

Sacred Spaces: A Journey with Ellie

Learning objective: To identify and explain the significance of key features and practices within different places of worship.

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions using evidence from the text. For the extension task, provide detailed reasoning to demonstrate your understanding.

Ellie the elephant, with her incredible memory for history, loves visiting places of worship. She explains that these buildings are far more than just bricks and mortar; they are centres of community, peace, and spiritual reflection. In a church, you might notice an altar and stained-glass windows that tell ancient stories. A mosque often features a mihrab, a niche indicating the direction of Mecca, and beautiful, intricate geometric patterns that represent the infinite nature of the Divine. Meanwhile, a synagogue houses the Torah scrolls within an ark, serving as the heart of the Jewish faith. Despite their different architectural styles, these spaces all share a common purpose: providing a sanctuary for people to express their devotion. Whether it is the quiet flickering of a candle or the rhythmic sound of chanting, every detail is designed to help visitors feel a sense of reverence. Ellie notes that while the rituals differ, the human need for connection and reflection remains universal. By respecting these sacred spaces, we learn about the diverse beliefs that shape our world, fostering a greater understanding of our neighbours and their traditions.

Word bank: sanctuary · reverence · architecture · denomination · communal · devotion

1. According to Ellie, what specific feature in a mosque helps people identify the direction of Mecca? (2 marks)

2. What is stored inside the ark within a synagogue? (2 marks)

3. Explain why the author describes places of worship as 'more than just bricks and mortar'. (3 marks)

4. What might happen if a place of worship did not have a dedicated space for quiet reflection or prayer? (3 marks)

5. Ellie says that places of worship help us understand our neighbours. Justify why visiting different religious buildings could be beneficial for a local community. (4 marks)

Draw: Draw a place of worship that combines features from different traditions, such as stained glass, geometric patterns, and symbols of peace, illustrating how architecture can represent unity.



Extension challenge: Compare and contrast two different places of worship you have studied. Justify why certain architectural features are considered essential to the function of these buildings. What challenges might a religious group face if they had to move their place of worship to a completely new environment?