

# difference.

for Primary  
Schools



## Course overview

**RLN** DIFFERENCE IS A PART OF THE  
RECONCILING LEADERS NETWORK





## About

We live in a messy, hurting, and divided world. For children growing up and working out who they are, it can be especially hard to know how to handle conflict, difference, fear of saying the wrong thing, and the ups and downs of friendships.

Children and young people need the opportunity and support to build good relationships with themselves, their peers, and the world around them. Through *Difference*, pupils will develop formational habits to encounter others well and navigate difficult situations. By participating in this programme, they will gain the tools and skills to engage constructively and respectfully to build a flourishing and welcoming school community.

## Key stages

*Difference* for Primary Schools has five sets of resources – one for each key stage. These course materials have been developed with education experts and school practitioners.

We are delighted that schools around the world are using these resources – please use the age ranges below as guidance for your context.



### Early Years Foundation Stage

3-5 years old (Nursery and Reception)

### Key Stage 1

5-7 years old

### Lower Key Stage 2

7-9 years old

### Upper Key Stage 2

9-11 years old

### Transition

10-12 years old

In our diverse classroom contexts, it is important to recognise how worldviews can impact how pupils think, believe, feel, and act. The *Difference* course is rooted in Christian principles and is thoughtfully designed to speak to universal values, such as compassion, empathy, interconnectedness, forgiveness, belonging, and hospitality.

These values ensure that the content is inclusive and relevant to all pupils. Recognising the influence of different worldviews helps us create a more empathetic and supportive learning environment. The resources include optional prayers along with alternative reflections for the diversity of needs and beliefs of your pupils.



# Sessions

With the exception of the Nursery materials, the *Difference* course for primary schools has six sessions:

## 1 Introduction

In complex and divided times, we can develop habits that help us to relate better to others and work towards building just and flourishing communities.

## 2 Crossing Divides

Sometimes our own assumptions or prejudices divide us from others. We can challenge these assumptions by being curious about the lives of those we don't know.

## 3 Navigating Disagreement

It is possible to have good relationships even when we disagree. Instead of being afraid of disagreement, we can develop empathy for those we disagree with, learning to see things from the other's point of view.

## 4 Pursuing Justice

Justice is an important part of peacemaking. We are invited to recognise that the world is not as it should be and to join with others to pursue just and flourishing communities to change the world around us.

## 5 Practising Forgiveness

Taking steps towards forgiveness can be complex but transformative. Having recognised a hurt, we can begin to see if a better relationship is possible in the future.

## 6 Belonging Together

We flourish when we recognise our interconnectedness and the unique value we each have.

# Sessions contain the following elements:



## Film

Suggested videos to explore with pupils, encouraging meaningful discussions around key themes and habits.



## Song

Songs are included to help pupils connect with the themes, remember key messages, and express their learning in creative and joyful ways – including the *Difference* song.



## Children's literature

Stories that connect to the session theme to aid exploration and discussion.



## Slides

A slide deck for every session, with images, videos, and discussion questions included.



## Activity

Guidance for activities is provided, along with key discussion questions to link activities to the learning.



## Bible

Biblical passages and stories are offered for those who wish to explore the session themes from a Christian perspective.



## Prayer and reflection

Prayers and reflections to read with your pupils, or to put into your own words.



# Difference teaches three habits

*Difference* introduces three formational habits that can shape how we navigate everyday relationships. Rooted in the wisdom of experienced peacemakers and inspired by Jesus' encounters in the New Testament, these habits equip and encourage children in a fractured and fragile world.

Our habits matter. Research estimates that 45% of our daily actions are habitual<sup>1</sup> and neuroscientists have estimated that up to 95% of our behaviours are controlled – at least in part – by the subconscious mind.<sup>2</sup> This suggests a close connection between what we believe and what we do. If we can shape our habits, we will develop practices that have a deep and lasting impact on our actions, our thoughts and our character.

## The three habits are:



Be Curious



Be Present



Reimagine

These habits are deeply interconnected and can be used flexibly, there is no correct order – they strengthen and support each other.

## Let's take a closer look at the three habits →

<sup>1</sup> David T. Neal, Wendy Wood, and Jeffrey M. Quinn, 'Habits – A Repeat Performance', Duke University, 2006

<sup>2</sup> e.g. Lakoff and Johnson 1999, in Martin 2008



**Be Curious  
Community**

Listen well

Take an interest

Find out more

Ask respectful questions

*"God created human beings, making them  
to be like himself." Genesis 1:27a (GNB)*

**Listen to others' stories and see the world through  
their eyes.**

In Genesis 1, we read that every person is made in the image of God, with value and a unique story of deep worth. When we are curious enough to discover a person's story, we affirm their innate value.

When a person feels seen, heard, and respected, it enables trust to grow and deeper conversations to become possible. Demonstrating a genuine interest in who another person is and how they experience the world can open a door to navigating more challenging territory together.

Curiosity about the other also invites us to stretch beyond the borders of our own experiences. Adopting a posture of enquiry and wonder cultivates humility, where we acknowledge that we don't have all the answers, while still valuing the experience and insights we do offer.

Being curious enables pupils to build community. The word community comes from ideas of shared belonging and unity. This concept will be explored through specific examples to help pupils better understand how context – geographic, historical, cultural, etc. – impacts what it means to live, believe, and think as a member of a global community.

## Habits progression

**EYFS  
(3-5 years old)**

We are all  
different, but  
together we are  
stronger

We are all  
different and we  
are all connected  
– we need to  
honour each  
other

We are  
stronger when  
we celebrate  
and value our  
differences

It takes time,  
commitment,  
and patience to  
get to know each  
other better

Umunthu  
– I belong,  
therefore I am

**Transition  
(10-12 years old)**





## Be Present Embrace

Show up

Stick around

Listen well

*"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." John 1:14a (NIV)*

### Encounter others with authenticity and confidence.

It is often in our encounters with others that we notice complexity, divisions, and differences in human relationships. Such encounters are at the heart of many of Jesus' teachings.

Being present with others means more than just being there physically. It means being fully present – showing up and sticking around, making time for the other, giving them our full attention, and meeting them as they truly are.

The Christian faith teaches that God became human and chose to be part of a hurting world. God's response to injustice and hurt was to step into the reality of the human experience through the person of Jesus Christ.

Being present involves having the courage to bring our unique selves into our encounters – not just the filtered version of ourselves we want others to see. When we show up with our experiences, backgrounds, strengths, hopes, and fears, it can make way for deeper, more meaningful relationships.

When we choose to be present, we move towards embrace. Embrace is not just about welcoming others – it's about taking the opportunity to broaden our perspectives. Through the lens of Ubuntu, this relational concept invites pupils to expand their understanding and gain insight into how their own environment has influenced their understanding of the world.

### Habits progression

EYFS  
(3-5 years old)

We make everyone feel welcome

We can make people feel welcome by... (diverse approaches)

Being welcoming enables us to expand our own horizons

We're all responsible for helping others feel that they belong

Our ways of thinking, knowing, and believing shape our identity

Transition  
(10-12 years old)

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## Reimagine Power

Seek hope

See beyond

Find a new way

*"I am making everything new!"  
Revelation 21:5 (NIV)*

### Find hope and opportunity in the places where we long to see change.

Our perceptions of the world are shaped by our imaginations. When divisions and conflict seem intractable and we face repeated disappointment, it can sometimes be difficult to find hope or to envision a future where healing, restoration, and thriving relationships are possible.

Yet we read in Revelation 21 that 'God is making all things new.' The habit of reimagining encourages us through being renewed by the Holy Spirit to seek for God to expand our understanding of what is possible. Reimagining is rarely a solo activity; it often happens in community. For relationships to be restored, the systems and structures we live by may need to be reimagined and reshaped in ways we have not yet considered.

The habit of reimagining helps pupils reflect on the dynamics of power. Power cannot be divorced from context; it is undeniably the case that some people have more power than others and that this power can be used for both good and ill. This concept asks pupils to critically analyse ways in which power has shaped lived experience – positively and negatively – in a global context.

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### Habits progression

EYFS  
(3-5 years old)

Everyone can make a difference

There are important stories and experiences; we can listen, care, and understand

Lived experiences shape and deepen how we understand our worldview

People in a worldview may follow different sources of authority

Power and influence shift with time, place, and shared hope

Transition  
(10-12 years old)



# Theological underpinning

- All humans are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139) and have intrinsic worth.
- Our world is a wonderful place, full of all kinds of people. It is a more wonderful place because people are all different. (Galatians 3:28)
- We love to explore and discover new things; we are curious and enjoy learning about different people, places and stories. (Psalm 111:2)
- We value the contribution of a whole range of people, not just those who look, think or speak like us. (Romans 12)
- We know that everyone makes mistakes, but it is important to make amends, especially if someone has been hurt. (Matthew 5:23-24)
- We enjoy learning about people who are different from us; it helps us to understand more about the world. (1 Corinthians 12)
- We learn from the example in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:27) that excluding others because they are different to us is wrong; it hurts them, and it hurts us.
- Only in full diversity (gender, age, multi-cultural, multi-racial) can the full image of God be glimpsed. (Revelation 7)

# UN Sustainable Development Goals

*Difference* for Primary Schools reflects some of the aims of the **United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals** by nurturing values and habits that encourage pupils to think critically, care deeply, and act responsibly. Through the habits of **Be Curious**, **Be Present**, and **Reimagine**, children explore themes of justice, equality, peace, and sustainability in age-appropriate ways. This helps to build a foundation for global citizenship, empowering pupils to reflect on their place in the world and their potential to make a positive difference in their communities and beyond.





Key Stage	Wondering questions	Children's literature	Key themes
<b>Early Years</b> <b>Foundation Stage</b> (3-5 years old)	<b>Nursery: I wonder...</b> How can we be kind to others?  <b>Reception: I wonder...</b> How can our differences make us stronger?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I Want My Hat Back</i> by Jon Klassen</li> <li>• <i>My World, Your World</i> by Melanie Walsh</li> <li>• <i>Hair Love</i> by Matthew A. Cherry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-awareness</li> <li>• Personal expression</li> <li>• Respect for diversity</li> <li>• Empathy and compassion</li> <li>• Community and inclusivity</li> </ul>
<b>Key Stage 1</b> (5-7 years old)	<b>I wonder...</b> Are we braver than we think?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Black Dog</i> by Levi Pinfold</li> <li>• <i>Tin Forest</i> by Helen Ward and Wayne Anderson</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bravery</li> <li>• Hope</li> <li>• Hospitality</li> </ul>
<b>Lower Key Stage 2</b> (7-9 years old)	<b>I wonder...</b> How can we define beauty?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Wild</i> by Emily Hughes</li> <li>• <i>The Rough-Face Girl</i> by Rafe Martin and David Shannon</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assumptions</li> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• Racial identity</li> <li>• Childhood</li> </ul>
<b>Upper Key Stage 2</b> (9-11 years old)	<b>I wonder...</b> How can we intentionally flourish together?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Varmints</i> by Helen Ward and Marc Craste</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assumptions</li> <li>• Environmentalism</li> <li>• Marginalisation</li> </ul>
<b>Transition</b> (10-12 years old)	<b>I wonder...</b> How can we lift up our voices?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>If Racism Vanished for a Day</i> co-produced by the RESPECT project</li> <li>• <i>A World of Your Own</i> by Laura Carlin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human dignity</li> <li>• Belonging in diversity</li> <li>• Equality and stewardship</li> </ul>

# Early Years Foundation Stage

## Key themes

### 1 Self-awareness

Encouraging pupils to understand and appreciate their own strengths, weaknesses, interests, and values.

### 2 Personal expression

Allowing children the opportunity to express themselves through different media (plural of medium) throughout the continuous provision. This will encourage a sense of pride in their own uniqueness.

### 3 Respect for diversity

Highlighting the importance of respecting and valuing differences in others including cultures, perspectives, and abilities.

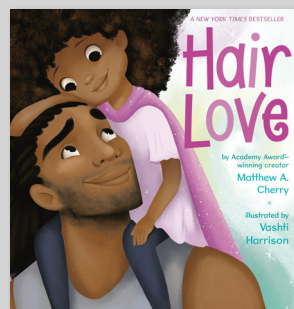
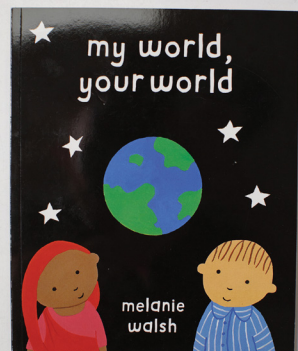
### 4 Empathy and compassion

Enabling pupils to understand and share the feelings of others.

### 5 Community and inclusivity

Helping pupils to understand the importance of feeling included, valued, and heard.

## Children's literature



Balancing individuality and belonging are essential for creating an environment where all students can thrive. The key texts for the EYFS sessions – *I Want My Hat Back* by Jon Klassen, *My World, Your World* by Melanie Walsh, and *Hair Love* by Matthew A. Cherry – serve as powerful tools to further embed these key themes.

## Through the key texts, pupils can:

- Reflect on how their interests can bring people together but also exclude others.
- Recognise that everyone is unique, but everyone can still belong.
- Realise that their words have power and can be used to make our world a better place.
- Feel inspired by feelings of hope and empowerment that their differences when shared, explored, and valued really can make them stronger.

## Wondering questions

Each course begins with a wondering question – an open-ended prompt designed to spark curiosity and reflection. Wonderings are a powerful teaching approach that support pupils to take ownership of their learning, leading to greater engagement and deeper thinking.

### Nursery



**I wonder...**  
**How can we be kind to others?**

### Reception



**I wonder...**  
**How can our differences make us stronger?**



# Key Stage 1

## Key themes

### 1 Bravery

Understanding how we can use courage to overcome our fears. Pupils will examine how to embrace courage whilst recognising how fear can sometimes hold us back.

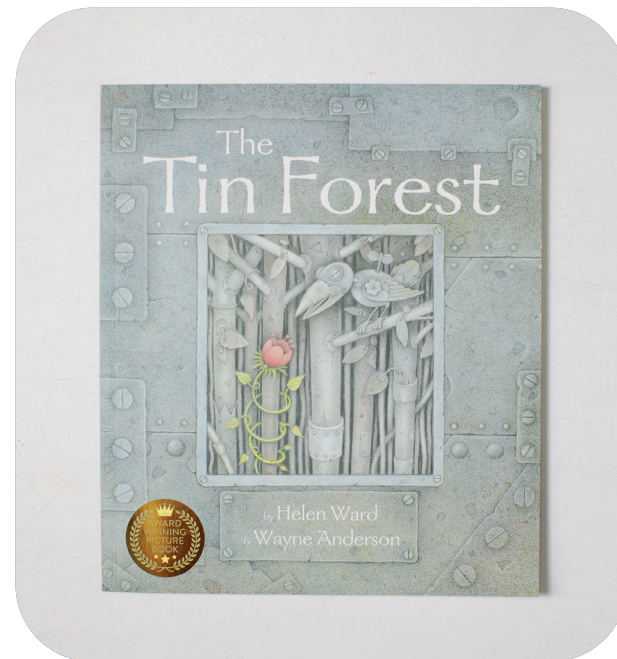
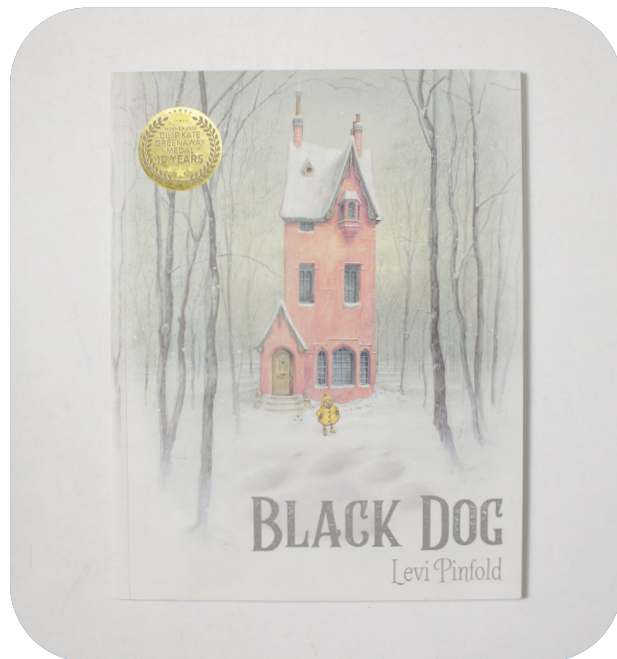
### 2 Hope

Exploring how to hold on to hope and think positively in the face of challenges. Pupils will examine how they can assess challenging situations and apply a positive mindset to envision a better future.

### 3 Hospitality

Examining how to embrace others, this theme looks at how we can welcome those who are different from us, understanding how to value those differences and create a sense of belonging.

## Children's literature



Central to these resources is the importance of creating a sense of belonging among pupils, their communities, and beyond. The key texts, *Black Dog* by Levi Pinfold and *Tin Forest* by Helen Ward and Wayne Anderson, serve as a powerful tool to illustrate these themes.

### Through the key texts, pupils can:

- Consider how fear can create a barrier to progress in our lives.
- Understand the importance of embracing courage when we are fearful.
- Explore how other people with different perspectives can offer us hope in challenging times.
- Understand the importance of welcoming others and how this contributes to a sense of belonging.
- Explore how beauty is about love, kindness, growth and hope.
- Understand how we can create beauty in our own communities.

## Wondering questions

Each course begins with a wondering question – an open-ended prompt designed to spark curiosity and reflection. Wonderings are a powerful teaching approach that support pupils to take ownership of their learning, leading to greater engagement and deeper thinking.

### Key Stage 1



**I wonder...**  
**Are we braver than we think?**

# Lower Key Stage 2

## Key themes

### 1 Assumptions

Understanding how assumptions shape our perceptions of the world and the people around us. Pupils will examine how assumptions can lead to misunderstandings and biases.

### 2 Gender

Highlighting the importance of female voices and protagonists, pupils will delve into the issues of beauty and identity and particularly how they affect women and girls.

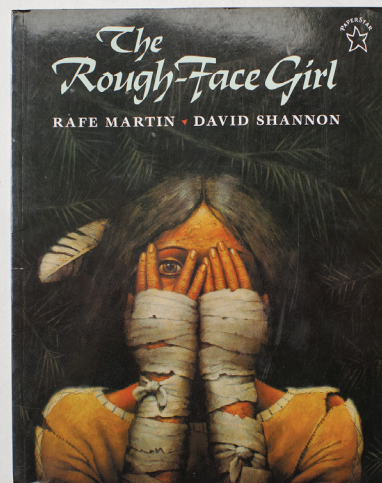
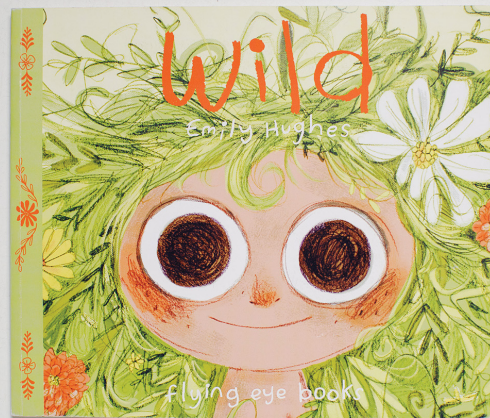
### 3 Racial identity

Addressing the experiences of some groups, this theme encourages empathy and understanding of the challenges faced by those who are often excluded, oppressed and/or treated differently within society.

### 4 Childhood

Pivotal to every child, this theme explores the rights of children to learn and grow without fear of persecution.

## Children's literature



Central to these resources is the importance of creating a sense of belonging among pupils, their communities, and beyond. The key texts, *Wild* by Emily Hughes and *The Rough-Face Girl* by Rafe Martin and David Shannon, serve as powerful tools to illustrate these themes.

### Through the key texts, pupils can:

- Reflect on how assumptions about others can lead to conflict and exclusion.
- Experience the perspectives and identities of women and girls globally.
- Develop empathy by considering the experiences of marginalised groups and the importance of inclusion.
- Feel inspired by themes of hope and renewal, which are crucial in a world often marked by conflict.

## Wondering questions

Each course begins with a wondering question – an open-ended prompt designed to spark curiosity and reflection. Wonderings are a powerful teaching approach that support pupils to take ownership of their learning, leading to greater engagement and deeper thinking.

### Lower Key Stage 2



I wonder...  
How can we define beauty?



# Upper Key Stage 2

## Key themes

### 1 Assumptions

Pupils will explore how assumptions shape their perceptions of the world and the people around them. Through critical reflection, they will examine how assumptions can lead to misunderstandings and biases, recognising the importance of questioning preconceived notions.

### 2 Environmentalism

The resources highlight the significance of caring for the environment, prompting pupils to consider the impact of human actions on the natural world. By discussing sustainability and conservation, they will be encouraged to think about their role in protecting the planet for future generations.

### 3 Marginalisation

Engaging with the experiences of marginalised groups, pupils will develop empathy and a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by those who are often excluded or oppressed. By confronting these issues, they will be equipped to contribute to a more just and inclusive society.

## Children's literature

Central to these resources is the importance of creating a sense of belonging among pupils, their communities, and beyond. The storybook, *Varmints* by Helen Ward and Marc Craste, serves as a powerful tool to illustrate these themes.



## Through the key text, pupils can:

- Reflect on how assumptions about others can lead to conflict and exclusion.
- Understand the importance of protecting our environment and the impact of human actions on ecosystems.
- Develop empathy by considering the experiences of marginalised groups and the importance of inclusion.
- Feel inspired by themes of hope and renewal, which are crucial in a world often marked by conflict.

## Wondering questions

Each course begins with a wondering question – an open-ended prompt designed to spark curiosity and reflection. Wonderings are a powerful teaching approach that support pupils to take ownership of their learning, leading to greater engagement and deeper thinking.

### Upper Key Stage 2



**I wonder...**

**How can we intentionally flourish together?**

# Transition

## Key themes

### 1 Human dignity

Pupils will explore the idea that each person is unique, deeply valued, and made with purpose. Recognising the sacred worth of ourselves and others helps build communities rooted in dignity and respect.

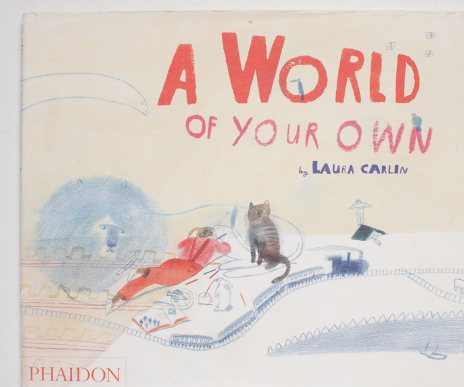
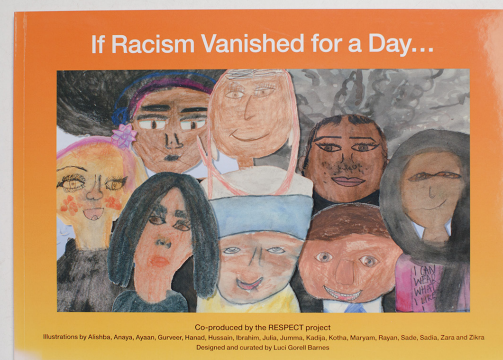
### 2 Belonging in diversity

We're better when we're different together. Pupils will reflect on how our differences – culture, background, language, identity – can strengthen communities when they are welcomed and celebrated.

### 3 Equality and stewardship

No one is above another. Pupils will consider how fairness, shared responsibility, and caring for one another and the world help create a more equal and flourishing society for all.

## Children's literature



\*If obtaining a copy of *A World of Your Own* proves difficult, *Journey* by Aaron Becker is a great alternative.

At the heart of these resources is the idea of belonging – within the classroom, across communities, and throughout society. The key texts, *If Racism Vanished for a Day* co-produced by the RESPECT project and *A World of Your Own* by Laura Carlin, offer a powerful glimpse into a world where everyone can be treated with dignity and respect. They invite pupils to reflect on their own experiences, value the perspectives of others, and imagine how we can all help create spaces where everyone feels they truly belong.

### Through the key texts, pupils can:

- Reflect on how stereotypes and assumptions affect the way people are seen and treated.
- Explore how racism and exclusion impact individuals and why standing up for fairness matters.
- Think about what it feels like to belong, and what it takes to make others feel included and valued.
- Be inspired to imagine a fairer, kinder world and consider the role they can play in shaping it.
- Be empowered to think critically, act kindly, and believe in the possibility of change.

## Wondering questions

Each course begins with a wondering question – an open-ended prompt designed to spark curiosity and reflection. Wonderings are a powerful teaching approach that support pupils to take ownership of their learning, leading to greater engagement and deeper thinking.

### Transition



**I wonder...**  
**How can we lift up our voices?**



# Ready to run *Difference* with your school?

We invite you to run the *Difference* course with your pupils!

If you haven't already, you'll need to create an online account so you can access everything you need, including films and slides provided for every session. This is free and simple to do – just follow the steps below:

- ☐ **Register for training** – sign up for a training session at [difference.rln.global/training](https://difference.rln.global/training).
- ☐ **Head to [difference.rln.global/sign-up](https://difference.rln.global/sign-up) and create an account** – this gives you access to the resources hub after completing training.
- ☐ **Explore the dashboard** – this is where you'll find articles and introductory videos about the *Difference* course.
- ☐ **Set up your *Difference* course** – we'd love to know when you're running the course and for how many people so we can best support you along the way. Please register a course per class/group.
- ☐ **Download the course materials** – visit the training and resources hub to find the films and slides that accompany each session.

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