

Humanism

Holy book: Humanists do not
follow a holy book.

Name of people who study religion: Humanists

The first humanist:
Francesco Petrarca

Place of worship: Humanists
do not have a place of worship.



Prior key knowledge needed for this unit

Lesson 1

- know that people who believe in humanism are called "humanists".
- identify and name the "Happy Human" as symbol of humanism.
- know that most humanists identify humanism as a non-religious worldview.
- know that opinion polls suggest 2 out of 10 people in Britain hold humanist beliefs, and so might be identified as humanists.
- know that most humanists believe what is right or wrong mainly depends on whether an action brings benefits or pleasure or causes suffering or pain to people or animals. What is right or wrong does not depend on rules that are believed to come from God.
- know that most humanists believe that even if a person does not believe in God or religion, it is still possible for them to be happy and feel their life has purpose and meaning.
- Pupils should be taught that a worldview can be a religious worldview and that Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism and Sikhism are religious worldviews but also that a worldview can be a non-religious worldview such as Humanism.

Lesson 2

- know the words "atheism" and "atheist". Know that atheism rejects the belief that there is a God and an atheist is a person who believes in atheism.
- know that many humanists are atheists and they reject the belief there is a God.
- know that many humanists reject the belief in the soul, or in life after death.
- know the word "agnostic" and that an agnostic is a person who doubts there is a God.
- know that most humanists do not believe in angels or demons or in supernatural events like miracles or revelations
- Pupils should be able to discuss questions like "If there isn't a God who made the world?", "If God made the world who made God?"
- know that many humanists have a positive attitude towards religion and believe religion is often the source of good in the world.
- know that some humanists have a negative view of religion and believe religion is often the cause of unnecessary fear, conflict, and division in the world.

Key knowledge needed for this unit

- know the meaning of the words, "moral" and "morality" and how to spell and grammatically use these words correctly.
- know the "Golden Rule" - "Treat other people as you would want other people to treat you". This is linked to the Good Samaritan story that Christians also believe in.
- know that many humanists believe: (1) a person can know right from wrong but not believe in God or be religious; (2) the Golden Rule can be used to help a person decide what is the morally right or wrong way to act in certain circumstances.

- identify the Golden Rule as a rule that most religions teach including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism.
- know Bernard Shaw's views regarding the Golden Rule particularly his criticism of the rule as expressed in his statement, "Do not do to others as you would expect they should do to you. Their tastes may not be the same".
- know Cicero's views regarding the Golden Rule particularly his criticism of the rule as expressed in his statement, "There are many things that we would never do for our own sake but will do for the sake of friends".
- Discuss and express their own views in response to the question "If humanism replaced religious faith would it make a difference morally? Would it be a good or bad thing?". Pupils should be able to give reasons to justify their views.
- A criticism of humanism is that humans cannot know morally what is right or wrong as they do not have a holy scripture to teach them in the same way that Christians, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus do. Another criticism is that as Humanists do not believe in heaven or hell, then they have no incentive to do what is morally right.

Vocabulary you will use:

Word	Definition
ethical	A general way to refer to whether a person behaves morally, meaning that their actions are right or wrong. Ethical could also be used to describe whether an employed person like a journalist, or doctor conducts themselves according to the professional standards that is expected of them. Ethical is also used to refer to the branch of knowledge that we have about what is morally right or wrong. This means that a person may be a lecturer at a University and may be very knowledgeable about ethical ideas but may not be very ethical in their own personal life.
immoral	Immoral actions are actions that are unfair, dishonest, cruel, hurtful or unkind which pay no regard to the feelings and welfare of other humans and other living creatures.
moral	how a person behaves with regard to whether their actions are good or bad. Moral actions are associated with good actions that are fair, honest, generous or kind and which take into account the feelings, welfare and needs of humans and other living creatures.
Secularism	Secularism means anything that doesn't involve religion in any way. Secularism doesn't necessarily mean being opposed or being hostile towards religion. Nor does it mean that in a secular society there are laws which are opposed to religion... However, in a society that affirms secularism it may mean a person is free to be religious, or non-religious, or free to change their religion if they wish, or free from religious interference in how laws are decided or applied.

Questions we'll ask you throughout the unit to check your knowledge and understanding.

Will people do what they like if there is no punishment in an afterlife to worry about?

Other religions believe only God knows what is right or wrong and God has provided humankind with that knowledge in holy books. As humanists do not believe in God, or in holy books, how do humanists know what is right or wrong?

Some people believe humanists only do what is morally good because over centuries religion has ingrained in many people, they should do what is good. To what extent do you agree?