

Year 5&6 Key Stage 2



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Resource File

Optional units of work - Humanism - A friend in need





Lesson 4 A friend in need

The big picture

Like religious believers, those who subscribe to a non-religious world view such as humanism choose to act to help other people because of their beliefs.

Humanists follow the Golden Rule of treating others as you would want to be treated yourself and helping people in difficult situations. They believe in trying to seek happiness for, and looking after the welfare of, as many people as possible. Many humanists were active in setting up the United Nations.

In this lesson people will have the chance to explore the work of the Red Cross. The Red Cross is not a humanist organisation, but it is supported by many humanists because it does not align itself with any religion, as it feels this would compromise its work in the field. In Muslim countries the Red Cross becomes the Red Crescent, in case the cross suggests a link with Christianity.

Learning objective

Learning about:

- To consider why the Red Cross chooses to stand apart from all religions in its humanitarian work.
- To consider and write a suitable reflection for a humanist to use in the light of a natural disaster.

Learning from:

- To identify what influences humanists to want to support other people in their time of need.

Success Criteria

Learning about:

- Pupils will have explained why the Red Cross chooses to stand apart from all religions in their humanitarian work and they will have offered their opinion on why this is or is not a good idea.
- Pupils will have written a suitable reflection for a humanist to use in the light of a natural disaster.

Learning from:

- Pupils will have identified what influences humanists to want to support other people in their time of need.

Religious Education Council Requirements

A1, A2, A3, B2, B3, C2, C3

Resources

- Newspaper cutting or television clip of the aftermath of a natural disaster
- Access to the Internet to view: www.redcross.org.uk

Vocabulary

Humanitarian, natural disaster, neutral, Red Crescent, Red Cross, reflection

Key questions ?

Why isn't the Red Cross associated with a religion?

Introduction

Show a picture from a newspaper or a clip from television showing a recent natural disaster. Ask the class to share how incidents like this make them feel. Does it make them want to do anything? Ask people to write down what they want to do when they see situations like that. Share people's reasons for wanting to act. Are there any religious reasons? Are there any non-religious reasons?

How do people think humanists feel when they see disasters like this? Explain that humanists want to help in the same way that people with religious beliefs do, however, some of their reasons for acting might be different. Because of the Golden Rule of treating others as you would want to be treated yourself, and because humanists believe this is the only life we have, they believe that we should help people in difficult situations.

Introduce the learning objective: 'In this lesson we will think about why people want to help other people in their time of need. We will also look at a non-religious organisation – the Red Cross – that helps people who need support in war and peacetime.'

Activities

Stimulus

Share with the class the work of the Red Cross. There is information and a section for young people on their website at www.redcross.org.uk.

Explain to the class that the Red Cross upholds the principle of religious neutrality. It believes that if it showed allegiance or support to any religion it may compromise the work it does in the field. For example, it might mean that they weren't allowed into certain countries or areas, and some people might feel unable to accept their help. This is a strict policy which means they are not allowed to have any religious displays in their shops.

Explain that one of the other principles of the Red Cross is humanity. This is strongly supported by humanists. For the Red Cross this means 'to prevent and alleviate suffering wherever it is found', to respect human beings and to promote understanding, friendship and peace between all peoples.

Ask people to draw the outline of a cross, either in their books or on a piece of paper, and record their ideas in writing about whether they think it is a good idea for the Red Cross to have no religious allegiance.

Response

Discuss the fact that after many disasters there are periods of silence observed to allow people to think about and reflect upon what has happened. In places of worship prayers are often said. Explain to the class that many humanists also choose to reflect at these times of sadness and a time of silence is appropriate for a humanist, but a form of words could also help them to focus their reflection.

Ask people to write a reflection that would be suitable for a humanist to use after a natural disaster. Remind them to include some words about action and perhaps reasons for action. Ensure that everyone understands that this is not a prayer, and so the words must not be addressed to any supreme being. After they have written their reflection, ask people to think of a suitable action for a humanist to do to support the people involved in the disaster.

Plenary

Ask the class to think back to the beginning of the lesson and their reasons for wanting to act – or not act – when disaster strikes. Can they think of what they might be able to offer as sustained support for people in need, either before a disaster strikes or next time they hear of people in need? You might choose to give them the following sentence starters:

- In this lesson I have learnt...
- Next time there is a disaster I will... because...

Differentiation

Less able people should be able to access the material in this lesson. Sentence starter support may improve their work on the reflection.

Extension

More able people may want to compare the founder of the Red Cross, Henry Dunant, with a religious person who chose to set up a charity, such as Jackie Pullinger.