The Christian faith is full of symbols: pictures, words, actions and objects. As you look around Westminster Abbey think about some of those to be found here.

Self Guided groups will enter the Abbey from the cloisters, follow the roped area around and On the right you will see the Coronation Chair being restored.

What symbols would you paint on the Coronation Chair?

Used at every coronation since 1307, the chair was decorated with leaves and birds, and a king being crowned with his feet resting on a lion.

On a nearby pillar you will see a painting of Richard II at his coronation. The Order of the Coronation Service hasn’t changed much for a thousand years and is full of symbolism.

In the Coronation Service, the monarch holds certain objects or regalia. Draw lines to match up the objects with what you think they symbolise.

- Sword of State symbolises kingship
- Orb: a jewelled ball with a cross on top symbolises authority
- Two sceptres: jewelled rods symbolises Jesus’ rule over the world
- St. Edward’s Crown symbolises the ‘marriage’ between the sovereign and the state
- A ring symbolises justice.

There are four main parts to the Coronation service.

- The sovereign is presented to the people
- The sovereign swears an oath to uphold the law and the Church
- Then they are anointed with oil, crowned, and given the regalia.
- The people pay homage.
Ask a Marshal in a red gown for entry through the rope into the Nave. Find the Grave of the Unknown Warrior. During World War I, thousands of servicemen died. It was sometimes impossible to tell who they were so their bodies were just buried near the battlefield, and marked with a white cross. On November 11th 1920, one of these was brought back and buried in the Abbey.

Give three reasons why it is surrounded by poppies.

1. 

2. 

3. 

This part of the Abbey is called the Nave and it is where the majority of people sit during large services. It gets its name from the Latin word, ‘navis’, meaning ‘ship’.

On either side of the nave you will see some pictures called ‘icons’ which show images of Jesus and his mother Mary. Visitors can light candles here. Icons are not traditionally found in English churches but are more common in Orthodox Churches.

What do you think the candles may symbolise?

Why do you think Westminster Abbey has these two icons?
On the left of the screen at the head of the nave you will see a large memorial to Sir Isaac Newton. He was a famous scientist, who ‘discovered’ gravity.

Sometimes people think that religion and science are opposed to each other. Can you think of some reasons why they might think this?

Walk under the archway next to Sir Isaac Newton’s memorial through to the Quire.

This is where the Choir sits to sing. The space between the Quire and the steps is called the Lantern. It is where the coronation takes place. The High Altar is up a small flight of steps.

The High Altar is used to celebrate Holy Communion. Why do you think it is up some steps?

Holy Communion: Christians share bread and wine to remember Jesus’ death. The bread symbolises Jesus’ body and the wine his blood.
On the left of the steps is the pulpit. The priest will stand here to preach a sermon and to lead prayers. It is raised up so that everyone can see the priest and also because the sermon is a very important part of worship.

The floor of the Sacrament is a beautiful mosaic pavement created in 1268 when the present Abbey was being built. It is supposed to symbolise how long the world will last from its beginning to its end.

**Leave the Lantern area and turn right to follow the Ambulatory around the High Altar.**

On the right, up a small flight of wooden steps is the Chapel of St. Edward the Confessor. This is the most holy part of the Abbey as it contains the shrine of St. Edward. Prayers and Holy Communion are still said in the Shrine on most Sundays.

Edward the Confessor was king of England from 1042-1066. His reign was a time of peace and he was a holy man. He built a great Abbey at Westminster and was made a saint in 1161. Henry III was particularly devoted to him and built much of the present Abbey and the Shrine to contain his bones.

On the left of the steps is the pulpit. The priest will stand here to preach a sermon and to lead prayers. It is raised up so that everyone can see the priest and also because the sermon is a very important part of worship.

**Why do you think this area is roped off and people are not allowed to walk up to the altar? The area is called the Sacrament or Sanctuary.**

Christians have been coming on pilgrimage to Westminster Abbey for nearly a thousand years to pray at the tomb of St. Edward. Give reasons why people went on pilgrimages in medieval times and today.
Continue around the Ambulatory. You may like to visit the small chapels of Our Lady of the Pew, St. John the Baptist, and St. Paul as you pass them on the left. Climb the steps and enter the Lady Chapel.

To which ‘Lady’ do you think this Chapel is dedicated?

This chapel is known by two other names: The Henry VII Chapel, because it was built during his reign and he is buried here, and the Order of the Bath Chapel. This is a group of knights, appointed by the monarch. You can see their banners and coats of arms. This is the place where most weddings and baptisms take place. The children of the knights, or their grandchildren, may use the chapel for these important Christian ceremonies.

Why do you think people like to get married in a church?

Look at the carved wooden font by the entrance. What ceremony is the font used for?

Why is it placed near the entrance?

How many times is water poured over the baby’s head? What does this symbolise?

Pelican-in-her-Piety
The carving on the font cover shows a pelican. In medieval times it was thought that a pelican wounded herself too feed her young on her own blood and so was seen as a symbol of Jesus’ death giving life to Christians.
On either side of the chapel are the tombs of very important women: Mary I and Elizabeth I, and Mary, Queen of Scots. Visit them if you have time. Many other kings and queens are buried in this area.

Go down the steps and continue around the Ambulatory. You may wish to visit the chapels on either side dedicated to St. Nicholas and St. Edmund. Notice the tombs of Edward III and Richard II on the right as you go past the shrine.

Continue into the South Transept, Poets’ Corner. Many of the people buried and remembered here are famous poets and writers.

Find memorials to these people and note whether they are buried here or just remembered. Place a tick in the correct column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Buried</th>
<th>Memorial only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George Eliot</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Browning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfred, Lord Tennyson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Austen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Shakespeare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the wall at the back of Poets’ Corner you can see the remains of wall paintings which date to around 1290. Although they are quite damaged we know they use special symbols which have become traditional in Christian art. One shows St. Christopher who carries Christ upon his shoulders. People often wear a necklace of St. Christopher and he is known as the patron saint of travellers.

Why do you think people, even non-Christians, might wear a St. Christopher medal around their neck?
There are toilets in Poets’ Corner.

Leave Poets’ Corner and enter the Cloisters.

Before 1540, when Henry VIII dissolved the monastery, the monks spent most of their time here. Go straight a head and turn left to visit the Chapter House where the monks held formal meetings each day.

Write down some thoughts as you look around here. You may wish to turn these into a poem later.

Leave the Chapter House and turn left and then right at the corner of the Cloister. Along this stretch you will find several modern memorials with interesting symbols.

Choose one memorial and draw or describe the symbols on it. Explain who the memorial is for and why you chose it.

We hope you enjoyed your visit! To leave, follow the signs for the exit via the Great West Doors, there are a few more questions to answer just outside the doors.
Once you have come out of the Abbey turn back to look at the statues above the door. These represent ten Christian martyrs of the 20th Century.

What sort of things are people prepared to die for today? Is there anything you think you would die for?

On the left, you can see a memorial on the ground to the Innocent Victims of Oppression, Violence and War.

Why might it be appropriate to have this memorial outside the church?

Look back at the Great West Door. Why do you think there is such a grand entrance? Give more than one reason.

Think back to your time inside the Abbey. How did it make you feel?