

## *2001: A Space Odyssey* (dir. Stanley Kubrick, 1968)

Lesson by Fabienne Crocket, Teach First

Religious Education/Philosophy,  
Key Stage 3

This lesson will provide students with an opportunity to explore their own ideas about what the creation of the universe might have been like. The lesson would work well as an introductory lesson for a unit on creation myths. Alternatively it could be integrated into a unit of work on ultimate questions. Skills of exploration and imagination should be encouraged, and students should understand that the lesson is not about trying to find the right or wrong answer.

Students are encouraged to engage with the soundtrack and the visual elements of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and to think about how the former shapes the latter. They will use the music and beginning of the film as a stimulus and will storyboard their own re-imagining of the beginning of the world. There will also be an opportunity to create and investigate cosmological and philosophical questions using P4C methods. If for religious reasons, students do not feel comfortable imagining their own version of the beginning of the world, they may opt to complete alternative activities (these are in the green boxes).

### You will need...

#### Trailer

Mini-whiteboards or  
scrap paper  
DVD of film or  
recording of Richard  
Strauss' This Spoke  
Zarathustra

#### Main Attraction

DVD of film  
Story board template  
(provided below)

#### End Credits

Questions written on  
IWB/flipchart  
Post it notes

### Lesson Objectives

- To use music and film as a stimulus to re-imagine the very beginning of the universe
- To investigate meaningful questions about the beginning of the universe

### Curriculum links

- Creation stories/myths
- Ultimate questions
- Asking questions about the meaning and purpose of life and suggesting answers which relate to the search for truth
- Responding imaginatively to these ultimate questions.

## Activities

### TRAILER: Thus Spoke Zarathustra

As students walk in the class the theme from *2001* is playing (just the music). Ask them what adjectives they would use to describe the music and brainstorm on board.

Students must then use the music and the words they have brainstormed to imagine what the very beginning of the universe looked like. Students sketch this vision onto their mini-whiteboards/scrap paper. Emphasise that it is a quick sketch and doesn't need to be perfect. Music will probably have to be repeated a couple of times.

Students put this sketch to one side (not to be rubbed out!)

### MAIN ATTRACTION: Re-imagining

Students watch the beginning of *2001* (c.11:55 – 19:55 min). After watching, take feedback on what they think is going on.

Explain that there are various theories about what happened at the beginning of the universe, and this is what the unit of work will be about.

Students then use their initial sketch to help create a four-part storyboard that depicts how *they* think the beginning of the universe might have begun. They must include pictures and captions to explain what is happening. They can compare these with their partner/group and note any similarities or differences.

### END CREDITS: Cosmological questions

This is an enquiry led activity that gets students to engage with the philosophical questions raised by imagining the beginning of the world. It is centred on five key questions (which are open to adaptation/editing). These questions should be tackled one by one.

Questions:

- Is it possible that aliens created the earth?

#### Alternative activity

Students brainstorm how this music makes them feel, and how it might make others feel.

#### Alternative activity

Create a storyboard for the beginning of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (provided below). Use screengrabs for the images so that students can fill in the captions.

- Are humans intelligent enough to have designed the world?
- Does everything have a cause?
- Does time have a beginning?
- Is the future longer than the past?

Opinion line:

For each question, students move to the YES side or the NO side of the room. Give students a couple of minutes to discuss their reasons with those around them before feeding back as a whole group.

Differentiation – give quieter students with lower literacy a ticket with a word that they have to use.

After discussing the five questions, students must pick one question to write up their answer for. They write this answer in a book, or stick it on a post-it note, so that they can refer back to it later in the unit of work, to see if their opinion has developed.

For example:

I agree that everything has a cause because...

I disagree that aliens could have created the earth because....

As a means of making the activity more student led, nominate a Question Captain for each question discussed. Their job is to facilitate the discussion and make sure a range of views are heard. Alternatively you could use Pass-it-On, where students nominate the next person to speak.

## Extras

### Other ideas

As an alternative to the opinion line activity, a silent debate could be staged. Each question is written on a piece of sugar paper, and distributed across classroom. Students are allowed to move around the room contributing their ideas to each question, but must do so silently. Pens can be colour coded so that you know which group has contributed the most.

### Read

*The Sentinel*, Arthur C. Clarke (Short Story) (1951)

*2001: A Space Odyssey*, Arthur C. Clarke (1968)

*2010: Odyssey Two*, Arthur C. Clarke (1982)

*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, Philip K. Dick (1968)

### Watch

*A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (Steven Spielberg, 2001)

*Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927)

*The Matrix* (The Wachowskis, 1999)

*WALL-E* (Andrew Stanton, 2008) – Visual references to 2001.



# SCI-FI

DAYS OF FEAR  
AND WONDER

Draw your image here

Write your caption here

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