of Hindu worship. Other features to compare include seating or other places where people pray and how these reflect Muslim and other beliefs and practice, the mihrab (indicating the qiblah wall) and why the location of the qiblah is important. Also look for artefacts or the absence of artefacts the students have seen in other places of worship.
‘Mosque plan’. Show the students pictures of mosques which are buildings converted from other uses. Have the exteriors been changed much, if at all? Ask what would have to be done to the interior of a local building, such as a house, church or shop, in order to convert it into a mosque. The students should look at the picture of a room on the activity sheet and draw on the plan to show how it could be converted into a mosque.

Plenary
Invite volunteers to choose a feature of a mosque to describe and to explain why it is important.

Activity sheet – A visit to a mosque

Mosque features

Label the picture using the words in the word bank.

Word bank
dome
mihrab
minaret
minbar
prayer mats
qiblah
shoe racks
washbasins

Why does the mosque have these features?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of mosque</th>
<th>Symbolism or purpose</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dome</td>
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<td>mihrab</td>
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<td>minaret</td>
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