

VIRTUAL TOUR OF A HUMANIST BUILDING: CONWAY HALL

A guide for teachers



WELCOME

This is an educator's guide to using the virtual tour of Conway Hall, introducing what you can expect to find, and including a selection of activities for the classroom.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Humanists do not have a place of worship. However, Conway Hall is a rare surviving example of a building built by a group of humanists as a community space – representative of their shared values. The building and its contents can tell us much about humanism, past and present.

Exploring Conway Hall, you will discover:

- **Key features of the humanist worldview**, linked to objects in the building and the stories they tell;
- **Examples of humanists in history** who made an impact on the world at large;
- More about humanist ceremonies, and other **ways humanists put their beliefs into practice**;
- Videos of contemporary **humanists talking about their worldviews**, their work, and **humanist perspectives on topics from pastoral care to climate change**.

Three main spaces in Conway Hall are used to explore three main themes. These are:

1. The **foyer**: community and the arts
2. The **main hall**: freedom of speech and taking action for others
3. The **library**: understanding the world and the sharing of ideas.

These are three features of a humanist approach to life that humanists believe support us to lead ethical and fulfilling lives in the here and now.

You are free to explore, but we recommend learners go from the foyer to the main hall, and then upstairs to the library. The numbers on the icons will help to guide you where to go next.

Take the virtual tour here

understandinghumanism.org.uk/conway-hall-virtual-tour/









USING THE VIRTUAL TOUR

The virtual tour is best viewed on a desktop or laptop computer, but can also be explored on tablets and smartphones.

MOVING AROUND





You can use your arrow keys to navigate around the building, or use a mouse or touchpad to click where you want to travel. A good idea is to click the white circles on the ground to move directly to that spot, allowing you to head quickly and efficiently towards key points of interest. To adjust the angle of view, you can click, hold, and drag using your mouse or touchpad.

ICONS AND INFO BOXES

-  Before you enter Conway Hall, the text behind this **map icon** will introduce the tour and the building. It should open automatically.
-  The **number icons** show which objects or places have extra information attached, and suggest a route through each room. Click these to learn more. Number 1 will introduce each room and what you can expect to find there.
-  Each annotation can be read aloud, by clicking on the **audio button** inside the annotation box.
-  Click the **video icon** to watch contemporary humanists describe their worldview, work, and reflections on the humanist tradition.

DIFFERENT VIEWS

To the bottom left of your screen, you will see four icons. These control your view of the building, and can help you move through it more quickly.

-  **Dollhouse view**
-  **Floorplan (bird's eye) view**
-  **Floor selector**
-  **Show/hide annotations**

If using these alternative methods to move around, be careful not to miss the introductory information to each room.

Icons numbered '1' will provide helpful context for the content in that room.



ROOM GUIDE

To help you prepare to use the tour, here is an overview of each room's theme and what can be found there. The numbers given here correspond to their icons in the tour.

FOYER: COMMUNITY AND THE ARTS

1. The foyer

Here, we'll explore the theme of community and the arts: the importance of having a place to gather, and to enjoy art, music, entertainment, and each other's company.

While you are in this space, see where you can find examples of how **community** is important to humanists, and about the value of **art** and **music**.

2. Fun and fellowship (the creation of Conway Hall)
3. The joy of music (bench for Frank Andrade Hawkins)
4. More than 200 years of meeting (board of appointed lecturers)
5. Moncure Conway (bust of Moncure Conway)
6. Music and people (plaque to Alfred J. Clements)
7. Opening night (front desk)

Now head through to the main hall.

MAIN HALL: FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND TAKING ACTION FOR OTHERS

1. The main hall: a space to inspire action

Welcome to the main hall – a space where people have spoken freely, shared radical ideas, and encouraged **action for freedom and equality**. For humanists, it is important to think for yourself, and act for everyone. This means being able to debate and disagree, and to challenge things that are unkind or unfair.

Since it opened in 1929, many different groups have used Conway Hall as a place to gather together, often to discuss causes and campaigns they believed in. These have included groups working for women's rights, fighting against racism, campaigning for peace, and championing freedom. Here, people have listened to talks, held debates, and asked questions. Importantly, they have been spurred to action.



Humanists believe that this is the one life we have (wrongs won't be put right in another life after this) and so that motivates them to try to work for a better life for everyone in the here and now.

The people who gathered here also made and heard music, performed theatre and comedy, and held ceremonies to mark important life events. Of course, as the home of the South Place Ethical Society, groups of humanists have always met here too.

While you're in this room, look around for examples of how humanists have **gathered together**, stood up for freedoms of all kinds, and **taken action** for others.

2. To thine own self be true (freedom of thought and expression)
3. The power of words (lectern – standing up for what you believe)
4. Humanists who spoke or met at Conway Hall

L. Susan Stebbing: thinking carefully and rationally

Eslanda Goode Robeson: freedom for all the world

Har Dayal: building a happier world

Bertrand Russell: how to live a good life

Margaret Knight: morals without religion

World Union of Freethinkers: humanists around the world

5. A place to gather (humanist ceremonies)
6. Concerts at Conway Hall



Humanism in action

James: a humanist chaplain

Audrey: a humanist celebrant and organiser for the Association of Black Humanists

Lori: a humanist climate activist

Now head upstairs to the library.

THE LIBRARY: UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD AND THE SHARING OF IDEAS

1. The library

This library is a store of human wisdom: a place to learn, but also a space that embodies the value humanists place on sharing (and challenging) ideas as the way to make progress in our understanding of the world and each other.

As you explore this room, think about how the people you meet tried to **learn, share their ideas, and make progress.**



2. On the Origin of Species: a theory of evolution (Charles Darwin and Harriet Martineau)
3. Stories to explore being human (E.M. Forster)
4. The time to be happy is now (G.J. Holyoake, Omar Khayyam, Robert Ingersoll)
5. A little portrait of a very brave woman (Ernestine Rose)
6. Rights and revolution (Thomas Paine)
7. Fighting for press freedom (Richard Carlile's desk)

This annotation also includes videos of writer Steve Martin and historian Nan Sloane, talking about the influence of Richard Carlile and Susannah Wright.

8. Acting on our ideas (Rose Bush and the Humanist Housing Association)
9. Before you go (a chance to think about the questions in the box below)



What does it mean to be humanist?

For **Audrey**, humanism is all about freedom.

For **James**, humanism is about three things: compassion, reason, and hope.

For **Nan**, humanism is all about asking questions.



What can we learn from the history of humanism?

Audrey describes humanism as being as old as humanity, and reflects on the story of Conway Hall.

James talks about how history helps us understand what humans have in common, and how humanist traditions have existed all around the world.

Steve discusses drawing inspiration from history, and carrying on a tradition of black humanism.

Lori introduces some humanists from history who thought about the environment, and explains how humanist climate activists today try to follow in their footsteps.

Q: Do you remember our three main themes?

- In the foyer, when we first arrived in Conway Hall, we explored the theme of **community and the arts**. Do you remember who we met there?
- Next, in the main hall, we learned about **freedom of speech and taking action for others**. Can you give an example of a humanist who stood up for other people?
- Finally, in the library, we looked at why **understanding the world and sharing ideas** is important to humanists. Can you remember the story of anyone we came across here?

Q: Were there any people you met or learned about in Conway Hall who you'll remember after you leave?

Q: How did their story help you to understand humanist ideas and values?



CONWAY HALL VIRTUAL TOUR ACTIVITIES

Below you will find a selection of optional questions and activities to support students' learning journey on the Conway Hall virtual tour.

ACTIVITY 1: KEY VOCABULARY

Before starting the tour, ask students to think about what they already know about humanism and ask them to make a list of any words they associate with humanist beliefs and values. Share the sheet below for them to list their words.

Suggest that, during the tour, they pay attention to when and how often these words appear in connection with the people they meet and the rooms and objects they explore. Can they find a person on the tour who connects to each of their words and add some information about them on the sheet?

Ask them to keep an eye out for any other words that appear regularly on the tour and to make a note of them.

For groups with limited pre-learning about humanism you might want to suggest some words from the following list:

- **freedom**
- **empathy**
- **reason**
- **science**
- **atheism**
- **happiness**
- **human rights**
- **equality**
- **community**
- **action**
- **creativity**
- **education**



ACTIVITY 1: KEY VOCABULARY

Think about what you already know about humanism and make a list of any words you associate with humanist beliefs and values in the table below.

During the tour, pay attention to how often these words appear in connection with the people you meet and the features you explore. Can you find a person on the tour who connects to each of your words?

Keep an eye out for other words that appear regularly and make a note of them.

WORD	ON THE TOUR, WHO OR WHAT CONNECTS TO THIS WORD?
What other words appeared regularly?	



ACTIVITY 2: THE THREE THEMES

The tour features three rooms inside Conway Hall: the foyer, the main hall, and the library. Each room has a theme.

1. The **foyer**: community and the arts
2. The **main hall**: freedom of speech and taking action for others
3. The **library**: understanding the world and the sharing of ideas.

These themes connect to three things that humanists value. They are common elements of a humanist approach to life. Humanists believe that these features can support human beings to lead ethical and fulfilling lives in the here and now.

In each room, think about how the people, objects, or events you encounter represent or connect to each of these themes. Choose one person from each room and describe how they connect to the room's theme in the table below.

Not every person you meet on the tour fits neatly into only one theme. Think about where there may be connections between the three features of a humanist approach to life. For example, how might someone you learn about in the library connect to the theme in the main hall (freedom of speech and taking action for others)?

Finally, can you also say why these features are important to humanists?





ACTIVITY 2: THE THREE THEMES

THE FOYER

What was the theme of this room?

Who did you learn about and how did they connect to the theme?

THE MAIN HALL

What was the theme of this room?

Who did you learn about and how did they connect to the theme?

THE LIBRARY

What was the theme of this room?

Who did you learn about and how did they connect to the theme?

Did you learn about anyone who connects to more than one theme?

Why are these three themes important to humanists?



ACTIVITY 3: WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

In the **foyer**

1. Why might community be important to people?
2. What do you do to find community?

In the **main hall**

3. If you had the opportunity to speak to people about something that you were passionate about, what would it be?
4. What would you want to say?
5. How might you use your words to motivate other people to take action?

In the **library**

6. What books or ideas have inspired you and how you choose to live?
7. Can you give an example of something inspirational you learned from somebody else?
8. Can you give an example of when you read something that changed your mind?



Humanists on a peace march, 1962



Claudia Jones at Conway Hall, 1963. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, The New York Public Library

ACTIVITY 4: INSPIRATION AND INFLUENCE

Think about why humanists today might find the people you meet on the tour inspiring. Could they also be inspiring to people from other worldviews?

1. What influence has that person had on the world we live in today?
2. Did their work lead to an increase in people's freedoms (including the freedom to be non-religious)?
3. How did they believe their actions would change the world for the better? Do you agree?

ACTIVITY 5: SPECIAL PLACES

What other buildings might humanists value and why?

Take a look at the **resource** on Understanding Humanism to explore why humanists might value particular buildings that support human beings to learn, to stay healthy, to meet people, to enjoy hobbies and interests, and to create a fair society.

Find this activity at:

understandinghumanism.org.uk/area/society/





ACTIVITY 6: DESIGN A HUMANIST BUILDING

What might a building that represents humanist values look like?

Take a look at the resource on Understanding Humanism, exploring humanist values and the ideas of humanist architects. Students can put their knowledge about humanism to use, by designing a building for humanists.



The library at Conway Hall © Conway Hall Ethical Society

Find this activity at:

understandinghumanism.org.uk/area/what-is-humanism/





ACTIVITY 7: QUIZ

Questions

Introduction and the foyer

1. When was Conway Hall built?
2. Why was Conway Hall built?
3. Is Conway Hall a humanist place of worship?
4. How is Conway Hall used today?
5. When was Humanists UK founded and what was it called?
6. What is Conway Hall's slogan and what does it mean?
7. Why might music and song be important to humanists?
8. Who was Conway Hall named after? What did you learn about him?

The main hall

9. What causes and campaigns have people spoken about at Conway Hall?
10. Why might humanists campaign for a better life for people in the here and now?
11. What are the words above the stage and what do they mean?
12. Give an example of somebody who spoke at Conway Hall and the values they believed were important.
13. What are some different types of humanist ceremonies?

The library

14. What was Charles Darwin's big idea?
15. Can you find the quote from Robert Ingersoll?
16. What did Ernestine Rose campaign for?
17. How did E.M. Forster's work help to promote empathy?
18. What did Thomas Paine write about?
19. What work did Rose Bush do to put her humanist beliefs into action?
20. What happened to Richard Carlile and Susannah Wright when they wrote and sold books about the need for people to be free to criticise religious ideas and to challenge people in power that they disagreed with?



Answers

Introduction and the foyer

1. 1929
2. Conway Hall was built as a place where non-religious people could come together and find community: a community specifically of people who wanted to be 'good without god', to share ideas, to work for a better world, and to enjoy music, the arts, and each other's company.
3. No. Humanists don't worship.
4. Today Conway Hall hosts events, from lectures and performances to concerts and group meetings, and is host to the Humanist Library and Archives: the largest humanist research resource in the UK.
5. 1896. The Union of Ethical Societies.
6. 'Making ethics matter'. Making ethics matter means putting our ideas about what is good into action.
7. Humanists might enjoy music and song as a way of expressing what it means to be human; a way of sharing ideas and even making political statements; a way of experiencing joy and wonder at human creativity; and a way of bringing people together – to sing, play, or listen to music.
8. Moncure Conway. He was born in Virginia, USA in 1832. He campaigned against slavery.

The main hall

9. Women's rights, fighting against racism, campaigning for peace, championing freedom, and more.
10. Humanists believe that this is the one life we have (wrongs won't be put right in another life after this) and so that motivates them to try to work for a better life for everyone in the here and now.
11. 'To thine own self be true'. The quote comes from a play written by William Shakespeare, and it means 'be true to yourself'. We should all have the freedom to have our own beliefs and goals, and to be able to share them and act on them, as long as they don't harm other people.
12. L. Susan Stebbing: thinking critically, questioning, evidence.
Eslanda Goode Robeson: freedom, fairness, equality.
Har Dayal: happiness, freedom, democracy.
Bertrand Russell: love, knowledge, peace.
Margaret Knight: education, morality, tolerance.
13. Weddings, funerals, and baby namings.



The library

14. Darwin's big idea was the theory of evolution: the idea that life on earth had evolved over millions of years, as different species adapted to their environments.
15. 'Happiness is the only good. The time to be happy is now; the place to be happy is here; and the way to be happy is to make others happy.'
16. Ernestine Rose campaigned against slavery and for women's rights and suffrage (the right to vote in elections).
17. E.M. Forster was an author who wrote stories. He used his books to explore the lives of other people – something that allowed readers to imagine what it's like to be someone else.
18. Thomas Paine argued that human beings should base their ideas and beliefs on reason (thinking carefully, and looking for evidence), and that everybody had the right to be free.
19. Rose Bush played a big part in the Humanist Housing Association, which built homes for elderly and vulnerable people.
20. They were sent to prison.



GLOSSARY

Abolition/abolitionist – to abolish means to get rid of something. In this case: slavery. An abolitionist was someone who wanted to ban slavery.

Activism/activist – activism means working to make social or political change happen, like through campaigning or protests. An activist is someone who does this.

Agnostic – to be agnostic means to ‘not know’, and usually refers to the existence of a god.

Atheist – atheist means ‘without god’, and refers to a person who doesn’t believe in a god.

Blasphemy – blasphemy is saying or writing something about gods or religion which is seen to be offensive.

Campaigner – a campaigner is someone who takes part in actions to achieve a particular goal, especially a social or political change. See also: activist.

Compassion – compassion is having sympathy and understanding for someone who is suffering.

Democracy – democracy means ‘power of the people’. A country where people can show this power by voting and taking part in decision-making is called a democracy.

Discrimination – discrimination is treating a person or a particular group of people differently, usually worse than others, because of something about them.

Empathy – empathy is feeling what someone else is feeling, or imagining how it would feel to be another person.

Equality – equality is when everyone is treated equally and fairly, and has access to the same rights and opportunities.

Ethics – ethics comes from ‘ethos’, which means ‘ways of living’. Ethics are our beliefs about how we should act, based on ideas about what is right and wrong.

Ethical society – ethical societies were groups of like-minded people who came together in the belief that it was possible to be good without religion and to change the world for the better.

Evolution – to evolve is to change gradually over time. Evolution is the process by which different kinds of living things are believed to have developed from earlier forms.

Freedom of the press – the right to publish newspapers, magazines, and other printed material without restriction or censorship by the government.



Freethinker – a freethinker is someone who thinks for themselves, and uses their own reason to examine what they're told, or what is traditionally thought.

Humanism/humanist – humanism is an approach to life based on reason and empathy. A humanist is an atheist or agnostic who follows this approach to life.

Humanist ceremony – a humanist ceremony is a special event – like a wedding, funeral, or naming ceremony – which marks an important moment in life, without reference to a god.

Humanitarian – (a person) focused on making people's lives better.

Philosophy/philosopher – a person's philosophy is the beliefs and values they live by; a philosopher is someone who thinks deeply about things, and studies thinking itself.

Pluralism – pluralism is when different types of people, with different beliefs and opinions, live together within the same society.

Radical – (a person) holding strong beliefs about how society should be changed.

Reason – to think carefully about something, using logic and evidence.

Reform/reformer – to reform means to make changes; a reformer is someone who tries to do this, for example, to change something about society or the law.

Revolution – a sudden and dramatic change, usually in how a country is run.

Secularism/secularist – secularism means the separation of church and state and equal treatment for all, regardless of religion or belief; a secularist is someone who believes in this.

Status quo – the way things are; the current state of things.

Suffrage/suffragist – suffrage is the right to vote in political elections; a suffragist is someone who campaigned for this.

Supernatural – something outside of nature, which can't be explained by science.

Tolerance – a fair and understanding attitude towards people who are different from you.

Wisdom – being wise is using knowledge and experience to make good decisions.

Cover image: **Pen illustration of Conway Hall**
by **Herbert Cutner, 1931**. © Lord Wandsworth
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