Lessons on Humanism

3rd / 4th Class

HUMANIST ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND

compassion • equality • reason

Educate Together

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Lessons on Humanism

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3rd and 4th Class

Lesson 1

Using senses to find things out

Strand: Belief Systems

Strand Unit: Beliefs and Values

Moral & Spiritual, Exploring Moral Development

CONTENT OBJECTIVE: To identify key values associated with Humanism

LESSON 1

HUMANISTS BELIEVE IN WHAT YOU FIND OUT THROUGH USING YOUR SENSES

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To appreciate that Humanists believe in evidence gained though use of the senses.

Background to lesson:

(For teachers' information)

Humanists believe that they are part of nature and as such have a responsibility of stewardship towards the environment as well as a duty of respect towards their fellow human beings. Humanists do not believe in a god or gods. Instead they value evidence-based investigation.

Humanists also derive a sense of awe and appreciation from positive aspects of life such as art, music, sport, nature and time spent with family and friends.

Humanists are just one group of people who have this viewpoint. There are others e.g. people who identify as atheist or agnostic.

As with any philosophical outlook or religious affiliation, it cannot be said that all Humanists think or behave in a particular way.

If children reflect during the lessons and say 'I think I am a Humanist' or 'Am I a Humanist if...? ' it may be useful to let them know that people from different beliefs and philosophical viewpoints often share principles or values. Humanism incorporates beliefs which are shared by many religious and secular groups. It should also be pointed out that it is, of course, acceptable not to identify with a particular group, as it is to be uncertain and still questioning e.g. agnostics have not committed to the existence or lack of existence of a god or gods.

Introduction

Teacher explains *'what we're going to learn today'*.

- What is Humanism or what does it mean to be a Humanist?
- What are our senses? Why are they important?
- People use their senses to find out about their surroundings and themselves. Different senses give different information.

Development

- Teacher explains that Humanists believe in what they can see, hear, touch, taste or smell.
- How do we know what we know?
- Children are split into groups of 4: Children must come up with 4 facts based on the evidence of their senses.
- Groups report back to the class.

Why do you think Humanists believe in using their senses to understand the world instead of believing what someone else tells them?

Conclusion

Exit Pass Activity: Teacher gives the children a template of a hand and asks them to write & illustrate a different 'sense' on each of the fingers. 1.see, 2.hear, 3.touch, 4. taste, 5. smell. Teacher explains that historically it was believed that people had 5 senses. However scientists now believe that we could have many senses e.g. hunger and thirst are now seen as senses.

Differentiation

Pair work may be more suitable for some children.

Lower Order Questioning

- Where can we find information?
- Is this information always correct? Why/Why Not?

Socratic Questions

- Should you always believe what you read in books or what other people tell you? Why? Why Not?

Linkage and Integration

- **SPHE:** Myself/Making Decisions
- **Science:** Living Things/Human Life

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LEARNING RESOURCE

Pictures on page 4
Hand Template

Assessment:

- **Teacher observation**
- **Work sample (Hand template)**
- **Teacher's questions/ Children's questions**

It is recommended that Assessment for Learning (AFL) strategies be incorporated into lessons. Examples below:

Increase 'wait/thinking time'

- Increase time for learner response to at least 5 seconds

No hands up

- All learners are expected to contribute and all answers valued. Teacher may select any pupil, therefore all pupils need to frame answer in their head.

Traffic Lighting/thumbs up and thumbs down

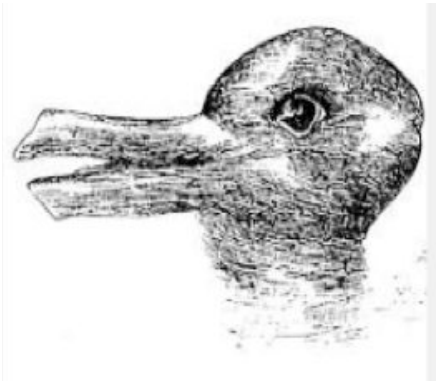
- Pupils assess own learning
  Red/thumbs down: can't do this/don't understand
  Amber/thumbs level: unsure
  Green/thumbs up: Can do this/understand

Ask for feedback/teaching ideas

- Pupils are regularly asked: 'How can we learn even more about Humanism? What ideas do you have?'

Extension Activity

- Teacher introduces pictures and asks children to identify what they can see. Children may interpret the picture in different ways. Group discussion.



Hand Template

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3rd and 4th Class

Lesson 2

Making sense of the world in different ways

Strand: Belief Systems

Strand Unit: Beliefs and Values

Moral & Spiritual, Exploring Moral Development

CONTENT OBJECTIVE: To identify key values associated with Humanism

LESSON 2

SOMETIMES WE MAKE SENSE OF THE WORLD IN DIFFERENT WAYS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To appreciate that Humanists believe in evidence-based investigation

Background to lesson:

(For teachers' information)

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Introduction

Teacher explains *'what we're going to learn today'*.

- What is Humanism or what does it mean to be a Humanist?
- What are our senses? Why are they important?
- People use their senses to find out about their surroundings and themselves. Different senses give different information.

Development

- Teacher introduces the idea of how we know things.
- Teacher explains that different people believe different things based on what they have been told, what they have seen or what they think for themselves.
- The children are spilt into groups of 4 for an activity. How do we know... ? (Link to recent SESE lesson chosen at teacher's discretion)

- Children are given 10 minutes to discuss this in their groups, they will then present to the class using a drawing or an oral presentation.

Conclusion

Teacher focuses the children's attention to the difference in how people decide they know things, such as: 'because I have done this before', or 'because I read about this in a book or saw it on television', or 'because someone/my mam told me.'

Exit Pass Activity: Children create a colourful word-art picture with the heading 'How I know things' and the pictures are arranged under a banner such as *'Sometimes we answer questions about the world around us in different ways'*

Differentiation

Pair work may be more suitable for some children.

Lower Order Questioning

- Where can we find information?
- Is this information always correct? Why/Why Not?

Socratic Questions

- Should you always believe what you read in books or what other people tell you? Why? Why Not?

Linkage and Integration

- **OSPHE:** Myself/Making Decisions
- **Science:** Living Things/Human Life
- **Art:** Drawing/Paint & Colour
- **English:** Oral Language/Writing
- **Drama:** Role Play

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LEARNING RESOURCE

Reading on page 4

Assessment:

- **Teacher observation**
- **Teacher's questions/ Children's questions**

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Ask for feedback/teaching ideas

- Pupils are regularly asked: 'How can we learn even more about Humanism? What ideas do you have?'

Extension Activity

- **Drama:** Charles Darwin, a British scientist, put forward the theory of evolution and transformed the way we think about the natural world. Humanists celebrate Darwin Day each year on February 12th.

- Teacher can read the following extract for the children:
  In the 1800s, many people believed that human beings were very special because they were made by a god or gods and that they were in no way like animals. As a scientist Darwin's findings suggested otherwise. Darwin concluded that humans evolved or slowly changed and adapted over time and that they started out as apes. Darwin's ideas were very new and different at the time and some people were angry and upset by his theories. Nowadays they are widely accepted. In fact, many people who are also religious and believe in a god or gods have no problem also believing in his theories.

- Children can be divided up into groups of 4 – the children will be encouraged to plan and create a simple drama around Charles Darwin's voyage of discovery and his theory of evolution. The children can take on different roles in the drama in order to argue for and against his theory.

- Teacher can display images of Charles Darwin, the Galapagos Islands and his ship the HMS Beagle to assist the children's drama.

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3rd and 4th Class

Lesson 3

It's important to ask questions

Strand: Belief Systems

Strand Unit: Beliefs and Values

Moral & Spiritual, Exploring Moral Development

CONTENT OBJECTIVE: To identify key values associated with Humanism

LESSON 3

HUMANISTS THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO ASK QUESTIONS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To understand that Humanists believe that people should ask questions and decide things for themselves.

Background to lesson:

(For teachers' information)

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Introduction

Teacher explains *'what we're going to learn today'*.

- Review of previous lessons
- Humanists believe in asking questions and deciding things for themselves.

Development

From the beginning of time people have been thinking, wondering and asking questions about the world around them.

Show pictures of cave paintings.

- Why do you think people drew on cave walls a long time ago?
- We will never know for sure but what do you think those people were thinking as they drew those pictures on the walls of their caves? Were they also asking questions? If so, what kind of questions?

Hot-seating

Pupil assumes role of cave dweller who drew pictures on cave wall thousands of years ago. Other pupils ask her/him questions from viewpoint of modern day journalist; fellow cave dweller of that time; animal being drawn etc.

- Can you give any examples of things you can do which clearly show that you're thinking about the world around you? (Noticing if someone is wearing something different, talking about the weather, drawing, painting, composing, writing etc.)
- As time moved on, what other evidence do we have of people trying to find answers to questions about the world around them? (Discoveries of explorers and scientists)
- Can you think of any examples of people changing their minds about something that had been believed as true for a very long time, maybe hundreds of years? (Sun not moving around earth, earth not being flat etc.)

Conclusion

Teacher concludes the discussion by asking what the children have learned about Humanism today.

Exit Pass Activity: Children turn to their partner and ask 'What have you learned about Humanism today?'

Differentiation

Pair work may be more suitable for some children.

Lower Order Questioning

- Do you have a question that you don't know the answer to? What is it?

Socratic Questions

- Why is it important to ask questions about our world?
- Should we believe what people tell us? Why? Why not?

Linkage and Integration

- **SPHE:** Myself/Making Decisions
- **Science:** Working Scientifically/Questioning

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LEARNING RESOURCE

Pictures on page 4

Assessment:

- **Teacher observation**
- **Teacher's questions/ Children's questions**
- **Exit Pass activity**

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Ask for feedback/teaching ideas

- Pupils are regularly asked: 'How can we learn even more about Humanism? What ideas do you have?'

Extension Activity

- Children could create their own 'cave paintings'

Lascaux is famous for its Palaeolithic cave paintings, found in a complex of caves in the Dordogne region of southwestern France, because of their exceptional quality, size, sophistication and antiquity. Estimated to be up to 20,000 years old, the paintings consist primarily of large animals, once native to the region.

This cave painting is from Bone in Sulawesi.

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Lesson 4

It's important to ask questions

Strand: Belief Systems

Strand Unit: Beliefs and Values

Moral & Spiritual, Exploring Moral Development

CONTENT OBJECTIVE: To identify key values associated with Humanism

LESSON 4

HUMANISTS THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO ASK QUESTIONS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To begin to appreciate that Humanists value evidence-based investigation.

Background to lesson:

(For teachers' information)

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Introduction

Teacher explains *'what we're going to learn today'*.

Review of previous lessons

Development

Pair Work: Children are split into pairs. Teacher distributes cue cards for the children to debate (10 mins).

Cue cards divided into questions eliciting speculation and those with actual answers:

Questions eliciting speculation (answers cannot be proven)

- What would happen if animals could talk?
- What would happen if the tide didn't come in anymore?
- What would happen if we couldn't use cars, trains or airplanes any more?

Questions with evidence-based answers

- What happened to the dinosaurs?
- Why is a spider not an insect?
- Is the earth round?

Discussion – prompt questions below

- Why are there so many opinions on 'What would happen if...'
- Is this a problem?
- Is it interesting or frustrating to have different opinions to these type of questions?
- What about the other questions? Are they easier? Why?
- Have there ever been hard questions? When? (When people didn't know answers)

Conclusion

Humanists generally believe in asking questions and investigating. If something cannot be proven they can't believe it's true. Teacher concludes the discussion by asking what the children have learned about Humanism today.

Exit Pass Activity: Children turn to their partner and ask 'What have you learned about Humanism today?'

Lower Order Questioning

- Do you have a question that you don't know the answer to? What is it?

Socratic Questions

- Why is it important to ask questions about our world?
- Should we believe what people tell us? Why? Why not? Humanists believe in the importance of questioning and that it is ok to be unsure about things.

Linkage and Integration

- **SPHE:** Myself/Making Decisions
- **Science:** Working Scientifically/Questioning

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LEARNING RESOURCE

Cue cards on page 4

Assessment:

- **Teacher observation**
- **Teacher's questions/ Children's questions**
- **Exit Pass activity**

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  Green/thumbs up: Can do this/understand

Ask for feedback/teaching ideas

- Pupils are regularly asked: 'How can we learn even more about Humanism? What ideas do you have?'

Cue Cards

What would happen if animals could talk?	Why is a spider not an insect?
What would happen if birds couln't fly anymore?	What would happen if the tide didn't come in?
What happened to the dinosaurs?	Is the earth round?

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3rd and 4th Class

Lesson 5

Take care of the environment

Strand: Belief Systems

Strand Unit: Beliefs and Values

Moral & Spiritual, Exploring Moral Development
Ethics & the Environment, Knowledge and awareness of environment issues, Activation of responsibility and stewardship

CONTENT OBJECTIVE: To identify key values associated with Humanism

LESSON 5

HUMANISTS BELIEVE THEY SHOULD TAKE CARE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To appreciate that Humanists believe they have a responsibility of stewardship towards the environment.

Background to lesson:

(For teachers' information)

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Introduction

Teacher explains *'what we're going to learn today'*.

Review of previous lessons

Development

Pair Work: Children are encouraged to chat with their partners about images.

Children are shown images of natural and human made resources:

- **Natural:** Do they like swimming in the sea during the summer? Playing in the sand? Collecting seashells? Climbing trees in the forest? Going on

nature trails in the woods? Observing wild animals? Feeding the ducks in the pond?
- **Human-Made:** Going to the local playground, the swimming pool, playing team sports on an astro-turf?

Teacher asks each child to report back on their partner's favourite pastimes.

Conclusion

Teacher reminds children that Humanists believe people come from nature and they have a duty to look after our world.

Teacher asks the children:
- Why should people protect our natural and human-made environments?
- Are Humanists the only people who think we should look after the environment?
- Can you think of any ways in which our natural resources are being destroyed?
- Can you t hink of any ways in which our human made resources are being destroyed?
- What would happen if we used or destroyed all our natural resources or neglected our human made resources?

Exit Pass Activity: Teacher gives the children a template (on page 4) for an acrostic poem titled "EARTH". The children are encouraged to complete a poem using today's Humanist teaching point as their focus.

Differentiation

Pair work may be more suitable for some children.

Lower Order Questioning

- How would you feel if every swing was broken in your local playground?
- Why is it important to respect property and nature?

Socratic Questions

- Why should we have a duty of care for our environment and our world?
- What would happen if we neglected our environment?

Linkage and Integration

- **SPHE:** Myself and the Wider World/Environmental Care
- **Science:** Environmental Awareness and Care
- **Geography:** Environmental Awareness and Care

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LEARNING RESOURCE

Pictures on page 4

Assessment:

- **Teacher observation**
- **Teacher's questions/ Children's questions**
- **Work samples (Acrostic poem)**
- **Exit Pass activity**

It is recommended that Assessment for Learning (AFL) strategies be incorporated into lessons. Examples below:

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- Increase time for learner response to at least 5 seconds

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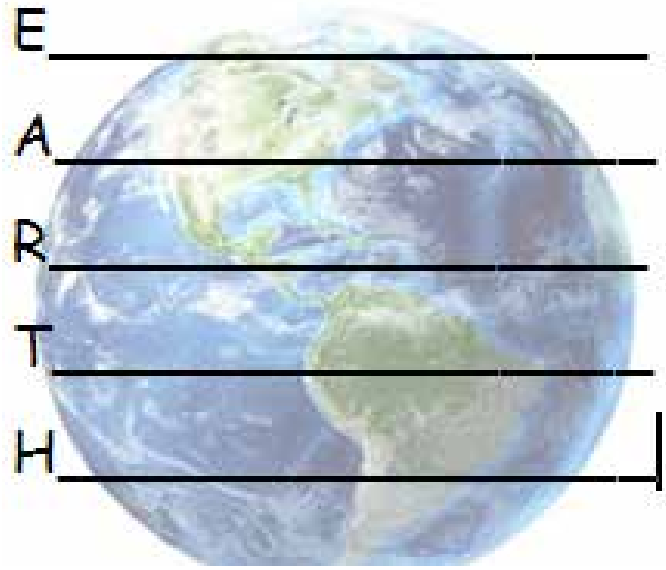
Ask for feedback/teaching ideas
- Pupils are regularly asked: 'How can we learn even more about Humanism? What ideas do you have?'

Extension Activities

- Children draw up a charter and agree, as a group, the best way that their class can take care of their local school environment.
- Children could contact their local Tidy Towns representative and try to get involved in local community clean ups.



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3rd and 4th Class

Lesson 6

Respect the environment

Strand: Belief Systems

Strand Unit: Beliefs and Values

Moral & Spiritual, Exploring Moral Development, Cultivating Spiritual Growth
Ethics & the Environment, Knowledge and awareness of environment issues, Activation of responsibility and stewardship

CONTENT OBJECTIVE: To identify key values associated with Humanism

LESSON 6

HUMANISTS BELIEVE THEY SHOULD RESPECT THE ENVIRONMENT

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To appreciate that Humanists believe they have a responsibility of stewardship towards the environment.

Background to lesson:

(For teachers' information)

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Introduction

Teacher explains *'what we're going to learn today'*.

Review of previous lessons

Development

Humanists believe the world should be protected for future generations.

- What does 'future generations' mean?

Group work: The children are arranged into groups of four and asked to discuss the following questions. They have 10 minutes in which to do this and each group must assign a timekeeper, a reporter, a scribe and a group leader.

- Why is our environment so important?
- Why should we think about future generations?
- What would be the impact on future generations if we used or destroyed all our natural resources or neglected our human made resources?
- Why do they think Humanists believe it is important to care for the world for future generations?
- Are Humanists the only group to think this?

Conclusion

Teacher asks the 'reporters' in each group to share their group discussion with the class.

Exit Pass Activity: Each child writes one thing they can/will do to take care of the environment for the next generation. These are displayed under a banner entitled 'Taking care of our world for tomorrow's children'

Differentiation

Pair work may be more suitable for some children. Children could focus their exit pass activity on taking care of classroom/school for the next class/ intake of children.

Lower Order Questioning

- How would you feel if every swing was broken in your local playground?
- Why is it important to respect property and nature?

Socratic Questions

- Why should we have a duty of care to future generations?
- Can future generations not take care of themselves?
- What would we be depriving future generations of if we neglected our environment?

Linkage and Integration

- **SPHE:** Myself and the Wider World/Environmental Care
- **Science:** Environmental Awareness and Care
- **Geography:** Environmental Awareness and Care

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LEARNING RESOURCE

Assessment:

- **Teacher observation**
- **Teacher's questions/ Children's questions**
- **Exit Pass activity**

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Ask for feedback/teaching ideas

- Pupils are regularly asked: 'How can we learn even more about Humanism? What ideas do you have?'

Extension Activities

- Create a compost bin at school or at home for vegetable and fruit peels, apple cores, tea bags, egg shells, grass cuttings, other garden waste. “Minibeasts” such as worms and woodlice will turn all your waste into compost, which can be used for planting flowers and trees.

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Lesson 7
Family and friends

Strand: Belief Systems

Strand Unit: Beliefs and Values

Moral & Spiritual, Cultivating Spiritual Growth

CONTENT OBJECTIVE: To identify key values associated with Humanism

LESSON 7

HUMANISTS VALUE THE LOVE AND SUPPORT OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To understand that Humanists value the love and support of family and friends when marking the major rites of passage in life such as births, marriages and deaths.

Background to lesson:

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If children reflect during the lessons and say 'I think I am a Humanist' or 'Am I a Humanist if...? ' it may be useful to let them know that people from different beliefs and philosophical viewpoints often share principles or values. Humanism incorporates beliefs which are shared by many religious and secular groups. It should also be pointed out that it is, of course, acceptable not to identify with a particular group, as it is to be uncertain and still questioning e.g. agnostics have not committed to the existence or lack of existence of a god or gods.

"Humanists believe that we humans have one life: we are born, we change from being children to being adults...some people make babies, some don't, and we all die. These different stages are sometimes thought of as 'rites of passage' and many Humanists like to mark these moments with ceremonies." Rosen & Young 2015, p13).

Introduction

Teacher explains *'what we're going to learn today'*.

Review of previous lessons

Development

Teacher invites the children to think and talk about the concept of belonging. The following quote can be read and discussed:
"We may have different religions, different languages, different coloured skin, but we all belong to one human race." Kofi Annan.

In pairs the children discuss the following:
- What does the word 'belonging' mean to you?
- What different groups do you belong to?

Feedback to class
Humanists generally value the love and support of their family and friends.

Conclusion

Teacher asks the children if they have ever been to a celebration for a new baby, for a marriage ceremony or for a funeral of a loved one*. Why do we mark these events? Why do we invite friends and family to come?

*if teacher is aware of pupil in class who has recently been bereaved, it is advisable not to address this rite of passage

Humanist ceremonies often include family and friends.

- Do other groups include family and friends in special celebrations?
- Why do we do this?
- What do celebrations from different groups all have in common?

Exit Pass Activity: What other events do you think should be marked or celebrated? Children design their own ceremony for an event they feel is important.

Differentiation

Pair work may be more suitable for some children.

Socratic Questions

- Why do some people choose to celebrate an important event with friends and family?
- In what ways are Humanist ceremonies similar or different to one which you may have attended, heard about or seen photographs from?

Linkage and Integration

- **SPHE:** Myself and Others/Myself and My Family
- **Art:** Drawing/Paint & Colour

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LEARNING RESOURCE

Rosen, M. & Young, A. (2015) *What is Humanism? How do you live without a god? And other big questions for kids.* Wayland: London.

Assessment:

- **Teacher observation**
- **Teacher's questions/ Children's questions**
- **Exit Pass activity**

It is recommended that Assessment for Learning (AFL) strategies be incorporated into lessons. Examples below:

Increase 'wait/thinking time'
- Increase time for learner response to at least 5 seconds

No hands up
- All learners are expected to contribute and all answers valued. Teacher may select any pupil, therefore all pupils need to frame answer in their head.

Traffic Lighting/thumbs up and thumbs down
- Pupils assess own learning **Red**/thumbs down: can't do this/don't understand **Amber**/thumbs level: unsure **Green**/thumbs up: Can do this/understand

Ask for feedback/teaching ideas
- Pupils are regularly asked: 'How can we learn even more about Humanism? What ideas do you have?'

Lessons on Humanism

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3rd and 4th Class

Lesson 8

Humanist ceremonies

Strand: Belief Systems

Strand Unit: Rites and Ceremonies

Moral & Spiritual, Cultivating Spiritual Growth

CONTENT OBJECTIVE: To identify key values associated with Humanism

LESSON 8

HUMANIST CEREMONIES ARE NEVER THE SAME

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To understand that Humanists value the love and support of family and friends when marking the major rites of passage in life such as births, marriages and deaths.

Background to lesson:

(For teachers' information)

Humanists believe that they are part of nature and as such have a responsibility of stewardship towards the environment as well as a duty of respect towards their fellow human beings. Humanists do not believe in a god or gods. Instead they value evidence-based investigation.

Humanists also derive a sense of awe and appreciation from positive aspects of life such as art, music, sport, nature and time spent with family and friends.

Humanists are just one group of people who have this viewpoint. There are others e. g people who identify as atheist or agnostic.

As with any philosophical outlook or religious affiliation, it cannot be said that all Humanists think or behave in a particular way.

If children reflect during the lessons and say 'I think I am a Humanist' or 'Am I a Humanist if...? ' it may be useful to let them know that people from different beliefs and philosophical viewpoints often share principles or values. Humanism incorporates beliefs which are shared by many religious and secular groups. It should also be pointed out that it is, of course, acceptable not to identify with a particular group, as it is to be uncertain and still questioning e.g. agnostics have not committed to the existence or lack of existence of a god or gods.

"Humanists believe that we humans have one life: we are born, we change from being children to being adults...some people make babies, some don't, and we all die. These different stages are sometimes thought of as 'rites of passage' and many Humanists like to mark these moments with ceremonies." Rosen & Young 2015, p13).

Introduction

Teacher explains *'what we're going to learn today'*.

Review of previous lessons

Development

"I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can." -- George Bernard Shaw

- What does George Bernard Shaw mean when he says his life 'belongs to the community?'
- Does anyone know who George Bernard Shaw was?
- How did he contribute to hi s community?
- Do you think he was a Humanist?
- Is it only Humanists who value their family and friends and community?

Humanist ceremonies are personal/individual to the people involved. There is no script for Humanist ceremonies. Humanist ceremonies are often performed by specially trained and registered Humanist celebrants. They contact the people involved and together they plan the ceremony.

But Humanists don't have to use celebrants. They can design and perform the ceremonies by themselves.

Teacher reviews the concept of a naming ceremony and asks the children why people might have a ceremony or celebration when giving a child a name.

Naming ceremony

Teacher explains that a naming ceremony usually consists of some or all of the following:

- Introductions and welcomes
- Reading or poem
- Parental promises to the child
- Importance of wider family (e.g. grandparents, cousins, etc.)
- Appointment of guide-parents
- Guide-parents' promises
- Reasons for the choice of name
- The naming itself
- Concluding words

Discussion around various aspects of the ceremony.

- What are the names given to religious naming ceremonies?

Children are arranged into groups and given some time to work together to create their own naming ceremony.

Assessment:

- **Teacher observation**
- **Teacher's questions/ Children's questions**

It is recommended that Assessment for Learning (AFL) strategies be incorporated into lessons. Examples below:

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Conclusion

Feedback to group.

Differentiation

Pair work may be more suitable for some children.

Lower Order Questioning

- Who do you love and care about? Who loves and cares about you? How do you know?

Socratic Questions

- Why do some people choose to celebrate an important event with friends and family?
- In what ways is a Humanist naming ceremony similar or different to naming ceremonies you may have attended?

Linkage and Integration

- **SPHE:** Myself and Others/Myself and My Family
- **Drama:** Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding/exploring and making drama.

Lessons on Humanism

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3rd and 4th Class

Lesson 9

The Amsterdam Declaration

Strand: Belief Systems

Strand Unit: Beliefs and Values

Moral & Spiritual, Exploring Moral Development

CONTENT OBJECTIVE: To identify key values associated with Humanism

LESSON 9

THE AMSTERDAM DECLARATION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To become familiar with the Amsterdam Declaration, which outlines the principles of modern Humanism
- To begin to understand that this document is not absolutist and may change over time

Background to lesson:

(For teachers' information)

Humanists believe that they are part of nature and as such have a responsibility of stewardship towards the environment as well as a duty of respect towards their fellow human beings. Humanists do not believe in a god or gods. Instead they value evidence-based investigation.

Humanists also derive a sense of awe and appreciation from positive aspects of life such as art, music, sport, nature and time spent with family and friends.

Humanists are just one group of people who have this viewpoint. There are others e. g people who identify as atheist or agnostic.

As with any philosophical outlook or religious affiliation, it cannot be said that all Humanists think or behave in a particular way.

If children reflect during the lessons and say 'I think I am a Humanist' or 'Am I a Humanist if...? ' it may be useful to let them know that people from different beliefs and philosophical viewpoints often share principles or values. Humanism incorporates beliefs which are shared by many religious and secular groups. It should also be pointed out that it is, of course, acceptable not to identify with a particular group, as it is to be uncertain and still questioning e.g. agnostics have not committed to the existence or lack of existence of a god or gods.

In 1952, at the first World Humanist Congress, the founders of International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) agreed a statement of the fundamental principles of modern Humanism. They called it "The Amsterdam Declaration".

Introduction

Teacher explains *'what we're going to learn today'*.

Review of previous lessons

In 1952, lots of people with Humanist beliefs had a meeting to talk about these beliefs. After much discussion they agreed on principles or values which they felt described best what it meant to be a Humanist.

However, because Humanist opinions and beliefs can change over time, depending on scientific discoveries and changes in the way people view the world around them, they agreed that this document could also change or evolve over time. As such, the Amsterdam Declaration was updated in 2002. It may be reviewed and updated again in the future.

Development

Think-Pair-Share

Sample questions:

- Was it a good idea for Humanists to write down their principles?
- Why did they want to do this?
- Why do you think that this document is called the Amsterdam Declaration?
- How many years ago was the first Amsterdam Declaration written?
- How many years ago was it reviewed and updated?
- Where is Amsterdam?
- Why do Humanists update this document over time?
- Can you think of any scientific discoveries over the past 10 years? (e.g. unmanned Mars mission, Pluto no longer been seen as a planet; new drugs for diseases)
- Can you give examples of how people might view their world differently over time? What aspects of life have changed over the past say 20 – 30 years? (At one time, it was very unusual for women to get a promotion and impossible for a woman to be a president or Taoiseach/we now have gay marriage which would have been unthinkable until only recently/we now have a much greater understanding of racism and how wrong it is to discriminate against somebody because of their ethnicity)

Conclusion

What are the principles in the Amsterdam Declaration? Examples below:

- Humanists believe in what can be proven.
- Humanists believe in the importance of asking questions
- Humanists believe that they have a responsibility to be good and kind to each other and to take care of the earth.
- Humanists celebrate major rites of passage in life such as births, marriages & deaths.
- Humanists do not believe in a god or gods but believe people should decide things for themselves.
- Humanists believe people should be good because it is the right thing to do.

Differentiation

Pair work may be more suitable for some children.

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LEARNING RESOURCE

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Assessment:

- **Teacher observation**
- **Teacher's questions/ Children's questions**
- **Exit Pass activity**

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Ask for feedback/teaching ideas

- Pupils are regularly asked: 'How can we learn even more about Humanism? What ideas do you have?'

Lower Order Questioning

- What is a declaration?
- Can you name any other declarations which we may have learned about in other subjects?

Socratic Questions

- Why do you think Humanists update the Amsterdam Declaration based on current knowledge or discoveries?

Linkage and Integration

- **SPHE:** Myself and the Wider World/Developing Citizenship
- **English:** Developing Cognitive abilities through language/clarifying thought through writing

Extension Activities

- Children identify other declarations, for example the 1916 proclamation, Declaration of Human Rights etc.
- Children consider if other declarations could/should be changed over time, for example re-writing the 1916 proclamation for 2016.

Lessons on Humanism

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3rd and 4th Class

Lesson 10

The Amsterdam Declaration

Strand: Belief Systems

Moral & Spiritual, Exploring Moral Development

Strand Unit: Encountering the philosophy and values of the major belief systems – Humanism is a major belief system.

CONTENT OBJECTIVE: To identify key values associated with Humanism

LESSON 10

THE AMSTERDAM DECLARATION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To become familiar with the Amsterdam Declaration, which outlines the principles of modern Humanism
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Background to lesson:

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Development

Children draw up their own Declaration or 'Fundamentals of Humanism'.

- What are 'fundamentals'?
- Can you think of another word?

Children chat in groups about the fundamentals of humanism (most important aspects of Humanism)

Children illustrate and decorate their declarations once complete.

Conclusion

Children present their completed declarations to the class.

Declarations displayed.

Differentiation

Pair work may be more suitable for some children.

Lower Order Questioning

- What is a declaration?
- Can you name any other declarations which we may have learned about in other subjects?

Reflection/Socratic Questions

- Was it difficult to write your declaration?
- Was it hard to agree on certain topics?
- Why do you think Humanists update the Amsterdam Declaration based on current knowledge or discoveries?

Linkage and Integration

- **SPHE:** Myself and the Wider World/Developing Citizenship
- **English:** Developing Cognitive abilities through language/clarifying thought through writing

Extension Activities

- Children read the Amsterdam Declaration for themselves and see how it compares to their own declarations on the next chart. Pupils read what the other groups have recorded as answers and then add to the list. They also circle or highlight answers that they feel hit the mark or add question marks to answers they feel missed the mark.

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LEARNING RESOURCE

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Lessons on Humanism