November 2024

European Textbooks

Ireland Review

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IMPACT-se

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Executive Summary

This study examines the representation of Jews, Judaism, and Israel in Irish school textbooks, highlighting several key trends and offering recommendations for improvement.

This research involves a detailed analysis of textbooks from primary and post-primary levels, focusing on history and religion education. It includes a review of how key themes such as the Holocaust, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the portrayal of Judaism and Jews are addressed within the curriculum.

The findings reveal a troubling pattern of trivialization and minimization of the Holocaust. For instance, Auschwitz was referred to misleadingly as a "prisoner of war camp," failing to acknowledge its role as a death camp where mass extermination occurred. Such descriptions dilute the historical and emotional gravity of the Holocaust, providing students with an incomplete understanding of this atrocity.

Many narratives question the legitimacy of the state of Israel and undermine Jewish claims to indigeneity in the land. Additionally, discussions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict often lack the necessary historical and political context, presenting a one-sided view that frames Israel as the sole aggressor.

The portrayal of Judaism in these textbooks is also of concern. The textbooks underrepresent Judaism in illustrating values like compassion and justice, creating a biased view of moral teachings across religions.

Furthermore, Judaism is sometimes inaccurately depicted as advocating violence to achieve justice, contrasting with other religions that are portrayed as inherently peaceful. This misrepresentation promotes negative stereotypes and biases against Jews.

Based on these findings, we propose several recommendations. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) should revise the curriculum to ensure historical accuracy, particularly in references to Jesus' life and the geographical terms used. Establishing a proofreading and approval mechanism for sensitive topics, which involves experts in history, religious studies, and political science, will help maintain balanced and accurate representations. Textbook publishers should also consult with official figures from religious communities and academic researchers before publishing content about religions to ensure accuracy and inclusivity. Schools should implement feedback mechanisms for parents and students to report any perceived biases or inaccuracies and should establish formal channels to address these concerns with publishers. Providing training for educators on inclusive education practices is also essential to foster an environment of tolerance and respect for all religions and cultures.

By implementing these recommendations, the NCCA, textbook publishers, and schools can work together to create a more balanced, accurate, and respectful educational environment. This will help promote inclusivity and mutual understanding among students, contributing to a more cohesive and tolerant society.

Introduction

Overview of Country, Jewish History

The Jewish community in Ireland currently faces significant challenges, particularly in relation to an increase in antisemitism, linked to broader geopolitical issues. Today, it is estimated that around 2,700 Jews live in Ireland,[1] and this community, though vibrant, is increasingly concerned about its safety and acceptance in wider society.

Antisemitism in Ireland has been a persistent issue, but since October 2023 there has been a notable increase in its virulent and anti-Israel tone.[2] Chief Rabbi of Ireland, Yoni Weider, has publicly criticized Irish President Michael D. Higgins for dismissing the seriousness of antisemitism in the country. Chief Rabbi Weider has also emphasized the need for greater governmental acknowledgment of and action against such prejudices.[3] Furthermore, the disproportionate focus on Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict often spills over into antisemitic attitudes and behaviors. Israeli Ambassador Dana Erlich's statement points out Ireland's "obsession" with Israel, which she claims can exacerbate tensions and contribute to a hostile environment for Jewish residents.[4]

Civil society groups and opposition parties welcomed the Irish government's official recognition of the state of Palestine, and do not regard Israel favourably.[5] Ireland's President Higgins criticized Israel for breaching international law in its conduct of the war in Gaza.[6] Prominent politicians such as Leo Varadkar have echoed Higgins' stance on Israel as a state "blinded by rage."[7] A recent poll showed that almost 80 percent of the Irish public believe that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza.[8]

Increasing public support for the Palestinian cause draws parallels between the Irish experience of colonialism, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, implicitly labelling Jews as colonizers in their indigenous territory.[9] This historical empathy, while centered on human rights and political justice, sometimes crosses the line into antisemitism, harming the Jewish community.

The rise in antisemitic incidents is a direct consequence of these political and social dynamics. Chief Rabbi Yoni Weider described the impact of the increased antisemitism this way:[10]

> "Over the past few months, many members of the Jewish community in Ireland have felt increasingly isolated. Many do not feel comfortable to have signs of their Jewish identity on the[ir] homes or on their person. Things have been particularly difficult for young students in schools and universities across the country.... Since October 7th there have been numerous anti-Semitic incidents, but these have taken the form of hateful comments, graffiti, and the

[1] https://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/about/communities/IE

[2] https://www.jns.org/why-being-jewish-in-ireland-has-become-dangerous/

[3] https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/2024/05/26/chief-rabbi-criticises-higgins-for-dismissal-of-anti-semitism-in-ireland/

[4] https://www.irishtimes.com/politics/2024/05/23/ireland-has-a-disproportionate-obsession-with-israel-says-ambassador-dana-erlich/

[5] https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/2024/05/22/irish-recognition-of-palestinian-state-widely-welcomed-but-criticised-by-israel-and-its-supporters/

[6] https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/nov/02/ireland-criticism-israel-eu-palestinian-rights

[7] https://www.breakingnews.ie/israel-hamas/leo-varadkar-says-israel-has-become-blinded-by-rage-1588287.html

[8] https://www.fm104.ie/news/fm104-news/almost-80-of-irish-people-support-palestine-as-protest-to-take-place-in-the-city/

[9] https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/nov/02/ireland-criticism-israel-eu-palestinian-rights

[10] https://www.timesofisrael.com/at-28-irelands-new-chief-rabbi-is-leading-an-aging-population-in-a-time-of-turmoil/

like, or on social media. We have not seen any physical violence... The strong anti-Israel bias of the Irish media, and that of the government and opposition parties, has not only proliferated a hatred towards Israel, but also a hatred directed towards Jews."

Israeli Ambassador Ehrlich asserts that Ireland's "obsession with Israel"[11] is reflected in antisocial incidents, such as preventing people from buying food at an Israeli stall in a food festival,[12] and hateful comments on social media.

Overview of Education System, Curriculum

The Irish education system is centralized: all public schools follow a national curriculum developed and overseen by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). The NCCA works in collaboration with educators, experts, and stakeholders to develop curriculum guidelines that ensure uniformity and high standards in education across the country.[13]

Primary Education and the Role of the Catholic Church

Primary schools in Ireland, which educate children from ages four to eleven or twelve, are privately run but are state funded. The patron of a school, usually a religious organization, has significant authority over its ethos and religious education, as outlined in its "Patron's Programme."[14]

The Primary Curriculum Framework mandates that religious education, or the Patron's Programme, is to be provided for 1 hour and 40 minutes per week for junior (ages four to five) and senior infants (ages five to six) and for 2 hours for older classes weekly. This religious education is seen as crucial to embedding the school's culture and values into the curriculum.[15]

Approximately 90% of primary schools are under the patronage of the Catholic Church. In those schools, the "Grow in Love" Patron Programme is often used for religious education.[16]

Intercultural and Religious Education

The revised primary school curriculum, launched in 1999, reflects a shift toward celebrating diversity and promoting pluralism. It covers key areas including language, mathematics, social, environmental, and scientific education, arts education, physical education, and social, personal, and health education. The curriculum emphasizes respect for diversity, active citizenship, and well-being.[17]

Religious education in post-primary schools is designed to ensure that students are exposed to a broad range of religious traditions, as well as to nonreligious interpretations of life. The syllabus aims to

[11] https://www.irishtimes.com/politics/2024/05/23/ireland-has-a-disproportionate-obsession-with-israel-says-ambassador-dana-erlich/

[12] https://www.instagram.com/reel/C8MPFXaMD2w/?igsh=MXY4cXQyZ29hbXF4aQ%3D%3D

[13] https://ncca.ie/media/4456/ncca-primary-curriculum-framework-2020.pdf

[14] https://www.tara.tcd.ie/bitstream/handle/2262/67620/Identity.pdf

[15] https://ncca.ie/media/6000/faq-for-the-primary-curriculum-framework.pdf

[16] https://www.catholicbishops.ie/2018/06/05/procedure-for-the-approval-of-catechetical-materials-in-catholic-education/

[17] https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/84747851-0581-431b-b4d7-dc6ee850883e/2023-Primary-Framework-ENG-screen.pdf

foster mutual respect and understanding, equipping students with the skills to engage in meaningful dialogue with those of different or no religious traditions.[18] This approach aligns with the principles of intercultural education—promoting respect and mutual understanding.[19]

Approval and Assessment of Textbooks

The approval process for schoolbooks in Ireland involves several steps to ensure that the materials meet curriculum standards. Contrary to some beliefs, the NCCA does not approve textbooks; instead, it creates the curricular specifications that publishers and authors use to develop educational materials. These materials are then reviewed by subject experts to ensure alignment with the curriculum. Schools have the autonomy to select textbooks that best fit their teaching needs, with input from teachers, principals, and patrons.[20]

For religious studies, particularly in Catholic schools, the approval process is more stringent. A panel of experts in education, catechetics, liturgy, theology, and scripture assess textbooks and materials for suitability, evaluating their alignment with the Catechism of the Catholic Church and other relevant guidelines. The Episcopal review body, comprising at least three bishops, makes the final judgment on suitability, after which the publisher can make necessary revisions before resubmission. Approved materials are listed on the website of the Council for Catechetics, ensuring their doctrinal accuracy and educational soundness.[21]

Inclusive Education and Diversity

The Irish education system emphasizes inclusive education and diversity, ensuring that all children, regardless of their background, can feel respected and safe. The curriculum supports children's awareness and appreciation of the rich diversity of peoples, cultures, religions, and beliefs. It aims to develop students' ethical understanding of the world, encouraging them to reflect on their choices and responsibilities.[22]

Conclusion

The Irish school education system, shaped by the strong Catholic influence in primary education, is evolving to meet the needs of a more diverse and pluralistic society. The centralized curriculum developed by the NCCA ensures high educational standards, and the autonomy granted to schools allows for flexibility in textbook selection and program implementation. As Ireland continues to embrace diversity, its education system strives to balance traditional religious values with the principles of inclusivity and intercultural respect.

The education system in Ireland is supported by several key publishers that provide textbooks and educational resources to meet the curriculum standards set by the NCCA. The main educational publishers in Ireland are CJ Fallon, Veritas, Edco, Folens, educate.ie and Gill Education.This report will

[18] https://ncca.ie/media/1976/intercultural_education_in_the_post-primary_school.pdf

[19] https://ncca.ie/media/3785/junior-cycle-religious-education-specification.pdf

[20] https://www.tara.tcd.ie/bitstream/handle/2262/67620/Identity.pdf

[21] https://www.catholicbishops.ie/2018/06/05/procedure-for-the-approval-of-catechetical-materials-in-catholic-education/

[22] https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/84747851-0581-431b-b4d7-dc6ee850883e/2023-Primary-Framework-ENG-screen.pdf

explore the presentation of Jews, Judaism and Israel in Irish textbooks. As such, the curriculum, defined by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA,) was analyzed to identify which subjects cover these topics, and require examination.

Relevant Curriculum Topics:

History - Junior Cycle (7–9 class)[23]:

- Peace and war in Europe 1920–1945, including World War II and the Nazi regime

History - Senior Cycle (11–12 class)[24]:

- Dictatorship and democracy, 1920–1945
- Emancipation of the Jews
- The Nazi state in peace and war
- Nazi propaganda—state control and use of mass media
- Antisemitism and the Holocaust
- British withdrawal from Palestine and origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict
- Zionism
- Discrimination

Religion - Junior Cycle (7–9 class)[25]:

- Major world religions (including Judaism)

Religion - Senior Cycle (11–12 class)[26]:

- Religious traditions in Ireland
- The role of religious belief in two of the world's contemporary conflict situations
- The question of discrimination in Ireland
- The "just war" tradition

Civics - Junior Cycle (7–9 class)[27]:

- Racism and xenophobia
- Minorities

Civics - Senior Cycle (11–12 class)[28]:

[23] https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/55900bde-5836-4eef-b94c-d569b31d5b70/SCSEC29_Religious_Ed_syllabus_eng.pdf

[24] https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/da556505-f5fb-4921-869f-e0983fd80e50/SCSEC20_History_syllabus_eng.pdf

[25] https://ncca.ie/media/3785/junior-cycle-religious-education-specification.pdf

[26] https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/55900bde-5836-4eef-b94c-d569b31d5b70/SCSEC29_Religious_Ed_syllabus_eng.pdf

[27] https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/b4cf7fd4-46d0-4595-baa9-f6c38923c75f/JCSEC04_CSPE_Syllabus.pdf

[28] https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/ee597f5d-180a-4531-ba50-2f4c966f2df3/Politics-and-Society-new.pdf

- The idea of equality in relation to rights
- Religious diversity
- The significance of ethnic and cultural diversity within the European Union

Based on our curricular review, our analysis examined religion and history books, with a focus on the following topics:

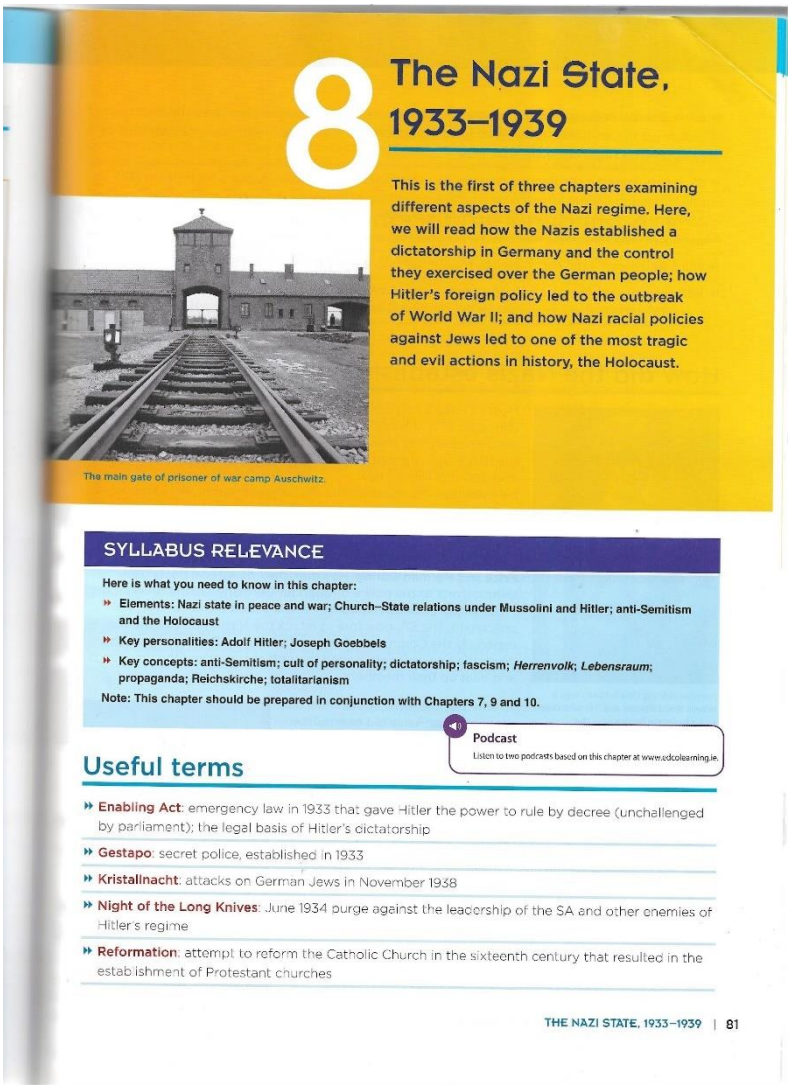
- The Nazi regime during World War II and the Holocaust
- Perception of peace and justice in different religions
- Comparison of Judaism to other religions

The Holocaust

Examples from Textbooks

1. ***Dictatorship and Democracy 1920–1945*, 2nd edition. Leaving Certificate History. 11th & 12th class. By Stephen Tonge. Edco (2017). Page 81**

Recognizing Auschwitz as a death camp is crucial to understanding the scale and nature of the Holocaust. Labeling it as a “prisoner of war camp” minimizes the unique and horrific nature of the Holocaust and the systematic extermination carried out there. The term "death camp" or "extermination camp" more accurately captures the function of the Auschwitz camp and the atrocities committed there.



8

The Nazi State, 1933–1939

This is the first of three chapters examining different aspects of the Nazi regime. Here, we will read how the Nazis established a dictatorship in Germany and the control they exercised over the German people; how Hitler's foreign policy led to the outbreak of World War II; and how Nazi racial policies against Jews led to one of the most tragic and evil actions in history, the Holocaust.

The main gate of prisoner of war camp Auschwitz.

SYLLABUS RELEVANCE

Here is what you need to know in this chapter:

- Elements: Nazi state in peace and war; Church–State relations under Mussolini and Hitler; anti-Semitism and the Holocaust
- Key personalities: Adolf Hitler; Joseph Goebbels
- Key concepts: anti-Semitism; cult of personality; dictatorship; fascism; *Herrenvolk*; *Lebensraum*; propaganda; Reichskirche; totalitarianism

Note: This chapter should be prepared in conjunction with Chapters 7, 9 and 10.

Podcast
Listen to two podcasts based on this chapter at www.edcolearning.ie.

Useful terms

- **Enabling Act**: emergency law in 1933 that gave Hitler the power to rule by decree (unchallenged by parliament); the legal basis of Hitler's dictatorship
- **Gestapo**: secret police, established in 1933
- **Kristallnacht**: attacks on German Jews in November 1938
- **Night of the Long Knives**: June 1934 purge against the leadership of the SA and other enemies of Hitler's regime
- **Reformation**: attempt to reform the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century that resulted in the establishment of Protestant churches

THE NAZI STATE, 1933–1939 | 81

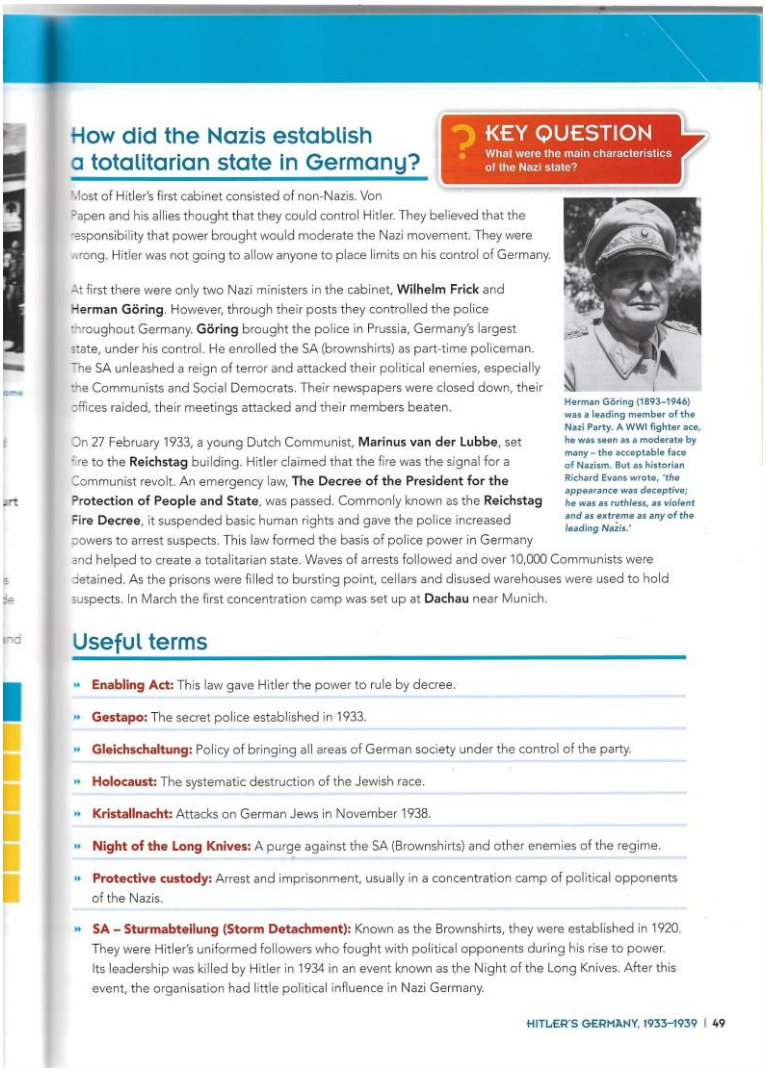
2. ***Case Studies: Dictatorship and Democracy 1920–1945*. Leaving Certificate History. 11th & 12th class. By Stephen Tonge. Edco (2022). Page 49**

Referring to the Holocaust as "the systematic destruction of the Jewish race" is problematic for several reasons and could potentially minimize its horrors.

First, it perpetuates the false Nazi ideology that Jews are a race when, in fact, Judaism is a religion, and Jews are an ethnic group. The Nazis used this racist concept to justify their genocide of the Jewish people.

Second, the term "destruction" does not adequately convey the systematic, industrialized murder of six million Jewish men, women, and children by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. The Nazis used mass shootings, gas chambers, starvation, and other brutal methods to commit genocide against Jews on an unprecedented scale.

Thus, the definition "the systematic destruction of the Jewish race" is reductive, inaccurate, and offensive, because it echoes Nazi ideology and minimizes the scale and methods of the genocide. Official definitions rightly focus on the Holocaust as the state-sponsored genocide of six million Jews by the Nazi regime due to antisemitic beliefs.



How did the Nazis establish a totalitarian state in Germany?

KEY QUESTION
What were the main characteristics of the Nazi state?

Most of Hitler's first cabinet consisted of non-Nazis. Von Papen and his allies thought that they could control Hitler. They believed that the responsibility that power brought would moderate the Nazi movement. They were wrong. Hitler was not going to allow anyone to place limits on his control of Germany.

At first there were only two Nazi ministers in the cabinet, **Wilhelm Frick** and **Herman Göring**. However, through their posts they controlled the police throughout Germany. **Göring** brought the police in Prussia, Germany's largest state, under his control. He enrolled the SA (brownshirts) as part-time policeman. The SA unleashed a reign of terror and attacked their political enemies, especially the Communists and Social Democrats. Their newspapers were closed down, their offices raided, their meetings attacked and their members beaten.

Herman Göring (1893–1946) was a leading member of the Nazi Party. A WWI fighter ace, he was seen as a moderate by many – the acceptable face of Nazism. But as historian Richard Evans wrote, *'the appearance was deceptive; he was as ruthless, as violent and as extreme as any of the leading Nazis.'*

On 27 February 1933, a young Dutch Communist, **Marinus van der Lubbe**, set fire to the **Reichstag** building. Hitler claimed that the fire was the signal for a Communist revolt. An emergency law, **The Decree of the President for the Protection of People and State**, was passed. Commonly known as the **Reichstag Fire Decree**, it suspended basic human rights and gave the police increased powers to arrest suspects. This law formed the basis of police power in Germany and helped to create a totalitarian state. Waves of arrests followed and over 10,000 Communists were detained. As the prisons were filled to bursting point, cellars and disused warehouses were used to hold suspects. In March the first concentration camp was set up at **Dachau** near Munich.

Useful terms

- **Enabling Act:** This law gave Hitler the power to rule by decree.
- **Gestapo:** The secret police established in 1933.
- **Gleichschaltung:** Policy of bringing all areas of German society under the control of the party.
- **Holocaust:** The systematic destruction of the Jewish race.
- **Kristallnacht:** Attacks on German Jews in November 1938.
- **Night of the Long Knives:** A purge against the SA (Brownshirts) and other enemies of the regime.
- **Protective custody:** Arrest and imprisonment, usually in a concentration camp of political opponents of the Nazis.
- **SA – Sturmabteilung (Storm Detachment):** Known as the Brownshirts, they were established in 1920. They were Hitler's uniformed followers who fought with political opponents during his rise to power. Its leadership was killed by Hitler in 1934 in an event known as the Night of the Long Knives. After this event, the organisation had little political influence in Nazi Germany.

HITLER'S GERMANY, 1933–1939 | 49

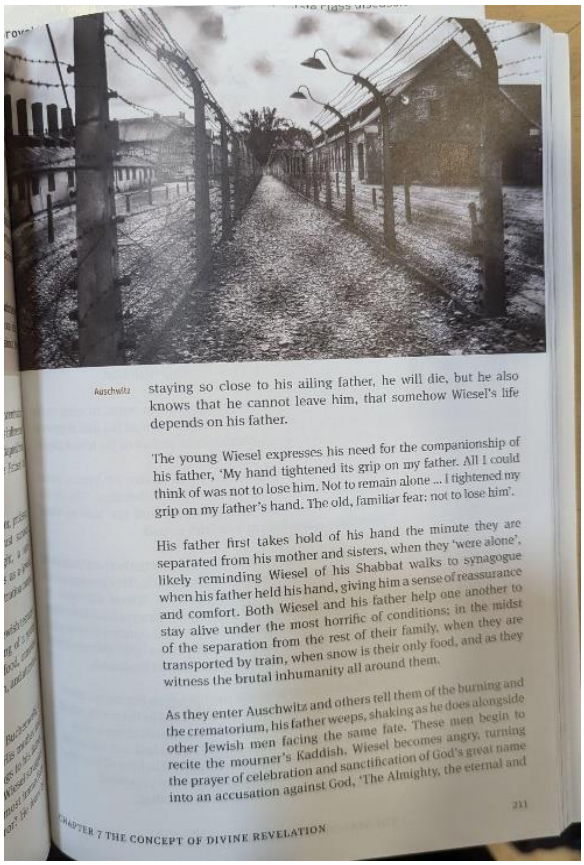
3. ***Faith Seeking Understanding*. Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus. Section A: *The Search for Meaning and Values*, 2nd new edition. 11th & 12th Class. By Kate Liffey & Lir Mac Cárthaigh & Siobhan O'Donoghue. Veritas (2022). Page 211**

The depiction of Auschwitz in the book, which labels it simply as "Auschwitz," is problematic because it trivializes the historical and emotional gravity of the site. Auschwitz was not merely a geographical location: it was the largest of the Nazi death camps where more than a million Jews and other victims were systematically exterminated. Failing to label the image as "Auschwitz Death Camp" or at least "Auschwitz Concentration Camp" fails to convey the horrific reality associated with the name.

When used alone, "Auschwitz" refers to a place name, which can be misleading. It does not capture the site's historical significance and the atrocities committed there. Just as an image of the atomic bomb mushroom cloud over Hiroshima simply titled "Hiroshima" would inadequately represent the catastrophic event, so too does "Auschwitz" fall short in conveying the full gravity of the Holocaust.

The inadequate labeling of the image disrespects the memory of the victims and the experiences of survivors. It diminishes the camp's role in the genocide, reducing it to a mere geographical reference. Accurate and respectful representation is crucial in educational contexts to honor those who suffered, and to educate future generations about the scale of such events. Note that this is a religious textbook aimed at imparting values, not a historical analysis, meaning that the question of why Jews in particular were being persecuted is all the more important.

Jews and Judaism in Christian Religious Context



Auschwitz

staying so close to his ailing father, he will die, but he also knows that he cannot leave him, that somehow Wiesel's life depends on his father.

The young Wiesel expresses his need for the companionship of his father, 'My hand tightened its grip on my father. All I could think of was not to lose him. Not to remain alone ... I tightened my grip on my father's hand. The old, familiar fear: not to lose him'.

His father first takes hold of his hand the minute they are separated from his mother and sisters, when they 'were alone', likely reminding Wiesel of his Shabbat walks to synagogue when his father held his hand, giving him a sense of reassurance and comfort. Both Wiesel and his father help one another to stay alive under the most horrific of conditions; in the midst of the separation from the rest of their family, when they are transported by train, when snow is their only food, and as they witness the brutal inhumanity all around them.

As they enter Auschwitz and others tell them of the burning and the crematorium, his father weeps, shaking as he does alongside other Jewish men facing the same fate. These men begin to recite the mourner's Kaddish. Wiesel becomes angry, turning the prayer of celebration and sanctification of God's great name into an accusation against God, 'The Almighty, the eternal and

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CHAPTER 7 THE CONCEPT OF DIVINE REVELATION

Examples from Textbooks

1. ***Grow in Love*, Junior infants. Veritas (2019). Page 39**

Depicting the people who "did not like Jesus" as traditional Jews in the comic can have several harmful effects, fostering subconscious biases and negative stereotypes against Jews among young children.

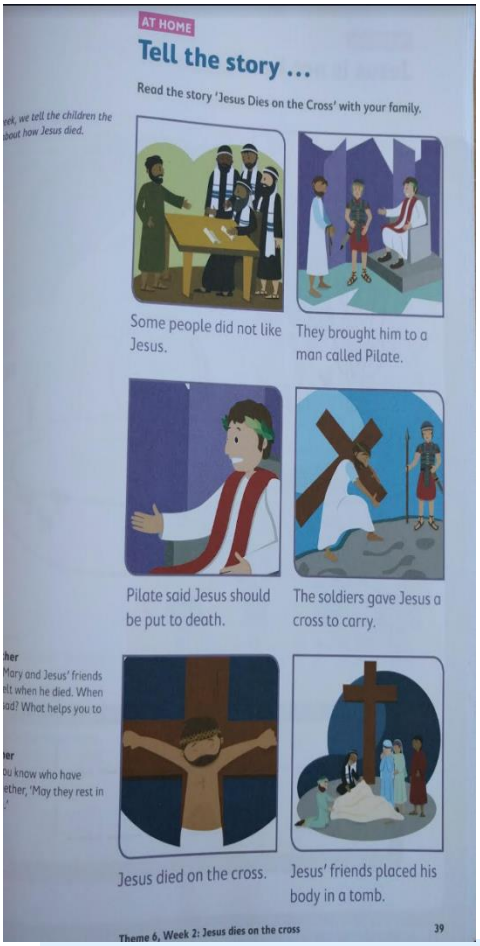
Historical Context and Antisemitism: Historically, this portrayal aligns with antisemitic stereotypes that have wrongly blamed Jews collectively for the death of Jesus. Such depictions perpetuate dangerous and inaccurate narratives. At a young age, children are highly impressionable, and showing Jews as the "bad guys'' can lead to a subconscious association between Jewish people and negativity or wrongdoing, which over time can solidify into explicit bias or prejudice

Moral and Ethical Considerations in Education: Modern educational frameworks emphasize teaching tolerance, empathy, and inclusivity. This image contradicts these principles by singling out a specific religious group negatively. It is crucial that educational content foster a sense of tolerance and inclusivity among students.

Impact on Jewish Students and Community: For Jewish students, seeing their cultural symbols associated with negative characters can be alienating and stigmatizing, which may diminish their sense of belonging and safety within the educational environment.

After this issue was escalated to the publisher, the image was replaced in a newer version of *Grow in Love*. In the updated image, the “people who didn’t like Jesus” are depicted wearing neutral clothing that does not associate them with any specific religious group. (Yet, having the figures wear head coverings resembling a kippah still conveys a sense of Jewish identity.)

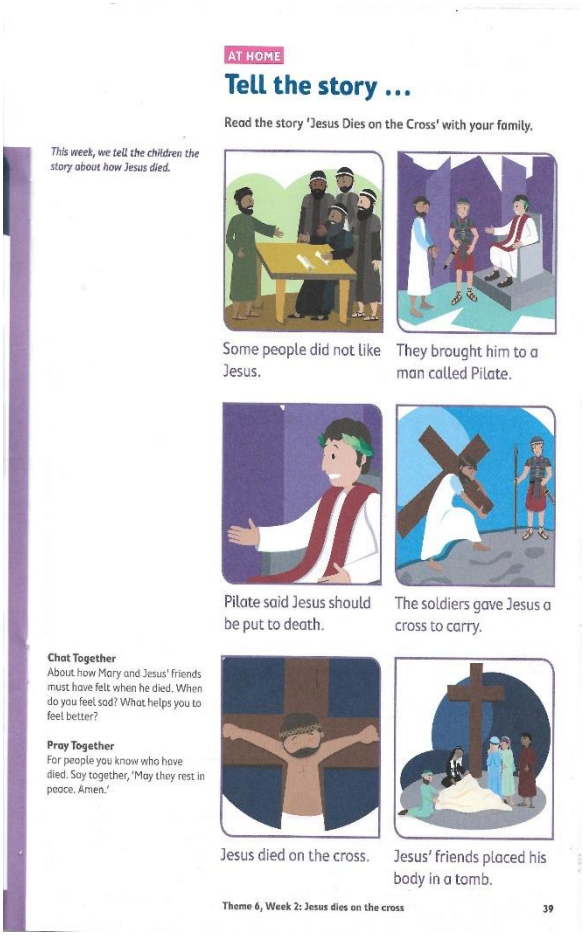
Original version (2019)



2019

Grow in Love, Junior infants, 2019, p. 39

Revised version (2024)



2024

Grow in Love, Junior infants, 2024, p. 39

"some people did not like Jesus" dressed with tallit

"some people did not like Jesus" wear generic clothing

2. ***Inspire - Wisdom of the World.*** **Junior Cycle Religious Education. 7th–9th Class. By Michael Purcell & Ailís Travers, Educate.ie (2020). e-book. Page 364**

A balanced portrayal of all religions should include both their peaceful principles and the conditions under which conflict is permitted.

The text of this table, "Understanding of Peace and War," portrays Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam as inherently peaceful and nonviolent, emphasizing their quest for justice without addressing their historical complexities, such as the Rohingya genocide[29] in Myanmar, the 9/11 terror attack, or the Crusades.

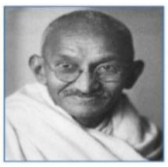
The text's characterization of the role of justice in Judaism is biased and inaccurate for several reasons.

It states that Judaism believes engaging in violence and war is necessary to achieve justice. In so doing, it ignores the diverse teachings in Jewish texts that advocate for peace, justice, and the sanctity of life. Jewish law emphasizes peace, as seen in principles like "pursuing peace" (Derech shalom) and "justice, justice you shall pursue" (Deuteronomy 16:20).

Further, the concept of 'Tikkun Olam' (repairing the world) and other various ethical guidelines derive from the Talmud and other Jewish texts which promote justice and peace.[30]

Religion/ Worldview	Understanding of peace and war
Hinduism	Hinduism believes that we should avoid harming any living thing. This includes physical, mental and emotional harm. Hindu sacred texts include teachings that condemn violence and war. Hindu sacred texts also include teachings that promote war as a moral duty in certain situations.
Judaism	Judaism believes that there can be no real peace without justice for all. Judaism believes that violence and war are sometimes necessary to promote justice.
Buddhism	Buddhism is essentially a peaceful tradition. Non-violence is at the heart of Buddhist thinking and behaviour. There is nothing in any Buddhist sacred text that gives support to the use of violence or war as a way to resolve conflict.
Christianity	The aim of Christianity is to promote a world in which peace and justice are enjoyed by everyone. Christians believe that war is rarely justified and should be avoided unless certain conditions are met.
Islam	Islam is in favour of peace and against violence. Islam allows war in self-defence, to defend Islam (but not to spread Islam) and to protect those who are oppressed. Islam sets strict guidelines for how people should behave in war.
Humanism	Humanists recognise that war and violence are human problems. Wars are started by humans and they can only be ended by humans. Humanists throughout history have worked to build peace. Humanists believe that peace is an active process that requires solving problems justly and without violence.

A role model for peace: Mohandas 'Mahatma' Gandhi



Mohandas Gandhi (1869–1948) was a political and spiritual leader in India during the time India wanted independence from Great Britain. He was given the title 'Mahatma', meaning 'great soul', because his **moral** and **spiritual** leadership resulted in India gaining independence. He proved that peaceful protest and dialogue can bring about change.

Gandhi was a **pacifist**. A **pacifist** is a person who is against war and violence of any kind and tries to live peacefully with others. Gandhi said:

> I object to violence because, when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary, the evil it does is permanent.

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[29] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rohingya_genocide#:~:text=The%20UN%20found%20evidence%20of,August%20and%20September%2024%2C%202017.

[30] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tikkun_olam

Despite these problematic examples, there were many good, balanced, and accurate examples of Judaism and Jews in the materials we analyzed. These examples cover religious traditions, values, ceremonies, and philosophies that depict Judaism and Jews objectively. Two balanced and accurate examples follow.

3. **"Judaism—the Way of the Torah."** ***Faith Seeking Understanding*****. Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus Unit 2. Section C:** ***World Religions*****. 11th & 12th Class. By Ellen Moiselle. Veritas (2005)**

The chapter titled "Judaism—the Way of the Torah" offers a comprehensive overview of Jewish faith and practices. It emphasizes Judaism's status as the world's oldest monotheistic faith and highlights key aspects such as the Shema prayer, the importance of the Torah, and Jewish values like justice and compassion. The chapter also addresses the Jewish people's commitment to learning and preserving their faith through generations despite historical challenges. This portrayal is balanced and educational, providing a clear understanding of Jewish beliefs and practices.

Image taken from *Faith Seeking Understanding*. Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus Unit

Chapter 5

Judaism – the Way of the Torah

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Repeat them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.
Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Judaism is the world's oldest **monotheistic faith**. It is a remarkable faith for a number of reasons:

- Judaism was the first of the great world religions to say that there is only one God – in stark contrast to the polytheistic beliefs of the time.
- It is the 'parent' of two of the world's great religions – Christianity and Islam.
- It teaches that religious practice goes far beyond attending special ceremonies; it also directs the way we behave towards other people: 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Leviticus 19:18).
- Pious Jews express their love of God through obedience to the law of God found in the first five books of the Bible, known as the **Torah**, the centrepiece of which are the Ten Commandments. These commandments have become the foundation of many of the world's legal codes.
- The Jewish people believe that they have been chosen by God to have a special relationship with God and that they have a special role towards the rest of humanity – to bring all people to the knowledge of one God. 'For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem' (Isaiah 2:3).

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Assignments

1. Summarise the points given here in a short introductory essay on Judaism.
2. The Jewish teacher Gamaliel said: 'Excellent is the study of the Torah combined with a worldly occupation, for the toil involved on both sides makes sin to be forgotten.' Explain. Do you agree with his statement?

This topic is also considered in Section A, The Search for Meaning and Values.

Resources for further study
See teacher's text on CD-Rom for further suggestions.

- Jewish faith teaches that God is creator of everything that is and that everything depends on God for its continued existence. God is a personal God, 'the God of Abraham, the God of Jacob, the God of Israel' (Exodus 3:6) and a God of love and justice. God's created world has a purpose – to fulfil the promise of building a kingdom of love, peace and freedom – and all life has meaning.
- The Jewish people have been called 'the people of the Book' because of the emphasis they place on the study of sacred Jewish texts. Only through such learning can individuals understand the essence of Judaism and the nature of God revealed in events through history. The Talmud states: 'Learning God's teaching is equal to everything else.' Such study should inspire goodness and kind living, and lead to faithfulness to God.
- Despite centuries of persecution, exile, enslavement and bigotry, Jewish people, though small in number, have clung fast to their faith and religious identity, and passed it down through generations.
- Despite their relatively small numbers worldwide, the Jewish people have impacted greatly on world history in terms of culture, business and intellectual and philosophical thought.

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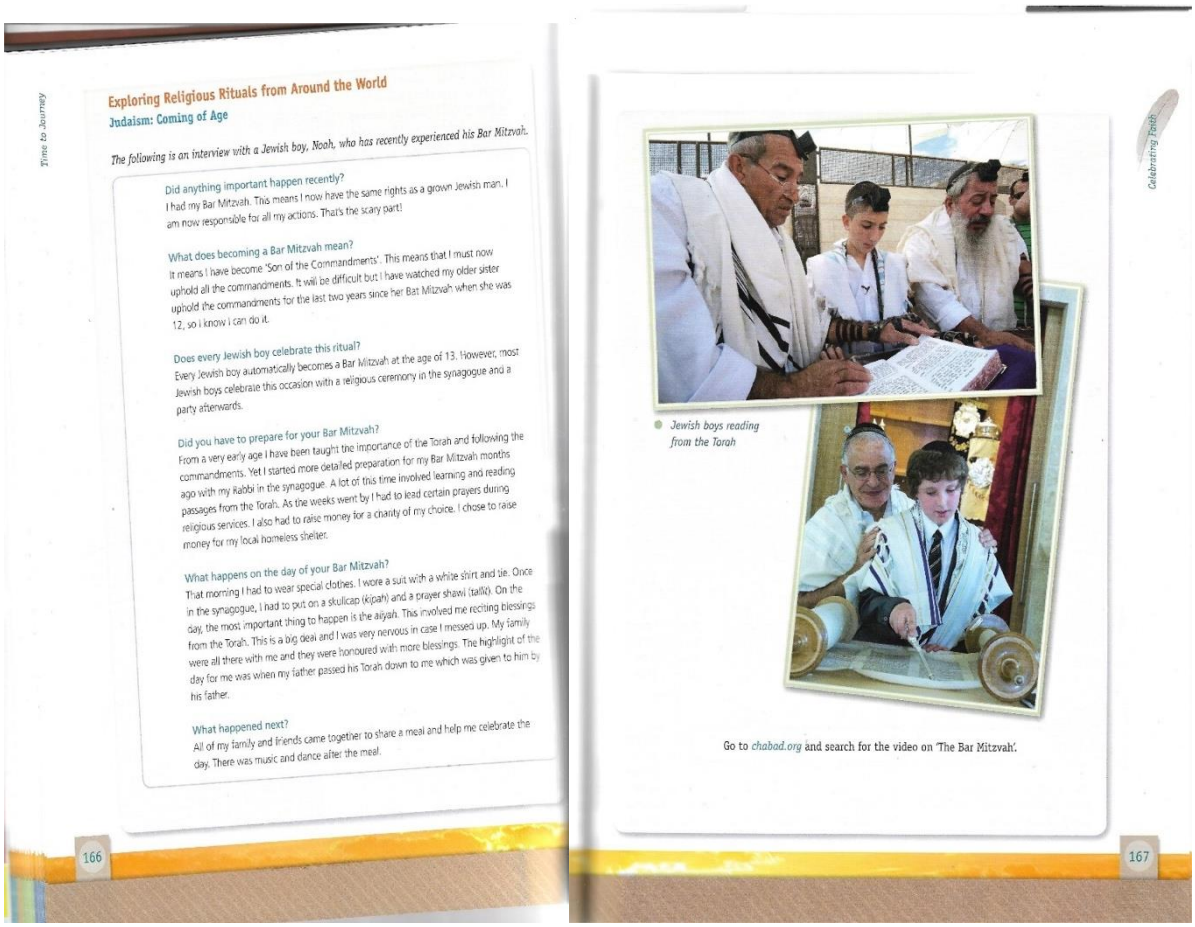
2. Section C: *World Religions*. 11th & 12th Class. By Ellen Moiselle. Veritas (2005) page 44.

4. **"Judaism: Coming of Age"**

The section on Bar Mitzvah ceremonies includes an interview with a Jewish boy who recently experienced his Bar Mitzvah. It explains the significance of this milestone, how Jewish boys prepare for it, and the rituals involved. This narrative helps readers understand the importance of the Bar Mitzvah in Jewish culture and how it marks a young person's transition to adulthood within the community.



Time to Journey

Exploring Religious Rituals from Around the World

Judaism: Coming of Age

The following is an interview with a Jewish boy, Noah, who has recently experienced his Bar Mitzvah.

Did anything important happen recently?
I had my Bar Mitzvah. This means I now have the same rights as a grown Jewish man. I am now responsible for all my actions. That's the scary part!

What does becoming a Bar Mitzvah mean?
It means I have become 'Son of the Commandments'. This means that I must now uphold all the commandments. It will be difficult but I have watched my older sister uphold the commandments for the last two years since her Bat Mitzvah when she was 12, so I know I can do it.

Does every Jewish boy celebrate this ritual?
Every Jewish boy automatically becomes a Bar Mitzvah at the age of 13. However, most Jewish boys celebrate this occasion with a religious ceremony in the synagogue and a party afterwards.

Did you have to prepare for your Bar Mitzvah?
From a very early age I have been taught the importance of the Torah and following the commandments. Yet I started more detailed preparation for my Bar Mitzvah months ago with my Rabbi in the synagogue. A lot of this time involved learning and reading passages from the Torah. As the weeks went by I had to lead certain prayers during religious services. I also had to raise money for a charity of my choice. I chose to raise money for my local homeless shelter.

What happens on the day of your Bar Mitzvah?
That morning I had to wear special clothes. I wore a suit with a white shirt and tie. Once in the synagogue, I had to put on a skullcap (kipah) and a prayer shawl (tallit). On the day, the most important thing to happen is the aliyah. This involved me reciting blessings from the Torah. This is a big deal and I was very nervous in case I messed up. My family were all there with me and they were honoured with more blessings. The highlight of the day for me was when my father passed his Torah down to me which was given to him by his father.

What happened next?
All of my family and friends came together to share a meal and help me celebrate the day. There was music and dance after the meal.

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Celebrating Faith

Jewish boys reading from the Torah

Go to *chabad.org* and search for the video on 'The Bar Mitzvah'.

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Image taken from *Time to Journey*. Religion for Senior Cycle Students. 11th & 12th Class. By Claire Breen & Fiona Hedderman. Gill Education (2014) page 166

Jews as Part of the National Fabric

Examples from Textbooks

1. ***Inspire—Wisdom of the World*. Junior Cycle Religious Education. 7th–9th Class. By Michael Purcell & Ailís Travers. Educate.ie (2020). e-book. Page 123**

In this material, only Christian, Muslim, and nonreligious organizations are presented as addressing the problem of homelessness in Ireland. Jewish social welfare organizations are notably absent, despite their contributions to alleviating homelessness and other social issues in Ireland. This omission is significant for several reasons.

Stating that homelessness is "a serious problem in Ireland" and then showcasing only Christian, Muslim, and non-religious efforts, implicitly suggest that they are the only groups addressing the issue. This is an inaccurate and incomplete representation of the collective efforts within Ireland.

By excluding Jewish organizations, the material sends an indirect message that the Jewish community is not involved in solving pressing societal issues and is only concerned with the welfare of fellow Jews. This portrayal can lead to misconceptions about the Jewish community's role and contributions to Irish society, affecting how students perceive the Jewish community. It may give rise to potentially reinforcing stereotypes that Jews are not part of the compassionate and caring fabric of Irish society. This exclusion does a disservice to the values of inclusivity and diversity.

It is important to note that the Jewish community in Ireland is significantly smaller than other religious groups. When the community's positive contributions to critical social issues are overlooked, it can create the impression that the Jewish community is more inwardly focused and less engaged in improving Irish society as a whole.

Homelessness is a serious problem in Ireland. There are people sleeping on the streets every night, **homeless shelters** are full and there are many more people in **temporary** or **emergency accommodation**. If we include people who are at risk of losing their homes, there are thousands more people affected by this issue.

In a **just** society everybody should have a safe place to sleep. Many people are angry that a solution has not been found to the homeless problem in Ireland. Until we have a solution, many people are working to help those affected by this issue.

In this chapter we are going to look at how some Christians and Muslims have responded to this issue by putting their faith into action. We are also going to look at how some non-religious people and organisations respond to homelessness.

A Muslim response to homelessness in Ireland

The **Muslim Sisters of Éire** are a group of Muslim women in Ireland. They volunteer their time to work together to create a **just society**. They focus on providing support to individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Every Friday night they meet outside the GPO on O'Connell Street in Dublin to feed those in need of a meal.

Chairperson of the Muslim Sisters of Èire, Lorraine O'Connor, spoke to *TheJournal.ie* in December 2018:

Christian faith in action

Christians believe that God creates each person with specific talents and gifts to be able to fulfil their **vocation** in life. A **vocation** is a calling to serve God, or to fulfil your special purpose in life. What all Christians have in common is that they are called to find a way to bring God's love into the lives of others by working for **justice** and showing **compassion** to all.

If you investigate the contribution of Christianity in Ireland you will discover many Christians whose vocation inspires them to use their time and talents to help those in need. One area where Christians are working for justice and showing compassion is in their response to helping **people who are homeless**.

The Christian understanding of **charity** is based on **love of others** and is also a way to show **love to God**. Christians follow the example and teaching of Jesus. Jesus told his followers to love their neighbours as themselves. If Christians are going to do this fully, they need to remember that their neighbours include those with no place to call home.

Non-religious responses to homelessness in Ireland

▲ Alice Leahy

The Alice Leahy Trust

'Where others see problems, Alice sees people. She is on their side every time.'

The Alice Leahy Trust started life as a result of one person's compassion, determination and moral vision.

Alice Leahy felt her vocation in life was to be a nurse but sometimes people feel called to change direction. Alice, from Tipperary, was living and working in Dublin as a nurse when she began to do volunteer work. It was her shock at the murder of Seán Armstrong in Belfast that prompted her to leave her job and volunteer full time: 'Losing someone so young (Seán was thirty-one), who seemed so full of life and potential, was the shock I needed to see that life was short.'

Alice saw that her nursing background could help her to support those with no homes. In 1975 she co-founded Trust, now the Alice Leahy Trust, to offer healthcare and advice, as well as friendship, to people who are homeless. It was the first doctor and nurse team visiting homeless people in the city and became a model for services to follow.

Alice knows she cannot fix the housing crisis alone, but the charity always treats people with dignity and respect by meeting some of the simple human needs most of us take for granted. It offers a place for friendship, welcome, nursing care and much more. A shower, a change of clothes and a hot cup of tea can make a huge difference.

Alice has received a number of awards over the years for her work, including an International Human Rights & Nursing Award and the Irish Red Cross Humanitarian of the Year Award in 2018.

When people come to volunteer at the charity, Alice asks them if they could ever see themselves being homeless. Normally they say no, but after spending time working there with people who are homeless, they soon realise it could happen to anyone. One student nurse who volunteered with Alice described what she learned through the experience:

2. ***Inspire—Wisdom of the World*. Junior Cycle Religious Education. 7th–9th Class. By Michael Purcell & Ailís Travers. Educate.ie (2020). e-book. Page __**

In another example from the same book, the warm connections between the Jewish community and other religious communities are not mentioned, which may portray a skewed picture of religious harmony in Ireland (see the image of Christmas greetings.)

Overall, throughout this book, Islam is mentioned significantly more than other religions, including Judaism: the word "Islam" appears twice as often as the word "Judaism." The book also highlights more examples of good values and virtues carried out by Muslims in Ireland than by Jews. A book that aspires to educate about the religious fabric in Ireland should provide a more balanced representation of all religions, ensuring that no single faith is favored over others. As do the positive examples depicting Judaism in the previous section, the "Grow in Love" program portrays Jewish traditions in an informative and respectful manner.

Members of other world religions also send greetings to one another when it is a special time of the year. The leader of the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland wished Christians a Merry Christmas with this message.

The real meaning of Advent is a time to prepare for Christmas by spreading hope, love, joy and peace.

3. *Grow in Love*, Primary 5, 3rd Class. Veritas (2017). Page 94

"Our Jewish Brothers and Sisters"

This lesson on the Sabbath introduces students to Jewish traditions, including the lighting of candles, the blessing over the bread, and the significance of rest. This lesson encourages students to reflect on and discuss these practices, fostering a deeper appreciation of Jewish culture.

Image taken from *Grow in Love*, Primary 5, 3rd Class. Veritas (2017) page 94.

The inclusion of detailed and respectful descriptions of Jewish traditions, values, and ceremonies helps provide a balanced and accurate portrayal of Judaism. Such content contributes to a well-rounded education on the diverse religious landscape, fostering understanding and respect among students.

IN SCHOOL

THIS WEEK IN SCHOOL

You are invited to think about:

- How the Sabbath is different from the other days of the week
- How Jewish people celebrate the Sabbath
- Sharing what you have learned about the Jewish synagogue with family and friends
- Giving thanks to God for the day of rest, the Sabbath

KEY WORDS

Synagogue: the place where Jews worship.

Jewish Sabbath: the Sabbath begins on Friday evening at sunset and ends at nightfall on Saturday with the appearance of three stars. It lasts about twenty-five hours.

The Torah: the Jewish sacred scripture. It contains the first five books of the Old Testament.

Tallit: a fringed prayer shawl traditionally worn by Jewish men.

Bimah: platform or pedestal on which the Torah scrolls are placed when they are being read in the synagogue.

Eternal Light: a continuously burning lamp that is usually found above or near the Holy Ark or Aron Kodesh in the synagogue.

SEASONAL LESSON 4 | INTERRELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Our Jewish Brothers and Sisters

ABOUT JUDAISM

Recall the stories of the three friends Muireann, Eli and Salma from the Catholic, Jewish and Muslim faith traditions. Chat about all the things you remember learning about the Jewish faith in previous *Grow in Love* programmes. Begin by answering these questions: Where would you find a mezuzah? A kippah? the Aron Kodesh?

ACTIVITY

- This week you heard the story about Muireann's sleepover at Eli's house during the time of the Sabbath. Both children shared their understandings about how the Sabbath can be spent in order to show love and respect to God the Creator. Imagine you met Muireann and/or Eli in the school yard and you chatted about the sleepover. Find a partner and act out the conversation. Here are some questions you might ask:
  - What did you eat at the Sabbath meal on Friday evening?
  - How was the dinner table prepared?
  - What did you see in the synagogue?
  - What did you do in the synagogue?

DISCUSS

- Can you recall the different foods that are shared at the Sabbath meal?

ACTIVITY

- In your Religious Education journal record two things you like about the Jewish celebration of the Sabbath. Share your work with someone in your family.

Observe the Sabbath (Exodus 20:1, 8-10)

God spoke, and these were his words:... 'Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy. You have six days in which to do your work, but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to me. On that day no one is to work – neither you, your children, your slaves, your animals, nor the foreigners who live in your country.'

FOR MEMORISATION

'Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy.' (Exodus 20:8)

Jews and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Examples from Textbooks

1. ***Faith Seeking Understanding*, Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus. Section B: *Christianity: Origins and Contemporary Expressions*. 11th & 12th Class. By Paula Goggin & Colette McCarthy-Dineen. Veritas (2005). Page 83.**

   The page from "Faith Seeking Understanding" presents a problematic image in the context of the parable of the Good Samaritan, which is meant to teach lessons about compassion, tolerance, and caring for others. However, instead of focusing on the core moral teachings of the parable, the image of a Palestinian boy protesting against Israeli aggression shifts attention towards a political critique, unjustly portraying Israel and Jews as wrongdoers. This shift detracts from the parable's universal message of compassion and understanding, steering the narrative into a controversial and divisive political issue.

   While the parable does acknowledge the historical animosity between Jews and Samaritans, this serves merely as a backdrop to highlight the Samaritan's act of kindness. The image chosen for this context, however, emphasizes historical conflict and aligns it with contemporary political tensions between Israel and Palestine. This conflation overshadows the primary message of the parable—compassion and care—by introducing a politically charged dimension that distracts from the intended moral lessons.

   The choice of image not only misses the opportunity to illustrate Good Samaritan-like behavior but also risks implanting a biased anti-Israeli sentiment in students' minds. A more appropriate illustration would have focused on acts of kindness and compassion, which are central to the parable's teachings. Instead, the current image diverts the lesson from its educational goal, creating a polarizing narrative rather than fostering understanding and tolerance.

   Moreover, this imagery is particularly problematic because it conflates the ancient hostility between Jews and Samaritans with modern political conflicts involving Israel. Even if the intention were to critique Jews, this would still miss the parable's point, which is about overcoming enmity through compassion. By bringing Israel and contemporary political issues into a religious discussion, the textbook manipulates the narrative, introducing bias where the focus should remain on the moral and religious teachings of the parable, free from political influence.

Group Work/Discuss

1. Read the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 and answer the following questions.
   a. In what ways would this story have shocked those listening to it?
   b. What was the point Jesus wished to make in this parable?
   c. What does this parable say to Christians about their response to violence and intolerance?
   d. Compose a modern version of the Good Samaritan story.
2. Study these key texts and say what they reveal about the Christian response to violence and intolerance.
   Matthew 23:1-12 Jesus is angry at the scribes and Pharisees.
   Luke 22:24-27 Service.
   John 13:1-17 Washing the feet of the disciples.
   Mark 10:35-45 The first shall be last.
   John 4:4-42 Jesus and the Samaritan Woman.

Six-year-old Mohammed Ahmed taking part in a demonstration organised by members of the Muslim and Palestinian community in Ireland outside the Israeli Embassy in Dublin to protest at that country's actions against their fellow Muslims in Israel and Palestine

This topic is also considered in Section F, Issues of Justice and Peace and Section D, Moral Decision-making.

For Reflection

Think of situations of violence and intolerance in our world today. What is the Christian response to these situations? Is this way of responding the norm in our society?

The Good Samaritan: The parable of the Good Samaritan is by now so familiar to many that it has lost some of its power to shock. Time and distance mean that some elements of the parable have to be explained today in order for us to appreciate fully the power of the story. The Samaritans were a group within first-century Palestine who came from a region to the north of Judea, called Samaria. They were despised by the Jews because of their mixed ethnic and religious background.

> *They were regarded by the Jews as a half-breed and religiously impure people. The Jews did not speak to the Samaritans; certainly a Samaritan would not be expected to show compassion to a Jew.*

The other characters in this story were a priest and a Levite. The priests were among the most important religious groups and the Levites also belonged to the Temple.

Can you think of a group or groups that face intolerance in our society today?

CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF A JUST AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

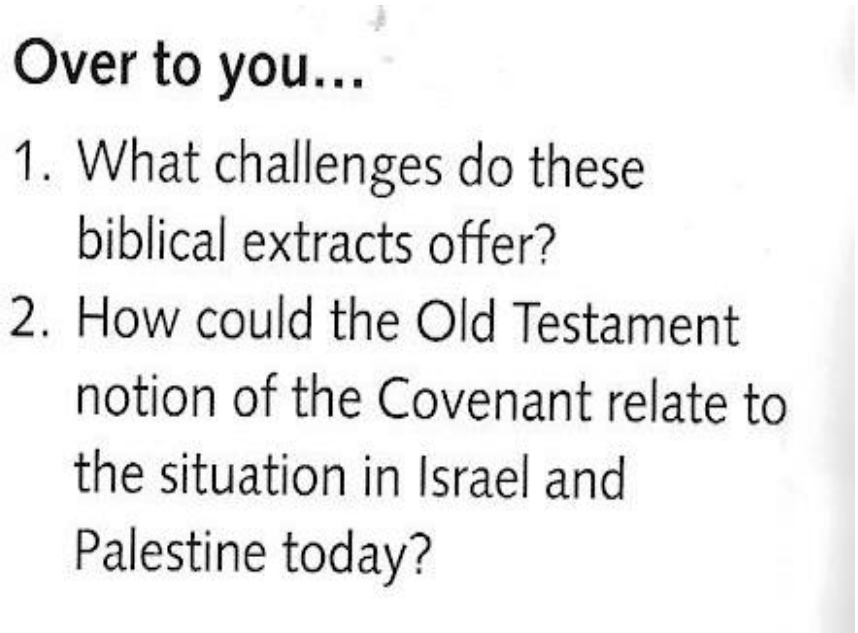
'As many of you as were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.' (Galatians 3:27-28)

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul goes to great lengths to remind the recently converted Galatians of the consequences of faith in Christ. Paul's words are worth close examination. They continue to be relevant to Christians today, especially those who find themselves faced with injustice. In the Kingdom of God, announced and heralded by Jesus, justice will prevail and all people will be included. In Christ all are equal; there should be no distinction or discrimination made in terms of race, religion, class or gender. In Christ there is *'neither Jew nor Greek'*. There are no distinctions made between those of differing nationalities or religious beliefs, and no

2. ***Faith Seeking Understanding*. Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus. Section F: *Issues of Justice & Peace*. 11th & 12th Class. By Barbara Raftery. Veritas (2006). Pages 53–54**

After describing the fundamental agreement of the covenant between God and the Hebrew people, there is a question directed to the students under the section "Over to you." These questions are meant to prompt students to reflect on the subject and apply it to the world they live in. The question posed is: "How could the Old Testament notion of the covenant relate to the situation in Israel and Palestine today?" Although not explicitly stated, the textbook could imply that the expectation of treating neighbors and foreigners with special care is not met by Israel, and therefore their part of the covenant, which guarantees them the legitimacy to occupy the land, is not fulfilled. This subtle implication nudges students toward questioning the legitimacy of the Israeli presence in the land of Israel, challenging the status quo and the rights adopted by UN Resolution 181 in November 1947.

Again, it is important to make explicit that this example is essentially drawing a comparison between the covenant between God and the Hebrews and the Israel-Palestine conflict, which is shifting the discussion from a religious one, concerning Jews, to a political one, concerning Israel. it risks conflating any mention of Jews with the modern political issue of Israel/Palestine. This insertion of Israel/Palestine into discussions about the Jews introduces a political dimension that may lead students to form biased opinions, rather than fostering a deeper understanding of the historical and religious context of the covenant. Such an approach shifts the focus away from the intended religious and moral teachings, instead introducing a contemporary political controversy into a discussion that should remain centered on historical and spiritual understanding.



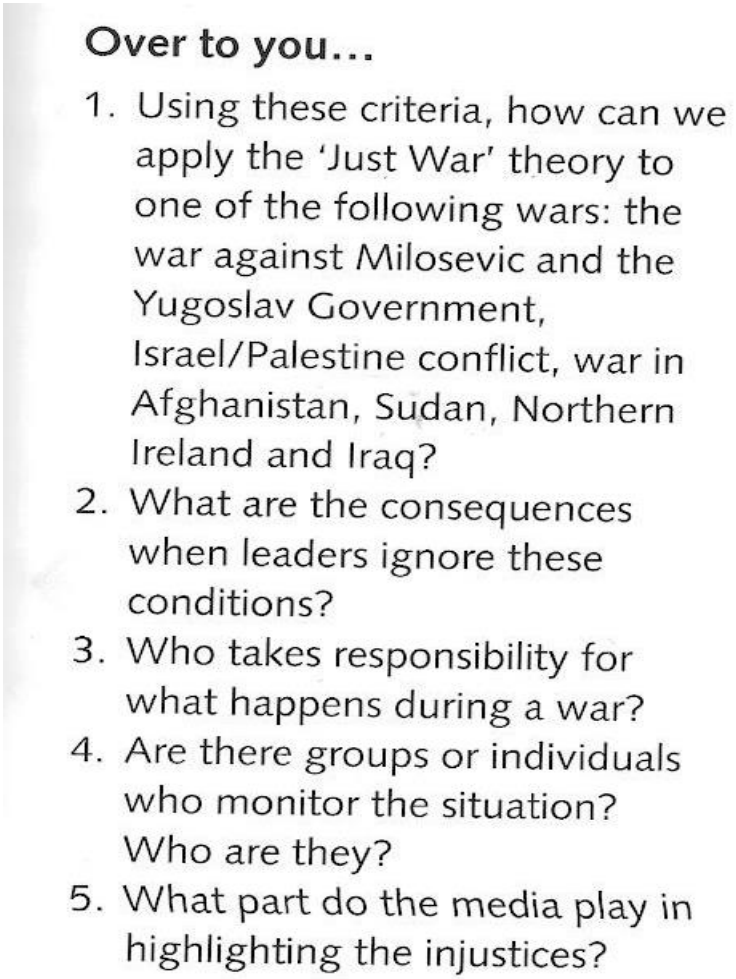
Over to you...

1. What challenges do these biblical extracts offer?
2. How could the Old Testament notion of the Covenant relate to the situation in Israel and Palestine today?

3. ***Faith Seeking Understanding*. Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus. Section F*: Issues of Justice & Peace*. 11th & 12th Class. By Barbara Raftery. Veritas (2006). Page 79**

Including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within the framework of "Just War" theory may implicitly suggest that Israel is the aggressor and that Palestinian actions could be viewed as justified under this theory. This perspective is particularly challenging given recent events, such as the Hamas attack on October 7th, 2023, which some have argued constitutes a legitimate act of war in the context of occupation. However, the attack, marked by significant violence, raises complex moral questions that complicate the straightforward application of "Just War" theory and could potentially lead to misinterpretations by students.

The Israeli-Palestinian situation is more accurately characterized as a conflict rather than a traditional war. It involves a complex combination of political, social, and historical factors that do not align neatly with the criteria of "Just War" theory. Applying this framework to the conflict may oversimplify the issues and result in misleading conclusions.



Over to you...

1. Using these criteria, how can we apply the 'Just War' theory to one of the following wars: the war against Milosevic and the Yugoslav Government, Israel/Palestine conflict, war in Afghanistan, Sudan, Northern Ireland and Iraq?
2. What are the consequences when leaders ignore these conditions?
3. Who takes responsibility for what happens during a war?
4. Are there groups or individuals who monitor the situation? Who are they?
5. What part do the media play in highlighting the injustices?

4. ***Time to Journey.*** **Religion for Senior Cycle Students. 11th & 12th Class. By Claire Breen & Fiona Hedderman. Gill Education (2014). Page 122**

The inclusion of this 2007 article as the only case study in the subsection "Justice and Peace" within the chapter "Living Faith: Doing Justice" is problematic.

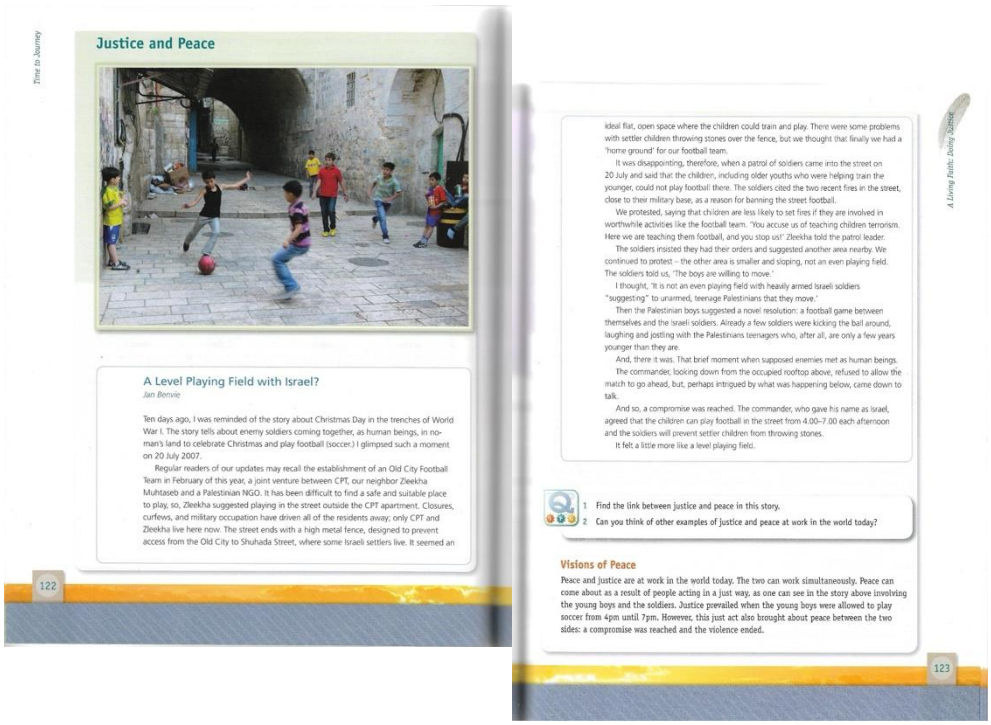
The article presents a one-sided narrative that depicts Israeli soldiers as aggressors and Palestinian children as innocent victims. This oversimplified portrayal lacks the necessary context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict's historical, political, and religious complexities. Moreover, the absence of any equivalent examples that humanize Jews or Israelis in the context of war and justice further skews the narrative. By presenting this case study without sufficient background information, the narrative suggests a clear-cut scenario of wrongdoing by Israel, which can shape students' perceptions negatively and unfairly.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a deeply complex issue with roots that span more than a century, involving multiple wars, peace processes, and political agreements. The article fails to provide this context, thereby flattening the situation into a simple narrative of oppressors versus oppressed.

Educational content should strive to present balanced perspectives, especially on contentious issues. By selecting this article as the sole example under "Justice and Peace," the book risks imparting a biased view to students, who might develop a skewed understanding of Israel and its actions.

For many Irish students, this article may be their first exposure to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Presenting such a one-dimensional case study could lead to lasting misconceptions about Israel's role and actions.

There are numerous other examples of justice and peace that could be explored that do not involve the same level of complexity and sensitivity. For instance, case studies on apartheid or post-apartheid in South Africa could be presented.



Time to Journey

Justice and Peace

A Level Playing Field with Israel?

Jan Benvie

Ten days ago, I was reminded of the story about Christmas Day in the trenches of World War I. The story tells about enemy soldiers coming together, as human beings, in no-man's land to celebrate Christmas and play football (soccer.) I glimpsed such a moment on 20 July 2007.

Regular readers of our updates may recall the establishment of an Old City Football Team in February of this year, a joint venture between CPT, our neighbor Zleekha Muhtaseb and a Palestinian NGO. It has been difficult to find a safe and suitable place to play, so, Zleekha suggested playing in the street outside the CPT apartment. Closures, curfews, and military occupation have driven all of the residents away; only CPT and Zleekha live here now. The street ends with a high metal fence, designed to prevent access from the Old City to Shuhada Street, where some Israeli settlers live. It seemed an

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ideal flat, open space where the children could train and play. There were some problems with settler children throwing stones over the fence, but we thought that finally we had a 'home ground' for our football team.

It was disappointing, therefore, when a patrol of soldiers came into the street on 20 July and said that the children, including older youths who were helping train the younger, could not play football there. The soldiers cited the two recent fires in the street, close to their military base, as a reason for banning the street football.

We protested, saying that children are less likely to set fires if they are involved in worthwhile activities like the football team. 'You accuse us of teaching children terrorism. Here we are teaching them football, and you stop us!' Zleekha told the patrol leader.

The soldiers insisted they had their orders and suggested another area nearby. We continued to protest – the other area is smaller and sloping, not an even playing field. The soldiers told us, 'The boys are willing to move.'

I thought, 'It is not an even playing field with heavily armed Israeli soldiers "suggesting" to unarmed, teenage Palestinians that they move.'

Then the Palestinian boys suggested a novel resolution: a football game between themselves and the Israeli soldiers. Already a few soldiers were kicking the ball around, laughing and jostling with the Palestinians teenagers who, after all, are only a few years younger than they are.

And, there it was. That brief moment when supposed enemies met as human beings.

The commander, looking down from the occupied rooftop above, refused to allow the match to go ahead, but, perhaps intrigued by what was happening below, came down to talk.

And so, a compromise was reached. The commander, who gave his name as Israel, agreed that the children can play football in the street from 4.00–7.00 each afternoon and the soldiers will prevent settler children from throwing stones.

It felt a little more like a level playing field.

A Living Faith: Doing Justice

1 Find the link between justice and peace in this story.
2 Can you think of other examples of justice and peace at work in the world today?

Visions of Peace

Peace and justice are at work in the world today. The two can work simultaneously. Peace can come about as a result of people acting in a just way, as one can see in the story above involving the young boys and the soldiers. Justice prevailed when the young boys were allowed to play soccer from 4pm until 7pm. However, this just act also brought about peace between the two sides: a compromise was reached and the violence ended.

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5. ***Inspire - Wisdom of the World*. Junior Cycle Religious Education. 7th–9th Class. By Michael Purcell & Ailís Travers. Educate.ie (2020). e-book. Pages 73–75**

The statement that Jesus lived in "Palestine" requires historical context. Although Jesus lived in regions that are now part of modern-day Israel and of the Palestinian territories, specifically in Judea and Galilee, the term "Palestine" as we understand it today was not used during his lifetime.

Historical Context

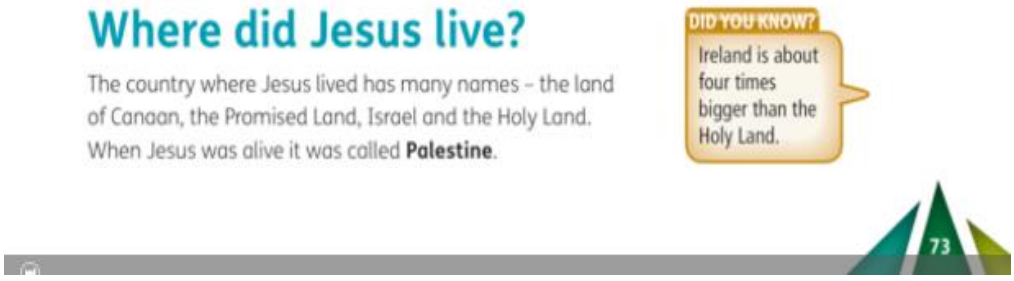
Roman Province of Judea: During Jesus's life (approximately 4 BCE to 30–33 CE), the area was primarily referred to as Judea, which was part of the Roman Empire. The Romans governed this region, and it was known as the province of Judea, which included Jerusalem and surrounding areas. The term "Palestine" was not widely used until after the Bar Kokhba revolt in 135 CE, when the Romans renamed the region as "Palestina" to minimize Jewish identification with the land.

Cultural and Ethnic Identity: Jesus was a Jew, and his life and teachings were deeply rooted in Jewish culture and religion. He was born in Bethlehem and grew up in Nazareth, both of which are in the historical regions of Judea and Galilee.

Use of the Term "Palestine": The term "Palestine" has evolved over centuries and was used to describe various geographical and political entities. It is more historically precise to refer to the region in which Jesus lived as Judea or Galilee, rather than Palestine. The modern usage of "Palestine" often carries political connotations that did not exist in the first century.

Damage to Israel's Legitimacy: Referring to Jesus's residence as "Palestine" without the appropriate historical context can contribute to the delegitimization of Israel. It can be exploited to undermine the Jewish historical connection to the land. Misrepresentations of historical facts can perpetuate narratives that challenge Israel's legitimacy and foster political agendas against the state of Israel.[31]

Although it is technically correct to say that Jesus lived in a region that was later named “Palestina,” it is more accurate to describe the area as Judea or Galilee during his lifetime. The term "Palestine" as a designation for the region was not commonly used until after the time of Jesus, making it less applicable to his historical identity. This distinction is crucial for understanding the historical and cultural context of his life and teachings. Proper terminology helps maintain the integrity of historical facts and prevents the misuse of history for political purposes.



[31] https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-779313

Look at the location of Palestine on the map on the right. Palestine is at the edge of the Roman Empire, but at a **central location** where Europe, Asia and Africa meet. This central location meant that Palestine was invaded by foreign armies many times. The foreign occupiers of Palestine could then charge a tax on all goods brought into the ports and transported across the country.

Palestine was near the edge of the Roman Empire, but at a central location where Europe, Asia and Africa meet

The Roman army invaded Palestine in 63 BCE. The **Roman Empire** was in charge and the people had no say in how they were ruled. However, Rome was a long way from Palestine, so the Roman emperor appointed **governors** to be in charge of the three **provinces** of Palestine at the time: Galilee, Judea and Samaria. Jesus was from **Galilee**, where people were called Galileans. The people of **Judea** were called Judeans. The people of **Samaria** were called Samaritans. The Samaritans were not liked by people in Galilee and Judea.

The Romans made the Jews pay a **tax**. This tax was used to build roads and pay soldiers in the Roman army. The Jews were angry because they felt they should not have to pay a tax in the land given to them by God. They were even more annoyed because many of the tax collectors were dishonest and charged the people extra money, which they kept for themselves. Roman soldiers worked in Palestine to keep control of the country and to make sure people paid the taxes.

The Romans allowed the Jews to continue to practise their religion, as they feared a revolt if they refused.

Palestine at the time of Jesus

ENQUIRY

How are the following places linked to the life of Jesus?

- River Jordan
- Sea of Galilee
- Bethlehem
- Nazareth
- Jerusalem
- Cana
- Capernaum
- Emmaus

Look up the following Bible passages (see page 24 if you need a reminder of how to look up Bible references). Match each Bible passage with a place from the list above. Then find out what happened at each place:

Luke 2:5–7	Matthew 3:13–17	Matthew 4:18–22	Luke 23:26–28
Luke 2:39–40	John 2:1–11	Mark 2:1–2	Luke 24:13–35

You might want to visit the places mentioned in the Enquiry activity (page 74) on Google Earth to see what they are like today: **www.google.com/earth/**

DID YOU KNOW?
The Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea are lakes, not seas.

PORTFOLIO ACTIVITY 10.1

Go to page 28 of your Portfolio and label the map of Palestine.

Daily life in Palestine

Homes

Jesus grew up in the small village of **Nazareth**. Homes in Nazareth at that time were very small. They had only one room, one door and one small window. This made the homes dark but families used oil lamps to light them. People slept on mats, and their animals often slept indoors as well.

Outside the house steps led to a **flat roof** that could be used as extra living space.

Typical house from first-century Palestine

On the doorpost of each Jewish house hung a **mezuzah** – a small box that held a scroll with the words of a prayer from the Torah called the Shema:

> Israel, remember this! The Lord – and the Lord alone – is our God. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. Never forget these commands that I am giving you today. Teach them to your children. Repeat them when you are at home and when you are away, when you are resting and when you are working. Tie them on your arms and wear them on your foreheads as a reminder. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.
> (Deuteronomy 6:4–9)

A mezuzah

People would touch the mezuzah as a mark of respect whenever they entered or left the house.

DID YOU KNOW?
Many Jewish homes today still have a mezuzah. They are often put on the doorpost of every room in a Jewish home. In a similar way, some Christians put a holy water font at doorposts as a reminder of their faith.

The World of Jesus

Chapter 10

Note for teachers:
Learning Outcomes 2.5 and 2.6.

In this chapter you will learn about:

- life in Palestine at the time of Jesus.

You will be able to:

- name the main places in Palestine associated with the life of Jesus
- describe daily life in Palestine at the time of Jesus
- explain the difference between the two groups of Jewish religious leaders at the time of Jesus.

KEYWORDS

Mezuzah | Gentile | Sadducees | Pharisees

ICE-BREAKER

Country Quiz

- What is the name of the current Taoiseach?
- What is the name of the current President of Ireland?
- Can you name another country that ruled Ireland in the past?
- How many provinces are there in Ireland? Can you name them?
- What are the two official languages in Ireland?

The Republic of Ireland is a **democracy**. That means that the people of Ireland get to vote for their leaders. The Taoiseach is the political leader in Ireland and the President is the head of state. They are both voted for by the people.

In this chapter, we will learn about the geography, the culture and the leaders of the country that Jesus lived in.

Where did Jesus live?

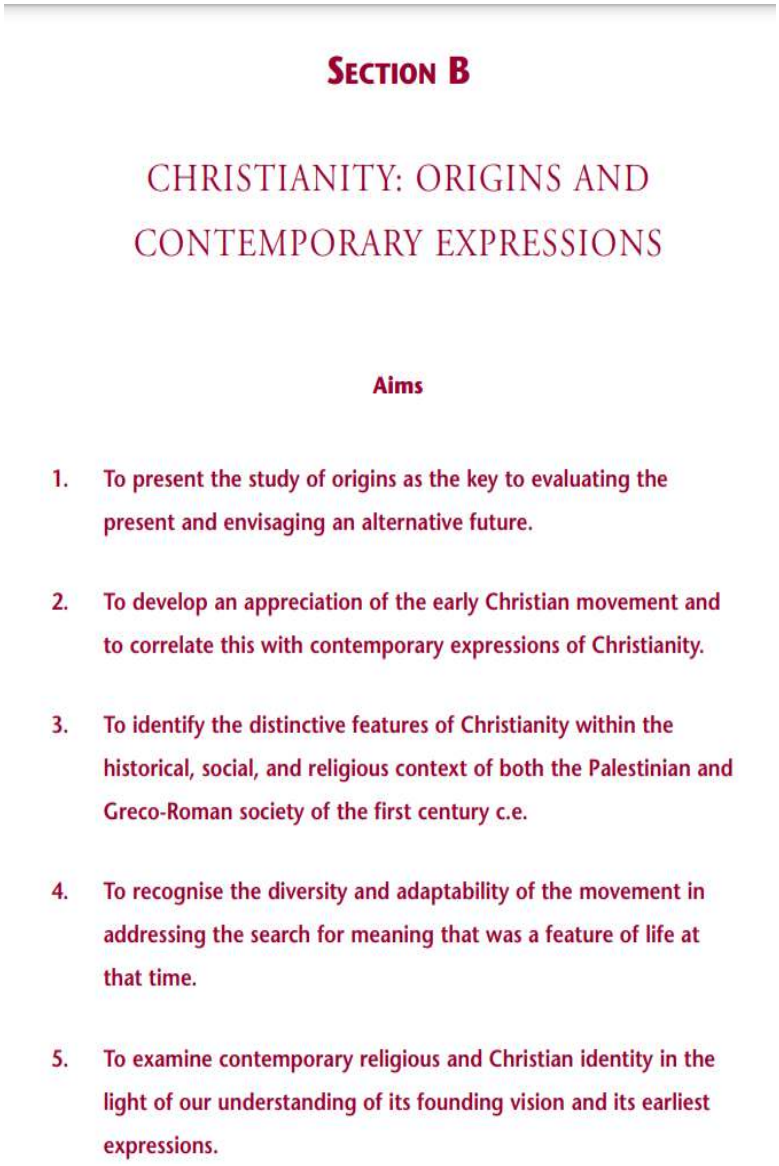
The country where Jesus lived has many names – the land of Canaan, the Promised Land, Israel and the Holy Land. When Jesus was alive it was called **Palestine**.

DID YOU KNOW?
Ireland is about four times bigger than the Holy Land.

6. **Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus. National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2003). Link**

   As with the previous example, the official syllabus for the religious leaving certificate, published by the NCCA and the Department of Education and Science in 2003, states that its aim is *"to identify the distinctive features of Christianity within the historical, social and religious context of both the Palestinian and the Greco-Roman society of the first century CE."*

   The term "Palestinian society" is not an appropriate or accurate descriptor for the context of early Christianity in the first century CE. A more precise term, such as Judean or Jewish society, should be used to reflect the historical and cultural realities of the time. This will ensure that students gain an accurate and nuanced understanding of the origins and development of early Christianity and are not presented in any way with concepts that undermine the legitimacy of Israel.



SECTION B

CHRISTIANITY: ORIGINS AND CONTEMPORARY EXPRESSIONS

Aims

1. To present the study of origins as the key to evaluating the present and envisaging an alternative future.
2. To develop an appreciation of the early Christian movement and to correlate this with contemporary expressions of Christianity.
3. To identify the distinctive features of Christianity within the historical, social, and religious context of both the Palestinian and Greco-Roman society of the first century c.e.
4. To recognise the diversity and adaptability of the movement in addressing the search for meaning that was a feature of life at that time.
5. To examine contemporary religious and Christian identity in the light of our understanding of its founding vision and its earliest expressions.

7. ***Call to Action*. Junior cycle civic Social and political education. 7th-9th class. By Gearoid O'Brian. Gill Education (2022), page 119-129**

This chapter provides six exercises designed to explore key aspects of the Palestinian reality, from 1947 to the present. The exercises aim to engage students in an understanding of the historical, social and political challenges faced by Palestinians.

Through these activities, students are encouraged to examine the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and consider possible outcomes for the future. The exercises include:

1. *'Shrinking Palestine'* – An exercise demonstrating how the land inhabited by Palestinians has shrunk throughout the years, using a widely-discredited depiction of Palestinian territorial loss by inaccurate and misleading maps.
2. A comparison exercise between photos of Israel and Palestine, asking students to mark which picture depicts Israel and which depicts Palestine.
3. The Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory in facts and figures.
4. A case study about the push for the demolition of a Bedouin village.
5. A case study about a family who had been attacked by Israeli settlers.
6. An exercise asking students to predict the probable future of Palestinian children living in the occupied territories and propose solutions to enable a desired future.

The core issue with the textbook's portrayal of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Lessons 29 and 30 is the unfair and inaccurate framing of Israel as the sole aggressor and actor responsible for the conflict. This approach fails to acknowledge the agency of the Palestinian leadership, and neighboring Arab states, whose actions have similarly shaped the ongoing situation. Consequently, through omitting significant roles and key players, lessons present a distorted and incomplete perspective on the conflict.

For example, ignoring the Arab rejection of the UN partition plan, and subsequent declaration of war on the nascent state of Israel, leaves students unaware of the existential threat Israel continually faces. This narrative could lead students to foster negative feelings towards a seemingly powerful and needlessly aggressive nation, and sympathy for the peaceful Palestinian underdog. These sweeping generalizations of both Israelis and Palestinians is a largely inaccurate and unnuanced understanding of the reality, caused by partial story-telling.

A more detailed look at historical omissions highlights the severity of this imbalance. Regarding the Six-Day War, the textbook fails to mention that Egypt, Jordan, and Syria had massed their armies along Israel's borders and made repeated threats of annihilation prior to Israel's preemptive strike. Without including this crucial context, the strike suggests that Israel, unprompted, declared war to expand its territory.

Similarly, the textbook oversimplifies the issue of Palestinian refugees, neglecting to clarify that the 5 million UN-recognized refugees are mainly descendants of the original refugees, rather than individuals who directly fled their homes. This crucial distinction overlooks the fact that this is the only case in international law where refugee status is inherited through generations. As a result, the refugee crisis is portrayed as ongoing and substantial, while under normal international law, most of these 5 million people would not be considered refugees.

Lastly, the textbook ignores Israel's repeated peace offers, such as the proposals during the Camp David Summit in 2000 or the Taba negotiations in 2001. Israel made significant concessions, including land swaps and agreement for the establishment of a Palestinian state. The rejection of these offers by the Palestinian leadership is contextually crucial, and changes the portrayal of Israel from warmongering towards peace-making. The above examples are key instances where the omission of detail has led to disastrously inaccurate presentations of Israel, disregarding the complexities of the conflict. By excluding military provocations leading to Israeli strikes in 1967, the unique status of Palestinian refugees or the Palestinian rejection of Israeli peace settlements, textbooks have presented a skewed and potentially dangerous version of history. Other issues like Israeli settlements, water rights and military control are conveyed as simplistic issues, divided into clear aggressor and victim narratives, further contributing to a selective and unnuanced view of reality.

The narrow focus on Palestinian suffering, without recognizing Israeli challenges, contributes to a one-dimensional view, fostering resentment rather than understanding. It denies students the opportunity to engage with the full scope of historical realities, and prevents them from forming a nuanced understanding of the conflict. The lack of balance suggests an intent, or at least an effect, of promoting a particular prejudiced viewpoint, rather than critical analysis.

After World War I, Britain took over Palestine from the Turkish Ottoman Empire. At the time, Arab Palestinians were the majority and the Jewish population were in the minority. The Jewish population increased during the 1930s when many fled religious persecution in Europe and again in the 1940s after the Holocaust.

In 1947 as British rule was about to end, the UN suggested splitting Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states. Jerusalem would become an international city and would not be the capital of either Israel or the Arab state. Jewish leaders accepted the plan, but it was rejected by Arab Palestinians. In 1948, Jewish Palestinians declared Israeli independence. This led to a war after which Israel controlled most of the territory. Jordan and Egypt took the Palestinian lands of the West Bank and Gaza and Jerusalem was divided between Israel and Jordan.

In the Six Day War in 1967, Israel took control of Gaza and the West Bank. These are known as the Occupied Territories. Many Palestinian refugees fled from the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Israel has never allowed these refugees to return home. Since 1967, Israeli settlers have taken over more and more land in the West Bank. The conflict between Palestine and Israel is still going on.

Picture	Israel or Palestine?	Reason I decided
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

The Israeli occupation of Palestinian Territory in facts and figures

- The Palestinian population in the Occupied Territories is 4.8 million.
- There were 5.6 million Palestinian refugees living outside Palestine as of December 2019.
- There are 630,000 Israeli settlers living in 278 settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.
- Between 2011 and 2021, some 3,572 Palestinians (including 806 children) and 198 Israelis (including 14 children) died as a result of the conflict.
- The GDP per capita of the Occupied Palestinian Territory is US$3,463, compared with US$43,592 in Israel.
- The poverty rate is 36% in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and 64% in Gaza.
- In the Occupied Territories, Palestinian access to water is below the internationally recommended level of 100 litres per capita. Israel controls 85% of Palestinian water sources.
- Some 2 million Palestinians are considered food insecure, including 600,000 in the West Bank and 1.4 million in Gaza.

Kfar Adumim – Khan al-Ahmar

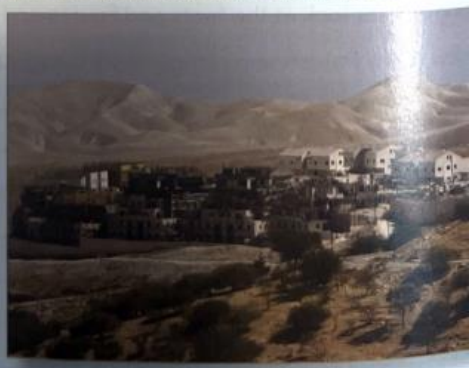
Kfar Adumim is an Israeli settlement 10 km east of Jerusalem where 400 settler families live in modern houses. The settlement was built in 1979, close to several tourist attractions, including the Ein Prat/ Wadi Qelt Nature Reserve.

A short distance from Kfar Adumim is the Bedouin (nomadic Arab) village of Khan al-Ahmar, which is little more than a collection of tin shacks. The village is home to approximately 180 Bedouin, more than half of whom are children, and was established by refugees who were driven out of Israel in 1948. As the Bedouin are Indigenous Peoples (the ethnic group who are native to a place), they enjoy special rights over the land they occupy and the natural resources they use to sustain their traditional livelihoods and way of life.

For years, Israel has been trying to relocate the residents of Khan al-Ahmar against their wishes, to expand settlements in the region. Firstly, they created push factors to make the lives of the Bedouin as difficult as possible:

- By refusing to connect homes to the electricity network.
- By confiscating solar panels.
- By failing to give access to water.
- By rejecting applications for building permits.
- By demolishing homes and animal shelters and threatening further demolitions.
- By restricting access to roads.
- By restricting access to grazing lands.
- By denying people permits to work in settlements
- By failing to protect the community from intim idation and attacks by Israeli settlers.

These push factors have led to violations o many human rights of the people of Khan a Ahmar, including the rights to adequate housin and to an adequate standard of living. The Kfa Adumim settlement has taken almost all the lan the Bedouin used to graze their animals. Th has seriously affected their traditional source o livelihood. Villagers now rely on low-paid season agricultural work elsewhere and hu nitaria relief from the Palestinian authorities. his onl just about covers essential household ex nditure



The Israeli government ordered the demolition of Khan al-Ahmar on the grounds that villagers did not get relevant building permits. The Bedouin fought this through the Israeli courts. However, in 2018, the Supreme Court ruled that demolitions could go ahead. The village is now facing demolition and the forcible transfer of its residents to make way for further illegal settlements. The demolition order includes the village's school, which provides education for some 170 Bedouin children. If implemented, these actions will constitute war crimes, as well as violations of the human rights to adequate housing, education and non-interference with family and home.

Source: Amnesty International

Read the articles and watch the video. Write what you think the probable futures of Palestinian children living in the Occupied Territories will be.

The following stories show the experience of Palestinians living in the West Bank.

At 2 a.m. on Nov. 14, 2013, Ruwaida Dar Khalil was warming a bottle for her baby son in her home in Sinjil in the occupied West Bank when four adult male Israeli settlers broke into the tiny house that she shares with her husband and five children. The men smashed windows with crowbars, before dousing the entrance in gasoline and setting it ablaze.

Ruwaida and her husband, Khaled, had no option but to hide on the roof until help arrived. Sinjil is surrounded on three sides by an Israeli military base and two settlements. Soldiers are a common sight in the neighbourhood, and Ruwaida finds it hard to understand why they didn't come to help her family on the night of the attack.

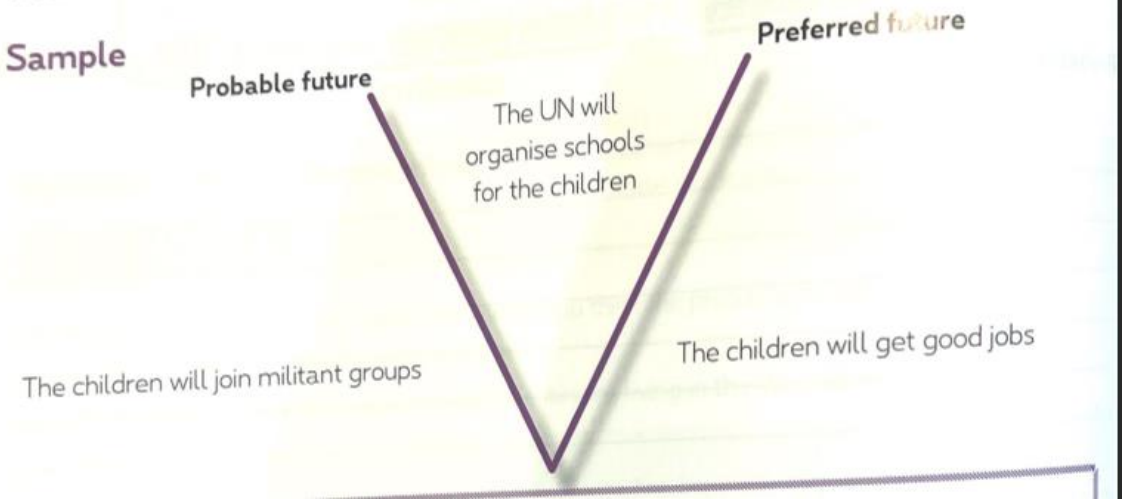
'That night, there were Israeli police officers on the corner … and soldiers usually come to our place every night,' she said. 'But … nobody showed up. Nobody cared. Why didn't anybody come to protect innocent children in this house?'

By the time Palestinian firefighters arrived and put out the fire, the roof had partially collapsed. All five of the children were treated for excessive smoke inhalation following the fire. The next day, Khaled found the words 'Regards from Eden, Revenge!' scrawled in spray paint on an outside wall. The message referred to Eden Attias, an Israeli soldier who had been killed by a Palestinian teenager a day earlier. Acts of violence like this are known as 'price tag' attacks and they are carried out by extremist Israeli settlers against Palestinians as revenge for any action taken against the settlements in the West Bank. This even includes actions by the Israeli government, like demolition orders against unauthorised settlements.

The Dar Khalil children continue to struggle with the after effects of the attack. Three-year-old Nisreen suffers from breathing difficulties and may have to have surgery. Eman struggles to sleep at night and refuses to go to the bathroom alone. She wakes up crying and thinks she hears settlers outside.

Look at the probable futures you chose in Exercise 30A. Write four of them along the diagonal line of the V marked 'Probable future'. Then look at the preferred futures you chose in Exercise 30B and write them along the other diagonal line. See if you can find four that are different to the probable future. Finally, consider what factors are needed to change the probable futures to the preferred futures. Write these factors in the centre of the V. See the sample below.

Sample



Conclusion

The review of Irish school books highlights several worrisome trends in the representation of the Holocaust, Israel, and Judaism.

1. Trivialization of the Holocaust: Misleading labels, such as referring to Auschwitz as a "prisoner of war camp," downplay its role as a site of mass extermination. Descriptions fail to convey the industrialized genocide of six million Jews, leading to a diluted understanding of this historical atrocity.

2. Misrepresentation of Israel: Narratives may imply that Israel does not fulfill its moral obligations, undermining its legitimacy and oversimplifying the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For example, a discussion around the Good Samaritan story frames Israel's actions in a negative light, suggesting a lack of compassion towards others. Additionally, the concept of the covenant is presented in a way that questions Israel's adherence to its moral and ethical commitments. This framing can lead students to perceive Israel as morally deficient, neglecting the historical and political context of its actions. Furthermore, some narratives shift the discussion from religious topics concerning Jews to political issues concerning Israel. This is concerning, as the implied criticism of Israel may be unconsciously perceived as a criticism of Jews, blurring the lines between religious and political critique.

3. Oversimplification and Delegitimization: Historical references to Jesus living in "Palestine" without appropriate context can contribute to narratives that challenge Israel's legitimacy and undermine the Jewish historical connection to the land. Case studies portraying Israeli soldiers as aggressors lack the needed historical and political context, reinforcing biased views against Israel. Additionally, discussions prompting students to apply the “just war” concept to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict may suggest that a war against Israel by Palestinians could be perceived as just. This is particularly dangerous given the atrocities carried out by Hamas in their attack against Israel on October 7, 2023.

4. Misrepresentation and Bias Against Judaism: Positive values such as compassion and justice are illustrated through other religions, with Judaism being less represented. This exclusion can create a biased understanding of moral and ethical teachings across different religions. For instance, negative depictions of traditional Jews, such as those who "didn’t like Jesus," foster harmful stereotypes and subconscious biases in young children. Furthermore, Judaism is sometimes inaccurately portrayed as advocating violence to achieve justice, ignoring the diverse teachings in Jewish texts that promote peace and moral values. This portrayal contrasts with those of other religions, which are depicted as inherently peaceful; this furthers a negative stereotype of Judaism and Jews.

Policy Recommendations

Textbook Authors, Educators, and Policy Makers

To enhance the accuracy, inclusivity, and respectfulness of educational materials, we propose the following recommendations for the NCCA, textbook publishers, and schools. These measures aim to address and rectify the identified biases and misrepresentations in the curriculum.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

1. Revise Historical References: Ensure that references to Jesus's life accurately reflect the historical context. Instead of using terms like "Palestine," which may carry modern political connotations, use historically accurate terms such as "Judea" or "Galilee" to prevent misunderstandings and maintain historical integrity.

2. Implement Proofreading and Approval Mechanisms: Establish an effective proofreading mechanism for educational materials that touch on sensitive topics such as other religions and politically charged issues. It should involve a panel of experts in history, religious studies, and political science to ensure balanced and accurate representations.

Textbook Publishers

1. Consultation with Experts: Although this is already part of the process, we propose that for books touching on topics related to non-Christian religions or politically sensitive subjects, publishers should seek advice from official figures within the respective religious communities or academic researchers specializing in those areas. This will help ensure that the content is accurate, respectful, and inclusive.

2. Diverse Representation: Ensure that positive values like compassion and justice are illustrated through examples from a diverse range of religions, including Judaism, to avoid bias and to promote a comprehensive understanding of moral and ethical teachings.

3. Irish textbooks should teach the life of Jesus through the prism of the shared roots of Christianity and Judaism, and recognize the historic persecution of Jewish people at the hands of the Catholic Church. Additionally, the Vatican's present-day efforts to repair interfaith relations and combat antisemitic dogma, including the accusation of Jewish deicide should be noted. Religious teaching should remain divorced from politics and teachings which may inspire prejudice of non-Christians, including Jews and Israelis, and focus on commonalities and opportunities for dialogue.

Schools

1. Feedback Mechanisms for Parents and Students:

    - Create a system for collecting feedback from parents and students regarding the content of textbooks. This system should allow for the reporting of any perceived biases or inaccuracies.

    - Establish a formal feedback loop with publishers to address concerns raised by parents

and students. This will ensure that problematic content can be reviewed and revised in future editions of textbooks.

2. Inclusive Education Training: Provide training for educators on inclusive education practices. This training should focus on fostering an environment of tolerance and respect for all religions and cultures, ensuring that all students feel represented and valued in the educational materials used.

By implementing these recommendations, the NCCA, textbook publishers, and schools can work together to ensure that educational materials are balanced, accurate, and promote a respectful understanding of all religions and cultures. This will help foster an inclusive educational environment that respects diversity and encourages mutual understanding among students.

Methodology

IMPACT-se applies methodological standards which are based on UNESCO and UN declarations, and international recommendations and documents on education for peace and tolerance (see notes). Our methodology is designed to consider every detail within the textbooks; it does not paraphrase, rely on interpretations, or attempt to illustrate preconceived notions.

The following is an updated, condensed version of the IMPACT-se UNESCO-derived standards for peace and tolerance in school education:

1 **RESPECT**

The curriculum should promote tolerance, understanding and respect toward the "Other," his or her culture, achievements, values and way of life.[32]

2 **INDIVIDUAL OTHER**

The curriculum should foster personal attachment toward the "Other" as an individual, his or her desire to be familiar, loved and appreciated.[33]

NO HATE

3 The curriculum should be free of wording, imagery and ideologies likely to create prejudices, misconceptions, stereotypes, misunderstandings, mistrust, racial hatred, religious bigotry and national hatred, as well as any other form of hatred or contempt for other groups or peoples.[34]

4 **NO INCITEMENT**

The curriculum should be free of language, content, and imagery that disseminate ideas or theories which justify or promote acts and expressions of violence, incitement to violence, hostility, harm and hatred toward other national, ethnic, racial or religious groups.[4]

PEACEMAKING

5 The curriculum should develop capabilities for non-violent conflict resolution and promote peace.[36]

[32] As defined in the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance Proclaimed and signed by Member States of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Articles 1, 4.2. See also the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding Between Peoples (1965), Principles I, III. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. Based also on UN Security Council Resolution 2686 on "Tolerance and International Peace and Security" (unanimously adopted June 14, 2023), which urges Member States to promote tolerance and peaceful coexistence through education, consider interreligious and intercultural dialogue as means of achieving it, and publicly condemn violence, hate speech and extremism to prevent the spread of intolerant ideology and incitement to hatred and discrimination based on race, sex, ethnicity or religion or belief (including Islamophobia, antisemitism or Christianophobia). See specifically Article 6: reaffirming States' obligation to respect, promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of all individuals.

[33] The goal of education for peace is the development of universally recognized values in an individual, regardless of different socio-cultural contexts. See Ibid., Article 6. See also, on exchanges between youth, the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965), Principles IV, V.

[34] Ibid., and based on Articles III.6, IV.7 and VII.39; and on the Integrated Framework for Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, approved by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-eighth session, Paris, November 1995, Article 18.2.

[35] As defined in Article 4 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2106 (XX) on December 21, 1965. See also Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2200A (XXI) on December 16, 1966.

[36] Based on the Integrated Framework for Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, approved by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-eighth session, Paris, November 1995, Article 9; and on the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Article 5.

6 UNBIASED INFORMATION

Educational materials (textbooks, workbooks, teachers' guides, maps, illustrations, aids) should be up-to-date, accurate, complete, balanced and unprejudiced, and use equal standards to promote mutual knowledge and understanding between different peoples.[37]

7 GENDER IDENTITY AND REPRESENTATION

The curriculum should foster equality, mutual respect, and should aim for equal representation between individuals regardless of their gender identity. It should also refrain from language, content, and imagery that depicts limiting and/or exclusionary gender roles.[38]

8 SEXUAL ORIENTATION

The curriculum should be free of language, content, and imagery that promulgates violence or discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.[39]

9 SOUND PROSPERITY and COOPERATION:

The curriculum should educate for sound and sustainable economic conduct and preservation of the environment for future generations. It should encourage regional and local cooperation to that effect.[40]

[37] Based on UNESCO recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, adopted by the General Conference at its eighteenth session, Paris, November 19, 1974, Article V.14.

[38] The preamble to the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, notes the Convention on the Elimination of Any Form of Discrimination against Women and emphasizes respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to gender.

39 Based on Resolutions 32/2 (adopted June 30, 2016) and 17/19 (adopted July 14, 2011) of the UN Human Rights Council, and numerous UN General Assembly resolutions expressing concern and condemnation of laws and practices around the world which target individuals based on their gender identity and/or sexual orientation for discrimination, violence, and even extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions—all of which contradict the most basic principles of the UN and have no place in education.

[40] Based on UNESCO recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, adopted by the General Conference at its eighteenth session, Paris, November 19, 1974, Articles III.6, and IV.7. On the imperative for developing "systematic and rational tolerance teaching methods that will address the cultural, social, economic, political and religious sources of intolerance," see the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Article 4.2. On education for international cooperation, see also the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965), Principle II.

List of Textbooks

Below are the books examined as part of the research:

1. *Faith Seeking Understanding*. Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus. Section A: The search for meaning and values - 2nd new edition. 11th & 12th Class. By Kate Liffey & Lir Mac Cárthaigh & Siobhan O'Donoghue. Veritas (2022)
1. *Faith Seeking Understanding*. Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus Unit 2. Section B: Christianity: Origins and Contemporary Expressions. 11th & 12th Class. By Paula Goggin and Colette McCarthy-Dineen. Veritas (2005)
2. *Faith Seeking Understanding*. Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus Unit 2. Section C: World Religions. 11th & 12th Class. By Ellen Moiselle. Veritas (2005)
3. *Faith Seeking Understanding*. Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus Unit 2. Section D: Moral Decision Making. 11th & 12th Class. By Fr Donal O'Neill. Veritas (2005)
4. *Faith Seeking Understanding*. Section F: Issues of Justice & Peace. Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus. Section F. 11th & 12th Class. By Barbara Raftery. Veritas (2006)
5. *Faith Seeking Understanding*, Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus. Section I: Religion: The Irish Experience. 11th & 12th Class. By Tom Gunning. Veritas (2006)
6. *Life Matters* - Senior Cycle Religious Education. 11th & 12th Class. By Niall Boyle. Mentor Books (2014)
7. *Time to Journey.* Religion for Senior Cycle Students. 11th & 12th Class. By Claire Breen & Fiona Hedderman. Gill Education (2014)
8. *Inspire - Wisdom of the World*. Junior Cycle Religious Education. 7th-9th Class. By Michael Purcell & Ailís Travers, Educate.ie (2020). e-book
9. *Grow in Love*, Primary 1, Junior Infants. Veritas (2015)
10. *Grow in Love*, Primary 4, 2nd Class. Veritas (2016)
11. *Grow in Love*, Primary 5, 3rd Class. Veritas (2017)
12. *Grow in Love*, Primary 7, 5th Class. Veritas (2018)
13. *Dictatorship and Democracy 1920-1945*, 2nd Edition. Leaving Certificate History. 11th & 12th class. By Stephen Tonge. Edco (2017)
14. *Case Studies: Dictatorship and Democracy 1920-1945*. Leaving Certificate History. 11th & 12th class. By Stephen Tonge. Edco (2022)
15. *Dictatorship and Democracy 1920-1945*. Leaving Certificate History. 11th & 12th class.By Sean Delap. Folens (2004)
16. *Leaving certificate Religious Education Syllabus*, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2003). Syllabus