



A Teacher's Guide



to exploring humanism with Early Years pupils

This teacher's guide accompanies a series of digital resources – Genially and PowerPoint presentations created especially for those working with Early Years children. The digital resources aim to enable practitioners to explore some key humanist beliefs and concepts at an age appropriate level for Early Years children.

These resources are available via the [Understanding Humanism](https://www.understandinghumanism.org/) website and from [Books at Press](https://www.booksatpress.com/).

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Exploring humanism with Early Years pupils.

This guide accompanies a series of digital resources – Genially and PowerPoint presentations created especially for those working with Early Years children. The digital resources aim to enable practitioners to explore some key humanist beliefs and concepts at an age appropriate level for Early Years children.

The table below provides background information for teachers, relating to each resource and its theme, and offers suggestions for questioning and follow up activities with pupils.

All of the resources have been based around Wilf, a real child and his family who live in South Wales. Wilf's parents are humanist.

Generally, as with Wilf's parents, humanists encourage their children to develop and decide upon their own beliefs as they mature. Therefore, throughout the resources, Wilf's thoughts and beliefs are his own as a five year old child. Alongside this, the resources provide an insight into Wilf's parents' beliefs and values as humanists and how these are expressed in their everyday family life.

It is important to note that the resources portray one family's expression of their values and beliefs and Wilf's parents do not represent all humanists. However, many humanists will share the same or similar beliefs and values expressed in these resources. Diversity of beliefs, values and lifestyle should always be acknowledged.

In order to take account of the variety of expressions of beliefs, it is always advisable to modify speech by using terms such as "many humanists", "some humanists" or "humanists often".

A summary of humanist beliefs suitable to explore with Early Years children.

Humanism is a non-religious worldview or approach to life. Humanists class themselves as agnostic or atheist. They base their moral and ethical decision-making on reason, empathy and compassion for others. Humanists rely on evidence and science to inform them and influence their decisions.

Humanists believe that:

- people have one life, they should make the most of it and feel lucky to be alive;
- they should try to live a happy life and help others to be happy;
- helping to make others happy by being kind in speech and actions is important;
- family and friends are of great importance and that families should support each other in life through love and commitment; and
- the planet Earth began naturally and that human beings should care for this world to enjoy now and for people to enjoy in the future.

Theme A. Kindness – helping others to have a happy life.

Understanding Humanism Core Area of Knowledge: Humanist ethics

Big question: How can I know what is good?

Key vocabulary: kind, kindness, happy, happiness, help, care

Theme A. Kindness – helping others to have a happy life.

Key Resource 1. *The VAT of Belonging and Believing, Wilf – Genially digital tool for Early Years: Kindness*

This tool is freely available to access from the hosting website [Home - The VAT of B&B \(thevatofbandb.co.uk\)](http://thevatofbandb.co.uk)

The resource explores the concept of kindness and how, through acts of kindness, Wilf and his family exemplify their humanist belief that to help others is important.

The VAT of Belonging and Believing tool also introduces the Happy Human symbol.

The theme of living a happy life is explored more fully in Resource 2 PowerPoint (see below)

Key belief / concept	Early Years Language / Questions to think about	Activities
<p>Humanists believe that they have a duty to support oneself and others to live fulfilling lives. They believe they should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• show concern for human welfare• proactively help others.• consider the impact on others in determining their own actions.• treat others as they would like to be treated themselves.	<p>Be kind to others. Make others happy by being kind in speech and actions. Think about how your actions affect others.</p> <p>Q. Is it important to be kind? Q. How does it feel when someone is kind to you? Q. How does it make you feel when you are kind to others? Q. How do think others feel when you are kind to them? Q. How can you be kind to others?</p>	<p>❖ Take the Learning Bus down Wilf’s road – ‘Happy People’ to discover how he and his family try to help make others happy.</p> <p>Included in the digital tool:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Explore the concept of kindness for Wilf’s humanist family.❖ Collect kindness words and fill a bucket.❖ Engage with photos of Wilf and his family carrying out acts of kindness.❖ Take the quiz to recall what Wilf and his family do to be kind.❖ Engage with the Happy Human symbol activities (odd one out games) to become familiar with the symbol and its variations across different humanist groups.

Theme B. One life – be happy.

Understanding Humanism Core Area of Knowledge: The one life

Big question: How should I live?

Key vocabulary: happy, happiness, sad, sadness, Happy Human, life, being alive

Theme B. One life – be happy.

Key Resource: 2. Powerpoint *Wilf and this one life – being happy.*

Wilf shares some of the activities that make him happy – his love of the outdoors and playing in the park.

He tells us that his mum and dad are humanists and believe there is just one life so we should try to be happy. Wilf is encouraged to make up his own mind about what he believes.

Wilf refers to the Happy Human symbol and the different variations used around the world.

Learners are invited to think about in what ways they have fun and try to have a happy life.

Key belief / concept	Early Years Language / Questions to think about	Activities
<p>Humanists believe this is the one and only life and world that there is. They believe they should</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• create their own happiness;• make the most of this life;• find what makes them happy as individuals and be free to choose as there are many different ways to be happy;• support others to be happy recognising that not everyone has the same opportunities; and• try to build a world where everyone can live a good life.	<p>Try to live a happy life and help others to be happy. Recognise that people find happiness in different things. There are many different ways to be happy. People are not all the same. Q. What makes you happy? Q. What makes other people happy? Q. Are we all the same? Q. What makes different people happy? Q. How can you help to make others happy? Q. What is good about the world in which we live? Q. What can we enjoy about / in our world?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Find out what makes different children in the class happy.❖ Make a chart to show the activities that make the children happy. (Pictogram)❖ Look for other Happy Human symbols (on the web) and find out if the children have a favourite Happy Human symbol.❖ Discuss what the Happy Human symbol looks like and when might someone stand like that (it's a person celebrating being alive).❖ Talk about what, about being alive, can be celebrated? (e.g. friendship, the natural world, sight, smell, feelings)❖ Design own Happy Human symbols using creative materials.❖ Play a variety of recognition and memory games using the Happy Human flash cards (PDF resource provided) e.g. snap, Kim's game, Pelmanism, odd one out.❖ Talk about ways in which some people may not be happy and why.

	<p>Q. What can we do to make the world a better place?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Think about how people can help to create a world where everyone can live a happy life (e.g. make sure everyone has food, friends, freedom).❖ Think about ways in which the children can help to make each other happy in the class, school and at home.
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Theme C. Family and friendship

Understanding Humanism Core Area of Knowledge: The one life

Big question: How should I live?

Key vocabulary: family, love, care, choose, choice, humanist naming ceremony

Theme C. Family and friendship

Resource 3. PowerPoint *Wilf and the importance of family and friendship*

Wilf talks about his family members. We see their family bond and how they care for and support one another. We see how they enjoy spending time together. Wilf tells us that his mum and dad are humanists and believe that family is really important and that they should try to help each other as much as they can. Learners are encouraged to think about who is in their family and what they do together. A series of stock photographs invite discussion about different families - activities they do together and ways in which they might support each other.

Key belief / concept

Humanists believe that family is of great importance. They recognise and respect the many different types of family within society and that what is important is that people love and take care of each other. They believe they should

- support each other in life through love and commitment; and
- recognise the importance of other people in their lives – family and/or friends.

Early Years Language / Questions to think about

Family and friends are really important and can help each other in many different ways. There are lots of different types of family groups.

Q. Who is in your family / care group?
Q. What family and friendship groups do you belong to?
Q. What do you do with your family group?
Q. Who is important to you?
Q. Who shows you love and care?
Q. How do you show family members and friends your love and kindness?

Activities

- ❖ Encourage the children to talk about their families – different members and what they like to do together.
- ❖ Ask pupils to bring in photos of their families and make a display.
- ❖ Look at the Slides on the PPT and discuss the family photographs – who the family members might be (mother, brother, father etc.) and how the children think the family members are supporting each other – having fun together (laughter), talking, walking, cycling, playing cooking etc.
- ❖ Encourage recognition of different types of family groups to celebrate the diversity and plurality within and across families.

Theme D. Naming ceremonies

Understanding Humanism Core Area of Knowledge: The one life

Big question: How should I live?

Key vocabulary: family, love, care, choose, choice, humanist naming ceremony, celebrant

Theme D. Naming ceremonies

Resource 4. PowerPoint *Wilf and a humanist naming ceremony*

Wilf introduces us to his family members. His sisters are older than him. He is younger.

Wilf introduces Arjo who has a younger sister. We find out about her naming ceremony which takes place in the local woodland. The ceremony is conducted by a humanist celebrant and includes some Bengali customs reflecting the baby's Indian heritage on her mother's side. The ceremony is unique to the family, and we learn about all the different elements which the family have chosen to create this special occasion.

Key belief / concept

Humanists believe that children should have opportunity to develop and decide on their own beliefs as they grow up. Some humanist families choose to have a naming ceremony for new family members (usually a baby) and as a way of welcoming the child into the family. It is also an opportunity for parents and 'guide parents' to make a commitment to support children to develop and decide on their own beliefs.

The ceremony can take any form and be created personally to suit the individual family. What is important is that the parents and family say and do things that are important and meaningful to them. The support of a celebrant can be employed to create the ceremony.

Celebrant Susan Fleming offers a useful video talking about naming celebrations she provides as a celebrant.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WGvI141P3x0>

Early Years Language / Questions to think about

Some families welcome a new baby by having a special celebration. This can be a time to announce the baby's name and to make special promises to help look after and guide the baby as it grows up.

Q. Who is in your family / care group?

Q. Who is older or younger than you in your family?

Q. What might it be like to have a new baby join a family?

Q. Who guides you in life / helps you understand right from wrong?

Q. Who teaches you new things?

Q. What celebrations or special times do you have in your family?

Activities

- ❖ Encourage the children to talk about their families – different members and their position within the family (older, younger).
- ❖ Talk about any experiences of having a new baby join a family. What feelings might siblings experience – joy, jealousy, etc.
- ❖ Encourage the children to talk about (with the help of parents) any special ceremonies they may have had as a baby to welcome them to the family (or sibling celebrations).
- ❖ Talk about the humanist naming ceremony held for Raaya. Note all the different elements of the ceremony e.g. decorating the woodland with candles, flags, bunting, gifts and cards, food and drink, three things for Raaya to choose from (an Indian custom) ... (NB these are personal elements chosen by this family – humanist ceremonies differ).
- ❖ Support the children in creating a role-play area for a humanist naming ceremony.

A blog about the naming ceremony featured in the PPT resource can be viewed here:

[A socially distanced naming ceremony \(humanists.uk\)](https://www.humanists.uk/blog/a-socially-distanced-naming-ceremony)

The celebrant's website is also a useful teacher resource [Naming Ceremonies in Surrey and surrounding areas - \(silverbeeceremonies.co.uk\)](https://www.silverbeeceremonies.co.uk/naming-ceremonies-in-surrey-and-surrounding-areas)

A video resource for another naming ceremony is available here:

<https://understandinghumanism.org.uk/area/humanist-ceremonies/>

Q. How do different families celebrate a new baby?

Encourage the children to choose what they would like to include for the 'baby's' naming celebration.

Theme E. How the world began

Understanding Humanism Core Area of Knowledge: Human beings

Big question: What am I?

Key vocabulary: planet, Earth, world, nature, natural, human, the Big Bang,

Theme E. How the world began.

Resource 5. PowerPoint: *How the world began.*

Wilf reflects on the wonderful world – all the amazing creatures that live now and that lived millions of years ago.

Learners are encouraged to think about what things they like in nature.

Wilf is curious about how the world began. He knows there are lots of different stories about the origin of the world.

Links are included to two 'story' interpretations of the scientific explanation about how the universe developed.

Slides provide a simple outline of the theory of the Big Bang (text taken and adapted from the NASA Space Place educational website).

Wilf's dad talks about his belief in the Big Bang theory and how life on planet Earth evolved.

Learners are encouraged to reflect on how they might think the world began.

Key belief / concept	Early Years Language / Questions to think about	Activities
<p>Humanists believe that the planet Earth was created naturally through a series of scientific processes known as the Big Bang theory. They believe they should</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• rely on evidence and science to inform and influence their beliefs.• ask questions about the world around them.	<p>Wilf's family believe that the planet Earth began naturally. They believe that scientists can explain how our world began.</p> <p>Q. Are there things you like in the natural world? Q. What are you curious about? Do you want to find out more? Q Who helps you learn new things about the natural world? Q Who helps you investigate things and think about what is true? Q. How do you think the world began?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Use the outdoor environment to encourage the children to reflect on what they like in their local natural area.❖ Focus on Slide 2 and 3 of the PPT to provide opportunity for children to consider the variety of plants and animals that live on our planet Earth.❖ Use the PPT interactive slide and encourage children to drag and drop onto the picture the natural things they like.❖ Provide a range of small world dinosaurs for the children to explore and play.❖ Encourage 'I wonder' questions and curiosity.❖ Initiate 'I wonder how the world began and all these creatures and plants came to be here'. Encourage the children to talk about any stories they may have been told about how the world began.

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Share the books (or You Tube resources) of scientific accounts of the beginning of the universe e.g. Older Than The Stars - YouTube by Karen C Fox, Once Upon a Star by James Carter❖ Re-cap the Big Bang theory with Slides 8 – 12 if helpful.❖ Listen to Wilf's dad (as a humanist) talk about how he thinks our world began and developed (Slide 13)❖ Invite a humanist visitor to talk to the children about their belief about how the world began (and what they like about the natural world, and how they help to look after it).❖ Encourage the children to appreciate that there may be different accounts of how the world began but many (most) people believe we should all look after the planet. |
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Theme F. Evolution and curiosity about the world (I wonder...)

Understanding Humanism Core Area of Knowledge: Human beings

Big question: What am I?

Key vocabulary: animals, human, evolution, amazing, wonder,

Understanding Humanism Core Area of Knowledge: Understanding the world

Big question: How can I know what is true?

Key vocabulary: curiosity, questions, wonder, amazing, evidence, natural, humans

<p>Theme E. Evolution and the wonderful world – how humans came to be part of the natural world.</p> <p>Resource 6. PowerPoint: <i>How humans came to be part of the natural world</i> Wilf introduces a picture of planet Earth. Wilf's dad talks about how he thinks our planet began and how the animals and people developed over time. The story <i>Grandmother Fish</i> is included as an early introduction to the idea of evolution. Wilf's dad believes in looking for evidence to know if something is true. Wilf and his dad enjoy looking at rocks and fossils and being curious about how they were made. Wilf likes to wonder and ask questions about the natural and human made (man-made) world. Pupils can be encouraged to wonder and ask questions, stimulated by a series of stock photographs.</p>		
Key belief / concept	Early Years Language / Questions to think about	Activities
<p>Humanists believe in natural origins and evolution of humans and all other beings. Many humanists take great pleasure in the wonder of the natural world. They believe contemplating nature can also help humans to recognise their natural place within it.</p> <p>They believe they should</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rely on evidence and science to inform and influence decisions • enjoy the natural world, respect and care for the environment 	<p>Wilf's family believe that creatures changed and developed naturally over time. Wilf is curious (likes to think and know more) about the natural world.</p> <p>Q. Are there things in the natural world that you especially like? Q. Are you sometimes curious? What are you curious about? (What do you want to find out more about?)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Alongside Slide 2, use a globe and pictures / online images to show the learners planet Earth. ❖ Listen to Wilf's dad talk about how he thinks our planet developed. ❖ Read about or watch video recordings of the scientific 'story' of human origins/evolution: e.g. Grandmother Fish by Jonathan Tweet, Our Family Tree by Lisa Westberg Peters Our Family Tree: An Evolution Story - Storytime with Miss L - Bing video, Our Family Tree: An Evolution Story - Bing video

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• recognise their human place within the world• recognise and celebrate the achievements of human beings.	<p>Q Who helps you learn new things about the natural world? Q Who helps you investigate things and think about what is true?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Use and enjoy the resources available from www.grandmotherfish.com to reflect on the account of evolution.❖ Encourage the children to reflect on how they might know if something is true... who helps them to think about what might be true.❖ Listen to Wilf and his dad talk about rocks and fossils (Slide 9) and consider that Wilf's dad thinks they need to look for evidence to know if something is true.❖ Introduce the word 'amazing' if the children are not already familiar with it.❖ Look at the Slides 11 – 13 to focus on some of the things that Wilf finds amazing in the natural world and makes him wonder about.❖ Provide opportunity for the children to look at / experience 'amazement' at the natural world and to ask 'I wonder...' questions.❖ Look at the Slides 14 – 16 to focus on some of the things that Wilf finds amazing that are 'man/human-made and makes him wonder about.❖ Provide opportunity for the children to look at / experience 'amazement' at human-made things and to ask 'I wonder...' questions.
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Theme G. The natural world

Understanding Humanism Core Area of Knowledge: Human beings

Big question: What am I?

Key vocabulary: animals, human, evolution, amazing, wonder,

<p>Theme F. The natural world</p> <p>Resource 7. PowerPoint: <i>Wilf and the natural world</i> Wilf loves being in the natural world. We see that he enjoys going on a bug hunt with his family and appreciating all the tiny creatures. He believes people should care for all creatures. Using stock photos pupils can think about the different ways in which people show care for different creatures – as a vet, farmer, pet owner, feeding, grooming etc. Pupils are also invited to think about the different ways in which people can help look after the world – planting trees, nurturing (watering) plants, growing food, caring for animals, being careful with litter, recycling etc. They are also encouraged to think about how the natural world helps us too...animals, insects, plants water, food.</p>		
Key belief / concept	Early Years Language / Questions to think about	Activities
<p>Humanists believe that it is human responsibility to solve the world’s environmental problems. They believe they should</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • care for the planet for themselves to enjoy now and for future generations • appreciate the wonder of the natural world – be curious and ask questions. • recognise human connection with other animals and living things (interdependence). 	<p>It is important for human beings to look after everything in the world. We need natural things in our world to help us live happy and healthy lives.</p> <p>Q. Is it important to look after the world? Q. What might happen if humans don’t look after the world? Q. How can you help to look after our world? Q. How can you show kindness to animals? Q. How can you enjoy our world? Q. How can you help make it a better place for others?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Arrange a bug (minibeast) hunt in the school grounds/ local green area. ❖ Explore a variety of different mini creatures looking at similarities and differences in shape, size, movement, colour, habitat etc. ❖ Use the mini creatures flash cards for memory games, snap, matching, sorting and reflecting on Wilf’s beliefs. ❖ Talk about ways in which people care for different creatures prompted by the PPT slides. ❖ Talk about how people can look after our world. ❖ Talk about ways in which nature looks after humans. ❖ Talk about the need to look after the world (interdependence).

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Enjoy resources for small world play in the various provision areas – sand, water, creative, language, maths, drama.❖ Be creative using a variety of materials in the art and craft area to represent mini creatures and other aspects of the natural world.❖ Enjoy a range of stories about human interaction with the natural world.
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Created for Books at Press and Humanists UK.

With thanks to Wilf and his family, Emma and David Shepherd for their contributions and to Luke Donnellan for his advice, suggestions and expertise in creating these resources.

Summary of resources available to use in the classroom:

1. Kindness – helping others to have a happy life (interactive digital tool)
2. One life – being happy (presentation)
Happy Human flash cards (activity)
3. Family (presentation)
4. Wilf and a humanist baby naming ceremony PPT
5. Wilf and how the world began PPT
What do you like in the natural world? (activity)
6. Curiosity – how humans came to be (presentation)
7. Wilf and the natural world PPT
Mini creatures flash cards (activity)