The Sweet Shop

Present the students with the following scenario.

You are in a sweet shop with some friends. The owner of the shop is not looking. One of your friends says he is going to steal some sweets. What should you do? Why?

If you think he shouldn't steal the sweets, how would you persuade him not to?

Give the students some time to discuss and then ask for feedback.

If students talk about the law or fear of punishment, then present the following extra information.

Imagine your friend had a cloak of invisibility (like Harry Potter). He would be able to do whatever he wanted without anyone being able to see him. If he wanted, he could steal the sweets without anyone knowing it was him.
- Should he steal the sweets?
- If not, why not?

This activity is based on a famous thought experiment by the ancient Greek philosopher Plato called the ring of Gyges. The ring made its owner invisible and therefore able to do whatever they wanted. It can help people to think about how they would use this power and whether there are reasons not to misbehave other than the danger of getting caught and punished.

Show students the slide with young people's answers to why they would not steal the sweets?
- I might get caught and get in trouble
- It's against the law
- I would feel like a bad person
- The shopkeeper would be unhappy
- I wouldn't like it if someone stole from me
- If everyone did it, then the sweet shop would close down

Ask students what they think about the different reasons for not stealing. Are they good reasons?

Ask which of the reasons focus on the consequences on us and which focus on the consequences on other people.

Follow this activity up by sharing the Being good information sheet and discussing a humanist perspective.