

The Fox and the Stork

Read the students Aesop's fable called *The Fox and the Stork*.

Or show them a video of the story (www.youtube.com/watch?v=7n538d6rHhE).

Explain that the story helps to illustrate **the Golden Rule**:

'Treat other people as you'd want to be treated in their situation.'
'Do not treat others in a way you would not like to be treated yourself.'

People have been trying to answer questions about how we should treat other people for thousands of years. **Stories** have always helped us to think about such questions by allowing us to imagine what it would feel like to be the characters in those stories. This particular story comes from ancient Greece around 600BCE. The principle of the Golden Rule is found throughout history and all around the world. Many humanists believe the Golden Rule can help us to think about how we should treat other people. The Golden Rule promotes kindness and respect for others, because we would like to be treated kindly and with respect, and it discourages lying, bullying, cruelty, and theft, because no one wants to suffer in this way.

'Imagining yourself on the receiving end of your own behaviour is a good way to decide whether you're doing what you think is right or wrong.'

Natalie Haynes, author

Explain that many humanists believe the following:

- We need to think carefully about the **consequences** of our actions
- **Empathy** can help us to imagine how other people might feel
- We should try to act in a way that promotes **happiness** rather than suffering
- We live in communities: if we treat other people well, they are more likely to treat us well – **everyone benefits**

Questions for discussion:

- 1) If the Golden Rule says we should treat other people the way we would like to be treated, then did the fox do the right thing by serving the stork's soup in a shallow dish?
- 2) What should the fox have done? Why?
- 3) If the fox had served the soup in a tall jug that the stork could easily drink from, how might things have been different later in the story?
- 4) Should the stork have taken revenge on the fox and served him soup in a tall jug?

Note that, in this story, treating other people the way we would like to be treated does not mean giving them exactly the same vessel to drink from. It means treating them kindly, serving their soup in a way that makes it easier for them to drink, because that is what we would want.

Explain that many humanists believe that reading and listening to stories (fictional and historical) is a good way to help us to develop empathy. Stories can help us to better understand how we should (and should not) treat other people.