




Ealing Agreed Syllabus: guidance for teachers

KS3.1: Belief and practice: Humanism

Overall aim: To explore the phenomenon of 'humanism'.

<i>Being human</i>	<i>Students will</i>	understand that the term 'humanist' can be used in both religious and non-religious contexts, although it is more commonly understood as relating to people who are agnostic or atheist.
<i>Aim:</i> to explore what might make a person define themselves as a humanist.	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Starter: Ask class to name some common life experiences: e.g. being part of a family, falling in love, being afraid, having hope, making friends, being sick, dying and/or believing in something important. Discuss whether these are common to all human beings. Get them to name some of the 'big questions' that people ask, e.g. "Why am I here?" "Does life have a purpose?" "What happens when we die?"</p>		<p>The British Humanist (https://humanism.org.uk/) has excellent resources for teachers and students on their website: http://understandinghumanism.org.uk/</p>  <p>http://www.shj.org/</p>
<p>Activity 1: Ask students to think about how different people will give different meanings to these experiences depending upon the beliefs and values of their family, friends and culture.</p>		
<p>Activity 2: Discuss the terms agnostic and atheist. Consider the fact that there have been many people throughout history who either have not held a belief in a god or gods or who have considered the existence or not of deity to be inconsequential to their life and their ability to make ethical decisions.</p>		
<p>Activity 3: Ask the students to volunteer their understanding of the word 'humanist'. Diagram these in some form on the whiteboard. If there are no 'religious' associations, ask class if they learned about humanistic Judaism when they studied that religion in ks2. If they haven't, you might want to show them the Society for Humanistic Judaism website. Ask the question: why would these particular atheists still maintain a link with religion and religious practices?</p>		

Activity 4: Look at the four-fold definition of humanist on the British Humanism Association (BHA) website:

Humanists:

- Think for themselves about what is right and wrong, based on **reason and respect for others**.
- Find **meaning, beauty, and joy in the one life we have**, without the need for an afterlife.
- Look to **science instead of religion** as the best way to discover and understand the world.
- Believe people can use empathy and compassion to **make the world a better place for everyone**.

Plenary: Ask class to consider each of the elements of the BHA's definition of a humanist in turn. After reading out each one, ask the class how many members can agree with that statement? If they agree with one (e.g. the last one) does that make them a quarter humanist? Although they might laugh at the question, it can illustrate how hard it is at times to define your position and/or accept a label.

<i>Asking the good question</i>	<i>Students will</i>	understand that questioning prevailing ideas can lead to the birth of new ones; learn to apply critical thinking to the act of formulating questions.
<i>Aim:</i> to explore in an open-ended way the value of asking questions.	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Starter: Having given class a bit of background about him, look at Bertrand Russell’s 10 commandments, which he described as “A Liberal Decalogue” (see background information). Be sure to point out that when Bertrand Russell says “When you meet with opposition, even if it is from your family, endeavour to overcome it with argument and not by [citing an] authority...” he is meaning a well-reasoned argument, not a shouting match!</p>		<p>Protecting Muhammad put considerable pressure on his uncle Abu Talib and Muhammad’s tribe. In one instance Abu Talib exclaimed to Muhammad, “Spare me and yourself, and do not put a greater burden on me than I can bear.” Muhammad responded, “Oh uncle! By God Almighty I swear, even if they should put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left that I abjure this cause, I shall not do so until God has vindicated it or caused me to perish in the process.”</p> <p>(From a biography of the prophet by Ibn Ishaq, which survives in a version edited by Ibn Hisham.)</p>
<p>Activity 1: Discuss the fact that many of the founders of religions also thought deeply and questioned the existing beliefs of their time. Give (or ask for) some examples. Consider how this can create great conflict within a person. Being sure to stress that students don’t have to speak about this, ask them to think about the times they have questioned the things they have been brought up to believe. How hard has it been to cope with this inner conflict?</p>		
<p>Activity 2: Look at Russell’s 9th commandment: “Be scrupulously truthful even if the truth is inconvenient, for it is more inconvenient when you try to conceal it.” Have an open discussion about this, pointing out that 1) not every culture/country allows this speaking of truth and 2) even in countries where freedom of speech is a right, not every <i>family</i> allows this. Consider as an example of the strains put on a family by someone’s outspoken beliefs the story about Muhammad and his uncle Abu Talib (see right).</p>		
<p>Activity 3: Have an open discussion about how modern religious education itself can put stress on a person’s beliefs. Nonetheless the ability to ask the good question is an important life lesson that can serve a person in all areas of their life, not just as regards questions of belief. Ask class for examples of this: e.g. learning to tell when a course of action urged upon you, although initially appealing, can actually <i>cause</i> you harm.</p>		

<p>Activity 4: As class to think about/volunteer to discuss times in their lives that they wished they had “looked before they leapt.” What questions might have been useful for them to ask?</p>	
<p>Plenary: Have an open discussion around asking questions. Aspects to consider: Has anyone ever been made to feel that asking a question is a nuisance? Has this lesson changed their ideas about that? What is the difference between an open and a closed question? Who gets to say whether any particular question is closed? Ask class to volunteer some of the best answers to difficult questions that they’ve ever heard.</p>	

Ethical choice	Students will	understand that it is possible to lead a moral life without holding any 'religious' beliefs; understand that there will always be differing viewpoints.
Aim: to explore how people make ethical decisions in the absence of a belief in a god.	SEN	
	Gifted	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
Starter: Ask students where they get their ideas of right and wrong, e.g. from parents, religion, school, peers, etc. Do their ideas of right and wrong change with the circumstance?		<p>Suitable images can be found via Google or by visiting http://www.biblical-art.com/</p> <p>"Free Will": http://activeintelleckt.blogspot.co.uk/2008/07/status-free-will-human-condition.html</p>
Activity 1: Examine a picture that illustrates the biblical story of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden for eating fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Compare this with Joseph M Thompson's picture "Free Will", which portrays the act of sharing this 'forbidden fruit' as a positive thing (see background information).		
Activity 2: Look at the Adam and Eve story from two contrasting viewpoints: that of certain religious perspectives where the emphasis is on the <i>disobedience</i> of humankind and that of humanism where it would be considered a <i>positive</i> thing for human beings to know the difference between good and evil. Be sure and point out that even in the religions where Adam is an important figure (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) there are differences in the way the story is told and which lessons are drawn from it.		
Activity 3: Discuss the humanist belief that morality has its basis in human nature, and that values are developed from society and human experience—in other words they do not come from a supernatural being or god but are developed by people themselves.		
Activity 4: In groups, have the students think of a moral dilemma (e.g. whether to cheat on a test or whether to report someone they discovered cheating) and discuss the right course of action using only reason, compassion and the situation itself as a guide.		
Plenary: Discuss whether it is possible to make ethical decisions without turning to codes of behaviour formalised in sacred texts. How should we make decisions when our religion tells us one thing, the prevailing law of the land tells us another and our conscience tells us something different to both of those?		

<i>The golden rule</i>	<i>Students will</i>	learn that there are versions of the golden rule from many different times and cultures; be able to make statements about rules of behaviour that they value and try to follow.
<i>Aim:</i> to consider why the 'golden rule' is so ubiquitous in human history.	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
Starter: Read an extract from John F Kennedy's speech on civil rights, asking the class if anything in what he says sounds familiar. Get pupils to read out variations of the golden rule that have been found in other cultures and religions.		<p>John F Kennedy library and museum site: http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/LH8F_0Mzv0e6Ro1yEm74Ng.aspx</p> <p><i>The Golden Rule</i> by Norman Rockwell http://www.nrm.org/2014/02/golden_rule/</p> <p>BHA Golden Rule poster: http://humanismforschools.org.uk/case-studies/resource-the-golden-rule-poster/</p>
Activity 1: Look at Norman Rockwell's painting 'The Golden Rule', and ask students to think about why this is an appropriate image for humanist beliefs.		
Activity 2: Consider whether the golden rule is enough to get people to do the right thing, or whether further rules are necessary.		
Activity 3: Breaking the class into groups, ask each group to come up with a list of three rules for good behaviour in school. Get the students in each group to read out their lists, noting in particular if any of the groups come up with similar rules.		
Activity 4: Get students to mark on a map of the world where different versions of the golden rule come from. Make sure they understand that the same principle has been developed all over the world and at many different times.		
Plenary: Ask students why they think so many different cultures have come up with this very basic principle (i.e. do unto others as you would have them do unto you), and if this could be evidence for the humanist belief that morality has its origin in human nature.		

<i>Life without afterlife</i>	<i>Students will</i>	understand that most humanists do not believe in an afterlife because they don't think there is any evidence for one; think about how ideas around death affect the way people live their lives.
<i>Aim:</i> to consider the consequences of an evidence-based understanding of life.	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Starter: Ask students to think about how a belief in an afterlife affects the way we live in the present. Now consider the same question from a humanist perspective, how <i>not</i> believing in an afterlife might affect the way we live. Be sure and point out that there are religious people who don't believe in an afterlife and there are some humanists who do (e.g. believing that some type of consciousness persists beyond death).</p>		<p>BHA on Humanist funerals: https://humanism.org.uk/ceremonies/non-religious-funerals/</p> <p>BHA on euthanasia: https://humanism.org.uk/campaigns/public-ethical-issues/assisted-dying/</p> <p>For a thorough consideration of the ethical pros and cons of euthanasia visit the BBC Ethics website: http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/euthanasia/religion/religion.shtml</p>
<p>Activity 1: Ask students to write sentences on what they would do differently if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ they were given conclusive proof of an afterlife ▪ they were given conclusive proof that there was <i>no</i> afterlife <p>Share these sentences, and discuss what might be considered 'conclusive proof'.</p>		
<p>Activity 2: Introduce the concept of ethical dilemmas as being of relevance for all people, regardless of their beliefs. Look at some of the arguments for and against voluntary euthanasia. Discuss why humanists might support voluntary euthanasia in cases of extreme physical suffering. However be sure to include the possibility that someone with strong religious beliefs might have those beliefs challenged when confronted by their own or a beloved's suffering. In other words: can empathy trump 'belief'? (If time, you could also discuss the converse of that, i.e. what happens when we let 'belief' trump empathy? Also, get class to imagine a scenario where being swayed by empathy could have disastrous consequences.)</p>		
<p>Activity 3: As a class design a funeral ceremony that would reflect humanist beliefs. Ask them to imagine attending such a funeral: what might they say to a friend who was a humanist whose father had died, e.g. how would they comfort that person? Have a brief discussion concerning the conflicts of interest that can arise when the person who has died has different beliefs from the surviving relatives. This could evolve into a discussion about who is served by funerals.</p>		

Plenary: Draw the discussion to a close by pointing out that whatever a person believes about an afterlife, their religion or philosophy needs to:

- give them a sense of meaning
- help them to live in this life
- help them to make difficult moral decisions

<i>Infinite diversity</i>	<i>Students will</i>	look at modern examples of humanist values in the arts/media; understand that we can gain more from an exploration of other beliefs when we do so with an open mind.
<i>Aim:</i> to consider how valuing open-mindedness can encourage co-operation in a multi-cultural society	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
Starter: Look at the Vulcan IDIC symbol and discuss the relevance of Roddenberry’s philosophy for our modern multicultural society.		<p>If there is time, and if the teacher is—or knows—a Trekkie, the class could watch a video/DVD of one of the Star Trek episodes that best illustrates its Humanist values. For example:</p> <p><i>Star Trek: The Next Generation</i> “The measure of a man” (Season 2); “The drumhead” (Season 4); “The first duty” (Season 5)</p> <p><i>Star Trek: Deep Space 9</i> “Far beyond the stars” (Season 6)</p> <p><i>Star Trek: Voyager</i> “Deathwish” (Season 2), “Nothing Human (Season 5), “The Void” (Season 7)</p> <p><i>Star Trek: Enterprise</i> “Detained” (Season 1)</p> <p>http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Band_Aid_(band)</p>
Activity 1: Ask students to discuss the following humanist values in terms of the way they are reflected in the Star Trek Universe as established by its creator Gene Roddenberry:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Co-operation and mutual encouragement ▪ Peaceful problem solving ▪ Equal dignity and respect for all life forms ▪ The absence of dogma or doctrine (apart, that is, from the Prime Directive!) ▪ Reliance on science, at the same time as appreciating human emotions, spirituality and intuition. 		
Activity 2: If it has been possible to watch a relevant episode of Star Trek, or part of one, ask pupils to discuss the humanist beliefs it reflects.		
Activity 3: Look at how Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi were able to work together for Indian independence in spite of their differing beliefs (see background information). Have an open discussion about whether it is important for all people who work for a cause to share beliefs. Ask class for other examples. Could this be an example of the co-operation that Roddenberry encourages in Star Trek?		
Plenary: Remind class of the discussion about Humanistic Judaism in the first lesson. With sensitivity, explore with the class what humanistic forms of other religions might look like. For instance, if you were brought up a Muslim and you don’t believe in a god, what aspects of Muslim practice and belief might you still wish to retain? For example, could you imagine retaining the five daily prayer sessions for moments of reflection?		

Key words	Humanism, atheism, agnosticism, scepticism, scientific method, reason, moral responsibility
Points to note	<p>Although the convention is not universal, many humanists use the words <i>Humanism</i> and <i>Humanist</i> (i.e. with a capital 'H') to refer to the lifestance and its adherents, and <i>humanism</i> (with a small 'h') to refer to other related movements or philosophies. Individuals and organisations outside of the movement often claim humanism (with a small 'h') as a personal attitude or attribute: for example, Pope Paul VI referred to himself as a humanist. Although the British Humanist Association uses small 'h' throughout their website and it appears as such in this scheme, it is perhaps useful to capitalise it when part of the religious education programme, as in this case it is appearing in the context of the names of other beliefs, e.g. Christianity, Islam, Humanism.</p>

Background information

Humanism is based on the idea that human beings can live good lives without religious beliefs. Humanists make sense of the world using reason, experience and shared human values. They seek to make the most of the one life they have by creating meaning and purpose. They take responsibility for their actions and work with others for the common good. (<https://humanism.org.uk/>)

Key points:

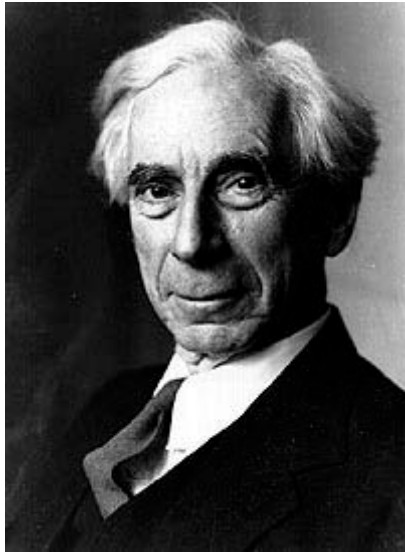
- 1) Humanism is an approach to life based on humanity and reason. Humanists recognise that moral values are properly founded on human nature and experience alone. They base decisions on the available evidence and an assessment of the outcomes of their actions, not on any dogma or sacred text.
- 2) Humanists are agnostic (literally 'without knowledge') because they do not believe it is possible to know whether there is a god. Because they do not believe there is evidence of a god or gods—or for an afterlife—they live their lives as atheists (literally, 'without god') at the same time as finding other reasons for living a good life.
- 3) Humanists believe in individual rights and freedoms, but believe that individual responsibility, social cooperation and mutual respect are just as important.
- 4) Humanists do not have sacred texts, traditions, dogma, prophets or any source of authority other than human experience. They look for evidence before they believe things and like to think for themselves.
- 5) Humanists believe that we have only one life, and that it is our responsibility to make it a good life, and to live it to the full.



The **Happy Human** is the official symbol of the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU), a world body for humanism, and has been adopted by many humanist organisations and individuals worldwide. This symbol was chosen in the 1960s after a competition organized by the British Humanist Association as a fitting symbol of the view that humans have only one life to live and that they should therefore try to make it happy and fulfilling. The winning design was created by Dennis Barrington.

The copyright is held by the British Humanist Association, which freely licenses use of the symbol by humanist organisations worldwide. A great many humanist organisations use the symbol or an adapted version of it.

Stained glass panel , [Unitarian Universalist Church of Muncie](#)



Bertrand Russell

[wikipedia](#)

More and more people are becoming unable to accept traditional beliefs. If they think that, apart from these beliefs, there is no reason for kindly behaviour the results may be needlessly unfortunate. That is why it is important to show that no supernatural reasons are needed to make men kind and to prove that only through kindness can the human race achieve happiness. (Bertrand Russell, "The Faith of a Rationalist", talk broadcast in 1947)

Bertrand Russell (1871-1970) was a philosopher, an outstanding mathematician, a champion of intellectual and social freedom, a pioneer of new ideas in education, and a writer. He was given public recognition of his work by being awarded the Order of Merit and the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Fundamental to his work in formal philosophy was the idea that beliefs should be based on evidence and logical procedures. From about the age of fifteen he became deeply concerned with questions like the existence of a god, for which he could find no evidence, and at the age of eighteen he became an atheist, finding it a great relief to be free of some of the fears and dogma surrounding religion.

Bertrand Russell's 10 Commandments ("A Liberal Decalogue")

1. Do not feel absolutely certain of anything.
2. Do not think it worthwhile to produce belief by concealing evidence, for the evidence is sure to come to light.
3. Never try to discourage thinking, for you are sure to succeed.
4. When you meet with opposition, even if it is from your family, endeavour to overcome it with argument and not by [citing an] authority, for a victory dependent upon authority is unreal and illusory.
5. Have no respect for the authority of others, for there are always contrary authorities to be found.
6. Do not use power to suppress opinions you think pernicious, for if you do, the opinions will suppress you.
7. Do not fear to be eccentric in opinion, for every opinion now accepted was once eccentric.
8. Find more pleasure in intelligent dissent than in passive agreement, for if you value intelligence as you should, the former implies a deeper agreement than the latter.
9. Be scrupulously truthful even if the truth is inconvenient, for it is more inconvenient when you try to conceal it.
10. Do not feel envious of the happiness of those who live in a fool's paradise, for only a fool will think that is happiness.



Detail of "Hay Wain" triptych
by Hieronymus Bosch

[wikipedia](#)



"Free Will"
Joseph M. Thompson, 2004

Now God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.... God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." (Genesis 2: 8-9, 15-17)

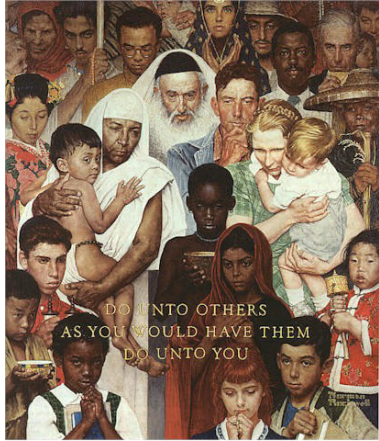
The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3: 2-5)

Within humanism there is a range of opinion on the matter of free will. Some stress that human activity is significantly determined by genetic make-up and the sum of a person's past experiences, which may dictate what choices they make in the present. The majority, however, while not ignoring these factors, also believe that in practice there is good evidence that human beings have an element of freewill and can exert some decisive influence over their actions.

They believe that the human ability to devise moral rules and codes of ethics came about through the evolutionary process of natural selection rather than divine instruction. Humanist morality is dependent on the situation, i.e. behaviour can—and often should—vary according to the circumstances. Humanists have very clear values, e.g. unselfishness and integrity, based for example on the Golden Rule and the principles of avoiding harm to others and contributing to general happiness and welfare.

"Free Will": <http://activeintellekt.blogspot.co.uk/2008/07/status-free-will-human-condition.html>



“The Golden Rule”
Norman Rockwell 1961

http://www.nrm.org/2014/02/golden_rule/

The heart of the question is whether all Americans are to be afforded equal rights and equal opportunities, whether we are going to treat our fellow Americans as we want to be treated. If an American, because his skin is dark, cannot eat lunch in a restaurant open to the public, if he cannot send his children to the best public school available, if he cannot vote for the public officials who will represent him, if, in short, he cannot enjoy the full and free life which all of us want, then who among us would be content to have the colour of his skin changed and stand in his place? Who among us would then be content with the counsels of patience and delay?

(John F Kennedy, 11 June 1963. Extract from a radio and television report on civil rights. For complete speech visit the John F Kennedy library and museum site: <http://www.jfklibrary.org/j061163.htm>)

In 1959 the American painter Norman Rockwell had an idea for a ten-foot mural for the United Nations that was meant to promote world tolerance. Unfortunately he received little encouragement, which prompted him to abandon the project. And then a year later he decided to illustrate the Golden Rule. He got out his old sketches and reworked them in the form of a painting, which appeared on the cover of the “Saturday Evening Post” in April 1961.

Rockwell received the Interfaith Award of the National Conference of Christians and Jews that same year. Of all the honours he received, he valued this one the most because it praised him for his dedication “to the highest ideals of amity (friendship), understanding, and cooperation among [people].” The award described his painting as “ ... depicting the universal fact that all [human beings] ... are members of the One Family of [Humankind]...”

Versions of the simple moral principle commonly known as 'the golden rule' can be found in many cultures and religions around the globe. Humanists do not believe it was given to us by a god or sacred texts but rather that it was developed by people, based on a desire to be treated well by others. Examples include:

- "He should treat all beings as he himself should be treated. The essence of the right conduct is not to injure anyone." (Jain, *Suta-Kritanga*, c550 BCE)
- "Do not do to others what you would not like for yourself." (*Analects of Confucius*, c 500 BCE)
- "I will act towards others exactly as I would act towards myself." (Buddhism, *Siglo-Vada Sutta*, c 500 BCE)
- "This is the sum of duty: Do nothing to others which, if done to you, could cause you pain." (Hinduism, *Mahabharata*, c150 BCE)
- "What you would avoid suffering yourself, seek not to oppose on others." (Greek philosophy, Epictetus, c90CE)
- "Love your neighbour as yourself." (Judaism, Leviticus 19, c400 BCE, quoted by Jesus in Matthew 22 and Mark 12, 1st century CE)
- "What is harmful to yourself do not do to your fellow men. That is the whole of the law...." (Judaism, *Talmud*, c100 CE)
- "None of you truly believe, until he wishes for his brothers what he wishes for himself." (Islam, saying of the Prophet Mohammed, 7th century CE)
- "As you think of yourself, so think of others." (Sikhism, *Guru Granth Sahib*, 1604 CE)
- "One should be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow against himself." (Thomas Hobbes, English Philosopher, 1588-1679 CE)
- "He should not wish for others what he does not wish for himself." Baha'i, from the writings of Baha'u'llah, c 1870 CE)



Children playing

Children's Hospice, Chorley, Lancs
Window by [Leland Stained Glass](#)

Be sure then that you have nothing to fear in death. Someone who no longer exists cannot suffer, or differ in any way from someone who has not been born. (Greek philosopher Lucretius, c 95-55 BCE)

Humanists believe that there is no evidence for life after death and so they place a special value on this life and on making the best of it. They do not expect justice in another life and therefore work for justice in this one. They believe that it is important to face the problems of the world without the prospect of supernatural assistance.

Their attitude toward death is that it should be as painless and dignified as possible. They believe that people should not be forced to suffer for prolonged periods when it is clear that they are not going to get better, therefore they support voluntary euthanasia.

Humanists believe that the only ways we live on are in other people's memories of us, in the work we have done while alive, or in our descendants. Humanist funerals are a positive celebration of a person's life, specially created for that person and their family, with music, readings and time to reflect.



[wikipedia](#)

Aesop, or **Æsop** (from the Greek *Aisopos*), known only for his fables, was by tradition a slave of African descent who lived from about 620 to 560 BCE in ancient Greece. Aesop's fables are still taught as moral lessons and used as subjects for various entertainments, especially children's plays and cartoons. They are of interest to humanists because they teach a simple, practical morality deeply rooted in human experience and common sense, giving worldly—rather than metaphysical—reasons for behaving well.

(Left) Picture of Aesop from the Nurenburg Chronicle, where he is depicted as a 15th century German.



Nehru and Gandhi, July 1946

www.wwnorton.com

...Nor am I greatly interested in life after death. I find the problems of this life sufficiently absorbing to fill my mind. (Jawaharlal Nehru)

I wish to declare with all earnestness that I do not want any religious ceremonies performed for me after my death. I do not believe in such ceremonies, and to submit to them, even as a matter of form, would be hypocrisy and an attempt to delude ourselves and others. (From Nehru's last will and testament.)

The first Prime Minister of India, **Jawaharlal Nehru** (1889-1964) came from a wealthy Brahmin family. He had a privileged education in England at Harrow School, Cambridge University and the Inner Temple in London where he studied law. Realising that few of his compatriots were able to have such a privileged education, he returned to India in 1912 and entered politics as a member of the Indian National Congress party. He became a follower and close associate of Mahatma Gandhi, and devoted his life to achieving independence from British rule and to improving the conditions of the Indian population.

Nehru and Gandhi's close relationship was considered unusual because of their differing beliefs. Gandhi was widely recognised as a holy man, whereas Nehru thought that religion was at the root of the stagnation and lack of progress in his country. He believed that unthinking obedience to the authority of sacred books, old customs, and outdated habits were preventing India from progressing, however this did not prevent him from sharing many common goals with Gandhi. Deeply concerned about the high rate of illiteracy in the country, he fought for education of the masses.

The independence movement of which Nehru was such a prominent member sought a socialist, secular, democratic society based on human values and dignity, one that valued peaceful co-existence within the complicated structure and culture of Indian society. The British government of India repeatedly sent Nehru and other leaders of the movement to prison. However when India became independent after the 1939-45 war, it was Nehru who became the first Prime Minister.



IDIC symbol

“Infinite diversity in infinite combinations”

[wikipedia](#)

Gene Roddenberry (1921-1991) was the creator and executive producer of the television series *Star Trek*. He believed that human beings could solve problems through reason and co-operation; that there was no need to turn to religion for help; that human understanding and intelligence will help us to develop and progress; and that the universe is a natural wonder waiting to be explored and understood, a philosophy that shines through the many adventures in *Star Trek*.

Although Roddenberry’s family were churchgoers, he became an atheist when a teenager. He didn’t believe the claims of many preachers, and his experience was that many people who were concerned to improve the world were, like him, atheists. He began writing when he was a pilot during the Second World War, and launched *Star Trek* in 1966.

The IDIC symbol—designed by Roddenberry himself—was first worn by Mr Spock (in the episode “Is There in Truth No Beauty?”) to represent the Vulcan belief that beauty, growth, and progress all result from the union of the unlike, and that concord, as much as discord, requires the presence of at least two different notes. It is the most revered Vulcan symbol, representing the philosophy that embracing a diversity of peoples and ideas helps to create a society that is greater than the sum of its parts.

There are many ways that Roddenberry’s actions reflect humanist ideals. At the height of the Cold War he included a Russian crewmember (Chekov) in his cast. Another of the characters he created, Lt Uhura, inspired and gave hope to both women and the black community. And he refused to give in to Christian demand to put a chaplain on board the *Enterprise*, arguing that it was illogical to expect everyone from Earth and other planets to share the same beliefs in the 24th century.

Note: the *Prime Directive* asserts that no Star Fleet personnel may interfere with the healthy development of alien life and culture. Such interference includes the introduction of superior knowledge, strength, or technology to a world whose society is incapable of handling such advantages wisely. Star Fleet personnel may not violate this directive even to save their lives and/or their ship unless they are acting to right an earlier violation or an accidental contamination of said culture. This directive takes precedence over any and all other considerations, and carries with it the highest moral obligation.