

Although the assemblies are divided into year groups, many of them are suitable for a wider age range.

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## **Contents**

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<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>		
	<b>YEAR 7</b>		<b>YEAR 8</b>
<b>New Beginnings</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>The Next Step Forward</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Friendship</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Anger</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Bullying</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Old Age</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Caring</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Reflections</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>God</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>The Beauty of Ordinary Life</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Nature</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>Life</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Harvest Festivals</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Loneliness</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Superstitions</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>Belonging</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Hallowe'en</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Affecting Others</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Our Environment</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>Stealing</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Remembrance</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>Christmas</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Hanukkah</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>New Year</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Advent</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>Courage</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Christmas</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>Shrines</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>New Year</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>Fasting</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Animals</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>Passover</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Rushing into Things</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>Children's Day</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Easter</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>Easter and its Origins</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Communication</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>The Future</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Signs</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>Conversations</b>	<b>76</b>

# Contents

---

YEAR 9		YEAR 10	
Half-Way	78	Moving Forward	116
Michaelmas Day	80	Influences	119
Neighbours	81	Heaven	121
The Other Person's Point of View	83	Moral Dilemmas	124
Following the Manufacturer's Instructions	85	Eggs	126
Fireworks	88	What Makes a Saint?	127
Life	90	Respect for the Aged	128
Festivals – Diwali	93	Making Your Mark	130
The Christmas Truce	95	Symbols	132
Christmas	96	The Angel of Mons	134
New Year	98	Christmas	135
Envy	100	New Year	137
Cemeteries	102	The Art of Persuasion	139
Parents	103	Bullying	141
Chivalry	105	Violence	143
Alcohol	107	St Valentine's Day	145
Perseverance	109	Bridges ( <i>Dealing with Bereavement</i> )	147
Lent	110	The Sikh Festival of Vaisakhi	150
Animal Rights	113	Pentecost	152
Prejudice	115	Making Mistakes	154

# Contents

---

## YEAR 11

<b>The Beginning of the End – or the End of the Beginning?</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>Challenges</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>Tolerance</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>The World of Work</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>The Homeless</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>The Big Interview!</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>Remembrance Day</b>	<b>170</b>
<b>Dreams</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>Ramadan</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>Christmas</b>	<b>177</b>
<b>New Year</b>	<b>179</b>
<b>Stress</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>Suffering</b>	<b>183</b>
<b>Parents</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>Faith</b>	<b>187</b>
<b>The Media</b>	<b>189</b>
<b>Easter</b>	<b>190</b>
<b>Relationships</b>	<b>192</b>
<b>Taking Care</b>	<b>193</b>
<b>Last Days</b>	<b>195</b>

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# Hallowe'en

Assembly Point: **Hallowe'en is a time for fun, but centuries ago it was a time of great fear.**

A long time ago, people were much more superstitious than they are today. Hallowe'en, for instance, was a time when people believed all the evil spirits and witches were out roaming the land. This was because the date, 31st October, was the last day of the year in the old Celtic calendar, the last chance for evil spirits to do their worst.

This was why people lit fires and displayed lanterns to keep away the evil spirits. Once we became a Christian country, we named the following day, All Hallows Day. "Hallows" is an old word meaning "Saints", so November 1st is now called "All Saints Day".

[In other countries, Mexico, for instance, November 1st/2nd are known as The Day of the Dead. It is a time when the people celebrate the lives of members of their family who have died. Ironically, this is seen as a happy time, a time of celebration rather than mourning or being afraid of ghosts. In many homes they build altars and surround them with candles as a sign of respect for their ancestors.]

Now, of course, Hallowe'en is enjoyed by young people in some countries as a time for dressing up as witches and demons and going around the neighbourhood for "Trick or Treat". It is only fairly recently that this practice has become widespread in Britain.

However, it is very important to consider the feelings of those people in your neighbourhood whom you call on. Some of them may be old people for whom Hallowe'en is a very frightening time. To have youngsters knocking on their door every five minutes asking "Trick or Treat" is a nervous time, for when they were children "Trick or Treating" didn't happen. So they don't fully understand it. In fact, for these people, the nervousness they feel is very much like the nervousness our ancestors used to feel when they were genuinely afraid of witches and demons attacking their homes!

The message is this: enjoy yourselves on Hallowe'en and keep safe by being sensible and polite when you go to the houses in your neighbourhood. But also consider the feelings of the people, especially older people, and try to understand why some of them will feel nervous when you call.

## **Meditation:**

Many centuries ago there was genuine fear on Hallowe'en. We must all make sure

selling drugs. Up till now, Barry hasn't been involved. But he is finding studying very difficult now as the examination period isn't all that far away.

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COLIN: It'll help you. All that time studyin'. You'll knacker yourself.

BARRY: I dunno.

COLIN: Look. There's loads taking it. I'm working every hour just gettin' enough of the stuff to go round. You'd be amazed who's doin' it.

BARRY: Who?

COLIN: Rammy for one.

BARRY: Rammy? Give over. He's captain of the rugby team. His dad'd kill him if he found out.

COLIN: Trust me. Rammy can't get enough. Remember that try last month? In the final?

BARRY: Yeah.

COLIN: Let's say I had a hand in that. Courtesy of. You saw how fast he went.

BARRY: Yeah.

COLIN: He reckons he'd've had no chance if he'd had nothin'. See? An' if it sharpens up the body just think what it'll do to the mind, eh, brainbox?

BARRY: How much is it then?

It's a sophisticated persuasive technique. Take the stuff and you'll be like the captain of the rugby team. Take the stuff and you'll achieve higher than you ever thought possible. Take the stuff and Colin makes more money.

### **Meditation:**

We all need to be aware of these persuasive influences and techniques that are all around us. We need to be strong enough to resist the temptations that will be dangled before us.

## **Bullying**

Assembly Point: **You can turn a clock back. But you can't turn the clock back.**

Anyone with any intelligence knows that bullying is wrong. It can cause a huge amount of suffering for the victim, but all too often the bully doesn't see the inner results of the bullying. To the bully, it is "a laugh", or it makes them look big, or it is a way of getting pleasure out of making other people miserable.

Listen carefully to the following poem. If anyone here is being bullied, remember that it doesn't have to be that way. All that you need to do is tell someone, one of your teachers or your parents or a trusted family member.

If anyone here is a bully, remember that for you also it doesn't have to be that way.

Perhaps you, more than anyone, should put yourself in the place of the speaker in the poem.

I used to call you names and you never answered back.

I'd make you stand there all alone  
Surrounded by us on your own.  
I'd thump you push you hit your head  
And tell you slyly you'd be dead  
The second you became a grass.  
You'd whimper when you couldn't pass.

I used to call you names and you never answered back.

I knew your  
I loved to see  
I took your  
Nowhere near  
Your eyes were  
It gave me power all the while.



I used to call you names, and you never answered back.

But then one day you stayed away,  
And all the kids around your way  
Said how they'd seen the flashing light  
The cries and sobs throughout the night.  
And then their eyes all turned on me,  
I snarled and scowled but let them be.

I used to call you names, and you never answered back.