

Society: overview (age 11+)



Big question: What kind of world do I want?

Key vocab: plural society, veil of ignorance, freedom, equality, justice, human rights, secularism, freedom of belief, responsibility, campaigning, progress

Knowledge outcomes: Students should know about the following common features of a humanist approach to building a healthy society		
Promoting freedom, equality, and human rights	Supporting secularism and believing it benefits individuals and society	Believing that human beings alone are responsible for making the world a better place
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognising a plural society as one in which there live people from different backgrounds, cultures, and traditions, with a range of worldviews Believing that human beings share many needs and feelings The veil of ignorance as a way to help us think about what would make a fair society and the work that needs to be done (the case for individual freedom and equality of opportunity) The belief that human rights are based on our universal human needs and are designed to guarantee us all the freedom to live our lives the way we wish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misconceptions about secularism (it is not atheism) Secularism as a position that advocates separation of church and state, freedom of belief, and equal treatment of all The belief that secularism supports freedom, fairness, and peace Humanists will typically be secularists, but so will many religious people The UK is not a secular state Secularism is under threat in many parts of the world In many countries people are not free to be non-religious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The belief that help won't come from outside humanity The absence of belief that wrongs will be put right in some future life, and the need to work for justice in the here and now How individual humanists' concerns often stretch beyond the work of humanist organisations (humanists can be found campaigning for human welfare, peace, education, and the protection of the environment, and against poverty and injustice) Recognising the significant progress we have made towards a fairer and better world, but that there is still much work to be done

Introduction

- Begin with the [‘A humanist approach to life: a summary’](#) slide to introduce/recap the core features of a humanist approach to life.
- Explain that you are going to explore some of the goals and ambitions humanists have for building what they believe would be a better world in which everyone can live well together.

A fair society: freedom, equality, and human rights

- Show the [What kind of world do you want? film](#) and ask the students to note down words and phrases they hear (e.g. freedom, equality).
- Carry out the [Veil of ignorance activity](#) to explore John Rawls' thought experiment about fairness.
- Share the [A fair society information sheet](#) and discuss the reasons why many humanists are motivated to support individual freedoms, equality of opportunity, and human rights.
- You could also share the [What are humanist goals for society? information sheet](#).
- You might also want to show the [Veil of ignorance film](#): [youtube.com/watch?v=A8GDEaJtbq4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8GDEaJtbq4)

Secularism

- Share the [Secularism information sheet](#) and discuss what secularism is and the case for secularism.
- Carry out the [Is this secularism? activity](#) to check students' understanding of secularism.
- You could also watch the following films:
 - [What is secularism?](#)
 - [The case for secularism](#)
 - [The state of secularism](#)

Responsibility

- Show the [Pale Blue Dot film](#) (youtu.be/8cgVkOo2wXw) or share the [information sheet](#) to explore Carl Sagan's humanist perspective on our position and our responsibility. (You could begin by showing an image of the Pale Blue Dot and asking students what they can see: planetary.org/explore/space-topics/earth/pale-blue-dot.html)
- Digging deeper: Share the examples of individual humanists on the [Humanists in action information sheet](#) and explore how individual humanists' concerns are often wider than the work of humanist organisations.

Progress

- Digging deeper: carry out the [Human progress activity](#) and share and discuss the [Progress: a humanist perspective information sheet](#) to explore the question 'Are things getting better or worse?'

Summary and assessment

- Choose one or more of the following:
 - Share and discuss the [Multiple choice questions](#).
 - Carry out the [Fill in the blanks activity](#).
 - Ask students to complete the [humanist responses activity](#).
- Review the knowledge outcomes above.
- Ask the students what questions they would like to ask a humanist.