

Understanding the world: overview (age 7+)

Big question: How can I know what is true?

Key vocab: curiosity, responsibility, evidence, science, progress, natural, atheist



Knowledge outcomes: Students should know about the following common features of a humanist approach to understanding the world		
Recognising our beliefs can be mistaken and being prepared to question them	Believing science provides the best way of answering questions about the world	Believing that the world is a natural place, and looking for natural explanations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recognition that our beliefs can be true or false • Recognising the different reasons why we believe things and why they are open to error • The responsibility to ask questions, think carefully, and look closely at the evidence • Being willing to adapt or change beliefs when faced with new evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science as a process that asks questions and allows us to test claims • Being wary of claims that have no scientific evidence or can't be tested • Science as a process that sometimes makes mistakes but is able to check its results • Science as a source of progress in our understanding • Curiosity as a pleasure and science as a source of wonder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The absence of belief in supernatural beings or forces • The absence of belief in a god due to the absence of persuasive evidence • The word for someone who does not believe in a god is 'atheist' • Supporting freedom of belief (and not allowing different beliefs to get in the way of friendship)

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 the way humanists understand the world around us – what they do and don't believe in and how they decide what to believe.

Making mistakes and looking for evidence

- Ask the students what 'belief' means. Explain that we all have beliefs. Sometimes they are true, sometimes not.
- Carry out The trial activity to introduce students to different types of evidence.
- There are two Understanding the world information sheets (lower and higher). Which is more suitable will depend on the age and existing knowledge of the students. The guidance below relates to the higher sheet. However, the lower sheet may be more suitable for some students.
- Share and discuss the first section of the Understanding the world information sheet (Beliefs) on ways our beliefs can be mistaken.
- Carry out the Beliefs and evidence activity so students can explore how our beliefs can be mistaken and can consider what counts as good evidence.

Science

- Discuss the second section of the Understanding the world information sheet (Science), and explore the reasons humanists believe science provides the best method for answering questions about the world.

Believing the world is a natural place

- Discuss the third section of the [Understanding the world information sheet \(What do humanists believe?\)](#), on the things humanists do and don't believe in.
- You could also share the [What is a humanist approach to understanding the world? information sheet](#).
- Look back at some of the beliefs in the [Beliefs and 'evidence' activity](#) and discuss which of the beliefs in the activity a humanist might hold and what evidence a humanist might find persuasive.

Summary and assessment

- Share and discuss the [Multiple-choice questions](#).
- Carry out the [Fill in the blanks activity](#).
- Review the knowledge outcomes above.
- Ask the students what questions they would like to ask a humanist.