



Behind Closed Doors

CHRISTIANITY
HINDUISM
JUDAISM
ISLAM



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What is architecture?



People need places to eat, work, live and worship. Architecture is the design of spaces to meet these needs. Architecture blends science with art: buildings must stay standing and fulfill the functions they have been designed for, but they should also be pleasing to look at.

'Architecture' doesn't just refer to skyscrapers or big modern art galleries: architecture is all around you. In designing your home, school or local shopping centre, an architect has to make decisions about several factors including space, light, construction materials as well as the people who will eventually use the building.

The *Behind Closed Doors* project looked especially at religious architecture. Each of the faiths explored by the project uses a different type of building and each of the buildings plays an important role in its community. By looking at the design, shape, style and use of a religious building, you can begin to understand the history and tradition of the religion practised there.



About the Behind Closed Doors



In early 2010, 20 young people came together to explore five religious buildings in Belfast. They learned about the architecture of the buildings and how it related to the religions practised inside them.

Before their visit, the young people had the chance to draw what they expected to see in each of the buildings. They produced more pictures and took photographs during and after their visit.

They all agreed that they had a much clearer understanding of the different buildings and religions after their visit. Some of their drawings and photographs are featured in the *Behind Closed Doors* exhibition and in this booklet.





Before you explore...

Before reading about the five buildings, take this short quiz to test your knowledge of religious buildings and the faiths practised inside them.

- 1 **What is the name of the building that Jewish people use for worship?**
- 2  **In what part of a religious building would you find an image like this one?**
- 3 **What symbol might you see outside a Christian church?**
- 4 **What sort of furniture is used for prayer in a religious building?**
- 5 **Inside which religious building would you find this symbol?** 
 - a) Islamic mosque b) Hindu temple c) Christian church
- 6 **What is the Hebrew name for the nine-candle candelabra used in Jewish buildings?**
 - a) Mezuzah b) Menorah c) Torah
- 7 **On what day do most Muslim worshippers visit the Mosque?**
- 8 **What do Hindu worshippers do upon entering the Temple?**
(More than one of these answers is correct!)
 - a) Remove their shoes b) Ring a bell c) Wash their hands
- 9 **In which religious building would you find a Qu'ran?**
- 10 **In Christian churches, what do the letters 'IHS' represent?**
 - a) They are a shortened form of an ancient Greek word for 'Jesus'
 - b) They stand for 'In Here on Sundays'
 - c) They come from a Latin word meaning 'church'



Imagine...

The young people who took part in the *Behind Closed Doors* project drew pictures of each of the buildings before visiting them, showing how they imagined the buildings might look inside and out.

Before you explore the buildings over the next few pages, why not try this exercise yourself? Pick a building from the list – one you have never visited before! – and draw it as you imagine it.



- Jewish Synagogue
- Islamic Mosque
- Hindu Temple
- Christian – Roman Catholic
- Christian – Anglican, Protestant

HINDUISM

4,000+ years old
900 MILLION followers worldwide



Belfast Hindu Temple

Belfast Indian Temple was opened in 1979 in a former Methodist (Christian) church. On entering the Temple, worshippers remove their shoes and ring a bell to signify their arrival.

The temple is laid out in a rectangular shape and worship takes place in the centre of the room. At the top of the temple is a row of *Murtis* – *Murtis* is a sacred statue of God, a god or goddess.

The 'ohm' symbol is found in all Hindu Temples. It symbolises the Hindu divine and is chanted in meditation and prayer.

DISCOVER MORE

How do the interiors (insides) of each of these buildings compare? How many of the other buildings have statues?

JUDAISM

3,000-4,000 years old
14 MILLION followers worldwide



Belfast Synagogue

Belfast Synagogue is circular in form, which is unusual for a synagogue. The roof of the building is supported by concrete beams which form the shape of the Star of David on the ceiling. On either side of the room is a raised platform. Women sit on this platform while men sit in the lower area, closer to the centre of the room.

The Torah – the Jewish holy scripture – is displayed on a platform called a Bimah. Verses from the Torah are also contained on tiny scrolls called *Mezuzah*.

These are attached to the doorposts. Another object you will see in the Synagogue is the menorah, a nine-candle lamp.

DISCOVER MORE

Can you find examples of the Hebrew script, or alphabet, in the synagogue? What other script, or scripts can you see in the other buildings?



CHRISTIANITY

2,000+ years old
2.2 BILLION followers worldwide



St Malachy's Roman Catholic Church

St Malachy's Roman Catholic Church was built in 1884 and is the third-oldest Roman Catholic church in use in Belfast. Its design was inspired by the Tudor period; features of this style are steep roofs and tall, narrow doors and windows.

Inside the church you will find stained glass, statues of the saints, candles and the symbols of the cross and crucifix (a cross with a figure of the body of Jesus).

You will also find the cross outside this and other Christian churches.

DISCOVER MORE

The focal point (place where everyone's attention is directed) of St Malachy's is its altar. What do you think the focal points of the other buildings are?



ISLAM

1,400+ years old
1.5 MILLION followers worldwide



Belfast Mosque

Belfast Islamic Centre and Mosque is located in a semi-detached house on Wellington Park, near Queen's University. It was founded in 1978 by members of the local Muslim community. Belfast Mosque is open every day as a community and resource centre but is busiest on Fridays, the Islamic day of public worship.

On entering the mosque, worshippers must remove their shoes to keep the building clean for worship.

Inside the mosque you will find many mats – which are used for prayer – and the muslim holy book, the Qu'ran.

DISCOVER MORE

The mosque is both a place of worship and a community centre. What other functions might religious buildings have?

CHRISTIANITY

2,000+ years old
2.2 BILLION followers worldwide



St George's Anglican Church

St George's Anglican Church was built in 1816 and is the oldest Anglican Church in use in Belfast. It is built in a classical style, which was very popular in the 19th century. The church has many interesting features including stained glass, a floor mosaic and colourful prayer cushions.

As well as the cross symbol, you will also see the letters 'IHS', a shortened form of the Greek word for Jesus.

DISCOVER MORE

How does the exterior (outside) of St George's compare to the other buildings?



Back to the drawing board



Participants in the *Behind Closed Doors* project said that visiting each of the buildings gave them a much better understanding of the faiths practised inside them. What do you think? Are there other things you would like to know about these buildings?

Re-draw the building you imagined on page 5 – what is different? What have you learnt about its architecture and the rituals that take place inside it? You can write key words and facts in the space below too.

Looking Behind Closed Doors

“Sometimes they are big pretty buildings but I don’t think Belfast has one”

You have now finished your tour behind closed doors and have seen the five different buildings and glimpsed the faiths practised inside them. In exploring the buildings, you have seen how architecture plays an important role in the design of buildings to meet a particular purpose.

Now that you have explored each of the five buildings, take a look at your answers to the first quiz (page 4). How many did you answer correctly?

“It looks like a normal church until you go inside”

“Big, historical and holy”

“The star on the ceiling is really nice”

“People who go here only worship one God”

All of these answers can be found in the information on pages 6–10.
1 Synagogue or Temple / 2 Stained glass window / 3 Cross or crucifix
4 Chairs, rugs, mats / 5 Hindu Temple (b) / 6 Menorah (b)
7 Friday (Islamic day of public worship) / 8 Visitors to the Temple
must remove their shoes and ring a bell, to symbolise their arrival for worship (a) & (b)
9 Mosque / 10 It is an abbreviation of the word ‘Jesus’ in ancient Greek (a)

ANSWERS

Find out more

If you would like to learn more about architecture and the built environment, have a look at the following websites:

PLACE

www.placeni.org

IRISH ARCHITECTURE FOUNDATION

www.architecturefoundation.ie

ARCHISEEK

www.archiseek.com

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

www.ulster.ac.uk

Your careers guidance counsellor can also help you to find information about studying architecture at University.

