

Asking questions

Ask the students for some suggestions for things that make human beings special.

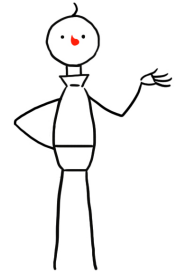
Explain that one thing that many humanists believe is special about human beings is our ability to ask questions and look for answers.

Ask the students 'Why do we ask questions?' and discuss their answers.

Explain that asking questions helps us to improve our understanding of the world.

Trying to answer some questions can also make our lives better:

- How can I cure this disease?
- How can I grow more food?
- How can I make the world a fairer place?



Ask the students what questions they would like to know the answer to.

Can they think of any questions that would make our lives better if we could find an answer (e.g. think of a gap in our knowledge or a problem we face and ask the question 'How can we solve it?')?

Explain that humanists believe that **asking questions** helps us to learn more about the world and helps us to make the world a better place. Many humanists believe that **curiosity** is one of life's great pleasures and that we should try to stay curious throughout our lives. There are still many questions to be answered – humanists believe we can all help with the quest to find the answers.

'Human beings have this wonderful curiosity that makes them rather special and rather different from other living creatures.'

Philip Pullman, author

'I think, at a child's birth, if a mother could ask a fairy godmother to endow it with the most useful gift, that gift would be curiosity.'

Eleanor Roosevelt, political activist

Ask the students if anyone has ever given them the wrong answer to a question.

How did they find out the answer was wrong?

Give an example, e.g. What are the pyramids made from? Answer: ice.

How could we check? We could go to Egypt. We could ask other people. We could look in books. We could use our knowledge about what happens to ice in heat.

Explain that asking questions is important to humanists but they also believe that we should think carefully about the answers we are given. We often make mistakes and other people don't always give us the correct answer. Humanists believe we need to **think carefully, listen to different opinions**, and **look for evidence** that the answers we have been given are correct (e.g. scientists trying to cure a disease will think about what they already know, explore different possible medicines, and test them to be sure that they work).