



Introduction

Crosses come in many shapes and sizes, but this hand-painted wooden Kashmiri cross is different. What do you notice?

Can you spot:

- The different types of flowers? Flower designs are common in traditional Kashmiri arts and crafts.
- The use of symmetry (balance) in the design - and asymmetry (non-balance)?
- The range of colours?

Background

Kashmir is a large region in Asia crossed by borders belonging to the countries of India, Pakistan and China. Most of the people who live in the valleys there are either Hindu or Muslim, but there are some Christians too. The land is very fertile - many different crops are grown, especially a wide range of beautiful flowers. However, the question of which country 'owns' Kashmir has led to violent disagreements and wars, and in that region some think that it is impossible to be both Christian and Kashmiri, so everyday life for Christians in Kashmir can be very difficult.

Christians believe God defeated the people who killed Jesus by raising him from the dead, and he promises to do that for all his people, especially those who suffer for their faith. The bright Kashmiri flowers are a symbol of new life and a new hope that overcomes fear and suffering. And by being placed on this cross it may also indicate that it can be possible to be both Christian and Kashmiri.

To talk and think about

When was the last time someone in your family used flowers to share their thoughts and feelings? What were the flowers 'saying' for them? Can you think of any other situations when people use the language of flowers like this?

A cross like this would usually be designed to hang on somebody's wall. If a Christian was having a difficult time, what message, in ten words or less, do you think this cross would be saying?

To do

Draw the outline of this cross, or, even better, make it out of natural or recycled materials. What 'signs of new life' could you decorate it with? Are there any flowers growing near where you live that could be used as design motifs? Which would you prefer to use most, and why? If your cross had a message, what would it be?