

EYFS Special places: lesson using persona doll

Notes about using persona dolls

Persona dolls are an extremely valuable tool in supporting learning about and from different religions. By encouraging children to enter imaginatively into the life of the doll, they can be introduced to situations, ideas and issues that are significant and relevant to them and also experiences that are sometimes very different from their own.

Persona dolls should be recognised as special and generally only used in planned teaching and learning sessions. Practitioners are encouraged to use open-ended questions that will stimulate discussion, invite participation, help the children relate to the doll and encourage them to ask their own questions. As the material is contextualised in the life of the doll children find it easier to engage with the mystery and wonder of the religion in focus.

Hasan's story (Muslim focus): special places

Inside Hasan's backpack

pebbles
shells
prayer mat

Special words

Mosque, minaret, prayer mat,
Allah, minbar, prayer beads,
Qur'an, Makkah

Part 1: A special place in the natural world

Sit Hasan in the circle with children in your group.

Place the backpack in the centre of the circle and take out the pebbles and shells. Explain to the children that we are thinking about special places and Hasan has brought these shells and pebbles from his favourite place.

? Where do you think it might be?

Hasan is very lucky because he lives so close to the beach that sometimes when he stands in his back garden he can smell the sea. Hasan is always asking his mummy to take him down to the beach.

? Have you ever been to the seaside? What is your favourite game on the beach?

Samuel loves to dig huge holes with his spade in the sand and wait for the sea to fill them in. He loves to collect sea shells and make patterns with them on the beach. When Hasan looks at the wide ocean and endless sky he remembers how great **Allah** is to have made the whole world for him to enjoy.



Play a recording of ocean waves. Ask the children to close their eyes and imagine they are sitting near some rock pools on a wide sandy beach. What can they see around them, above them and far out to sea? What can they smell and what can they feel under their feet as they set out to explore the rock pools?



Use shells, beach pebbles and dried seaweed to create patterns and pictures on sand trays. Show these to Hasan when they are done.

Part 2: Hasan's special place of worship

Sit Hasan in the circle with other children in the group.

Place the backpack in the centre of the circle and take out the **prayer mat**.

Hasan wants to show you his **prayer mat**. Whenever he wants to pray he unrolls his **prayer mat** and carefully lays it on the floor making his own special place. He also takes it when he goes to worship at the **mosque**.

The accompanying CD, "Special Places", shows Hasan visiting his **mosque**. Sensitivity will need to be shown when using these slides as some Muslims may find pictures of a persona doll in the mosque inappropriate. The slides are as follows:

1. **Hasan's Mosque.** This is Hasan's **mosque**. Look at the large dome and the Muslim symbol of the crescent moon right at the top.
2. **The Minaret.** As well as the dome, Hasan's **mosque** has a tall tower on the roof. In some countries a man stands at the top of the tower to call people to prayer.
3. **Hasan takes off his shoes.** The first thing Hasan does when he enters the **mosque** is remove his shoes. This will keep the **mosque** clean for prayer.
4. **Hasan washes before worship.** Next Hasan uses running water to wash himself. This is to help him prepare to pray and concentrate on **Allah**.
5. **The Prayer Mat.** There are no chairs in the **mosque**. Hasan uses a special **prayer mat** placed on the floor. He can take this mat with him and pray wherever he goes.
6. **Praying to Allah.** Hasan shows with his body how he is praying. First he stands at the back of his mat and puts his hands by his ears. This shows he is listening to God.
7. **Showing respect to Allah.** Next Hasan bows to show respect to Allah and he says "Glory to my Lord, the Great".
8. **Prayer Beads.** **Allah** has many different names. Each bead on the string helps Hasan to remember one name. Here are some of the names: The Creator; The Praiseworthy; The Guide: The Giver of Peace.
9. **The Minbar.** On Friday, the Imam at Hasan's **mosque** goes in to the **minbar** to teach from the **Qur'an**, the holy book for Muslims. When he stands on the **minbar** every one can see and hear him.
10. **Makkah.** When Hasan prays he faces the holiest place for Muslims. It is called **Makkah**. This is a picture of the **mosque** at **Makkah**. Even though **Makkah** is very far away, many Muslims in Britain visit this place. One day, Hasan dreams that he too will go there.

Hasan's Little Book

Name:	Hasan
Age:	5
Gender:	male
Hair:	straight and black
Eyes:	brown
Nationality:	British
Favourite food:	apples stuffed with sweet rice
Favourite activities:	swimming
Family structure:	lives with Mum, Dad, his brother Jameel (aged 2) and his sister Lela (aged 7)
Father's occupation:	works in a bank
Mother's occupation:	teacher
Languages spoken:	English and Gujarati
Family history:	grandparents came to England from Pakistan
Religion:	Muslim
Special times:	Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr

