



Interpreting Modern Martyrs: Esther and Peonia's perspective teacher notes

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Follow-up tasks

Ask pupils to reflect independently: After hearing about two of the ten modern martyrs, write down your understanding of the actions, characteristics and beliefs of a Christian martyr.

Ask pupils to discuss in pairs or in a small group: Esther and Peonia introduce us to two modern martyrs from very different parts of the world. Discuss the key similarities and differences between the lives of these two martyrs.

Ask pupils to write an answer to this essay question: These martyrs are described as "following in Jesus' footsteps as disciples". How similar are the martyrs' experiences to Jesus' experience?

Ask pupils to find out more about the martyrs mentioned:

<https://www.westminster-abbey.org/about-the-abbey/history/modern-martyrs>

Ask pupils to produce their own creative response about all or one of the martyrs:

You may find it useful to share these guidelines, which were given to the pupils who created the films.

Purpose:

Your creative responses will help your peers across the UK and the world to explore the idea of Christian martyrdom and the 10 modern martyr statues at Westminster Abbey.

Content:

There are lots of options of what you could create, but it must be able to be recorded and shared. It could be: a poem; an artwork; a dance; a song; a short documentary; or something else you are thinking of and want to discuss.

Audience:

Your creative response will be used by 14- to 18-year-olds (and their teachers) in classrooms around the UK and the world.

Tone:

Your creative response should be: imaginative; clear; curious; welcoming; and accessible.

Transcript

Esther John was a Pakistani Christian nurse who was born on the 14th of December 1929 in India. Esther John attended a Christian school after the age of seventeen. It was when she first read the 53rd chapter of Isaiah that she was suddenly taken over by Christianity. She secretly practiced her faith at home and it grew more and more over the years. She ran away 7 years later in fear of having to marry out of her religion.

Unfortunately, Esther John suffered a brutal murder. She was found dead in her bed where she lived at the time in Chichawatni on the 2nd of February 1960.

Something important we can learn from Esther John is to not limit ourselves when it comes to our beliefs and faiths. Her devotion to Christianity is inspiring because faith is a journey that we have to discover for ourselves and Esther John had the courage to become her own person.

Oscar Romero was part of the Archdiocese of San Salvador. He spoke about social injustice and violence and he stood up to the poor citizens of El Salvador against the military government.

Unfortunately, he was shot by an assassin while celebrating mass.

From this we can see that Oscar Romero was a passionate and strong-willed person who devoted his life to the church and defended the lives of the El Salvadoran people.

What we can draw from both Oscar Romero and Esther John is that they both died heroically for Christianity. For this cause they thought was beyond their own lives and sacrificed themselves in order to bring about change through Christianity.

They both had devotion to Christianity as they were both willing to die for it. Just as Jesus died in order to save our sins, they are also following in Jesus' footsteps as disciples.

Martyrs such as Esther John and Oscar Romero are important because it shows symbols of exceptional leadership and heroism through they were struck with difficult situations.

Let's honour all martyrs who were able to sacrifice their lives and show bravery in order to bring about change to the world through Christianity.