



Sikh Vaisakhi

These notes support the accompanying short video taken in April 2008 at the Guru Nanak Gurdwara, in Huddersfield, during the Sikh Vaisakhi celebrations.

Guru Nanak Gurdwara is the Kirklees Sikh Faith Centre of Interfaith Kirklees (Schools).

We see the Sikh community carrying out a celebration that has been in existence for over 300 years. In fact the ceremony that we witness has been enacted at each Gurdwara ever since the time that the community of Sikhs (the Khalsa) was formed in 1699. by Guru Gobind Singh.

It becomes clear very early on, that something sacred is about to happen. The Sikh symbol, the Khanda, features strongly in the footage and in many ways it is this that reminds us that Vaisakhi is about the Sikh commitment to God (Nam) and to the faith. We watch as the five beloved ones, the Panje Pyare, enter the ceremony, dressed in yellow and representing the first five who were initiated into the faith by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699.

Many Sikhs expect to be initiated at some stage in their life. Belonging to the Khalsa involves taking amrit and wearing the five articles of faith which distinguish individual men and women as members. These articles are commonly known as the five Ks because the Punjabi word for each begins with the sound of 'k'.

We watch as the flagpole with the flag of the Khanda (the Nishan Sahib) is lowered. After the cover is replaced with a new one we hear prayers and a period of reflection. The flagpole is raised, the Panje Pyare circle the flagpole and then re-enter the Gurdwara.

The video footage ends as the Sikh community enters the Gurdwara in preparation for the Nagar Kirtan, the procession of the Sikh holy scriptures, the Guru Granth Sahib, through the streets of Huddersfield.

The video footage lasts for 7 minutes only. It could be used with KS2 or KS3 pupils, or, selectively with younger pupils.

Vaisakhi Introduction Background

The Khanda 1
Film timing:
0.00 - 1.10

Class Activities

**The Khalsa:
The Five
Beloved Ones** 2
Film Timing:
1.17 - 2.02

Class Activities

**The Nishan
Sahib:** 3
**The Ceremony:
Replacing the
Nishan Sahib**
Film Timing:
2.02 - 6.42

Class Activities

**The Ceremony
ends** 4
Film Timing:
6.42-7.15

Class Activities



The Khanda

What Happens

We see the Sikh symbol, the Khanda, outside the Gurwara. It is found on the domes of the building, on the top of the flagpole and in the marble base of the flagpole. We see some large pans being filed with milk by a Sikh woman who then takes the milk cartons to the flagpole and bows her head against the marble base, near the Khanda symbol.

Background Information

The Khanda has particular significance for Sikhs. Not only is it the symbol of the Sikh faith, it symbolises the commitment of Sikhs to their faith and their relationship with God (Nam).

On each side of the central double edged sword (also called the Khanda), which symbolises the oneness of God, and the two aspects of freedom and justice, are two large curved swords (kirpans). The one on the left symbolises religious authority (piri) and the one on the right, political authority or guidance in worldly matters (miri).

The circle (chakra) emphasises the need for balance between the two, and the equality and unity of all people before God. It is also the symbol of the infiniteness of God, since it has neither beginning nor end.

The symbol of the Khanda is also the insignia of the Khalsa, and many Sikhs wear this symbol as a badge or brooch. It can often be found displayed on the bumpers of the cards belonging to Sikhs.



Classroom Activities:

1. Watch the film.
2. Where can you see the Khanda?
3. The Khanda is the symbol of the Sikhs. Can you think of other symbols or logos that are important to, or symbolise different groups? What do these logos or symbols mean?
4. Think about what the different elements of the Khanda might mean and why....
 - a. The central double edged sword.
 - b. The two curved swords on the outside
 - c. The circle in the middle
5. What are you committed to in life? It might be a particular cause or a group. Design your own symbolic logo and explain each part.



The Khalsa - The Five Beloved Ones

What Happens

A carpet is put out and five Sikhs dressed in orange, yellow, white and blue bow before the flagpole, circle round it and line up on the carpet.

Background

These are the Panje Pyare or the five beloved ones and they represent the first 5 men who were baptised as Sikhs by Guru Gobind Singh to start the community of Sikhs or the Khalsa.

Many Sikhs expect to be initiated at some stage in their life. Belonging to the Khalsa involves taking amrit and wearing the five articles of faith which distinguish individual men and women as members. These articles are commonly known as the five Ks because the Punjabi word for each begins with the sound of 'k'.

Kesh - refers to uncut hair which is required of Sikhs as one of the outward and distinctive signs of identity. Amritdhari or baptised Sikhs will tie up their hair; men and sometimes women, will choose to wear a turban.

Kangha - a small comb which

should be worn in the hair. It is used to keep the hair clean and symbolises orderly spirituality.

Kara - a steel bracelet worn by Sikhs, which acts as a reminder of the universality of God: a symbol of spiritual allegiance, equality and unity with God and the Khalsa. Kara also means 'strict' and so the bangle also represents self discipline, moderation and obedience to God.

Kachhera - a pair of shorts worn as underwear by Amritdhari or baptised Sikhs. They were originally introduced to allow the followers of Guru Gobind Singh to move freely in battle and as they worked in the fields. The shorts symbolise a readiness to defend the faith, modesty and moral restraint.

Kirpan - a sword worn by Sikhs symbolising courage, honour and self respect. Those who wear it must be prepared to defend their faith.

Classroom Activities:

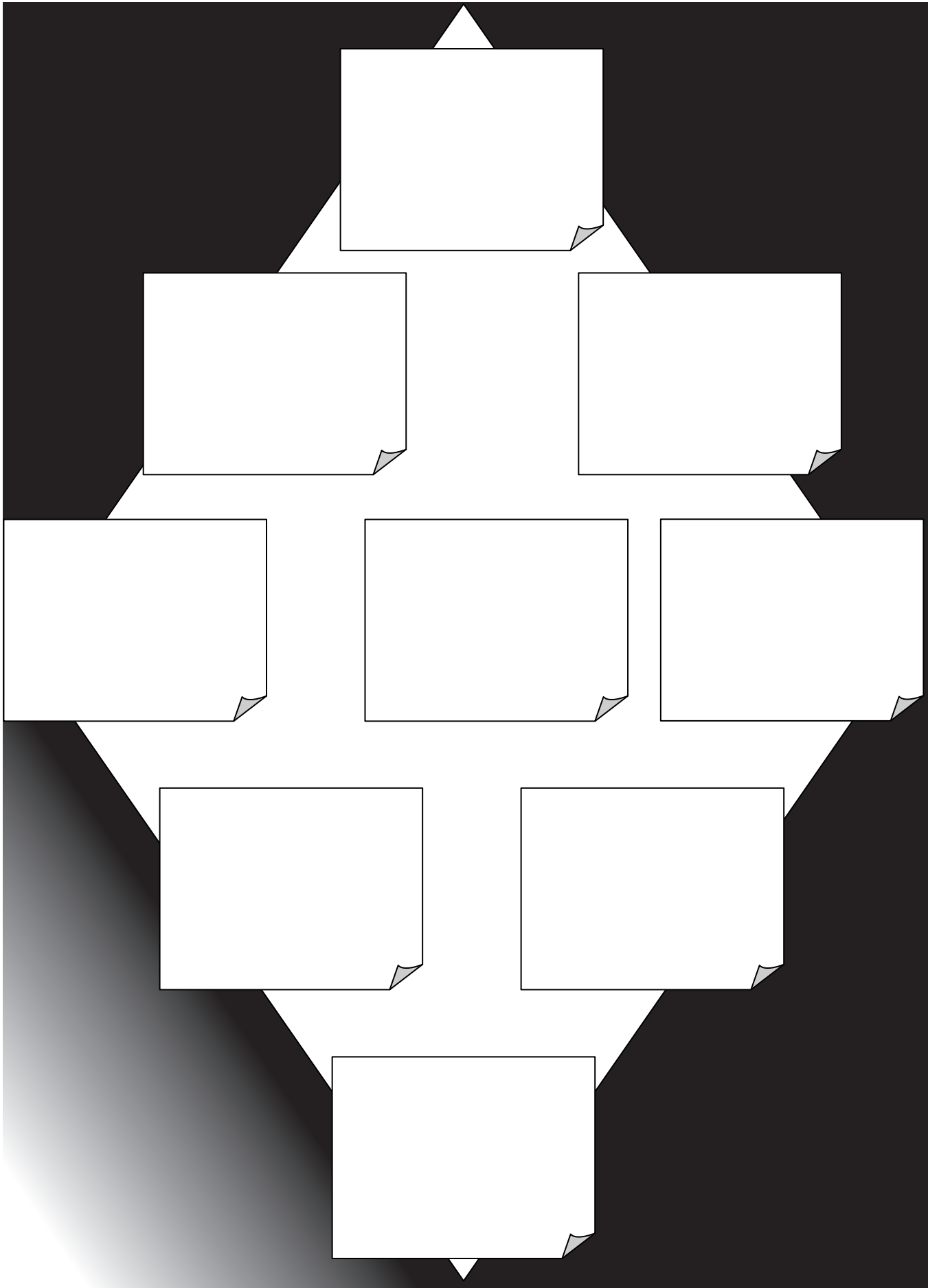
The pupils should be presented with the 5 Ks and told of the meaning of one. They should then think about what the other four Ks might symbolise.

What matters to you? Think about up to 9 things that are really important for you in your life. Are some more important than others? Put them in order using the Diamond Ranking Template below... the most important at the top, followed by the next 2, the next 3, the next 2 and the last one.

What would your 5Ks be for the things that matter to you? (These might be 5Cs or 5Ds etc). Draw them and then write a paragraph about each, mentioning the symbolism behind them and how they are linked to your beliefs or to the things that matter to you.

Diamond Ranking Template

section 2





The Nishan Sahib

What Happens

The flagpole is lowered and the cloths removed, along with the Khanda and the Sikh flag (Nishan Sahib).

The flagpole is washed with milk and yoghurt, dried and a clean cover, Khanda and Nishan Sahib are added to replace the old.

Prayers are said and we focus particularly on the Panje Pyare.

The newly dressed flagpole is raised once the prayers have been completed.

Background

The lowering and renewing of the coverings, including the washing of the flagpole and the prayers are all outward symbols of the rededication to the faith.

The ceremony is a personal commitment to the Sikh faith.

Classroom Activities:

1. Watch the film footage from 3 minutes 0 seconds to 6 minutes 42 seconds.
2. What happens? What do you think it means? Complete the table:

What Happens?	Why? What do you think it Means?

3. The ceremony is about Sikhs recommitting themselves to their faith. What happens in the film to show this?
4. How do you commit yourself to something that is important to you? Do you also have to recommit yourselves sometimes? If so, what happens and how do you do this?

End of the Ceremony

What Happens

The newly covered flagpole with the new Nishan Sahib is raised, the Panje Pyare circle the flagpole and enter the Gurdwara.



Classroom Activities:

1. What questions do you have?
2. How might this ceremony affect someone who was there?
3. What links can you make between the ceremony, the Khanda, the Khalsa and the Panje Pyare?
4. Is a ceremony like this relevant today? How might it help Sikhs?

From what you have heard so far, how would you compare the Sikh Vaisakhi ceremony with one from a different religion where there is a focus on commitment? You might consider: a rite of passage such as Bar/Bat Mitzvah (Judaism); Believers' Baptism (Baptist Christianity); Confirmation (Christianity); Ordination (Buddhism); Hajj (Islam)

Questions

How are they alike?

How are they different?

Vaisakhi

Chosen ceremony:

Similarities

Difference

Criteria

Difference