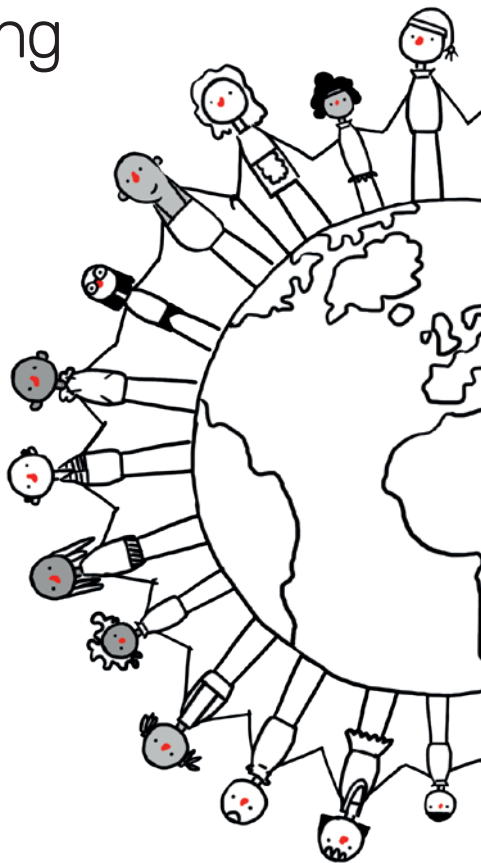




# Understanding Humanism

## WHAT IS HUMANISM?

Humanism is a **non-religious worldview** shared by millions of people in the UK and around the world. Humanists are non-religious people who believe it is possible to lead a good, happy, and meaningful life.



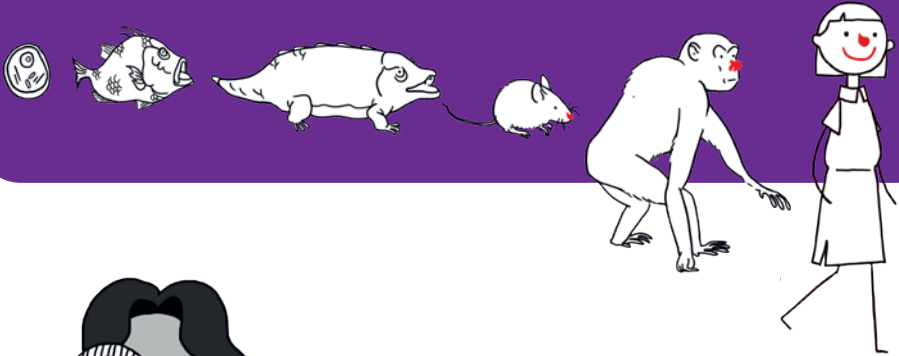
**THINK FOR YOURSELF,  
ACT FOR EVERYONE**



The **Happy Human** is a symbol used by humanist organisations all over the world. It represents a celebration of being human – celebrating our potential for happiness and celebrating what human beings are capable of.

## WHAT IS A HUMAN BEING?

Humanists believe that human beings have **natural** origins. We **evolved** naturally like all other living things. We have many capacities (such as reason, empathy, and creativity) and, if we put them to good use, we have the **potential** to lead good and happy lives.



### HOW CAN I KNOW WHAT IS TRUE?

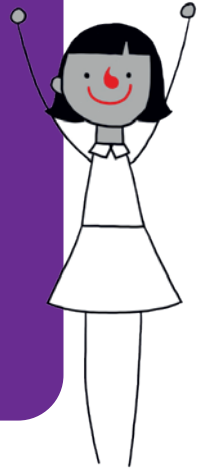
- Humanists believe the world is a **natural** place with no supernatural side.
- They believe **science, reason** and the search for **evidence** provide the best way to answer questions about the world.
- They don't have sacred texts or figures of authority. Instead, **everything is open to question.**
- Humanists do not see any persuasive evidence to believe in a god or gods. They are **atheists** or **agnostics.**

*The time to be happy is now. The place to be happy is here.  
The way to be happy is to make others so.*

Robert Ingersoll, American humanist (1833-1899)

## HOW SHOULD I LIVE?

Humanists see no persuasive evidence for an afterlife and so believe we need to make the most of the **one life** we have. For humanists, there is no single 'ultimate' meaning of life. Instead, it is up to us to make our own lives **meaningful**. They believe we should be **free** to decide how we live (as long as we do not cause harm to others), seeking **happiness** and supporting others to do the same. There are many different ways to be happy. We should celebrate human diversity.



## HOW DO I KNOW WHAT IS GOOD?

Humanists don't believe that answers about how we should behave come from somewhere outside humanity (e.g. from a god). Instead they believe **the origins of morality lie in human beings** and our evolution as a social animal that has long lived together in communities.



They believe that, when deciding how to act, we should use reason, **empathy**, and an understanding of our shared needs and values. We should consider the consequences of our actions and the likely impact on the wellbeing and happiness of other people and animals.

### MANY HUMANISTS ADMIRE AND TRY TO LIVE BY THE GOLDEN RULE:

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

# WHAT KIND OF WORLD DO I WANT?

- Humanists believe that human beings alone are **responsible** for making the world a better place in the here and now.
- Many challenge prejudice and discrimination, believing we should see everyone as human beings. They campaign for equality, **human rights**, and the protection of the environment.
- They support **secularism**: a society in which everyone has **freedom of belief**, and no one religion or belief has any privilege over any other.
- Many **celebrate** the progress humanity has made and our many achievements (artistic, scientific, and social), but recognise the work that is still to be done.

Humanism is the product of over **2,500 years** of human thought and conversation about how human beings should live. We can find humanist ideas in ancient India, China, and Greece.

Humanist thinking became increasingly popular during a period called the Enlightenment in the 18th century.

**Humanists UK** has been around since 1896. It provides services to support non-religious people and campaigns on issues where it believes the non-religious are treated unfairly. There are many other humanist organisations around the world.



**DISCOVER MORE**  @HumanismEdu | [education@humanism.org.uk](mailto:education@humanism.org.uk)

**[understandinghumanism.org.uk](http://understandinghumanism.org.uk)**

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