HUMANIST PERSPECTIVES IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

KEY STAGES 1 and 2
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HUMANISM; A NON-RELIGIOUS BELIEF SYSTEM

Humanism is a non-religious ‘belief system’, a way of thinking about what it means to be a human being, and a ‘moral system’ about how to live our lives well.

For Humanists, living our lives well means trying to increase human happiness and well-being in this world, and to help lessen suffering and unhappiness that is avoidable. We can all see people suffering and feel compassion for their suffering, and Humanists feel a responsibility to help in whatever way they can.

This gives Humanists strong beliefs about what is good and right, and what is bad and wrong. As human beings, we can see what sorts of thinking and behaving cause happiness and suffering. We do this by using evidence from history and from our experience of what we see going on around us every day. We work out our beliefs about what is right and wrong, or good and bad, by using our reasoning powers.

Humanists also think that we can use our reasoning power to work out for ourselves how to put our beliefs into action. This is not always easy because situations are complicated, so we need to think carefully about how to act to be sure that our actions have the results we want. This is where we can often learn from the thinking and experience of other human beings.

Many people share these Humanist beliefs and ideas, even if they do not call themselves Humanists. Many religious people will agree with these ideas and beliefs too. But Humanism is different from most religious belief systems because Humanists do not have a faith. This means that Humanists do not believe in supernatural powers acting in this world.

Humanists do not believe that there is a God who commands us to have certain beliefs or to live our lives in a certain way, and rewards or punishes us for what we have done or not done in this life. Humanists do not believe that we each have a soul that exists forever, nor that there is an after-life of either joy in Heaven or suffering in Hell as a result of how well we live this life.

Instead, Humanists believe that this life is all we have, and that we should live it as well as we can. We should use our own understanding and feelings to deal with problems, in cooperation with and learning from others, because this is all the knowledge that we have and all that we can rely on. We should do this for the benefit of humanity, not because it will benefit us as individuals in the future.
INTRODUCTION TO HUMANIST PERSPECTIVES AT KEY STAGE 2

The following nine Humanist perspectives are offered to Key Stage 2 teachers for information as to how the non-religious belief system of Humanism relates to nine themes commonly treated in religious education for children of 7 to 11. You may find Perspective 3 ‘Ceremonies and Celebrations’ a very appropriate way to introduce children to the Humanist life Stance.

Including an appropriate activity to show the Humanist perspective when these are relevant to your teaching will show the children that even if people (perhaps their parents) do not believe in God they still have beliefs and feelings and values that help them lead a good life. This will help children to begin to explore ideas and concepts that they may meet later in religious education that may well be beyond their understanding at this stage. You may find Perspective 3 ‘Ceremonies and Celebrations’ a very appropriate way to introduce children to the Humanist life stance.

Each perspective is followed by suggestions for appropriate teaching and learning activities that you may find useful. You will be able to find all the information you need to introduce the activities in the statement of the Perspective.

To avoid sub-headings the Perspectives are divided into sections by dotted lines. The suggested teaching and learning activities follow the same pattern in each case.

** indicates activities at each stage for older children who may be ready to tackle some more challenging concepts.
HUMANIST PERSPECTIVE  

BELIEFS AND KNOWLEDGE

People who call themselves Humanists believe strongly in the value of human beings, in their capacity to love and care for others, and their ability to reason things out. They try to uphold human values like justice, freedom, cooperation and respect for others and to show the human qualities of kindness, love and compassion.

Humanists do not believe in a God or supernatural power that plays an active role in our lives. This means that they also think that there is no soul, no everlasting life, no Heaven or Hell to punish us for how we live our lives. But some Humanists are more certain than others that there is no God: these Humanists are called ‘atheists’. Other Humanists are not so sure, thinking that we cannot prove there is not a God any more than we can prove there is a God: these Humanists are called ‘agnostics’.

However, all Humanists can only accept explanations that can be proved true from evidence. As a result, Humanists question anything that they cannot find out for themselves or know for certain from evidence we can test. This is why Humanists do not have ‘faith’, because this is a belief that there is some active ‘supernatural’ power beyond what can be proved to exist in this world. Humanists question anything that they cannot find out for themselves or know for certain from evidence they can test. This means that Humanists think that there are no answers to ‘ultimate’ questions like ‘why was life created?’ or ‘what is life for?’

Suggested teaching and learning activities

Tell children about the British Humanist Association’s recent ‘Atheist bus’ advertisement: ‘There is probably no God. So stop worrying and enjoy life’.

Ask the children to talk in pairs about what they would feel if they had seen a bus with the British Humanist Association’s advertisement.

Some things to explore with the children in circle time:
how do they think a strong religious believer would have thought about the advertisement, and what would a person without religious beliefs have thought?

why the advertisement said there is ‘probably’ no God. You could explain the Humanist perspective that because they cannot prove there is a God they cannot believe in a God. (** you might perhaps introduce older pupils to the term agnostic).

whether people who do not or cannot believe in a God but try to live well should be punished in the next life if there is a God. Would this be fair?

** whether Humanists should be free to run advertisements like this – in the same way as the Church of England runs advertisements for their ‘Alpha’ courses.
HUMANIST PERSPECTIVE 2

ORIGINS

Humanists believe that all forms of life have evolved by natural processes over millions of years, rather than by the work of a Creator at one moment in time and space. Humanists agree with the explanations of scientists who have investigated the origins of matter as the outcome of natural processes. Briefly these are that the Universe began with a ‘Big Bang’ about 13 billion years ago, that it has developed following mathematical laws ever since, and that the Earth came from molten matter swirling round the Sun that cooled down during billions of years. This means that the Earth cannot have been created in seven days a few thousand years ago. That was a story told before scientists had observed what is happening in the Universe.

Humanists also agree with the views of most scientists about the origins of life. They think that the evidence of fossils shows that life began, probably in the sea, from different chemical elements combining into very simple forms like bacteria, and that over very long periods of time life became more complex. Some fish became land animals, some land animals developed big brains, and eventually these animals became human beings.

We suggest that you might use the work of Charles Darwin as a way of introducing children to the Humanist view of Origins. The following information will be helpful for this. During a round the world voyage on ‘the Beagle’ in 1831-36 for geological exploration, the scientist Charles Darwin observed that creatures have to constantly adapt and improve in order to live successfully. This is the theory of evolution that explains why members of the same animal families can be so different in different places. Darwin found in the Galapagos Islands in the Pacific Ocean that turtles on islands with plants whose leaves were near the ground had evenly shaped shells, while those on islands with leaves on bushes had shells bent upwards at the front for their mouths to reach their food. In a similar way, finches on islands with hard ground had short, strong beaks to dig for worms and insects, while those on islands with softer soil had longer and thinner beaks. These differences made some creatures more successful than others of their kind on their island so that they survived while the others died out – this is the ‘survival of the fittest’.

Humanists note that if this idea of evolution is true, it means that human beings were not created in the form of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden a few thousand years ago, together with the rest of the world. Human beings
have developed from other animals (but not from monkeys or apes) over a long period of time.

There are many wonderful things in the world, but also terrible things happen. Humanists feel that if there is a loving and caring God he or she would not have made a Universe with natural disasters and suffering for innocent people. So for Humanists the Universe and our world are better explained as the outcome of natural processes.

**Suggested teaching and learning activities**

Tell the story of the scientist Charles Darwin and his voyage on the ‘Beagle’. Show the class pictures of the different turtles and finches that he found on the Galapagos Islands in the Pacific Ocean Resources (in books recommended below). Explain how Darwin thought of the idea of Evolution to explain what he observed (see introduction).

Perhaps show the class some examples of fossils borrowed from your local museum and explore with the children how they show creatures changing over long periods of time.

Ask the children to look up ‘camouflage’ on the Internet and find examples of animals adapting successfully to their environment. Explore in circle time how this means that those animals can survive and flourish.

Then tell the children that Charles Darwin did not publish his book ‘The Origin of Species’ until more than twenty years after he had his idea about how life evolves. Explore with them in circle time why not, by asking them why many religious people might have been made anxious and angry by his idea.

Look with the children at the story of Creation in Genesis. Does it fit with Darwin’s idea of evolution? Is the same true for other ‘Creation stories’ that they may have studied? Might this idea suggest that we do not need God to create all living things as they are – including us? People are still arguing about this!

Explore with the children whether it matters if the story of the creation of life in the Garden of Eden is not accurate. Lots of religious people believe that the idea of evolution is true, and that we can still learn a lot from the story in Genesis.

** You might ask older children to imagine they were alive in 1860, had been brought up to believe what the book of Genesis says about the origin of life, and then had read about the ideas of Charles Darwin. The children might discuss whether they would have agreed at that time with Darwin’s ideas that changes in life happen naturally without God being involved, why the idea of
evolution would have made many people angry, and then how Darwin would have answered the arguments of religious objectors.

The following books provide excellent simple explanations of evolution that will be a useful source of information for children as well as providing you with relevant illustrations:

Eyewitness Guide ‘Evolution’

Phil Gates ‘Evolve or die’ (Horrible Science)

Neil Morris ‘First book of long ago’

Martin Palmer and Esther Bisset ‘Worlds of Difference’. (This book provides information on a range of Creation stories, with an excellent section on the Humanist perspective.)
CELEBRATIONS AND CEREMONIES

Humanists know that we all need to enjoy our lives, and celebrate our special times. These include our birthdays and other birthdays in the family, and important times like weddings of those we know and love. These are times when family and friends gather together to enjoy the occasion and celebrate these important stages in life. These celebrations are sometimes called ‘rites of passage’, and are very important parts of the lives of us all.

There are non-religious ceremonies or forms of celebration for all these special occasions which do not include the prayers, hymns and thanks to God that are important to religious believers. These celebrations and ceremonies include songs, music and readings that are special to the person and their family, and contributions from family and friends. They are not held in religious buildings but in our homes or in places that are special to us. They are led by a trained ‘celebrant’, not a minister of religion. Examples of a Humanist baby naming and a wedding are shown in video extracts from the British Humanist Association and summarised under Suggestions below.

These ceremonies and celebrations also include Humanist funerals, because although these are sad times they can and should be a celebration of the life of the one who has died (see Perspective 7, the journey of life).

Suggestions for teaching and learning activities

Use the British Humanist Association’s Teaching Toolkit 2, Class Presentation 5. This is a video clip of a ‘baby naming ceremony’ called ‘How Humanists celebrate a new life’ (www.humanismforschools.org.uk). This includes a talk by a celebrant, a poem, the involvement of ‘special friends’, the naming and the parents’ promises to their baby.

In circle time ask the children about their own experiences of naming ceremonies, probably christenings with ‘godparents’. You might explore the differences between christenings and the Humanist ceremony, and what the Humanist ceremony shows us is important in life. You might point out that in a Humanist ceremony:
- the venue can be anywhere that is special to the family
- there are no hymns or prayers
- important promises are made to the baby
- welcoming messages from those at the ceremony can be made into a book
- ‘special friends’ have a very important role for the future.

Then use resource British Humanist Association Teaching Toolkit 2, Worksheet 2A (www.humanismforschools.org.uk), with pupils filling in the speech bubbles to express their feelings about this occasion. Then children may like to write a poem to welcome a new baby into the world.

In groups, ask children to imagine they are planning a Humanist naming ceremony. This could include:
- what special place they would choose to hold the ceremony
- which special friends they would like to come
- what they would like the baby’s special friends to promise that they will do
- what they themselves would promise a new baby brother or sister.

The work could end with a display, including cards to celebrate the naming ceremony, and a book with messages from special friends.

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In circle time ask the children whether they have been to a wedding, and if so tell the others about what happened. If this wedding happened in a church or other religious building, tell the children that:
- many couples get married in other places that are special to them – stately homes, castles, even on board ships - or in a registry office.
- these may be Humanist weddings, where there is a ‘celebrant’ instead of a priest or imam, and where there are no readings from holy books, hymns or prayers.

Use resource British Humanist Association Teaching Toolkit 2 Class Presentation 6, video clip ‘How Humanists celebrate weddings’ (www.humanismforschools.org.uk). This includes a talk by a celebrant, the making of vows, the exchange of rings, and everyone’s best wishes to the couple for their future together.

Then help the children compare a Humanist wedding with a religious one. You might remind them of the differences above, and then point out that humanists believe in love, but think that it comes from in human beings, not from God. What does the Humanist ceremony show us is important in life?

Then use the British Humanist Association’s Teaching Toolkit 2, Worksheet 2B (www.humanismforschools.org.uk), with pupils filling in the speech bubbles to express their feelings for the couple.

In groups, ask children to imagine they are planning a Humanist wedding. They will need to include:
- what special place they would choose to hold the wedding
- what they think a bride and groom would promise each other
- what readings people might choose instead of readings from a holy book
- what music people might choose instead of hymns.

Then the class might like to enact the wedding.

**HUMANIST PERSPECTIVE  4**

**SYMBOLS AND SPIRITUAL IDEAS**

Many, though not all, Humanists accept that there is a spiritual ‘dimension’ to life. They find this is our feelings of awe and wonder at natural events, in our feelings for beauty, in our capacity for love, our awareness of happiness and joy, our imagination and creativity. These are often referred to as aspects of the 'human spirit', and Humanists see them as an essential part of being human.

Some Humanists, it is true, do not share these beliefs. This is because they are ‘materialists’ who think that the world of feelings and emotions is solely a matter of electrical impulses and chemical reactions in the brain. But for the majority of Humanists while this may be an accurate explanation it devalues the reality of the emotions and the experiences they provide.

Perhaps the best way to approach this with children is through the concept of happiness. Not only can children draw on their own experiences, but they can recognise that all human beings share similar experiences. Humanists like to be happy and enjoy things like good food, football matches, pop concerts, etc, just like the rest of us. But happiness for them is one of the most important concepts of all because it guides our behaviour towards others. No wonder the Humanist logo is ‘The Happy Human’.

Happiness is also something you cannot measure, go out and find, nor create at will. It arises through action with and towards others, often as a result of striving to reduce other peoples’ unhappiness. Humanists feel that happiness is a spiritual experience.

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Humanists believe that all human beings can have spiritual experiences because these are human emotions. Religious believers also share these feelings, but for them the term spiritual refers to belief in a supernatural world that can only be attained through faith. For religious people this enhances all emotions, but for Humanists it devalues the meaning of life’s experiences for those without faith. Humanists think that religious spirituality is only one form of spiritual experience among others – and that all forms of spiritual experience are equally valuable.
Suggested teaching and learning activities

In circle time show the class the Humanist logo of the ‘Happy Human’ – this is the Humanists’ one symbol. Symbols have messages: ask the children to work in pairs and list what this symbol makes them think about, and collate their ideas.

Explore with the children the things that make them happy. You could then help them choose the ones that they remember for a long time and would like to repeat. You might show the children some pictures of beautiful or awe-inspiring things in nature, or play some uplifting music and ask them how these make them feel. These are the kinds of happiness the Humanist logo refers to, which everyone can enjoy.

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** If the children mention believing in God as a cause of happiness, you could show them that while Humanists do not share that cause of happiness, they understand how valuable it is for those who do. But they think that the other kinds of happiness you have been exploring with them are equally valuable. You might explore this concept by getting children to rank their ideas of happiness in order of significance: this should provide plenty of opportunity for discussion!
HUMANIST PERSPECTIVE  5

AUTHORITY

Humanists obey the laws of their country, even where these do not seem to be fair and rational, but they strive by rational argument to change those they disagree with. They believe in thinking things out for themselves, using their reasoning powers to investigate, discuss and argue as the only means to make sense of life and improve it for everyone. Humanists rely on thinking rationally, looking for evidence that something is true or false, right or wrong. If there is no evidence for an opinion or a statement, or to justify a law or an action, they are prepared to disagree with it or change it.

So Humanists do not accept the authority of a supernatural being as expressed in a holy book or doctrines. They deny the authority of any power, human or supernatural, that tries to indoctrinate people into any one way of thinking, because they believe in freedom of thought and freedom of expression – having an open mind and developing one’s own opinions. They believe that indoctrination creates dogmatic opinions that discourage people from thinking for themselves, closes people’s minds, and is intolerant of other opinions.

Authority gives power to individuals or more usually to groups. Humanists know that power can be and often is misused, and are very distrustful about the idea of God as the ultimate authority. This claim to absolute authority can result in absolute power, certainly over thought. Words claimed to be from God are seen as ‘the truth’. These words become ‘doctrines’, principles for living that are laid down with authority as truths for all time. Humanists question these ‘fixed truths’ because they feel that they may not all be appropriate to the changing circumstances we live in. ‘Fixed truths’ may need to be modified to serve human happiness, and Humanists observe that religious authorities are very reluctant to change their beliefs or opinions.

Humanists know that people in authority, both secular and religious, do not like criticism and have often persecuted those who do not accept their teachings. Humanists oppose persecution because of their belief in freedom of speech and opinion, concern for happiness and wish to prevent suffering.
The ‘authority’ that Humanists do recognise is, in Thomas Paine’s words, ‘my own mind’. But this does not mean that Humanists have no agreed philosophy or set of values. There are a number of principles on which the great majority of Humanists would agree as the outcome of reflecting rationally and with compassion on the human situation. This consensus on values is the Humanist’s ‘authority’. They adhere very strongly to these principles, which are not laid down as a creed but can be applied flexibly to different and changing situations (see Perspective 6 below).

Suggested teaching and learning activities

** We suggest that this is more appropriate for Upper Key Stage pupils. Authority and fairness are difficult concepts for pupils to grasp outside of their immediate context, indoctrination and dogmatism even more so. However, it could be useful to introduce pupils to the idea that authority should be used fairly, and that Humanists believe that people should as far as possible be allowed and encouraged to think for themselves.

In circle time, ask children to talk in pairs to draw up a list of people who are ‘in authority’ over them (probably their parents and teachers). Then ask them when they like obeying them, and when they do not like obeying them. This should bring out the idea of ‘fairness’.

** If the children mention the priest of their church or the imam of their mosque, explore why these people have authority. This should bring out the idea of ‘truth’, and how books, especially ‘holy’ books, have authority. Then you could explain the Humanist view on authority (see introduction) especially about thinking for yourself about what you believe. This means that Humanists do not have an authority that tells them what to believe.

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** Explore with older children examples of doctrines, choosing some that are universal such as ‘love your neighbour’, and some that are arguably related to particular times or situations, or an individual’s own ideas. With the children’s help, divide these doctrines into the two groups suggested. Should anyone enforce those doctrines or ideas that are related to particular times and situations?

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** You might then explore with the children whether not having an authority to follow means that Humanists can do whatever they like. This would form an ideal link to the next Perspective on Humanist morality, where some of the key Humanist principles are listed.
Humanism is a belief system, and Humanists have strong beliefs in being good people and doing good things, just like religious people. This is called being 'moral' or 'ethical' in our behaviour. It means having values that guide how we behave towards other people and other living things. This morality is the heart of Humanism.

Humanists believe that we can be good without believing in God. The reason for this is that Humanists believe that morals and values like care and cooperation have evolved like every other part of life. We can see that behaviour that we call right or good helps human beings survive in their societies and become happy. We can also see that other behaviour that we call wrong or bad damages human societies and makes people unhappy. We can see for ourselves that this happened in the past, and is happening today.

So for Humanists this means that we do not have to be told why we should live well by a God, nor how we should do this. Nor do we need the hope of reward in Heaven or fear of punishment in Hell to persuade us to live well. Humanists think that these are rather selfish reasons for good behaviour. Instead we should trust our reasoning powers – and our capacity for being concerned for everyone’s happiness and well-being.

Humanist morality is often summed up in a ‘Golden Rule’ (which can also be found in all the world’s great religious traditions). This says that we should treat others in ways that we should like to be treated ourselves, and not in ways that we would not like to be treated. So happiness is a very important aim for Humanists – indeed the symbol for Humanism is the ‘Happy Human’.

However for Humanists this aim includes other people’s happiness as well as our own. Because we can feel for others, this compassion leads us to seek happiness for everyone. But this Humanist trust in human capacity for good is not naïve. Humanists recognise that there is a great deal of selfishness in our natures and that unless this is controlled it can create a great deal of suffering. So Humanist morality demands that we act in ways that avoid causing suffering and help lessen the suffering of others where we can do so.
SOME KEY HUMANIST PRINCIPLES

- We should try to live by the values - such as love, compassion, fairness and respect - that have developed because human societies and groups cannot flourish without them.

- Most of us can reason out right and wrong from the consequences of our actions, especially if we have sufficient information. We have a duty to our fellow human beings to lead good lives, but we don’t need god(s) to tell us how to lead good lives.

- Our actions and laws should aim to promote well-being and happiness, and to prevent or decrease suffering and misery.

- Everyone should be free to act as they wish so long as their actions do not harm others.

- We should recognise that each society has evolved its own code of morality and laws, and that in most societies these will change as circumstances change. We should be tolerant of differences so long as these do not occasion harm.

- We should be sensitive to the living environment and to people different from ourselves.

- We should in general follow the two-part Golden Rule:
  - treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves
  - do not treat others in ways we would not want to be treated ourselves.

Suggested teaching and learning activities

Explore the concepts of right and wrong and behaving well by giving the children a shoplifting scenario: the children find themselves in a group of friends in a newsagent with an opportunity to steal some sweets. Their friends urge them to take part. What would they do? List their options, vote for the group’s choice, and justify this to the rest of the class.

In circle time you could then explore with the children the values they hold that guided them in their decisions. This might also be an opportunity to explore with the children how they would react if they saw a friend bullying someone else. Would they tell on him or her? What they might do instead? And, once again, what values would guide them in making their decisions?
In circle time show the children the video clip in the British Humanist Association’s ‘Teaching Toolkit 3 ‘What do we mean by behaving well?’ Philip Pullman reflects on how the characters in his stories decide how to act well, for example because of the results of being good. Explore with the children whether these are effective motives for behaving well and whether reasoning things out and caring for the happiness and well-being of others are better motives for behaving well.

** In circle time show older children the video clip in the British Humanist Association’s ‘Teaching Toolkit 3 ‘How do Humanists decide right and wrong?’ Several Humanists give their answers to this question, eg upbringing, conscience, empathy and reasoning out consequences. Explore with the children how we can work out ideas of right and wrong and how to behave for ourselves.

In circle time explore with the children why we should be good. Show the children the video clip in the British Humanist Association’s Teaching Toolkit 3 ‘The importance of human nature’. Philip Pullman suggests there is no need for God to tell us right from wrong: instead we have conscience, a sense of fairness, ideas that have evolved.

Explore with the children whether we need the hope for life in Heaven or the fear of life in Hell as reasons for behaving well.

In circle time introduce the ‘Golden Rule’. Explain to the children that Humanists have a clear and simple rule for good behaviour. Explain that the ‘Golden Rule’ is in two parts and that both are important for what we do and what we don’t do:
- treat others as you would want them to treat you
- don’t treat others in ways you would not want to be treated yourself.

Then show children the video clip in the British Humanist Association’s Teaching Toolkit 3 ‘Humanists and the Golden Rule’, in which Philip Pullman talks about the Golden Rule. Explore with the children where we can find the Golden Rule in the Sermon on the Mount and the Ten Commandments, or in the Koran.

Finally the children could colour in on a world map those parts of the world where religious writings include the Golden Rule.

** You might also use the video clip in the British Humanist Association’s Teaching Toolkit ‘What is the Golden Rule?’ These give eight statements of the Golden Rule from different religion and cultures – and the BHA. Alternatively examples of the Golden Rule in other religions can also be found
on the British Humanist Association’s poster ‘The Golden Rule’, available at info@humanism.org.uk).

HUMANIST PERSPECTIVE  7

THE JOURNEY OF LIFE

Humanists try in their different individual ways to lead a good life and be moral in their journey through life. This means that they try to be happy, but also to behave in ways that make other people happy – or at least don’t make them unhappy. They try to follow the ‘Golden Rule’, to treat other people as they would like to be treated themselves. This makes them feel responsible for the well-being of those they know, especially those in their family and their friends. They enjoy bringing up any children they have, or being good uncles and aunts if they have no children of their own. They enjoy celebrating important times like baby namings, birthdays and weddings with their family and friends (see Perspective 3 ‘Celebrations and Ceremonies’ above).

The Humanists’ Golden Rule’ has a second part to it that means that Humanists have responsibilities to other people as well as themselves and their family and friends. Because we know what makes us unhappy, we should avoid acting that way to others – and find out any other things that individual people will not want to happen to them. More than that, Humanists believe that they should use their talents in ways that will be useful to other human beings as well – those they meet and work with, and those they may influence as a result of what they do.

Humanists believe that our life on earth is the only one they have, because they do not believe in a supernatural world where everyone has an afterlife. For religious people thoughts of this afterlife give their journey through this life meaning and purpose because the end of this life is just a beginning to the next. But Humanists think that having only one life is an even nobler reason to live it well than being concerned with their own well-being in some future world. Our journey should be worthwhile for its own sake.

Humanists try to live as well as they can so that they will know when they come to die that they have achieved at least some of their potential. Hopefully they will be remembered as people who were worth knowing, and their lives will be celebrated by those who knew them.

Suggested teaching and learning activities
In circle time remind children of the Humanists’ ‘Golden Rule’, their guide to living a good life:
- treat others as you would want them to treat you
- don’t treat others in ways you would not want to be treated yourself.

Explore with them why this is a good idea! How would they want to be treated, and how would they not want to be treated? You could then explore with children whether we can lead a good life if we don’t believe in God.

You might take the opportunity to link this to the school’s work to prevent bullying by exploring with the children what happens to other people when they call them names, and how it must feel to be teased or talked about behind their back.

** Older children might benefit from a class debate on ‘Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me’.

Then explain that following the second part of the Golden Rule means not causing unhappiness. Choose a situation where other people are unhappy that the children can relate to easily, and find out about one religious and one secular charity working to help in this area. Tell the children about their work, and then explore with them how the charities are similar and different. Which one would they like to work with most?

** With older children you might explore how the ways we all make our lives happy ones can also cause unhappiness to other people without us realizing it. You might suggest to the children that many of the things that make us happy cause a lot of pollution and waste. Ask the children for examples of things they and their families enjoy doing that might damage the environment (eg long car journeys or flights to holidays abroad). Then suggest that some other ways of being happy might do less damage, and ask the children for examples from their lives (eg more local holidays). But would they be prepared to give up the things they enjoy? Would they enjoy life less?

** If you have studied Victorian England with the children you might remind them about the pollution and waste caused by the growth of factories, coal mining and transport (the paintings of L.S.Lowry are ideal for this).

** With older children you might also explore whether the only way to be really happy may be to change our wasteful way of life, and change our ideas about happiness!

Celebrating births and weddings might be ideal elements for work on this Perspective (see 3. above). But dealing with death and the end of life is a sensitive subject, especially if any one in the class is mourning a recent loss. However, a valuable part of the Humanist perspective is that Humanists are not distressed about the idea of dying. They believe that we each ‘live on’ in some ways after we die, so you might explore with the children in circle time ways in which this might be true. Perhaps you could ask the children what
they remember about a special person they have heard about and remember. They could write a short obituary for a display.

* You might explore with older children whether thinking, as Humanists do, that life comes to a final end when we die means that it has no value.

**HUMANIST PERSPECTIVE** 8

**INSPIRATIONAL PEOPLE**

We all need guidance through the journey of life. Our parents lay the foundation, then teachers and leaders in the groups that we belong to help us build on this. We may meet or read about people who help us understand the world, or even inspire us to develop our aims in life.

Humanists believe in people making up their own minds on issues. But we all need guidance in setting out our aims and priorities. Leaders and inspirational people can provide us with that guidance. But we must treat them as guides and models rather than authorities! (see Perspective 4 above).

Humanists find understanding and inspiration in the writings of thinkers who trusted in the use of their reasoning powers, like Socrates, John Locke, Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Charles Darwin and Bertrand Russell. Many, though not all, of these thinkers questioned or did not believe in the existence of God. Humanists also find inspiration from examples of leadership, courage and sacrifice given by people without a faith in God, like Jawaharlal Nehru, Marie Stopes, and Marie Curie. Among many who have celebrated life on earth from a Humanist perspective is Sir David Attenborough.

Short biographies of seven of these inspiring people are included in an appendix to this booklet. Two are still alive, and you might choose to study any of these with the children as examples of inspiring Humanist lives. As we explain in the biographies, more than one of these inspiring people had some degree of religious belief, but the driving force for all of them was a love of humanity.

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Some of these inspirational people with non-religious views faced criticism and opposition. There have been many other inspiring people who have suffered or even died for their non-religious beliefs in the past and some are still persecuted at the present time. Humanists support the work of Amnesty International to end persecution whatever the reason for it.

**Suggested teaching and learning activities**
Ask the children to write a few sentences about a person who is special to them, to show how he or she has inspired them, and what they have learnt from them.

Alternatively you might ask the children to collect articles in the newspapers about popular people, then explore with the pupils in circle time good reasons for being popular.
You might also invite a local leader, eg your Head teacher or a leader in the Scouts or Guides, into the class to talk about what is required of them as a leader. The children could prepare questions for the visitor about their feelings about being a leader.

In circle time tell they story of one of the seven examples of a person living for a cause, doing good and inspiring others but not primarily from a religious motivation, given in the appendix - Thomas Paine, Annie Besant, Sir Julian Huxley, Marie Stopes, Sir David Attenborough, Jawaharlal Nehru or Nelson Mandela.

Explore with the children in circle time why this inspirational person took up such challenging tasks and responsibilities, and how he or she tried to promote human rights and happiness. In groups the children could then make the information into a display about this inspirational person. The groups might then role play an episode from the life of their inspirational person to show the class their values and principles, and the qualities that made them a successful leader.

** With older children you might ask them in groups to choose one of the seven examples of Humanist inspirational people and work through the questions at the end of the brief biography, using the information provided. (Additional information can of course be found in the library or on the Internet.)

** You might finish the work by exploring with the children whether it is only religious people who can act out of love for others.
HUMANIST PERSPECTIVE  

BELIEF IN ACTION: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Human rights are one of the central concerns of Humanists. All human beings have rights that should be respected, because they are all unique, thinking beings. For Humanists all are equally important as human beings, whatever differences there are between them that make some seem more important than others, and whatever their differences in belief. Humanists are, in general, tolerant of other beliefs and respect them even if they disagree with them – so long as these beliefs do not lead to injustice and do not lead to actions that harm others.

Humanists believe that because we have rights we all have responsibilities towards others. We should behave fairly and justly towards other people so that everyone else’s rights are recognised too. Humanists therefore oppose all discrimination, because this treats groups of people as inferior, expects them to be less intelligent or successful than people in other groups, and gives them fewer opportunities to succeed.

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Not everyone can be equal in society, and differences in race, nationality, ethnicity, religious belief, class, ability, gender, sexuality, physical ability and age are obviously significant, but these should not divide the human race. However, these differences are only too often used to foster intolerance and create unhappiness. Today right wing organisations are fostering racism by condemning our Muslim communities as the source of terrorism (‘Islamophobia’). Humanists therefore seek to question and challenge the prejudices and stereotypes that underlie all discrimination – especially in work with young people at every stage of education.

Humanists believe in social justice and seek to understand the reasons for avoidable suffering such as poverty and ill health, and to tackle these - or at least avoid behaving in ways that contribute to them. Humanists respect rules and laws that help bring about the ‘greatest happiness of the greatest number’ by reducing suffering and increasing well-being, but they know that as circumstances change so must the laws if they are to continue to bring about well-being.

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Humanists are also deeply concerned about the unhappiness and suffering being caused by climate change and damage to the environment. They respect the scientific evidence that suggests that these changes are permanent, and recognise that they will almost certainly lead to a vast amount of suffering for billions of poorer people as sea levels rise and natural calamities increase in number and severity, and wars occur over dwindling resources.

For Humanists it is vital we should try to understand our responsibility as human beings for both creating this threat to us all and for working to reduce it. Humanists believe that the damage can be contained if we make the necessary changes in our way of life – and are quite sure that there is no one else who will do this for us, no other power that will intervene to save us from the consequences of our behaviour.

Suggested teaching and learning activities

In circle time explain to the children how you as a teacher try to respect their rights, and explore with them why. You might then tell the story, or use a (carefully chosen) video of a child being treated badly or not having access to education. What rights have not been respected in these cases? Or use the sweets stealing scenario in Perspective 6: ask the children to imagine they are in a group who see an opportunity to steal sweets from a newsagent and are asked to join in. Explore with the children what they would do, and whose rights are involved.

** With older children you could draw up a list of people who have been seen and treated as less than equal in the past (eg slaves, people with disabilities, women in most societies, poor people). Then explore with the children why this happened and why it was unfair.

** you might also explore with the children why some religious believers treat people of other religions as less than equal. Is this fair? How do they think Humanists feel about this treatment?

In circle time explore with the children what a prejudice is. This can pose difficulties, so perhaps you could start with examples of something not evident in the classroom, maybe even something amusing at first glance like ‘jokes’ about the Irish, the Scots or the French – but do include the English! Then tease out how these views are unfair, and how the children would feel if they were described in this way.

This would lead to exploring what views the children think Humanists have about prejudices (and stereotypes) and what values lead Humanists to oppose all types of discrimination. You could discuss how the children would
feel if they hear someone being prejudiced – and perhaps what they might say if they were asked if they agree?

The work could end with the children in groups designing a poster to challenge racism - or perhaps to challenge Islamophobic opinions?

** With older children you might introduce the idea of ‘stereotypes’, and explore any ideas they have that they might feel are stereotypical.

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(The following suggestion for exploring the Humanist perspective on global responsibility assumes that it will be part of a wider study where you will have shown children some pictures of natural wonders, coloured sunsets and interesting creatures, followed by scenes illustrating pollution and its effects on nature, waste in the form of litter and landfill sites, and perhaps some of the effects of climate change such as the melting of glaciers and ice caps.)

Exploring the Humanist perspective could start by showing children the Humanist ‘Happy Human’ logo, downloadable from the home page of the British Humanist Association web site www.humanismforschools.org.uk. This would lead to discussing how human beings have been responsible for at least some of the damage the children have been shown, and perhaps raising issues that Humanists care about like unfairness, suffering and human rights.

This might fit in very well with the work children have done in history about factories, coal mining, urbanisation and transport in Victorian times. This shows how modern pollution and waste started - and has got worse ever since.

An interesting activity would be to make a class map of the places where goods in our homes have come from. Children could look at labels on tins and pockets of food in the kitchen and list where they have come from, then add up the miles or kilometres their foods will have travelled to get to us. (There are, of course, many variations on this theme in the experience of many of the children, including air travel, but it opens up exploration of how we are all responsible for climate change as consumers in a personal and interesting way without being too ‘heavy-handed’ on responsibility.)

Finally, explore with the children their ideas of how we can help reduce climate change.
APPENDIX: EXAMPLES OF HUMANIST INSPIRATIONAL PEOPLE

**Thomas Paine (1737-1809)** campaigner for human rights. He wrote ‘my own mind is my own Church…my country is the world…..my religion is to do good.’

**Annie Besant (1847-1933)** campaigner for the rights of women who worked in dangerous conditions in match factories in London in the 1880s.

**Sir Julian Huxley (1887-1975)** campaigner for the welfare of people throughout the world, for two years was first Director of UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation).

**Jawaharlal Nehru (1885-1964)** Prime Minister of India (1948-64). He said ‘whether there is such a thing as a soul or whether there is survival after death I do not know…. It is the path to be followed in this life that interests me, how to understand life and improve it.’

**Marie Stopes (1880-1958)** pioneer and promoter of birth control.

**Sir David Attenborough (1928- )** conservationist, environmentalist and broadcaster, producer and presenter of ‘Planet Earth’, ‘The Living Planet’ and eight other series. His most recent series ‘The State of the Planet’ is a powerful analysis of the reality of global warming.

**Nelson Mandela (1918- )** President of South Africa 1994-99, after imprisonment for 27 years as a life-long campaigner against apartheid (the policy of separate and unequal development for people of different races).

You might also consider researching the lives of:
- Bertrand Russell, philosopher, mathematician and campaigner for peace
- Charles Bradlaugh, the MP who refused to take a religious oath and was prevented from initially taking up his seat in Parliament
- Richard Holloway, who was formerly Bishop of Edinburgh. In his book ‘Godless morality’, he condemned the ‘patronising attitude religious leaders adopt to highly moral people who have no religion and feel no need to have one’.

**THOMAS PAINE (1737-1809)**

Thomas Paine was an Englishman who wrote pamphlets and books about democracy at a time when ordinary people were feared by those who ruled
them. He got himself involved in some very exciting and dangerous activities during two revolutions that happened in his lifetime. He got into trouble because he thought for himself and wrote very readable books, such as the ‘Age of Reason’, that criticised religious beliefs and influenced many ordinary people.

Paine supported the revolution of the American colonies against rule by Britain. He became a citizen of America during their war against Britain, and proposed the name the ‘United States of America’. Then he supported the revolution of the French people against the rule of their King and noblemen. He wrote a book called ‘The Rights of Man’. In this book he said that England would be better off without a King as well. He was put on trial for treason ‘in absentia’ – the day after he had left the country and escaped to France!

In France Paine became a member of the French National Assembly (the name for their new Parliament after they had overthrown and imprisoned their King). But he argued that the King should not be executed, and found himself in prison. He only escaped execution by the guillotine himself because when the jailer came to put a cross on the cell doors of the prisoners to be executed, he put the cross on the wrong side of the door of Paine’s cell.

Thomas Paine had some very modern ideas. He wanted an income tax, a minimum wage for workers, help for those who were ill or without a job, and free education for all children.

Thomas Paine called himself a Deist, not an atheist. He believed that a god may well have started everything, but does not intervene. So God need not be worshipped; nor should the Church necessarily be obeyed.

Learning activities
Explore the ways in which Thomas Paine believed he was doing good.
Explore in which ways Thomas Paine was a ‘democrat’ who believed in the rights of ordinary people.
Write a newspaper article by Paine justifying what he had done in America or France.

ANNIE BESANT (1847-1933)

Annie was married to a clergyman, but her marriage failed when she lost her faith and could no longer take Holy Communion and her husband divorced her.

She joined the National Secular Society set up by Charles Bradlaugh (who later became a Member of Parliament but was not allowed to take up his position for several years because he refused to swear an oath to God). She was taken to court for publishing a book advocating birth control to help women choose how many children they have.

Annie worked for the welfare of women working in a match factory in London who suffered from poisoning by the phosphorous used in making match
heads, and who were paid very low wages. In 1888 she led them on a three-week strike in support of three workers who had been sacked for giving her information. Lots of people supported the strike and the factory owners had to make the work safer, give the sacked women back their jobs and raise wages.

Annie also fought for improvements in the education of poor children in London as a member of the School Board, and made sure that they got free meals and free medical examinations. She worked to help bring about women’s right to vote in elections, speaking at meetings of the Suffragette Movement.

Learning activities
Imagine you were a young woman working in the match factory. Write a diary about what happened when Annie Besant became aware of your problems.
Make a list of what you think Annie Besant believed in.
Make a list of the kind of people Annie Besant inspired.
What can we learn from Annie Besant’s life?

SIR JULIAN HUXLEY (1887-1975)

Sir Julian Huxley was a biologist. For seven years (1935-42) he was President of the Zoological Society, helping to run the London Zoo and Whipsnade Park. He wrote many books on the theory of evolution, particularly to prove that evolution proceeds by small and gradual changes rather than big ones. He also argued that nature selects the strongest and fittest of any species: these are the ones that survive and lead to the gradual improvement of the species. As a scientist, Sir Julian Huxley believed that the only universal knowledge is scientific, based on experiment and observation. He believed that all living things evolve, and that life can be improved by human efforts.

His thinking led Sir Julian Huxley to support the work of Marie Stopes to promote birth control. Like her and many other ‘progressive’ thinkers of his time, he came to support ‘eugenics’, the belief that human societies can encourage improvements by selecting their best members to produce the next generation (or at least discourage their less worthy members from doing so). However, this theory was discredited when it was used in Nazi Germany to try to create a superior ‘race’ – something Huxley strongly opposed.

Above all Sir Julian Huxley was an internationalist, and he was from 1946-1948 the first Director of the United Nation’s Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation, that works to provide free education throughout the world, to preserve indigenous peoples’ languages, and to preserve ‘world heritage sites’. He set up the World Wildlife Fund in 1961. He was also the first President of the British Humanist Association from 1963-1965.

Learning activities
Find out about the World Wildlife Fund, and prepare a display to show an example of its achievements.
Discover some more World Heritage Sites and prepare a display about them.
Make a list of the kind of people Julian Huxley inspired.
Explore what we can learn from Julian Huxley’s life.
**Explore why humanists not agree with Huxley’s support for eugenics.

Jawaharlal Nehru (1885-1964)

Nehru wanted to make India free from British rule, after British troops killed nearly 200 Indian people at a religious festival in Amritsar in the Punjab area of India in 1919. He was imprisoned nine times for a total of ten years because of his activities.

Nehru grew up in a rich family, but was shocked by the poverty in India. He said ‘I was filled with shame at my easygoing and comfortable life, and sorrow at the degradation and overwhelming poverty of India’.

Nehru was also shocked by the hatreds between religions, and the killings when India became free in 1947 but split into two countries (India largely Hindu and Pakistan largely Muslim). He helped ensure that India’s Constitution made it a secular state, not a country ruled by one religion.

Jawaharlal Nehru was the first Prime Minister of India when it became independent in 1947. He was Prime Minister for 17 years and set India on the road to becoming the country it is today. He was determined to use science and technology to make his country modern and rich. India now has many scientists and industries and many well-to-do people, but a lot of people are still very poor, especially those living in the countryside.

Nehru strove to help poor people and women. His government made laws to end the unfair caste system that kept the better jobs for the ‘better’ people, laws to end ‘dowry’ weddings where a bride’s family have to pay her husband’s family large sums of money, and laws to make it possible for women to be divorced from cruel husbands. Unfortunately these laws are not always observed.

Nehru loved children and tried to provide free education for them all. His birthday, November 14, is now ‘Children’s Day’ in India. He worked for peace in the world, and India was neutral and at peace for almost all the time he was Prime Minister.

Although born a Hindu, Nehru became an ‘agnostic’ – someone who honestly does not know about the existence of God. He said:
- ‘whether there is such a thing as a soul or whether there is survival after death I do not know … It is the path to be followed in this life that interests me, how to understand life and improve it.’
- ‘I want nothing to do with any religion that keeps the masses satisfied to live in hunger, filth and ignorance, that does not teach people that they are capable of becoming more civilised and happier on this earth.’

Learning activities
Find out how Nehru tried to make people ‘happier on this earth’.
Find out about what happened at Amritsar in 1919.
What do Nehru’s words tell us about being an ‘agnostic’?
**Explore why many people in India are still poor, despite the country having many industries and scientists.

MARIE STOPES (1880-1958)

Marie Stopes, a lecturer in science at University College, London and Manchester University, was a brave campaigner for women’s rights. She was the most effective pioneer in Britain of birth control, as a human right for women to have the information they needed to control the number of their children. She was bitterly opposed by many, as had been the earlier supporters of birth control who influenced her – writers like Annie Besant (see above), Charles Bradlaugh and Richard Carlile, all of whom were imprisoned for their views, and an American birth control campaigner, Margaret Sanger, who fled the USA and came to London to escape imprisonment.

Although she was not the first campaigner for the right to birth control, she was the person who established successful clinics. She opened her first ‘Mothers’ Clinic’ in Holloway, North London in 1921, and this still gives free contraceptive advice to poor women. She set up a network of clinics, and various societies to organise and campaign for birth control. These societies became the Family Planning Association in 1931, which is still the foremost provider of family planning advice in the UK after the National Health Service. The Marie Stopes International Global Partnership is now active in 38 countries.

Marie Stopes wrote two books, ‘Married Love’, the first ‘sex manual’, and ‘Wise Parenthood’, both published in 1918. These books gave women sexually explicit advice about methods of birth control. She also edited a magazine ‘Birth Control News’. She was strongly criticised by both the Protestant and Catholic Churches. Both called for her prosecution, so she held protest meetings outside Churches!

Marie Stopes, who was happily married, believed birth control should only be practised within marriage. But she was a strong believer in women’s rights in many forms. She had very ‘modern’ views on marriage, believing it should be an equal partnership. She wrote that ‘far too often, marriage puts an end to women’s intellectual life. Marriage can never reach its full stature until women possess as much intellectual freedom and freedom of opportunity as do their partners’.

Marie Stopes campaigned for the rights of married women teachers (who were often sacked by local authorities) and for separate taxation of husbands and wives to give wives some control over any income they earned.

However, like Julian Huxley and other ‘progressive thinkers’ at her time, she also believed in ‘Eugenics’ and argued for the ‘sterilisation of those totally unfit for parenthood – the insane, the feeble-minded and half-castes.’ Today this seems very much at odds with her other beliefs! Nevertheless in 1999 readers
of the ‘Guardian’ newspaper voted Marie Stopes their ‘Woman of the Millenium’.

Learning activities
Make a list of the ways in which Marie Stopes improved the rights of human beings.
Find out why Marie Stopes was criticised by the Churches.
Explore the ways in which Marie Stopes can be considered a Humanist.
** Explain why Humanists do not agree with Marie Stopes’ belief in ‘eugenics’
**Find out ways in which Marie Stopes was in advance of her times.

SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH (1928 - )

David Attenborough is probably Britain’s best known and best loved naturalist. As a broadcaster, he has created 10 major documentary series on almost every aspect of ‘Life on Earth’ – which was the title of his first series. Since then he has researched, written and produced: ‘The Living Planet’, ‘The Trials of Life’, ‘The Life of Birds’, ‘The Life of Mammals’, ‘The Blue Planet’, ‘Planet Earth’, ‘The State of the Planet’ and most recently ‘Life in the Undergrowth’ and ‘Life in Cold Blood’.

He is a convinced environmentalist, desperately concerned about the destructive impact of human actions on the environment. In ‘The Living Planet’ he wrote ‘surely we have a responsibility to leave for future generations a planet that is healthy and inhabitable by all species.’ He has probably done more than any other human being to make others aware of the wonders of the natural world, and to help us all to an understanding of its delicate balances, and the pressure that we are putting on these balances.

He has stressed again and again the increasing problems faced by the natural environment, and his belief that the root cause of these problems is human over-population. He has made a plea for human beings to curb their population growth – an interesting parallel with the work of Marie Stopes.

He also now believes that global warming is a reality, and that it is caused above all by human behaviour. In 2005 he wrote ‘in the past we didn’t understand the effect of our actions. Unknowingly we sowed the seed; now literally we are reaping the whirlwind. But we no longer have that excuse now; now we do recognise the consequences of our behaviour. Now surely we must act to reform it, individually and collectively, nationally and internationally - or we condemn future generations to catastrophe.’

As a scientist, David Attenborough believes in evolution and therefore opposes ‘Creationism’ or ‘Intelligent Design’ – although he has done more than almost anyone else to show how wonderful the designs in the natural world are. He commented recently ‘I think of a parasitic worm that is boring
through the eye of a boy living in West Africa, a worm that’s going to make him blind. Are you telling me that the God you say is an all-merciful God, that cares for each of us individually, are you saying that God created this worm that can live in no other way than in an innocent child’s eyeball? Because that doesn’t seem to me to coincide with a God that’s full of mercy’.

David Attenborough has recently declared himself to be a Humanist. He is also an agnostic ‘in the strict sense that I don’t know. I certainly don’t know about the existence of a God or about the existence of an afterlife. The absence of evidence does not mean that there is a god … it means that we do not know, but it also means scientifically that it would be interesting to find out.’

Learning activities

Find out the changes that David Attenborough says are needed to improve the world.
Find out what Sir David Attenborough believes in.
**Explore the ways in which Sir David Attenborough has changed our perception and understanding of the world,**
**Explain why Sir David Attenborough opposes the teaching of Creationism or intelligent design on schools,**
**Find out why many people say that Sir David Attenborough is not just a scientist but also an educator,**
**Explore why Sir David Attenborough says that he is a Humanist as well as a scientist.**

NELSON MANDELA (1918 -)

Nelson Mandela is a former President of South Africa (1994-99) and one of the world’s most revered elder statesmen. He helped to create democracy in South Africa and was the first black man to become president. Mandela worked as a lawyer giving free or low cost legal advice to black South Africans who could not afford legal fees. He became leader of the African National Congress, which campaigned for the rights of black people when South Africa was governed by white people using the system known as ‘apartheid’. This system meant separate but unequal life for people of different races: black people could not live in white areas, but only in poor areas of the countryside or in slum ‘townships’ outside the big cities. Nearly all black people in South Africa were denied the better things in life, and had no real opportunities for education.

As an anti-apartheid activist, Mandela spent 27 years in prison on Robben Island near Cape Town. He and his fellow-campaigners were wrongly accused of being communists and ‘terrorists’. Mandela believed in Gandhi’s strategy of non-violent protest, and only reluctantly agreed to acts of sabotage against military targets ‘as a last resort’ when protest was violently
suppressed. He became the world’s leading symbol of freedom and equality, and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.

As President after his release from prison, Mandela ended apartheid and worked for reconciliation between the races, to create ‘a rainbow nation at peace with the world and itself…a society in which all South Africans will be able to walk tall’. At his trial at Rivonia in 1962 he had called this ‘an ideal which I hope to live for and achieve. But if needs be it is one for which I am prepared to die’. One of his most famous gestures as President was to present the white captain of South Africa’s almost all-white World Cup winning rugby team with the trophy, wearing a Springbok shirt.

Although brought up in a Christian school, Mandela has been and still is a great Humanist, campaigning for the ‘inalienable right to human dignity’ of human beings. There is scarcely a reference to God in any of his major speeches. In his book ‘Long Walk to Freedom’ written in his cell on Robben Island, he said ‘if human beings can be taught to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite’.

Learning activities
Find out more about things black people were not allowed to do under ‘apartheid’.
Discover what happened at one of the protests against apartheid at Sharpeville in 1961.
**Analyse the ways in which Nelson Mandela showed courage.
**Analyse what made Nelson Mandela a great leader.

Re-enact in groups a scene from Mandela’s speech at the Rivonia Trial in 1962 (you can find extracts from this on the internet in Wikepedia), and the presentation of the Rugby World Cup by Mandela to the white South African captain (Francois Pineaar) in 1994.

**OTHER LEARNING ACTIVITIES ABOUT HUMANIST SPECIAL PEOPLE.**

(All these suggestions are for older pupils.)

**Humanists and religious people both make inspiring contributions to the rights and happiness of other people, even though their inspirations are different. Study these differences by working in pairs to compare, for example, the work for human rights and happiness of:
- Tom Paine with Lord Shaftesbury, who campaigned for the rights of children employed in factories and as chimney sweeps
- Annie Besant with Elizabeth Fry, who worked to help women in prison
- Jawaharlal Nehru or Julian Huxley with Mother Theresa, who devoted her life to helping the poor people of Calcutta
- Nelson Mandela with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who has also devoted his life to improving the rights and conditions of black people in South Africa.
Charities are also inspired by Humanist as well as religious beliefs. You might like to compare the type of work done by the United Nations Save the Children’s Fund with that of religious groups working for the rights of children like CAFOD or Christian Aid.

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