

RELIGIOUS STUDIES · Y3-Y6

Humanism

Knowledge Organiser — KS2 RE

Key vocabulary

1

Humanist

A non-religious person who believes humans can live good, meaningful lives without religion. There are many humanists worldwide; most are not part of a formal organisation.

2

Atheist

Someone who does not believe in any god or gods. Most humanists are atheists.

3

Agnostic

Someone who is not sure whether god exists or not. Some humanists are agnostic rather than atheist.

4

Secular

Not connected to any religion. A 'secular school' is one without a religious foundation.

5

Reason

Using evidence, logic and clear thinking to work out what is true. Humanists value reason highly.

6

Empathy

Understanding and sharing the feelings of another person. Humanists believe ethics comes from empathy, not from religious rules.

7

Ethics

Working out what is right and wrong. Humanists develop ethics through reason, evidence and care for others.



8

Golden Rule

Treat others how you'd want to be treated. Humanists share this with most religions — they believe it comes from human nature, not from a god.

Beliefs and practices

How humanists see the world

- There is no god or supernatural force — only the natural world.
- Humans evolved from earlier life forms over billions of years.
- This life is the only one we have, so it is precious.
- Right and wrong come from caring about others, not religious rules.
- We should use reason and evidence to make decisions.
- We should be kind, fair and honest because it benefits everyone.
- Science is our best tool for understanding the world.
- Different humans have different views, and that is valuable.
- When someone dies, they live on in memory and the things they did.
- We should help others and protect the environment because it matters.

Ceremonies and special times

Marking life's important moments with

- Naming ceremonies — welcoming a new baby, similar to a christening but not religious
- Humanist weddings — legally recognised in Scotland, Northern Ireland and (since 2023) parts of England
- Funerals — celebrating a person's life, focused on memories rather than afterlife
- World Humanist Day — 21 June each year, celebrating humanist values worldwide
- Darwin Day — 12 February, celebrating Charles Darwin's birthday and the theory of evolution



- Many humanists celebrate Christmas, Diwali, Eid and other festivals as cultural occasions
- No specific holy days, sacred texts, or required practices

Key thinkers and modern humanism

Humanism as a formal way of thinking has roots in ancient Greek philosophy and developed during the European Enlightenment (1600s-1700s). Key thinkers include Bertrand Russell, who argued for evidence-based thinking, and Mary Wollstonecraft, who argued for women's equality from a humanist perspective. Today, organisations like Humanists UK provide a community for people who want to discuss these ideas. Famous British humanists include David Attenborough (broadcaster and naturalist), Stephen Fry (comedian and writer), Brian Cox (physicist) and Sandi Toksvig (broadcaster). Humanism is not a religion — it has no founder, no holy book, and no required beliefs. Different humanists hold different views on many things. What unites them is the belief that humans can live good lives without supernatural beliefs.

