

The Characteristics of Social and Religious Rituals

A ritual is an organised pattern of symbolic actions and words (things we do and say) which members of a community use to understand and act out important experiences. Rituals can be a part of everyday life, they can have a regular place and meaning in special events and it can be an action that has a regular place in worship. Rituals can be social, such as the celebration of Anzac Day in Australia and New Zealand or Religious, such as the celebration of the Washing of the Feet at the Holy Thursday Mass in Catholicism each Easter.

There are SIX main points you need to learn to fully understand rituals. For each point, view the DVD excerpt and fill in the table that follows.

ONE: A RITUAL IS AN ACTION THAT IS MEANT TO SHOW SOME SPECIAL MEANING.

DVD Excerpt: Jesus Christ Superstar (2.06 min)

<i>What symbols are present?</i>	<i>What actions are performed? (What do they do?)</i>	<i>Who is involved?</i>	<i>What is each person's role in the ritual?</i>	<i>What is the meaning of this ritual?</i>

TWO: RITUALS CAN BE SIMPLE (A GREETING RITUAL, E.G. A HANDSHAKE) OR COMPLEX (MARRIAGE CEREMONY).

DVD Excerpt: Pride and Prejudice (Chapter 2)

What symbols are present?	What actions are performed? (What do they do?)	Who is involved?	What is each person's role in the ritual?	Is it a simple or complex ritual? Explain and give examples.

THREE: RITUALS ARE A PART OF EVERYDAY LIFE. THEY CAN HAVE 'SECULAR' (NON-RELIGIOUS) OR 'RELIGIOUS' MEANING.

DVD Excerpt: Truman Show (Chapter 2)

When does this type of ritual happen?	What actions are performed? (What do they do?)	Who is involved?	What is each person's role in the ritual?	Is this ritual secular or religious? Explain your answer.

FOUR: RITUALS USE SYMBOLS TO EXPRESS MEANING.

DVD Excerpt: Dead Poets Society (2.00 min)

<i>What symbols are present?</i>	<i>What actions are performed? (What do they do?)</i>	<i>Who is involved?</i>	<i>What is each person's role in the ritual?</i>	<i>List the order of events in the ritual.</i>

FIVE: COMPLEX RITUALS HAVE A STRUCTURE. THIS STRUCTURE USES SYMBOLS AND AN ORDER OF EVENTS.

DVD Excerpt: My Big Fat Greek Wedding (4.37 min)

<i>What symbols are present?</i>	<i>What actions are performed? (What do they do?)</i>	<i>Who is involved?</i>	<i>What is each person's role in the ritual?</i>	<i>List the order of events in the ritual.</i>

SIX: IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND A RITUAL FULLY, THE MESSAGE BEHIND THE RITUAL AND THE MEANING IT HAS FOR THE PEOPLE PRESENT MUST BE KNOWN. *DVD Excerpt: The Lion King (0.37 min)*

<i>What symbols are present?</i>	<i>What actions are performed? (What do they do?)</i>	<i>Who is involved?</i>	<i>What is each person's role in the ritual?</i>	<i>List the order of events in the ritual.</i>