



Teaching Humanism

Lesson plans and resources to support
'Any Questions?' The Bournemouth and
Poole Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2017-2022



*Edited by David Warden with assistance from Cathy Silman
Dorset Humanists Schools Team*

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Introduction

The RE agreed syllabus for Bournemouth and Poole challenges pupils and teachers with big questions and a robust 'enquiry approach'. It also aims to bring deeper understanding of the *concepts* and *beliefs* underpinning the religions and the non-religious worldview of Humanism.

RE in Bournemouth and Poole aims to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other principal religions and religious traditions. It is hoped they will also encounter the non-religious worldview of Humanism. This is especially important given that 30 per cent of the populations Bournemouth and Poole selected 'No religion' in the 2011 Census and according to the British Social Attitudes Survey, up to 70 per cent of young people in the 18-24 age range identify with 'no religion'.

"It is hoped that pupils will encounter Humanism as the 'highly recommended' non-religious worldview to be taught." *RE agreed syllabus for Bournemouth and Poole*

We believe it's vital for young people to encounter Humanism as a non-religious worldview which places great importance on ethics and values.

Dorset Humanists, a respected and well-established group representing Humanism locally, has been a member of local SACREs for many years and we assisted with the development of the Bournemouth and Poole RE agreed syllabus. We engage positively with local interfaith initiatives and civic occasions such as the Bournemouth Remembrance Service and Holocaust Memorial Day.

Dorset Humanists has a team of experienced school visitors who can help you deliver the Humanism aspect of the syllabus. We have a core group of members who have been trained and accredited by Humanists UK, the national charity supporting humanists. We have presented Humanism to thousands of pupils in Bournemouth, Poole and further afield. See next page for how to request a humanist visitor.

David Warden, BA (Hons), MA

Chairman of Dorset Humanists, Honorary Member of Humanists UK, Council Member and Training Officer for the South Central England Humanists Network

Website: understandinghumanism.org.uk

Email: chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk

Tel: 07910 886629

Dorset Humanists HMRC Charities Ref No EW10227



David Warden speaks at the Bournemouth Remembrance Service every year on behalf of Defence Humanists. We engage positively with interfaith initiatives locally including Holocaust Memorial Day and a monthly dialogue group with Christians in Sandford.

How to request a school visit from a trained humanist visitor

Dorset Humanists has a team of people who have been trained by Humanists UK to visit schools. Our team has a wealth of experience in a variety of educational settings and we can, free of charge, provide engaging assemblies and lessons for pupils and students at all ages from infants up to A Level. We can offer a planning meeting to tailor our presentation to your needs.

We also work in partnership with PACE (Programme for Applied Christian Education) to provide a joint interactive lesson to compare and contrast Christianity and Humanism.

You can read profiles of our team [here](#).

We have visited the following schools:

- Milborne St Andrew First School
- Pokesdown Primary
- Stourfield Junior
- Winton Primary
- Bishop Aldhelms
- Bearwood Primary
- Hillside Verwood
- Avonbourne Academy
- St Peter's RC
- St Edwards RC & CE
- Winton and Glenmoor Academies
- Ferndown Upper
- Swanage School
- Lytchett Minster School
- Canford School
- Thomas Hardy
- Bishop Wordsworth's

To request a school speaker there are two options.

Option 1

Contact David Warden direct on chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk or 07910 886629

Option 2

Visit <http://understandinghumanism.org.uk/school-speakers/> and fill in the 'Request a School Speaker' form. The website also has an extensive range of teaching resources about Humanism to support teachers.

We look forward to hearing from you

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Tel: 07910 886629

"Thank you so much for your time and energy today. I have had numerous students come up to me throughout the day saying how they enjoyed hearing from a Humanist worldview. It was quite a novelty and an eye opening experience for a great many of them." Rob Hilton, Ethical Studies teacher, Winton and Glenmoor Academies

Humanism: Beliefs and Values

Some of these questions and answers provide a good platform for interesting lesson plans. However, we recognise that some questions may be unsuitable for younger children. We provide brief answers below and suggested lesson plans for teachers to use in the later part of this supplement.



Is Humanism a religion, a belief system, or an attitude to life?

Humanism is not a religion although it may have some similarities to religion in some respects which can be teased out by students in some of the lesson suggestions in this guide. Humanism may be described as a 'non-religious worldview' or as a 'philosophy of life'.

What do Humanists believe?

Humanists believe that the world and the universe came into being by natural processes as revealed by science. The main belief of Humanism, therefore, is naturalism (as opposed to supernaturalism). Humanists do not believe in God or in life after death. They believe that we should live good lives based on reason and compassion and by every individual making his or her unique contribution to the world.

What are Humanist values?

- Engaging in dialogue and debate rationally, intelligently, and with attention to evidence
- Recognising the dignity of individuals and treating them with fairness and respect
- Respecting and promoting freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law
- Cooperating with others for the common good, including with those of different beliefs
- Celebrating human achievement, progress, and potential

We believe that these values are highly conducive to education and fully compatible with value statements by religions and with Ofsted's 'British values'.

How old is Humanism?

Organised Humanism is roughly 150 years old. There were secular groups and ethical societies in the mid to late 19th century. Humanists UK was founded in 1896 as the Ethical Union. Humanistic thinking is, however, at least 2½ thousand years old. It goes back to philosophers like Socrates and Aristotle who asked questions like 'How should we live?' and they attempted to give philosophical answers to such questions rather than religious answers. Later examples of humanistically-inclined philosophers include David Hume, John Stuart Mill, and Bertrand Russell.

Does Humanism have a recognised symbol?



The international symbol of Humanism is the 'Happy Human' which represents human potential and the possibility of a fulfilling life for everyone. There are different versions of this symbol, three of which are shown here.

How many humanists are there today?

There are around one billion people in the world today who are unaffiliated to a religion. A significant proportion of these people probably hold beliefs which are similar to Humanism. In the UK, over 50% of the population are unaffiliated to a religion and this rises to over two-thirds in the 15-24 age group (British Social Attitudes Survey 2016). Research done by Humanists UK indicates that roughly half of these people hold beliefs which are similar to Humanism. There are hundreds of humanist groups around the world which are affiliated to the International Humanist and Ethical Union based in London and the European Humanist Federation based in Brussels.

What sources of wisdom does Humanism have?

Humanists do not have one main repository of wisdom like the Bible or the Quran. Humanists learn from many different sources of philosophy and science to inform them about the world. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is particularly important to humanists. The Amsterdam Declaration is the globally-agreed statement of Humanism (see back of this supplement).

Do humanists have special buildings?

Humanists have some buildings such as Conway Ethical Society in London but most humanist groups use community centres and other places for their meetings.



Who is the leader of Humanism?

Humanists do not have an archbishop or pope. Professor Alice Roberts (left) is the current President of Humanists UK.

Are there any famous humanists?

There are many famous humanists such as Sandi Toksvig, Polly Toynbee, Joan Bakewell, David Attenborough, Stephen Fry, Brian Cox, Richard Dawkins, and Phillip Pullman. Historically, there are many more such as E M Forster, Bertrand Russell, and George Eliot.

How do Humanists decide what is right and wrong?

Humanists believe that we have a natural sense of right and wrong and that this sense has evolved over hundreds of thousands of years as humans learned to live in social groups. We know from a very young age that it's wrong to lie, cheat, and steal. We learn our sense of right and wrong by belonging to families, schools, and society. Humanists often quote the Golden Rule: 'Treat others the way you would like to be treated.' This rule is found in many ancient religions and in non-religious philosophies. Humanists also think about the consequences of their actions to decide what is right and wrong.

How do Humanists celebrate important moments in life e.g. the birth of a baby?

Humanists UK trains people to conduct meaningful ceremonies to mark the arrival of a new baby, to celebrate weddings, and to conduct funerals. These people are called 'celebrants'. You can find out more by searching for 'humanist ceremonies' online. Many humanists also celebrate Darwin Day on or around 12th February.

How do Humanists try to make the world a better place?

Humanists demand the rights of people around the world to have freedom of belief and expression. Humanists train people to provide non-religious pastoral support in places like hospitals and prisons. Individually, humanists try to make the world a better place by living a good life. They try to be kind, generous, tolerant, and forgiving. Humanists also try to make the world a better place by contributing their unique talents, skills, and gifts.

What do Humanists believe about how the world began?

Humanists believe that the universe came into being 13.8 billion years ago as a result of the 'Big Bang.' They believe that the Earth is about 4 billion years old and that life on earth started to evolve about 3 billion years ago. They believe that humans have lived on the Earth for around 200,000 years and that we came from a long process of evolution. We base these beliefs on the latest scientific findings which are the culmination of hundreds of years of human learning and collaboration.

What difference does being a Humanist make to people?

Being a humanist means trying to live by the values of Humanism such as applying rational thought to human problems and being kind to the people around you. Elements of the good life include love and friendship, achievement and fulfilment, a sense of belonging to the human community, and enjoying pleasures that do not harm others.

What do Humanists believe happens to them when they die?

Humanists believe that we live on in the memories of family, friends, and others who knew us when we were alive. We can also live on in the contributions we have made to society through the work we have done and the legacy we have left behind. Humanists do not believe in life after death so it is of the utmost importance that we should make the most of this life.

Do Humanists believe life has a purpose?

Humanists believe that people should live purposeful lives such as raising children, doing meaningful work, pursuing worthwhile goals, and leaving the world a better place than they found it. Humanists do not believe that there is some ultimate or cosmic purpose to life.



Humanism (Primary)

Strands and concepts grid

Concept/s Beliefs/ Theology	Strand A Know about and understand			Strand B Express and communicate			Strand C Gain and deploy skills		
	A1 Beliefs, practices, diversity	A2 Sources of wisdom	A3 Ways of life, expressing meaning	B1 Influence of beliefs, practices and forms of expression	B2 Identity, diversity, meaning and value	B3 Dimensions of religion	C1 Belonging, meaning, purpose and truth	C2 Communities living respectfully	C3 Beliefs, values and commitments
Human reason Freewill Science Need evidence for beliefs There is no God	<p>The Golden Rule: Treat others as we ourselves would like to be treated</p> <p>Live full and happy lives and help others to do the same</p> <p>Ceremonies marking rites of passage e.g. birth, marriage, death</p> <p>No sacred texts but consider human knowledge and reason</p> <p>No worship but reflection, awe and wonder about the world. Art, drama, music 'an attitude to life'</p>			<p>How human psychology is special compared to other life.</p> <p>Celebrate this life rather here and now</p> <p>Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution by Natural Selection: How life evolved explained by Susan Blackmore Richard Dawkins Steve Jones Stephen Law Armand Leroy</p>			<p>Good relationships</p> <p>Darwin Day</p> <p>Caring for others, animals and the environment</p> <p>How did the universe begin? Big Bang Theory explained by humanists: Peter Atkins Brian Cox Albert Einstein Stephen Hawking Stephen Law</p> <p>Groups within Humanism</p>		


The 4-step process: skills and attitudes

Step 1 Engagement	Step 2 Investigation	Step 3 Evaluation	Step 4 Expression
Skills Interpretation Empathy	Skills Investigation Application	Skills Discernment Analysis Evaluation	Skills Expression Reflection Synthesis
Attitudes Curiosity Appreciation Wonder	Attitudes Critical awareness	Attitudes Open-mindedness	Attitudes Self-awareness

Method:

Choose an Enquiry question or design your own, and select the content most applicable to it to scaffold your 4-part enquiry.

Lesson plan: What do Humanists believe? (Key Stage 1 and possibly foundation)

Intended learning outcomes	<p>Core concepts: happiness, care for others, asking questions, no belief in God, learning through science</p> <p>It is important to make an effort to make life good for everyone including yourself. You can find out about the world, as scientists do by asking questions. There is no God who makes the rules.</p>
Engagement	<p>Show one or more versions of the Happy Human symbol (these can be downloaded from the internet). Hold them up in turn asking the children to make the shape or do the actions. How do they feel? Explain that these symbols are the logos of Humanists. People who want everyone to try to be happy.</p> 
Core Activity	<p>This would probably be just one short lesson that would serve as introduction to a series. Hopefully you could ask a local humanist to come in and say very simply what they believe; OR</p> <p>Explain that humanists do not believe there is a God but they do believe that it is important to be good. Perhaps list some activities someone might do that might make children sad and then ask children to discuss how they know they are unkind.</p> <p>Show a nearly dead plant and ask the children why it looks like it does. Discuss the fact that they have observed this and this is how scientists set about finding out about the world. Stress they observe and ask questions.</p> <p>Humanists think it is important to help other people. So ask children to list things they have done in the past week that have helped others. Challenge them to do something every day for a week to help someone else and then write or draw what they have done. These could make a class display.</p>
Plenary	<p>Show a series of statements such as 'humanists believe in God' and 'humanists do not believe in God' and ask children if they are correct.</p>

Lesson plan: What do Humanists believe? (KS2)

Intended learning outcomes	<p>Core concepts: science, evidence, no belief in God</p> <p>Open-mindedness to the idea that humanists do not believe in God but they are still committed to living good lives. Curiosity, appreciation, and wonder about the things that science reveals about the world. How humanists explain the origin of the world if they do not believe in God.</p>
Engagement	<p>Pupils can watch Who are humanists?</p>
Core Activity	<p>Pupils can do this quiz: How humanist are you? A set of questions designed to get people thinking about what it means to be a humanist and whether any of their own beliefs or values could be described as 'humanist'</p> <p>Download the full 'What is Humanism?' lesson plan and presentation here.</p> <p>Or ask a humanist visitor to visit your school who can explain from a personal point of view what Humanism is and what it means to them. Contact chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk</p>
Plenary	<p>Ask pupils to summarise their understanding of key beliefs of Humanism.</p> <p>Humanism is a non-religious approach to life shared by millions of people in Britain. Humanists rely on evidence and reason to discover truths about the universe, and put human welfare and happiness at the centre of their ethics. Humanists see no convincing evidence for an afterlife or any ultimate purpose to the universe, but they believe that human beings can act to make their own lives meaningful, find happiness in the one life they know they have, and support others to do the same.</p>
Key questions for this session	<p>What do humanists believe? How can the world be explained if not by God?</p>

Lesson plan: How do Humanists decide what is right and wrong? (KS1 and foundation)

Intended learning outcomes	<p>Core concepts: human reason, compassion, empathy, caring</p> <p>Open-mindedness to the idea that humanists do not believe in God but they have other ways of deciding what is right and wrong.</p>
Engagement	<p>Explain that the class is going to play a version of musical bumps. However in this situation the children sit down every time the teacher says a statement that they know to be wrong. E.g. Last night I eat all the pudding and didn't leave any for my family.</p>
Core Activity	<p>Ask the children how they knew whether to sit down or stay standing in last game. Write these on white board but leave discussion to later.</p> <p>Remind children of a story e.g. Goldilocks and three bears where children can easily identify some of the things that she did that were wrong. Children could get into groups of four and choose who is to be Goldilocks and who the bears. Each bear then tells Goldilocks how they felt when they returned home.</p> <p>Look at white board list and ask children which things Goldilocks was not thinking about when she acted as she did.</p>
Plenary	<p>Show a picture of a brain and explain that humanists believe that all of us have a small voice we call a conscience inside our heads which tells us which things are right and which things are wrong. Stress that humanists don't believe we have to be good because a God tells us to do so. We just can think how other people feel. We also learn from all the people around us. Refer back to ideas children had given that are written on the white board.</p>
Key questions for this session	<p>How do people tell the difference between right and wrong if there is no God to tell us what to do?</p>

Lesson plan: How do Humanists decide what is right and wrong? (KS2)

Intended learning outcomes	<p>Core concepts: human reason, compassion, empathy, caring</p> <p>Open-mindedness to the idea that humanists do not believe in God but they have other ways of deciding what is right and wrong.</p>
Engagement	<p>Place some statements around the room which represent different ways we might know what is right and wrong e.g. the Ten Commandments, the Quran, school rules, parents' rules, my own conscience.</p> <p>Ask children to go and stand by the statement they use to decide what is right and wrong.</p>
Core Activity	<p>Pupils can watch What should I do? and evaluate the moral dilemma presented.</p> <p>Pupils can watch "How do you work out the difference between right and wrong?" by Humanists UK and evaluate the beliefs which are presented.</p> <p>Pupils can watch The importance of human nature by novelist Philip Pullman and evaluate what he says about conscience and how it developed.</p> <p>There are lots of activities here on the Understanding Humanism website.</p> <p>Activity 1: Ask pupils to write moral rules for their classroom to run well</p> <p>Activity 2: Ask pupils to write moral rules for the whole of society</p> <p>Can pupils list moral rules that everyone accepts? (Do not murder, do not steal, do not lie, care for young children/elderly parents.) Are there some that children disagree about? What can be done about moral disagreements?</p> <p>Can we use reason to tell us the difference between right and wrong? Can we use the Bible or the Quran to tell us the difference between right and wrong? What are the advantages and disadvantages of these different methods?</p>
Plenary	<p>Summarise the discussion from the core activities children have undertaken or ask two or three children to summarise them for the class. Make sure that children have understood that humanists believe it is very important to do good but feel they only need human help for this.</p> <p>Humanists often quote the Golden Rule: 'Treat others the way you would like to be treated.'</p>
Key questions for this session	<p>How do people tell the difference between right and wrong? What methods are reliable/unreliable? What is the common ground between humanists and religious people?</p>

Lesson plan: How do humanists celebrate important events and life stages? (KS1 and Foundation)

Intended learning outcomes	<p>Core concepts: birth, relationships, family, Christmas, Darwin Day, Remembrance Day</p> <p>Open-mindedness to the idea that humanists do not believe in God or in life after death but they still want to have ceremonies to mark important events and seasons in life.</p>
Engagement	<p>Ask children with a partner to think of as many ceremonies as they can. The pair who recall the most share their list with class. List of ceremonies recorded on white board. Discuss which of these celebrate extra special times in people's lives.</p>
Core Activity	<p>Explain that humanists don't think there is a God who organises their lives but they do think it is important to celebrate the special times in life.</p> <p>Compare Christian and humanist naming ceremonies. There are photographs in our Humanist Ceremonies slides.</p> <p>With a partner find three things the same about the pictures and three things that are different.</p> <p>Watch snippets of the humanist video of a naming ceremony. https://understandinghumanism.org.uk/films/?film=N9C49urGdY4&postID=406</p> <p>The children could write their wishes for a child at a naming ceremony and place on twigs brought into the classroom, they could act out a naming ceremony, or they could recall story of Sleeping Beauty (relevant pictures are on the ceremony PowerPoint) and write the wish they would give as a good fairy for a baby.</p>
Plenary	<p>Humanist ceremonies are very personal and flexible. The form of words is not written down in an official book. People are trained by Humanists UK to provide a very professional and caring approach.</p>
Key questions for this session	<p>Do Humanists have celebrations? Do they have to go to a special building for these? Why do they think it is important to have celebrations?</p>

Lesson plan: How do Humanists celebrate important events and life stages? (KS2)

Intended learning outcomes	Core concepts: rites of passage, birth, death, relationships, family, beliefs about life after death, Christmas, Darwin Day, Remembrance Day. Open-mindedness to the idea that humanists do not believe in God or in life after death but they still want to have ceremonies to mark important events and seasons in life.
Engagement	Pupils can watch 'What is a humanist ceremony?' narrated by Stephen Fry.
Core Activity	<p>There are lots of activities here on the Understanding Humanism website.</p> <p>Pupils might enjoy thinking about how a humanist ceremony might differ from a religious ceremony. Where would it take place, who would lead the ceremony, what activities would be included in the ceremony?</p> <p>Pupils might enjoy designing a ceremony without any religious elements. This could be a wedding, a naming ceremony for a new baby, a funeral, a coming of age ceremony (see interesting fact below). What are the advantages of designing a non-religious ceremony? Are there any disadvantages?</p> <p>Ask pupils what might a humanist want to celebrate at Christmas? Many humanists celebrate Christmas although they may consider it to be a midwinter festival which is an opportunity to cheer ourselves up in the depths of winter with food, friends, family, gifts, and decorations.</p> <p>Interesting fact: many teenagers in Norway have a 'coming of age' ceremony which is a humanist equivalent of confirmation or Bar mitzvah/Bat mitzvah. The ceremony takes place in City Hall in Oslo. What is the value of having such a ceremony? Could it be introduced in this country?</p> <p>Interesting fact: In Scotland, there are now more humanist weddings than Church of Scotland weddings. In England, the law hasn't yet changed to allow humanist weddings to be legally recognised but change is expected soon. The law has recently changed in Northern Ireland to allow for humanist weddings. Ask pupils to consider why humanist weddings are becoming more popular (the couple can make it very personal to them, they can choose the location and the words to be used, it affirms their humanist beliefs).</p> <p>Many humanists celebrate Darwin Day to mark the birth of Charles Darwin. This often takes the form of a communal lunch plus a talk and discussion about science, evolution etc.</p> <p>Some humanists take part in their local Remembrance Service whereas others have set up a separate and completely non-religious remembrance event. Dorset Humanists take part in the Bournemouth Remembrance Service alongside Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Talking point: is it better for humanists to join in with a religious service or to have a separate, non-religious ceremony?</p>
Plenary	<p>Emphasise the points that humanists do not believe in God or in life after death but they still want to mark important life events.</p> <p>Humanist ceremonies are very personal and flexible. The form of words is not written down in an official book. People are trained by Humanists UK to provide a very professional and caring approach.</p>
Key questions	What are the advantages/disadvantages of humanist as opposed to religious ceremonies? Why are humanist ceremonies becoming increasingly popular? Do humanists celebrate Christmas?

Lesson plan: How do Humanists try to make the world a better place? (KS1 and Foundation) and What difference does being a Humanist make to people? (KS1)

Intended learning outcomes	<p>Core concepts: care for the environment and animals, helping other people, responsibility</p> <p>Open-mindedness to the idea that humanists do not believe that God is in charge of the world. Humanists believe that humans have responsibility for the world and other people.</p>
Engagement	<p>Sing a familiar cheerful song such as 'If you're happy and you know it clap your hands'. At the end quickly discuss how singing songs can cheer you up when you are a bit down. Humanists try to make an effort to make themselves as well as other people happy. They also try to look after our world and animals. It is their responsibility.</p>
Core Activity	<p>Recap that humanists don't believe in a God who gives the world rules to live by. They believe in thinking for themselves about how others feel and what is good for the world.</p> <p>Play the Statement Game where children are challenged to consider carefully how their actions affect themselves and others.</p> <p>Or (Key Stage 1) show a clip on plastic in the ocean https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73sGgmZoMBQ</p> <p>Ask children, who have one and are willing, to show contents of their lunch box to others; or</p> <p>Show children a normal packed lunch of say sandwiches in a plastic bag, yogurt wrapped cereal bar, packet of crisps etc. Ask children what they think happens to this plastic. How does it get into the ocean? What they can do to help.</p> <p>In groups children take some paper, plastic bag, piece of bread and a yogurt pot and place in water. Write their predictions what they think will happen to each one in an hour, by the next day. Look at results and discuss how it is important not to throw plastic away when they are outside and also ask for suggestion as to how they might personally use less.</p>
Plenary	<p>Ask children if they think that it is just humanists feel they need to look after the world and make themselves and others happy. Stress that while most people try to do these things, it is part of being a humanist to live life for the general good because they themselves know it is right. Also perhaps stress we are looking after a world that doesn't belong to us or a God, but if we spoil it we won't be able to continue living happily here.</p>
Key questions for this session	<p>How can we be responsible for our own actions? How can we care for the world? How can we help other people? Are humanists different from any other groups of people i.e. Christians who are trying to do good?</p>

Lesson plan: How do Humanists try to make the world a better place? (KS2)

Intended learning outcomes	<p>Core concepts: Fairness, care for the environment and animals, science and technology</p> <p>Open-mindedness to the idea that humanists do not believe that God is in charge of the world or that he will intervene at some point to make the world into a paradise. Humanists believe that the future of the world is largely in human hands. They do not believe that we will go to heaven or hell after death.</p>
Engagement	<p>You could ask pupils to list problems in school and then the main problems in the world today. Which problems are the most important?</p>
Core Activity	<p>Pupils can watch The Life You Can Save in 3 minutes by Peter Singer and evaluate its message.</p> <p>Pupils might like to investigate the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and then imagine how they would spend \$38 billion to make the world a better place such as eradicating disease, helping refugees, or responding to natural disasters. What would their priorities be? How could they ensure that the money wasn't misused? What would be their measures of success? Would they target one main problem, or lots of different problems?</p> <p>Pupils could consider the differences between a religious approach to making the world a better place and a humanist one. For example, a religious approach might involve prayer, converting people to a religion, loving other people and engaging in charitable works. A humanist approach would probably emphasise the role of government, technology, and rational planning.</p> <p>Pupils could think about people who have made the world a better place such as Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, and Malala Yousafzai. How did they make the world a better place? Can we learn from their examples?</p> <p>Pupils might like to investigate the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and decide which ones are most important.</p>
Plenary	<p>Humanists do not believe in prayer or that God will ultimately intervene in world affairs. Humanists believe that humans are largely responsible for the future of the world and that we should use our skills, technology, and reason to make the world a better place.</p> <p>Humanists do good because they are humans, not because they are humanists. Lots of humanists are engaged in good works but they don't necessarily do it in the name of Humanism.</p>
Key questions for this session	<p>What are the differences and similarities between a religious and a humanist approach to making the world a better place? Can we put our faith in humans to make the world a better place or should we put our faith in God?</p>

Lesson plan: What do Humanists believe about how the world began? (KS1)

Intended learning outcomes	<p>Core concepts: universe, big bang, age of the earth, creation, evidence.</p> <p>Open-mindedness to the idea that humanists do not believe that God created the world. Humanists believe that the world and the universe came into being by natural processes as revealed by science.</p>
Engagement	<p>Ask children to try and write the number 1 billion. Demonstrate this for them. Show them slides 13 and 14 of How Did the Universe Begin?. Introduce the idea that humanists don't believe that a God created the world. It happened naturally; perhaps compare to a seed growing.</p> <p>Show How Did the Universe Begin? slides. Scientists now believe that the world exploded into being nearly 14 billion years ago and then gradually over time it changed and life began. This was called the Big Bang. Humanists don't believe there is a God who made the world so how do we know this?</p>
Core Activity	<p>Show children a collection of fossils or pictures of some fossils. How did this help scientists find out about the world? Prompt children into starting to understanding that scientists discovered this knowledge by using evidence e.g. fossils and asking questions.</p> <p>Use the STEM website (see resources section in this manual) for a variety of videos explaining how fossils are formed and also for activities for making children's own model fossils.</p> <p>Stress that when dinosaurs roamed the earth there were no people. Scientists now are able to find out how long ago each individual fossil was formed. They have found fossils of humans and these were made millions of years after dinosaur fossils.</p>
Plenary	<p>Humanists do not believe that God created the world.</p> <p>Ask the children to explain to a friend how scientists discover how the world came to be.</p>
Key questions for this session	<p>How do we find out how the world and humans came into being? Do humanists think that a God created people, the world and animals?</p>

Lesson plan: What do Humanists believe about how the world began? (KS2)

Intended learning outcomes	<p>Core concepts: universe, multiverse, big bang, age of the earth, creation</p> <p>Open-mindedness to the idea that humanists do not believe that God created the world. Humanists believe that the world and the universe came into being by natural processes as revealed by science.</p>
Engagement	Tell the person next to you what you have learnt about how the world began.
Core Activity	<p>You could show pupils one or more of these short clips about creation myths and then the short video about the Big Bang.</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLHB_hNk42g Christian/Islam</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTy49JlqJZE Egyptian</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6C4MoDIndug Zulu African</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYkdDniQJyw Big Bang</p> <p>Based on clips they have seen, pupils might enjoy discussing what they believe about how the world began. What are the main differences between a religious view and a scientific view? Are both of them true or is one account a story rather than factual? What happened before the Big Bang?</p>
Plenary	<p>Humanists do not believe that God created the world.</p> <p>Humanists do not have all the answers to difficult questions such as how did life begin or what happened before the Big Bang. Humanists wait patiently for science to work on these difficult problems.</p>
Key questions for this session	How do humanists account for the origin of the world if they do not believe in God? Are religion and science opposed to each other or can a scientist also be a Christian, a Muslim, a Jew etc?

Lesson plan: What difference does being a Humanist make to people? (KS2)

Intended learning outcomes	<p>Core concepts: make the most of this one life, belief that humans are responsible for making the world a better place.</p> <p>Humanists believe they should make a positive effort to help other people.</p>
Engagement	<p>Ask children to consider whether people have to believe in God to do good actions. You could show six pictures of people and ask if children can tell what they believe by looking at them. Two or three could be wearing religious clothing or symbols and the others could be of people doing helpful things such as collecting for charity, giving up their seat on a bus, or digging a well in an African village.</p>
Core Activity	<p>Request a humanist visitor to say what they positively do to try and be a good humanist or read the personal accounts in the 'Why I am a Humanist' section in this manual. Invite the children to identify the key points after each section.</p> <p>Request a humanist visitor to talk about humanist groups and what they do or read the Humanist Groups section in this manual and then ask children to respond to questions like this: What do humanist groups do? Why would someone want to join a humanist group?</p> <p>Pupils could learn about humanist schools in Uganda: http://www.ugandahumanistschoolstrust.org/</p> <p>Pupils could learn about the first Humanist chaplain: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/health-45221945/the-first-humanist-lead-chaplain-in-the-nhs</p> <p>Then discuss how these people actively live a humanist life.</p>
Plenary	<p>Millions of people are not affiliated to a religion and yet they live by good moral values and they try to live a good life. Many people, on hearing about Humanism for the first time, say they have been a humanist for years but didn't know it was called 'Humanism'.</p> <p>Humanists like to identify as humanists because this is a positive statement of values and beliefs, rather than just a negative statement about lack of belief in God.</p>
Key questions for this session	<p>Why do people identify as humanists? What is the purpose of a humanist group? What things do humanists care about?</p>

Lesson plan: What do Humanists believe happens to them when they die? (KS2)

Note: Humanists are mindful of the fact that this could be a sensitive subject especially for younger children. Some children may be told that a deceased relative or even a pet has 'gone to heaven' and it may be upsetting for them to think that this is not true. However, a core humanist belief is that this is our one life so this question should be tackled honestly and sensitively. Humanists put a comforting emphasis on the life that a person has led and the legacy they have left behind.

Intended learning outcomes	<p>Core concepts: life, death, life-after-death, meaning of life</p> <p>Open-mindedness to the idea that humanists accept that death is the end of life and not the doorway to another life.</p>
Engagement	You could ask pupils to state their beliefs about life after death – whether they believe in it or not. What about reincarnation?
Core Activity	<p>Pupils could watch "What should we think about death?" narrated by Stephen Fry – part of the 'That's Humanism!' series.</p> <p>For young children we suggest an activity on memories. The teacher tells a story about a relative of theirs who has died and their happy memories. Talk about a famous person the class has studied and how their deeds good or bad live on. Suggest another person for the class to think about. Try to avoid children talking about people in their own families who have died as this could become very sensitive.</p> <p>Pupils could think about people we remember years or centuries after their death. What do we remember them for? They could then think about their own legacy and what they would like to be remembered for. Would it be a consolation to know that their work and influence will live on?</p> <p>Pupils could think about the different ways in which we remember the dead, including the Mexican Day of the Dead. (Click here for a short YouTube film)</p>
Plenary	<p>Humanists do not believe in life after death. They believe that when the brain dies so does the mind. They do not believe in the soul. They believe that birth and death are like two bookends and the bit in between is our slice of eternity. We must make the most of life and not waste the time that we have. Our atoms are recycled back into the universe and the work we did in life and the influence we had on others may live on indefinitely, like ripples in a pond.</p>
Key questions for this session	What do humanists think about when someone dies?

Lesson plan: Do Humanists believe life has a purpose? (KS2)

Intended learning outcomes	<p>Core concepts: life, purpose, meaning</p> <p>Open-mindedness to the idea that humanists think that life is meaningful and purposeful even though it doesn't go on forever</p>
Engagement	You could ask pupils to state their beliefs about the purpose of life. Why are we here?
Core Activity	<p>Pupils could think about all the ways in which people make their life meaningful and worth living. What might make people think that life was not worth living? Can they think of famous people whose lives were particularly meaningful in terms of the good effect they had on the world?</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>Nelson Mandela who helped to end apartheid in South Africa</p> <p>Michael Faraday, the 'Father of Electricity' https://www.coolkidfacts.com/michael-faraday-facts</p> <p>Civil rights activist Rosa Parks https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/discover/history/general-history/rosa-parks/</p> <p>Children could spend some time thinking about a plan for their life and how they might plan to achieve their goals.</p>
Plenary	Humanists do not believe in a God-given purpose to life. They believe that it is up to us to make our lives meaningful and purposeful by choosing worthwhile goals and working towards them. Humanists believe that we can live purposeful and fulfilling lives even though we know that life is going to end at some point. We should not waste our time but make the most of the time we have.
Key questions for this session	What is the meaning of life? What are the different answers to this question given by humanists and religious people?

Big Question 1: Is there a God? (KS3)

Intended learning outcomes	Core concepts: Theism, atheism, agnosticism Critical awareness of different worldviews and prejudice based on ignorance (for example, the belief that 'atheists are bad people')
Engagement	You could ask pupils to stand and arrange themselves in the room along a continuum of belief from 'I'm certain there is a God' to 'I'm certain there is no God' with degrees of uncertainty in between. Pupils could then discuss their reasons for where they have situated themselves along the line.
Core Activity	<p>Pupils could evaluate the invisible pencil eating monster thought experiment or Russell's teapot.</p> <p>Pupils could evaluate the arguments which philosophers and theologians have given for believing in God.</p> <p>Design Argument – God must have created all the amazing things we see in the world today such as the eye. Evolution has another explanation for this.</p> <p>Origin of the Universe – God must have started the Big Bang. Atheists would ask 'Who made God?' Physicists think it may have been a 'quantum fluctuation'.</p> <p>Religious Experience – people claim to experience God. Neuroscientists may claim that these experiences can be explained by brain activity such as hallucinations.</p> <p>Miracles – Christians believe that Jesus rose from the dead. Atheists would claim that we can't rely on gospel reports written two thousand years ago.</p> <p>Problem of evil – atheists would claim that the world as we experience it is compatible with the claim that there is no God – disease, earthquakes, asteroids and so on. Some Christians claim that God made the world perfect but it was all spoilt by human sin.</p> <p>Pupils could consider Richard Dawkins' 'spectrum of possibilities' and where they are on this line:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong theist. 100% probability of God. 2. Very high probability but short of 100%. "I don't know for certain, but I strongly believe in God and live my life on the assumption that he is there." 3. Leaning towards theism. Higher than 50% but not very high. "I am very uncertain, but I am inclined to believe in God." 4. Completely impartial. Exactly 50%. "God's existence and non-existence are equally probable." 5. Leaning towards atheism. Lower than 50% but not very low. "I do not know whether God exists but I'm inclined to be sceptical." 6. Very low probability, but short of zero. "I don't know for certain but I think God is very improbable, and I live my life on the assumption that he is not there." 7. Strong atheist. "I know there is no God, with the same conviction as Jung knows there is one."
Plenary	Most people believe in God or a 'higher power' of some sort but millions of people do not believe. Some atheists also call themselves 'humanists' because they are committed to living good lives and having positive moral values.
Key questions for this session	Why do people believe/disbelieve in God? What are the implications for how people live their lives?

Big Question 2: Why is there suffering? (KS3)

Intended learning outcomes	<p>Core concepts: suffering, meaning, theodicy (theological explanations for suffering).</p> <p>An appreciation of how different religions and philosophical traditions respond to human suffering. Human causes of suffering as well as natural causes. Critical evaluation of the purpose and efficacy of prayer including scepticism about its effectiveness. Critical evaluation of Christian theodicy.</p>
Engagement	<p>Pupils could watch the YouTube video The "Evil God Challenge" by Stephen Law. The Evil God Challenge demands explanations for why belief in an all-powerful all-good God is significantly more reasonable than belief in an all-powerful all-evil god. Pupils can discuss their responses to this thought experiment.</p>
Core Activity	<p>Pupils could learn about the Boxing Day tsunami in 2004 which is believed to be the deadliest tsunami in history, killing more than 230,000 people across 14 countries. Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams wrote: 'How can you believe in a God who permits suffering on this scale?'. 'Prayer, he admits, provides no "magical solutions" and concludes that, faced with such a terrible challenge to their faith, Christians must focus on "passionate engagement with the lives that are left".' (<i>Telegraph</i> 2 Jan 2005) This response concedes a lot of ground to Humanism. Humanists do not believe in God, prayer or 'magical solutions'. Humanists believe that the rational respond to natural disaster is disaster relief and rebuilding communities. Pupils could discuss their own responses to the disaster and other natural disasters such as volcanoes, asteroid strikes, and epidemics. Can all of these be attributed to the 'Fall' of man and human sin? Why would God have made a world of such suffering?</p> <p>Pupils could watch the YouTube video Man's Search For Meaning by Viktor Frankl (Wisdom for Life). How did Victor Frankl preserve his dignity and humanity in a concentration camp? Pupils could discuss their own attitudes to suffering.</p> <p>Pupils could learn about the Chinese famine of 1960 in which up to 40 million people died (Hans Rosling, <i>Factfulness</i> (2018) p55). This was essentially a man-made disaster. It was caused by a combination of factors including a bad harvest, poor government advice, and local authorities not wanting to admit failure. The food that was produced was sent to the wrong place. Pupils could reflect on how humans cause suffering by their own stupidity or wickedness. What does this say about humanity?</p> <p>Pupils could learn about heroic individuals who have save a huge number of lives by their discoveries such as Karl Landsteiner who discovered blood groups. This has save a billion lives. Howard Florey carried out the first ever clinical trials in 1941 of penicillin at the Radcliffe Infirmary in Oxford. Penicillin has saved nearly 100 million lives. What do these examples say about humanity?</p> <p>More examples in <i>Enlightenment Now</i> (2018) Steven Pinker p64</p>
Plenary	<p>Religions try to explain suffering as part of God's will. Humanists do not believe in God and they think that we should try to eradicate suffering.</p>
Key questions for this session	<p>Is suffering part of God's will? Does suffering make it more difficult to believe in a good God?</p>

Big Question 3: What happens when we die? (KS3)

Intended learning outcomes	<p>Core concepts: life, death, life-after-death, meaning, mortality</p> <p>Open-mindedness to the idea that humanists accept that death is the end of life and not the doorway to another life.</p>
Engagement	<p>You could ask pupils to state their beliefs about life after death – whether they believe in it or not. What about reincarnation? What about ghosts and other paranormal phenomena?</p>
Core Activity	<p>Pupils could watch "What should we think about death?" narrated by Stephen Fry – part of the 'That's Humanism!' series.</p> <p>Pupils could try to describe what eternal life might be like. If you died and met your relatives what age would they be and would they be restored to perfect health? Would there be any babies or children in heaven? What about animals? Would there be any work or would it be like an endless holiday?</p> <p>Pupils could think about what effect different beliefs have on the way people live their lives. For example, if you believe in life after death how will this belief affect how you live? If you do not believe in life after death how will this belief affect how you live? What are the advantages/disadvantages to not believing in life after death?</p> <p>Pupils could think about people whom we remember years or centuries after their death. What do we remember them for? They could then think about their own legacy and what they would like to be remembered for. Would it be a consolation to know that their work and influence will live on?</p> <p>Pupils could think about the different ways in which we remember the dead, including the Mexican Day of the Dead.</p> <p>Pupils could think about paranormal phenomena and possible explanations for it such as dreams and hallucinations. Can the brain produce voices in the head? Or do voices in the head prove that there are spirit beings who can communicate with humans?</p> <p>Pupils could learn about Near Death Experiences and the different explanations for these.</p> <p>Why is life after death a feature of most religions? Why do humanists not believe in life after death? What happens to the brain or mind when people die? Is the brain like a radio that receives its content from some other source? How could the contents of your mind be saved and stored outside the brain? What about people with dementia or brain damage? Is there a soul? Can science find the 'soul'? Could science one day find the cure for death? What would it be like to live for ever?</p> <p>More information here</p>
Plenary	<p>Humanists do not believe in life after death. They believe that when the brain dies so does the mind. They do not believe in the soul. They believe that birth and death are like two bookends and the bit in between is our slice of eternity. We must make the most of life and not waste the time that we have. Our atoms are recycled back into the universe and the work we did in life and the influence we had on others may live on indefinitely, like ripples in a pond.</p>
Key questions for this session	<p>Why do humanists not believe in life after death? How do humanists cope with this belief emotionally? What difference does it make to their lives?</p>

Big Question 4: Is social justice possible? (KS3)

Intended learning outcomes	<p>Core concepts: equality, inequality, redistribution of wealth, Gini coefficient, corruption, religion, fatalism, institutions, infrastructure</p> <p>Critical awareness of the many factors which cause wealth and poverty. Awareness of possible differences between a humanist approach and a religious approach.</p>
Engagement	<p>Pupils could say what they think causes inequality and the vast differences between rich and poor. They could debate whether they think inequality is inevitable or whether governments could do something about it.</p>
Core Activity	<p>Pupils could watch Why Some Countries Are Poor and Others Rich published by School of Life. They could be invited (perhaps in competitive teams) to identify as many factors as they can that make countries rich or poor: Institutions, corruption, clan-based thinking, culture, religion, geography (tropical regions), poor soil, poor climate, the tsetse fly which makes animals sleepy, tropical diseases including cholera, malaria, yellow fever, trachoma, ebola, TB, dengue fever, leprosy and so on, temperature (16 degrees C is ideal), landlocked countries, lack of navigable rivers, natural resources, coltan (a mineral used in all mobile phones and mainly found in the Democratic Republic of Congo). What does the video suggest are the 2 personal lessons? (Modesty about the reasons for our own success and Sympathy for the enormous difficulties faced by other countries).</p> <p>Pupils could be invited to design a country, Richland, from scratch and make it as rich as possible. Pupils should also consider the possible downsides of living in Richland such as stress and overwork. Then watch How to Make a Country Rich published by School of Life. What are the 8 core requirements for Richland? Military security and law and order, lack of corruption, low amounts of red tape (regulation), well-educated labour force, good infrastructure, fair markets, contracts, corporation tax. What are the possible downsides? Being defined by your job and achievement, everyone is anxious, rampant consumerism, lots of bad news, not much spare time, following fashion and celebrities, suicide, and bad weather!</p> <p>In Matthew 26:11 Jesus says “The poor you will always have with you”. Does this mean that Christians are fatalistic about poverty? Is this actually true anyway? According to World Bank data, extreme poverty will be eliminated by 2026 (source: Our World in Data, graph printed in <i>Enlightenment Now</i> (2018) by Steven Pinker, page 87).</p>
Plenary	<p>Highlight differences but also common ground between religious people and humanists. Some religious people, particularly in very poor countries, may think that poverty is inevitable and that we should look forward to life after death. Many religious people think that we should try to alleviate poverty but they may think that prayer and charity are the main solutions. Humanists do not believe in God or life after death. Humanists think that technological and political solutions are the best remedy for poverty and inequality.</p>
Key questions for this session	<p>What causes wealth and what causes poverty? Can anything be done about the gap? What are the differences and common ground between religious people and humanists?</p>

Big Question 5: Does the environment matter? (KS3)

Intended learning outcomes	<p>Core concepts: climate change, pollution, oceans, soil, sustainability, economic growth and steady state economics, species extinction, rainforests, stewardship</p> <p>Critical awareness of differences and common ground between a religious approach and a humanist approach to the environment.</p>
Engagement	<p>Pupils could be invited to identify problems with the environment such as plastic in the oceans and possible causes. Is there a fundamental contradiction between our consumerist lifestyles and the capacity of the environment to sustain this?</p>
Core Activity	<p>Pupils could investigate the Earth Charter and analyse and evaluate its recommendations.</p> <p>Pupils could investigate the 17 Global Goals for sustainable development (United Nations Development Programme) for the years 2016-2030. Which of these specially focus on the environment? What are the main priorities? What are the practical actions needed?</p> <p>Pupils could investigate Humanists for a Better World which provides a network for UK humanists who'd like to share information and take individual and/or collective action on international ethical and sustainability issues such as peace and international co-operation, global justice, climate change and the environment.</p> <p>Pupils could watch Sustainability explained through animation and discuss how to apply the four principles. Reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and heavy metals, reduce our dependence on synthetic chemicals, reduce our destruction of nature, ensure that we are not stopping people globally from meeting their needs (for example, if people do not have access to clean electricity they may burn wood which destroys forests and contributes to air pollution).</p> <p>Pupils could discuss how technology might help us to reduce our impact on the environment. For example, is technology such as the smart phone helping to reduce our impact on the earth? A smartphone combines a number of functions which in the past would have required separate pieces of equipment such as a camera, telephone, maps, CD player, torch, encyclopaedia, address book, diary, calculator, video camera, audio recording machine and so on. Pupils could try and think of future technologies or simpler lifestyles which could reduce our impact on the environment.</p> <p>More information here</p>
Plenary	<p>Humanists tend to be optimistic about humanity and the possibilities of science and technology to solve environmental problems. Some religious people may think that we are heading for an apocalypse and that God will intervene to rescue the righteous believers.</p>
Key questions for this session	<p>Are there differences between a religious approach and a humanist approach to the environment? Do humanists have too much faith in science and technology? Do religious people have too little faith in science and technology?</p>

Why am I a humanist? Two personal responses

In this section, two humanists give some personal responses to this and other questions. Stop after each section and ask the children to identify the key points.

Cathy Silman or David Warden would be happy to visit your school. For further information about Humanists UK's school speakers programme please visit: <http://understandinghumanism.org.uk/school-speakers/>. If you would like to request a visit, please fill in the 'Request a School Speaker' form on the website and include one of our names on your request. The website also has an extensive range of teaching resources about Humanism to support teachers.

Cathy Silman, Secretary of Dorset Humanists

What do humanists believe? (KS2)

I was brought up by parents who were humanist and was taught that there was no God and this was the only life I was going to have so it was very important I made the most of it. I was also told that curiosity about the world was the way that its creation and the existence of people could be explained. All through my childhood I was encouraged to read and ask questions. But as a little girl, 50 years ago, I attended the local church school where I felt very left out because all my friends went to Sunday school to learn about being a Christian. My teachers all said I had to be good because there was a God who was watching me to see how well I behaved. I became very puzzled and didn't know whether to believe my teachers or my parents.

Then my sister helped me to start to think for myself. One night there was a terrifying thunderstorm that reminded me of a story about an ancient God called Thor who used a mighty hammer in the sky. People used to believe this was the thunder. My sister pointed out that Mum had just been telling us that thunder was really just electricity bumping around in the clouds. I thought about this and the scientific solution seemed the most likely. I then thought about all the other stories I had heard about different gods and decided that as there were so many different ones they couldn't all be right. Which led me to believe they were just stories and my parents had been right all along.

How do humanists decide what is right and wrong? (KS2)

My parents were very insistent that I grew up to think carefully about everything I did and to try and consider whether it was good for me and everyone around me. I hadn't heard of the Golden Rule but I did read an old fashioned book called 'The Water Babies' that had a fairy in it called 'Do as you would be done by' and I thought that this is really what my mum was trying to tell me to think about.

What do humanists believe happens to them when they die? (KS2)

As a child I was encouraged to ask questions and when my Granny and Grandad both died within about three weeks of each other, I really wanted to know where they were. My mum explained that they were no longer physically anywhere but lived on in our memories. She then asked me to draw and write some memories of them while she did the same. We put them into a book which we took out everytime I felt sad. We would talk about the day Grandad took me to the fair, or Granny had showed me the doll in the secret cupboard by the bath. My mum said they were alive still in our memories and as I

got older she explained that they had passed on their genes to me and so in some ways they lived on in me.

How do humanists celebrate important events and life stages? (KS2)

When my sister and I grew up we both got married in registry offices. They were just an office where you very quickly agreed that you wanted to marry the man who was to be in your husband. We were only in the office for about 5 minutes. There was no chance to make it into a real ceremony that meant anything. I just wish I could have had a humanist ceremony, as you can now, choose the music, the place, and the vows to make it a really special day. (Also enjoy dressing up if you so wish).

About ten years after my sister married my mum died and instead of having a service in a church to say goodbye we had a humanist ceremony where we read out loud poems and parts of stories my mum had loved, listened to her favourite music, and people had a chance to talk about their memories of her. My sister was so impressed by this she became a humanist celebrant, taking weddings and funerals for about twenty years.

What difference does being a humanist make to people and how do humanists try to make the world a better place? (KS2)

I feel I have been very lucky in my life as I had a good education, loving parents, great children and enough money to live comfortably. It has always worried me that others are not so lucky and felt as a humanist I needed to try in a small way to do something about this. When my children grew up I had the opportunity to work with teachers, who hadn't had much education themselves, in Namibia in Africa, teaching children who find learning difficult. I was sent by VSO as a volunteer which meant I was not paid but given a place to live and just enough money to buy food. Now I am older, I cook for people with nowhere to live and also volunteer for an organisation called Citizens Advice that helps people with problems. I don't do any of these things because I feel a God is telling me to. I do them because I can't call myself a Humanist without making a positive effort to help others now that I have the time and money to do so.

David Warden, Chairman of Dorset Humanists

What do humanists believe? (KS2)

I went to a Christian Sunday School from the age of about four or five. We heard stories from the Bible and sang choruses. Because I was very ill as a baby with Coeliac disease (which means I am allergic to anything made with wheat and gluten) my parents were too busy to have me christened (baptised). So when I was seven years old I asked to be christened and all my relatives came to the service and I was given a Bible by my godfather. When I was about eight years old I joined the church choir and later on I joined the youth club. When I was about eleven or twelve I made a personal decision to follow Jesus. After doing my A levels I decided to go to university to study to become a vicar in the Church of England. So up until the age of twenty-three I believed in God, Jesus, and the Bible. But when I went to university I started to have doubts about religion and I decided to become a humanist instead of being a Christian. I felt that I could only believe something on the basis of evidence rather than faith.

- Humanists believe that the world and everything in it has come into being as a result of natural processes. Humanists do not believe in a God or life after death.
- A humanist believes that we have one life and that we should make the most of the one life we have.
- A humanist believes that although there are lots of things wrong with the world, humans are responsible for making the world a better place.
- A humanist believes that we have made wonderful progress with things like hospitals and clean water and electricity and that we can continue to make progress in the future.
- A humanist believes that when we die we live on in the memories of those we loved and also by the way in which we contributed to the world.

How do humanists decide what is right and wrong? (KS2)

Most people know the difference between right and wrong because we are taught the difference between right and wrong from a very young age. We also know instinctively when something is unfair. For example, if you had some sweets to share and you kept most of them for yourself, your friends would soon think that you were a selfish person and they wouldn't want to be friends with you. We also do not like to see other things suffering. For example, if you saw a bird or another animal which was hurt you would probably want to try and look after it and make it feel better.

Sometimes we have to think more carefully about the difference between right and wrong. For example, it is OK to steal if no one is looking? Or is it OK to tell a lie if no one finds out? Humanists believe that we should always try to do the right thing at all times because otherwise the world could become a horrible place in which to live. This is called following your conscience.

Just imagine a game of football where no one bothered to obey the rules. The game would become impossible to play. Humanists think that life is like that. We have to obey the rules if we want to be able to get on well with other people.

What do humanists believe happens to them when they die? (KS2)

Humanists have humanist funerals which celebrate the life they have lived. People are sad at humanist funerals but they do not believe that they are going to meet up again with the person who has died. Instead, they find ways to keep the memories alive such as photographs or possibly videos of the person who has died. They may keep letters or poems.

Both of my parents have died and I think about them a lot and still love them very much. They were both very old when they died (80 and 89) and I am glad they are not suffering anymore. I think of the lives they led and how much they loved me and my brothers and sister.

How do humanists celebrate important events and life stages? (KS2)

I was christened as a child because I was brought up to be a Christian. When I got married the ceremony took place at Bournemouth Town Hall. It was a very short ceremony conducted by a registrar and the room was so small that one of our guests had

to leave for health and safety reasons! It would have been much better to have a humanist wedding which we could have planned ourselves. We are still waiting for the government to allow humanist celebrants to be able to officially marry people in England and Wales. It is already possible in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

What difference does being a humanist make to people and how do humanists try to make the world a better place? (KS2)

The main difference for me is believing that this is the one life we have. Humanists do not believe that we are going to live forever and so it becomes extremely important to humanists to make the most of this one life.

Humanists try to live good lives. For example, you cannot call yourself a humanist if you think that the purpose of life is just to live for yourself and not care about other people.

I try to make the world a better place by running a humanist group where people can gather together and learn about the world and how we can solve problems by applying our intelligence and problem-solving ability. We have raised thousands of pounds for young people who are homeless, and also for children who have experienced the death of someone in their family. I am also training to be a counsellor so that I can help people with depression and other mental health problems.

Humanist Groups – why do they exist and what do they do?

Humanist groups exist to help and support people live good lives without religion. There are many humanist groups in this country and around the world. In the UK, many of them are affiliated to Humanists UK which is the national humanist organisation in London.

Very few humanist groups have their own buildings. Most of them hire community centres or rooms in hotels for their meetings.

Humanist groups do not have a vicar or a rabbi or imam. They usually have a chairman or chairwoman who presides over the meetings.

A humanist meeting usually consists of an interesting talk followed by a discussion. Talks can be on a wide range of subjects. Here are some examples:

1. The life of Charles Darwin who discovered the theory of evolution
2. The overpopulation problem
3. The international fund for animal welfare (IFAW)
4. Dinosaurs and the evolution of birds (are birds a type of dinosaur?)
5. How to cure alcoholism
6. Equality and human rights
7. Humanist Schools in Uganda
8. How to solve inequality
9. Animal rights
10. Is there life on other planets?
11. The Hubble Space Telescope
12. Leaving your body to medical science
13. Humanist Ceremonies
14. The Jurassic Coast
15. Humanist pastoral support for people in hospital or in prison

From this list, children may notice that humanists are interested in things like science, astronomy, problems that affect the whole world, human rights, animal rights, giving people the support they need and so on.

Humanist groups also arrange social events like walks and social evenings in the pub.

Some humanist groups celebrate Darwin Day on or around 12th February which is Charles Darwin's birthday.

Dorset Humanists takes part in the Bournemouth Remembrance Service every November. This shows that Humanism, Christianity, Judaism, and other religious representatives can co-operate with each other.

Humanist groups also have speakers who visit schools.

Humanist celebrants conduct meaningful ceremonies for important events in life such as birth, marriage, and when people die.

Some humanist groups have regular dialogue meetings with religious groups.

People join a humanist group because they like to meet 'like-minded people' and to learn something new and have interesting discussions and debates about important subjects.

People may also join a humanist group in order to campaign for some change in society, for example, to allow humanist celebrants to conduct legally recognised humanist marriages.

Some humanist groups take part in LGBT festivals like the Bourne Free festival in Bournemouth.

Some humanist groups raise money for worthwhile charities such as homelessness charities.

Dorset Humanists runs personal development courses such as How to be Happy and How to Make Friends.

Some universities have humanist groups for students.

Some humanist groups have humanist choirs.

Some humanist groups have non-religious pastoral support volunteers who go into hospitals and prisons to help support people. They also try to help their own members who are in need.

Further resources

Understanding Humanism Website – Humanists UK

<https://understandinghumanism.org.uk/>



Books suitable for Key Stage 1 and 2

'Older Than the Stars' Karen C. Fox

'What Mr Darwin Saw' by Mick Manning and Brita Granström

Books suitable for teachers and KS2-3

Evolution (A Ladybird Expert Book) (2017) Steve Jones

What is Humanism? How do you live without a god? and Other Big Questions for Kids (2016) Michael Rosen and Annemarie Young

What is Right and Wrong? Who Decides? Where Do Values Come From? And Other Big Questions (2018) Michael Rosen and Annemarie Young

Books suitable for teachers and KS3 and older

The Young Atheist's Handbook: Lessons for living a good life without God (2014) Alom Shaha

Humanism: A Very Short Introduction (2011) Stephen Law

The Freedom of Thought Report produced by Humanists International (formerly International Humanist and Ethical Union) records discrimination and persecution against humanists, atheists, and the non-religious, with a country-by-country assessment. Free download from iheu.org

More books for children are listed [here](#)

Videos on YouTube (KS2 and above)

[When did you decide you were a humanist?](#) A short video of people being interviewed.

"What makes something right or wrong?" Narrated by Stephen Fry - That's Humanism!

["How do you work out the difference between right and wrong?"](#) Humanists UK

"What should we think about death?" Narrated by Stephen Fry - That's Humanism!

"What is Humanism?" Humanist Society of Scotland

"Kids Ask Questions About Humanism" Hemant Mehta

[From the Big Bang to Me](#). A 7 minute film on YouTube

Sites that give ideas for activities and information about evolution and the Big Bang

<https://bbsrc.ukri.org/documents/darwin-2009-activities-pdf/>

<https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/darwin-activities-and-games-6289766>

<https://www.stem.org.uk/resources/community/collection/12648/year-6-evolution-and-inheritance>

<https://www.stem.org.uk/resources/collection/4354/primary-evolution>

The Amsterdam Declaration – the International Statement of Humanism



Humanism is the outcome of a long tradition of free thought that has inspired many of the world's great thinkers and creative artists and gave rise to science itself.

The fundamentals of modern Humanism are as follows:

1. Humanism is ethical. It affirms the worth, dignity and autonomy of the individual and the right of every human being to the greatest possible freedom compatible with the rights of others. Humanists have a duty of care to all of humanity including future generations. Humanists believe that morality is an intrinsic part of human nature based on understanding and a concern for others, needing no external sanction.
2. Humanism is rational. It seeks to use science creatively, not destructively. Humanists believe that the solutions to the world's problems lie in human thought and action rather than divine intervention. Humanism advocates the application of the methods of science and free inquiry to the problems of human welfare. But Humanists also believe that the application of science and technology must be tempered by human values. Science gives us the means but human values must propose the ends.
3. Humanism supports democracy and human rights. Humanism aims at the fullest possible development of every human being. It holds that democracy and human development are matters of right. The principles of democracy and human rights can be applied to many human relationships and are not restricted to methods of government.
4. Humanism insists that personal liberty must be combined with social responsibility. Humanism ventures to build a world on the idea of the free person responsible to society, and recognises our dependence on and responsibility for the natural world. Humanism is undogmatic, imposing no creed upon its adherents. It is thus committed to education free from indoctrination.
5. Humanism is a response to the widespread demand for an alternative to dogmatic religion. The world's major religions claim to be based on revelations fixed for all time, and many seek to impose their world-views on all of humanity. Humanism recognises that reliable knowledge of the world and ourselves arises through a continuing process of observation, evaluation and revision.
6. Humanism values artistic creativity and imagination and recognises the transforming power of art. Humanism affirms the importance of literature, music, and the visual and performing arts for personal development and fulfilment.
7. Humanism is a lifeway aiming at the maximum possible fulfilment through the cultivation of ethical and creative living and offers an ethical and rational means of addressing the challenges of our times. Humanism can be a way of life for everyone everywhere.
8. Our primary task is to make human beings aware in the simplest terms of what Humanism can mean to them and what it commits them to. By utilising free inquiry, the power of science and creative imagination for the furtherance of peace and in the service of compassion, we have confidence that we have the means to solve the problems that confront us all. We call upon all who share this conviction to associate themselves with us in this endeavour.

International Humanist and Ethical Union Congress 2002