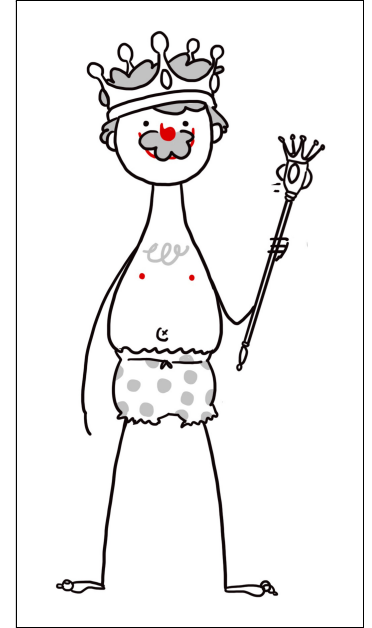


The Emperor's New Clothes

Long ago and far away there lived an emperor. The emperor was the most powerful man in the world. He was also the richest. He loved expensive and beautiful things: palaces, gold, and jewels. But most of all he loved clothes: hats, gloves, and coats – all sewn from the finest velvets and silks – marine blues, scarlet reds, deep forest greens – and all adorned with sparkling diamonds, sapphires, and rubies. The emperor liked nothing more than parading through the city and impressing his people.

One day the emperor was visited by two men. The two men told him they were weavers and they could weave the most magnificent clothes in the land. What was even more incredible was that these were magical clothes, visible only to the best and cleverest of people, and invisible to anyone who was foolish or dumb. The emperor thought about how magnificent it would be to learn which of his people were clever and who was stupid, and ordered the weavers to make him some new clothes.



The weavers demanded the emperor provide them with the finest silk and the purest thread, then set up two looms in the highest room of the highest tower of the palace. But the weavers did not begin to weave. Instead they put the expensive silks in their bags, put up their feet, and enjoyed the fine food and wine that the emperor provided them with.

After a week, the emperor sent his ministers to see the weavers' work. 'Look at the fine weave, the beautiful patterns, and the rich colours,' the weavers said, pointing to the empty loom. The ministers couldn't see anything. But they were too scared to say anything. They didn't want the emperor to think they were stupid. So the ministers looked at each other and said, 'It's wonderful,' and went back to tell the emperor.

Over the next month, the emperor sent many more ministers to see the weavers at work. The response was always the same. 'Magnificent!' 'Delightful!' 'Divine!' they reported, to the emperor's great satisfaction. Soon, everyone in the city had heard about the weavers and their magical clothes, visible only to the cleverest of people. Everyone became very excited and the emperor promised a procession to show off his new outfit.

After six months the emperor was told that his clothes were ready and he went with his ministers to see them. The ministers all said, 'How marvellous.' But the emperor couldn't see any clothes.

'Why don't you try them on?' said one of the weavers.

'Er... I will,' said the emperor, and he stripped to his pants.

'First the shirt,' said the weavers, 'Then the trousers. Now the coat.'

Everybody stared at the emperor. The emperor smiled. 'The most beautiful clothes in the land!' he said, and everybody cheered. The emperor told the two men that they were to become the palace's royal weavers and paid them both with great bags of gold.

Outside, the people of the city gathered, waiting for the emperor's procession. But, as the emperor arrived and marched in front of them, everyone stared at each other. Nobody wanted to admit that they could not see the emperor's clothes. So instead they cried out 'Gorgeous! Exquisite! Delightful!'

Suddenly, there was a shout from a young boy: 'But he's not wearing any clothes!'

For a moment there was silence. Then, 'He's right,' said somebody else. 'The emperor is naked.'

Before long everyone was joining in, pointing at the emperor and laughing. The emperor was worried that the crowd was right, but he carried on, parading all the way around the city and back to his palace. When he returned, the two weavers were nowhere to be found.

Many **humanists** would admire the actions of the young boy in the crowd.

A humanist approach is to...

- **Think for yourself** – we should not believe everything we are told without thinking about it (that doesn't mean everything we are told is false, but sometimes other people make mistakes or even lie to us)
- **Ask questions** (particularly when something does not look right)
- **Look at the evidence**
- **Be brave** enough to disagree

We all believe many things. Many of our beliefs will be true. But it is easy to be mistaken – to believe things that are not true. Often we can be persuaded that something is true by the fact that other people believe it. Sometimes that can be a good reason to believe, but many humanists believe we should always **think for ourselves**, look at the evidence, and be allowed to disagree.

Humanists believe **evidence** is very important when deciding what to believe. Looking for evidence helps give our beliefs more chance of being true. We can start with what we see and hear. We can also learn from books and other people. However, humanists believe that, when it comes to answering questions about the world, scientific experiments provide the best evidence.

Extension activity

How might you look for evidence for these beliefs?

- 1) Plants need water to grow.
- 2) Sugar is bad for your teeth.
- 3) Elephants are scared of mice.

