**Trinity: 3 is the magic number**

**Title:** Trinity  
**Key Concept:** Trinity  
**Religion:** Christianity  
**Key Question:** How have Christians expressed their belief in the Trinity through art?  
**Duration:** approx 6 lessons

**Back Story**  
Although the term “Trinity” is not actually used in the Bible,  
[http://www.christianity.co.nz/trinity6.htm](http://www.christianity.co.nz/trinity6.htm) shows how many verses in the Bible relate to 3 persons. Trinity is the name given to the statements of God used in the Creed and a summary of the use of the early church of the saying that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the teaching of Jesus and the New Testament as a whole. Jesus directs us to baptise in name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19). Judaism and Islamic teaching share the Christian belief in one God but only Christianity follows the New Testament teaching of God as the Father as well as the creator of the world, but also as the Son who came into this world, and as the Spirit who lives and works on Earth from the lives of the prophets of the Old Testament right up to influencing Christian lives in the present day (both famous saints and our own). The church carefully worked out and worded the statement of belief in the Trinity found in the Creed in order to uphold the New Testament against false beliefs.

The Trinity is not: Three individuals who together make one God OR Three Gods joined together OR Three properties of God

**Resources you will need:** web links in text: Weblinks to Rublev’s icon, printed copies of pictures of the icon, icons … prepared pieces of wood, card or canvases of a suitable size to make an icon for each child/group.

**Children’s Previous Experience:** To be completed by the teacher before teaching this unit: Children might have experience of Baptism and the story of Jesus’ baptism, the story of Pentecost from assemblies, the story of the creation form KS1.

**Potential Cross Curricular links:** Art, Literacy

**Glossary of Terms:** Trinity  Icon  Father, Son, Holy Spirit

Take care
# Christian Concepts Unpacked: Trinity

## Learning Intentions

### Engagement

| Listen to/watch [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iL659ziEyT8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iL659ziEyT8) Three is a magic number. Many concepts and ideas come in threes e.g. solid, liquid, gas; mother, father, child. Can children remember/add examples? Children record by writing on triangles on paper – ideas around edges. Remind children that 3 is an important number for Christians; elicit idea of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. |

### Enquiry

**Read the Bible references to the different aspects of the Trinity.**

John 1

“**Before the world began, the Word was there. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was there with God in the beginning. Everything was made through him, and nothing was made without him. In him there was life, and that life was a light for the people of the world. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not defeated it. The Word became a man and lived among us. We saw his divine greatness—the greatness that belongs to the only Son of the Father.”**

Compare to:

Genesis 1

*God created the sky and the earth. At first, the earth was completely empty. There was nothing on the earth. Darkness covered the ocean, and God’s Spirit moved over the water.*

If necessary, link ‘God’s spirit’ and ‘the Word’.

What does this tell us about what Christians believe about the nature of God?

Look at the story of Jesus’ baptism – 3 aspects of trinity all manifest at the same time – look at artistic representations of three aspects and identify each. How has the artist depicted God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit? Use copies of the pictures and divide the class into three groups, firstly to say what they think is happening, then, after teacher input if necessary, looking at the pictures specifically to identify the representations of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Each group then presents their views on challenging questions about meaning and truth. Applying their own ideas thoughtfully and respectfully.
Symbolism: God the Father is often shown in art as light or a cloud, as well as (more rarely) a figure; the story specifically says that the Holy Spirit was in the form of a dove.

How do Christians express this belief?

There are references to the Trinity in the Creed, said regularly in Christian services:

The word ‘creed’ comes from the Latin ‘credo’ – I believe.

“I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son Our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into Hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Amen.”

Activity: Read through the Creed and discuss unfamiliar words/concepts. Children could write a list of questions which arise when reading it (to which you can return as an evaluation activity). Identify which part of the creed shows the belief in the Trinity.

Alternatively listen to and read the lyrics of the Hymn: ‘We believe (in God the farther) by Graham Kendrick

How have Christians used art to express their belief in the Trinity?

Look at Rublev’s icon of the Trinity, believed to be created by Russian painter Andrei Rubley in the 15th century.
Questions to discuss:
The faces are identical – what does that tell us about the three figures?
Investigate use of colour in icon – Holy Spirit – in blue for heaven and green for new life, Jesus – blue for heaven, brown for earth, gold for king, God – blue for heaven, transparent robe over the top, to symbolize that God can’t be seen
They are turned towards viewer – you are part of the relationship

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluate</th>
<th>Expression</th>
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<td>Evaluation: Write ‘kennings’ to show your understanding about the nature of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Evaluation: Select one or more of the questions raised by the discussion about the Creed and ask the children to suggest possible answers, then to suggest what a Christian might answer. Eg What do they mean by ‘he rose again from the dead’?</td>
<td>Design and make an icon which would show what you understand about the Christian belief in the Trinity. Make own icon. Children think what symbols they can use to indicate which of the three figures are which, how they will use colour and whether all will be figures or whether they will use a different symbol for one or more of the elements of the Trinity. Notes on icons to share with children: <a href="http://www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools/collective_worship/pdf/notesforicons.pdf">http://www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools/collective_worship/pdf/notesforicons.pdf</a> This could be done individually, after investigating iconographers and the way they work, using prepared wood Notes on making icons in the classroom: <a href="http://www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools/collective_worship/pdf/CreatingIconsInTheClassroom.pdf">http://www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools/collective_worship/pdf/CreatingIconsInTheClassroom.pdf</a></td>
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**Assessment activities**

- Write Kennings
- Design an Icon
- Ask questions about the creed.

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<th>I can statements</th>
<th>Self assessment</th>
<th>Peer Assessment</th>
<th>Teacher assessment</th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>AT1 Strand A Beliefs, teaching and sources</strong></td>
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<td>Level 2: Say some things that Christians believe.</td>
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<td>Write kennings about the three persons of the Trinity showing some of the aspects of the Trinity.</td>
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<td>Level 3: use religious words to describe some</td>
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<td>Christian beliefs; Write kennings about the three persons of the Trinity showing the three separate ‘roles’.</td>
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<td>Level 4: express religious beliefs in a range of styles</td>
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<td>and words used by believers and suggest what they mean; Write kennings about the three persons of the Trinity showing the three separate ‘roles’, using words and phrases to show the importance of each aspect to Christians.</td>
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<td>Level 2: say what some Christian symbols stand for: Design an icon to show the three aspects of the Trinity.</td>
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<td>Level 3: use religious words to describe some of the different ways in which people show their beliefs: Design an icon to show the three aspects of the Trinity, using Christian symbols for each aspect.</td>
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<td>Level 4: express religious beliefs in a range of styles and words used by believers and suggest what they mean: Design an icon to show the three aspects of the Trinity, using Christian symbols for each aspect and following some of the conventions for making icons.</td>
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<td>Level 5: express religious beliefs in a range of styles and words used by believers and suggest what they mean: Design an icon to show the three aspects of the Trinity, using Christian symbols for each aspect, explaining how they have followed some of the conventions for making icons.</td>
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<td>Level 3: Ask important questions about life and compare my answers to those of other people; Ask questions about aspects of the Creed which are puzzling or surprising and give their view. How might a Christian answer this?</td>
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**Level 4:** Ask important questions about life and suggest a range of answers; Ask questions about aspects of the Creed which are puzzling or surprising and give different suggestions. How might a Christian answer this?

**Level 5:** Ask important questions about life and suggest answers which relate to the search for truth in their own and others’ lives; Ask questions about aspects of the Creed which are puzzling or surprising and give their view. How might a Christian answer this? Relate this to questions about what is ‘true’.