

What is humanism? overview (age 11+)

The suggestions below support an introduction to humanism. Other resources found under the five areas of knowledge on understandinghumanism.org.uk (human beings, understanding the world, the one life, humanist ethics, and society) will enable a fuller and richer exploration of the content introduced here.

Key vocab: non-religious, natural, evolved, science, potential, one life, freedom, happiness, empathy, responsibility

Introduction

- Explain that you are going to introduce students to a non-religious worldview called humanism.
- Show the students the 'Think for yourself, act for everyone' slide and ask them what they think it might mean.
- Show the 'The humanist approach to life: a summary' slide to introduce the core features of the humanist approach to life.

What is humanism?

- Watch one or more of the following films to explore what humanism means to humanists. Encourage the students to make notes of some of the words and phrases they hear.
 - Five facts about non-religious beliefs features humanist teenager Cerys explaining how she puts her beliefs into practice: www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zkyn2sg/articles/zfs2kmn
 - What does humanism mean to humanists? features vox pops with several humanists describing what humanism means to them.
 - Introducing humanism features Humanists UK Chief Executive Andrew Copson describing the core features of a humanist approach to life.
- Share and discuss the What is humanism? information sheet to explore the core features of a humanist approach to life. You could also explore the Humanism Venn diagram and share the What do humanists value? information sheet.
- Carry out the Humanism through objects activity using the objects to provide a tangible way to help the students remember the core features of a humanist approach to life.

Discovering humanism

- Watch the film When did you decide you were a humanist? and discuss the way that many humanists discover that the label fits the beliefs they already held.

Digging Deeper: For older students, you might want to explore some of the other resources found in the following areas on the Understanding Humanism website:

- What is humanism?: resources on humanist organisations and community
- History and influence: resources on the history of humanism and its impact on the modern world
- Data: resources on how many non-religious people and how many humanist there are
- Global humanism: resources on Humanists International, and humanist organisations and individuals around the world, including those whose beliefs put them at risk

Summary and assessment

- Share and discuss the [Multiple-choice questions](#).
- Carry out the [Fill in the blanks activity](#).
- Review what the students have learned about humanism. Recap the core features of a humanist approach to life.
- Share the [Happy Human symbol](#) and ask students to decorate it with words and pictures that illustrate what it means to be a humanist.
- Ask the students what questions they would like to ask a humanist.