

Educate Against Hate: Starting conversations about **Islamist extremism**

These materials are designed to help teachers initiate conversations in the classroom about Islamist extremism.

There is no requirement to explicitly teach about extremism in schools. However, helping students to understand what extremism is and the process of radicalisation is one way to help build resilience to harmful narratives. Teachers can use this resource, or parts of this resource, to start discussions in class.

The **video** covers:

- An overview of Islamist extremism
- How Islamist extremists differ to followers of Islam
- The techniques used to recruit people
- The importance of rejecting hate instead showing respect and tolerance to others

The **classroom task** can be used to explore the process of radicalisation and how young people can be drawn in.

The resources are designed to be used flexibly with students in Year 9 and above. However, you know your students best. It is strongly recommended that you review the films and handouts before delivering them to identify whether there are themes that might be upsetting for particular students.

Using the film in class



The film is **4 minutes 33 seconds** long.

It's designed to initiate conversations in the classroom. At several points in the video, a 'pause' icon appears in the top right corner indicating that it can be paused to open a class discussion.

Alternatively, the film is available as three separate videos.

An editable PowerPoint pack accompanies the video(s) with suggested discussion questions for the class:

- What did you learn from the video?
- What do people mean when they say Islamist extremist?
- What is radicalisation?
- What would you do if you were worried about a friend?
- How did the video make you feel?

Students could also think about or research famous successful Muslims, for example, Mayor of London Sadiq Khan, TV presenter Nadiya Hussain MBE, or British Olympic runner Sir Mo Farah.

Using the classroom handout

This handout shows the journey of a young person being radicalised by an Islamist extremist via social media. It aims to help initiate discussions about the techniques used by extremist groups to get more people to believe their hateful ideas.

For example, students could be asked to:

- Identify techniques being used to persuade the main character.
- Consider what they would do if they were in the position of the main character or one of her friends.
- Act out the narrative and then develop additional scenes.

Some of the techniques that can be identified in this fictional case-study include:

- Offering a sense of community and a support network (while creating distance from friends and family)
- Giving a sense that the individual is 'special', building on existing vulnerabilities such as lack of belonging or low self-esteem.
- Promoting an 'us and them' mentality
- Capitalising on grievances
- Encouraging using hatred and violent actions to seek justice

An annotated 'teacher copy' is available that highlights how these techniques are demonstrated in the case study.

Definitions

Extremism: The vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and respect and tolerance for different faiths and beliefs¹.

¹ The Counter Extremism Strategy 2015

Terrorism: An action or threat designed to influence the government or intimidate the public. Its purpose is to advance a political, religious or ideological cause.

Radicalisation: Commonly used to describe the processes by which a person adopts extremist views or practices to the point of legitimising the use of violence.

Refugee: A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it².

Examples of Islamist terrorism

The following events are mentioned in the resources:

9/11 plane attacks

In 2001, 19 terrorists from al-Qaeda hijacked four commercial airplanes, deliberately crashing two of the planes into the upper floors of the North and South towers of the World Trade Centre complex and a third plane into the Pentagon in Arlington. The attacks killed 2,977 people.

London transport bombings

In 2005, there was a series of coordinated terrorist suicide bomb attacks in central London which targeted the public transport system during the morning rush hour. 52 civilians were killed and over 700 more were injured.

Manchester arena attack

In 2017 there was an attack at an Ariana Grande concert in Manchester, where a bomb was detonated as people were leaving the area. 22 people were killed and more than 50 people were injured. ISIS claimed that they organised the attack.

Sri Lanka Easter bombing

In 2019, there was a series of explosions in churches and hotels in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday. A group called NTJ, a militant Islamist group, was accused by Sri Lankan government officials of carrying out the attacks. 290 people were killed.

A [timeline of terrorism](#) between 1972 and 2018 is available on the SINCE 9/11 website. It includes far-right and Islamist examples. It is suitable to be used by secondary school students.

² The 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

Where to find out more information

Daesh – Information about Daesh (also known as IS, ISIL and ISIS) is available on [GOV.UK](#).

Syria – Information on the Syrian crisis and the UK's humanitarian aid response is also available on [GOV.UK](#).

Proscribed groups: A list of proscribed (banned) terrorist groups in the UK is available on [GOV.UK](#).

Vulnerability to radicalisation: Some individuals are more vulnerable to radicalisation than others. More information is available in the [Q&A section](#) of Educate Against Hate.

Talking to students after a terrorist attack: The [PSHE association](#) have produced a framework for young people to discuss terrorist events, providing opportunities to process what has happened in the safety of a classroom.

Far-right extremism: A film and handout by Educate Against Hate to facilitate discussions about far-right extremism is also available here: educateagainsthate.com/resources/starting-conversations-about-far-right-extremism

Advice on holding difficult conversations: The [Institute for Global Dialogue](#) has produced advice for teachers on holding discussions on difficult topics. This includes tips for facilitating discussion (Chapter 5). There is an accompanying document specifically focussed on the [challenges of discussion religious extremism](#).

Further resources to talk about extremism in the classroom are available on educateagainsthate.com