

Human beings: good and bad

Activity 1

Ask the students to think about what is good and what is bad about human beings.

Ask them to think about...

- What we can and can't do with our bodies
- Ways in which we are better or worse than other animals
- Our feelings and emotions
- The way we treat other people
- The good and the bad things human beings have done in the past and are doing today

Some suggestions to help the students:

- **What's bad?** Our physical limits (e.g. speed and strength), we won't live forever, we don't know everything, we can be selfish and unkind, we can feel sad, angry, and afraid, we have been responsible for war, discrimination, and the destruction of the environment
- **What's good?** Our physical capacities (e.g. we can build and make things), we can ask and answer questions, we can solve problems, we can be creative, we have imagination and empathy, we can be kind and form friendships, we have language and can share our ideas, we can think about what we should do and can make choices, we can be happy, we have developed technology, medicine, art, education, and other things that have improved people's lives

Questions for discussion

- 1) On balance, are human beings good or bad?
- 2) Is there anything we can celebrate about being human?
- 3) What can and can't we change about ourselves?
- 4) How can human beings make the best of the things we can do?

Explain to the students that many **humanists** believe...

- Our positive and negative features are all part of being human – they are all **natural**.
- We can appreciate the incredible things we are capable of. We are not perfect, but we can **celebrate** many of our abilities and achievements.
- We can't change everything about ourselves, but we can try to overcome our negative feelings and behaviours and promote the **positive**.
- We have a responsibility to think about how we can make the best of our **potential** (our talents and abilities) and should encourage other people to do the same – this can help to make the world a better place.

Activity 2

Ask the students to create an image of a human being that illustrates both the good and bad sides of our nature. Ask them to identify or highlight the features a humanist might think we should celebrate and promote.