

HUMANISM KEY STAGE 1

Key areas of understanding

- Ideas of god
- Teachings
- Responses from a believer
- Festivals and celebrations
- Place of worship

Key ideas

Ideas of god

- Humanists don't believe there is a god.
- Some believe that we can never know whether there is a god, or not.

Teachings

- Human beings are special. Some of the things that are special about humans we share with some other animals, but some things only humans have
- Special attributes include our ability to question, our ability to reason, our empathy for other humans and animals, our ideas of right and wrong and our creativity.
- Human life is valuable and rewarding, as is love and support from others.

Responses from a believer

- Human beings should be good to each other, promote happiness and avoid doing harm. One way to be happy is to make others so.
- Humans can all find different ways to be happy.
- The happy human as a symbol is often used by humanist groups to represent the celebration of life and the importance of making ourselves and others happy.

Festivals and celebrations

- Humanists do not have unique festivals, but often participate in special cultural occasions as a means to celebrate the importance of family, friendship, kindness and sharing.
- Humanists like to mark key moments in people's lives, such as births, weddings and death.
- Humanist naming ceremonies celebrate the arrival of a new baby, where family and friends make promises of love and support.

Places of worship

- No particular places of worship, Humanists are happy to gather and celebrate anywhere.
- Humanists value the beauty of the natural world, and appreciate feats of human achievement and creativity.

Humanist views are found in every culture and country in the world.

On <http://understandinghumanism.org.uk> teachers can find a wide range of resources relevant to the above themes and discussions, including lesson plans, classroom activities, presentations, films, and humanist perspectives.

HUMANISM KEY STAGE 2

Key areas of understanding

- Ideas of god
- Teachings
- Responses from a believer
- Festivals and celebrations
- Place of worship

Key ideas

Ideas of god

- Humanists don't believe in a god or gods because they find no supporting evidence.
- Humanists would either consider themselves atheists or agnostics.
- Humanism is more than just atheism/agnosticism - a humanist has many other positive beliefs about how best to live life.
- Humanists believe we can lead good and happy lives without divine support.

Teachings

- Humanists base their beliefs about the world on scientific evidence; they believe science is the best method for understanding the world.
- The universe is billions of years old and began from a natural event.
- All life on Earth including human beings evolved from a common ancestor
- This is the one and only life we have, we should make the most of it - the time to be happy is now.
- Humanists have no sacred text or divine authority to guide them
- Rewards and punishments should not be our only motivation to do good.
- Empathy (the Golden Rule) and reason (considering the consequences and what might happen if everyone acted the same way) can help us decide how we should act.
- The importance of practical action – 'actions speak louder than words'

Responses from a believer

- It is important for individuals to ask critical questions, and to consider alternatives to widely-held beliefs.
- Respect different people's choices and different ways of life.
- Be willing to change their beliefs when faced with new evidence.
- Celebrate humanity, companionship, curiosity and both intellectual and artistic creativity.
- Appreciation of the senses.
- Appreciating and taking pleasure in the way we experience the world around us, especially the people we meet and our environment.
- Working to create a better society and a better world.

Festivals and celebrations

- Humanists value and celebrate human life, marking key moments such as births, weddings and death.
- Humanist weddings celebrate when two people, of any gender, agree to spend the rest of their lives together.
- Love and support needs to come from other people in our lives.
- Humanists do not have unique festivals, but often participate in special cultural occasions as a means to celebrate the importance of family, friendship, community and kindness.

Places of worship

- No particular places of worship, Humanists are happy to gather and celebrate anywhere.
- Humanists show appreciation and spread awareness of aspects of the world they consider worthy, to ensure nothing is taken for granted.

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HUMANISM KEY STAGE 3

Key areas of understanding

- Ideas of god
- Teachings
- Responses from a believer
- Festivals and celebrations
- Place of worship

Key ideas

Ideas of god

- Humanism is a positive philosophy of life. It is more than just being an agnostic or an atheist.
- Humanists would disregard claims of revelations or miracles
- Humanists don't believe in the supernatural power of prayer but will reflect and contemplate on situations and use that to help guide their behaviour or motivate themselves

Teachings

- Humanists base their beliefs about the world on scientific evidence; they believe science is the best method for understanding the world.
- The universe is billions of years old and began from a natural event.
- All life on Earth including human beings evolved from a common ancestor
- Naturalism, rationalism and scepticism are held as important ideas by Humanists
- Given the absence of any discernible purpose to the universe, humans have the right and responsibility to make their own lives meaningful
- Death is part of the natural cycle of life, we have one life and we should make the most of it.
- Something of us can survive our death (atoms, genes, ideas, memories, achievements, etc).
- Human morality is a natural capacity, which has evolved to help us live together in a society.
- All life has value and should be respected.
- We have the freedom to live how we wish as long as we try to avoid harm and avoid restricting others freedoms to live as they wish.
- The Importance of human rights.
- Humans have individual freedom of thought, speech, and choice.
- We should live our lives with social and environmental responsibility.

Responses from a believer

- Live useful and practical lives, being considerate of others' needs.
- Respect different people's choices and different ways of life.
- Charitable work, humanists can and do offer pastoral care in the community, e.g. in hospitals and prisons.
- Be willing to change one's belief when presented with the appropriate evidence.

Festivals and celebrations

- A Humanist Celebrant can be asked to conduct special occasions marking rites of passage.
- The end of human life and the memory and achievements of the deceased during their life are honoured at humanist funerals.

Places of worship

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- Humanists show appreciation and spread awareness of aspects of the world they consider worthy, to ensure nothing is taken for granted.

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Suggested addition to the Glossary

AGNOSTIC - someone who does not know, or believes that it is impossible to know, if a God or gods exist.

ATHEIST - someone who believes that a God or gods do not exist.

CELEBRANT - someone who is involved with creating, writing, and conducting a ceremony.

ETHICAL DECISION - a course of action stemming from a moral choice, that may have no clear right or wrong answer. It will try to take into account all the available evidence and considers all the foreseeable consequences, in order to do the least harm.

EMPATHY - the ability to share someone else's feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in that person's situation.

EMPIRICAL - based on, concerned with or verifiable by observation or experience rather than theory, or pure logic.

EVOLUTION - the process by which different kinds of living organism have developed from earlier forms over the history of the planet.

THE GOLDEN RULE - the concept, often appearing throughout the history of ideas, that people should treat each other as they would like to be treated themselves, with the implication being that it is best to treat everyone with tolerance, consideration and compassion in order to have a better society overall.

HUMANISM - an ethical worldview based on scientific understanding and human morality.

HUMANIST - someone who personally identifies with Humanism.

IGNOSTIC - someone who believes that the question of the existence of a God or gods is meaningless because the term "god" has no unambiguous definition.

JUDGEMENT - the formation of an opinion about some fact or idea after critical reflection, on the basis of reasoning and/or experience as appropriate.

NATURAL SELECTION - the process whereby organisms better adapted to their environment tend to survive and produce more offspring. The theory of its action was first fully and popularly expounded by Charles Darwin and it is now regarded as the principal mechanism by which evolution occurs.

NATURALISM: The idea that everything arises from natural properties and causes and discounts all supernatural or spiritual explanations

PASTORAL CARE - an ancient, universal model of emotional and spiritual support, performed by trained individuals supporting people in their pain, grief and anxiety or in their triumphs, joys and victories.

RATIONALISM - the practice or principle of basing opinions and actions on reason and knowledge rather than on religious belief or emotional response.

REASON - the power of the mind to think, understand and analyse given information and form judgements logically.

RELATIVISM: The idea that all points of view are subjective and there is no absolute truth

SECULARISM - a principle that proposes a strict separation between the state and religion and also that everyone, regardless of religious background, is equal before the law.

SCIENTIFIC METHOD - a set of principles and procedures for the systematic pursuit of knowledge and discovery, based upon the recognition and formulation of a problem, the formulation of testable hypotheses about the solution of the problem, and the collection of experimental data to enable the testing and refinement of those hypotheses.

SCEPTICISM - the idea that not all ideas should be taken at face value, but instead should be subjected to logical and empirical challenges.