

TEACHER GUIDE:

Examining Similarities and Differences



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The Task

STUDENTS ARE ASKED TO:

- 01 Identify and explain similarities between two religions in their beliefs, teachings, practices, and perspectives.
- 02 Identify and explain differences between two religion in the same area.
- 03 Identify and explain similarities between each religion and non-religious perspective.
- 04 Identify and explain differences between each religion and non-religious perspective.



This requires students to compare systematically, keep track of categories (beliefs, teachings, practices, perspectives), and present their ideas with accuracy and clarity.

The Core Skills to Teach

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|--|---|
| <p>01 CATEGORISATION</p> <p>Separating beliefs, teachings, practices, and perspectives to avoid muddled comparison.</p> | <p>02 COMPARISON</p> <p>Identifying both similarities <u>and</u> differences, not just one or the other.</p> |
| <p>03 BALANCING DETAIL</p> <p>Including enough depth (key terms, examples, quotes) without overloading.</p> | <p>04 CLEAR WRITING</p> <p>Using comparative language (similarly, in contrast, whereas) to signpost differences and links.</p> |

Step-by-Step Teaching Ideas



1 Sorting into Categories

- **Explanation:** Students often mix up beliefs, teachings, and practices. Clear categories help structure comparisons.
- **Teaching Idea:**
 - Give students a set of cards with examples (e.g. “Hindus believe in karma”, “Christians practice baptism”, “Humanism use reason not faith”).
 - Ask them to sort into: Beliefs / Teachings / Practices / Perspectives.
 - Highlight how belief (idea), teaching (authoritative source), practice (action), and perspective (overall stance) differ.

2 Identifying Similarities

- **Explanation:** Students may assume religions are entirely different, but examiners reward recognition of overlap.
- **Teaching Idea:**
 - Venn diagram task: put Religion A on one side, Religion B on the other, and note similarities in the overlap.
 - Teacher model: “Christians and Muslims both believe in life after death (similarity), but Christians emphasise salvation through Christ where as Muslims emphasise judgement by Allah (difference).”

3 Identifying Differences

- **Explanation:** It is not enough to just list differences - students must explain them with examples.
- **Teaching Idea:**
 - Comparison sentence frames:
 - “While [Religion A] teaches..., [Religion B] teaches...”
 - “[Religion A] shows this in practice through..., whereas [Religion B] shows it through...”
 - Peer exercise: one student writes a similarity, the partners has to “flip it” into a difference.

Step-by-Step Teaching Ideas



- ## 4 Bringing in Non-Religious Perspectives
- **Explanation:** Students often stop at religious comparisons. They need to bring in Humanist, atheist, or secular ideas too.
 - **Teaching Idea:**
 - Provide a “perspectives bank” (Humanism, science, utilitarian ethics).
 - Small group role play: Group 1 = Religion A, Group 2 = Religion B, Group 3 = Humanists. Each explains their stance, then whole class discusses where views overlap and differ.

- ## 5 Structuring the Comparison
- **Explanation:** Without structure, students may jump between points. A clear comparison framework helps.
 - **Teaching Idea:**
 - Teach the “4-box grid”:
 - Students, fill in, then turn notes into connected paragraphs using linking phrases.

	Religion A	Religion B	Non-Religious Perspective
Beliefs/Teachings			
Practices			
Similarities			
Differences			

- ## 6 Using Comparative Language
- **Explanation:** Students need to move beyond lists by signalling similarities/differences clearly.
 - **Teaching Idea:**
 - Provide a word bank: “similarly”, “both”, “whereas”, “in contrast”, “however”.
 - Sentence drill: give half finished sentences for students to complete, e.g.:
 - “Both [Religion A] and [Religion B] teach that..., however...”
 - “[Religion A] differs from [Religion B] because...”

Step-by-Step Teaching Ideas



7 Writing with Clarity and Neutrality

- **Explanation:** Students must avoid bias (“wrong/right”) and keep a descriptive tone.
- **Teaching Idea:**
 - Show side-by-side examples:
 - “Atheists don’t believe in God so they are against religion.”
 - “Atheists reject belief in God and often argue that morality can be grounded in reason rather than faith.”
 - Quick-fire rewrite exercise: students rephrase biased statements into neutral comparative ones.

Teacher Reminders

- Keep comparison balanced: every similarity should ideally be matched with at least one difference.
- Encourage students to explain (with examples/quotes), not just list.
- Encourage structured notes (grids, diagrams) before writing full answers.
- Reinforce neutrality - this is descriptive comparison, not evaluation or personal opinion.