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| Religion | Humanist |
| Denomination | |
| Question answered: | In what ways do science, belief and religion interact and what difference might this make? (KS3 Q1) |
| Key concepts, questions, and outcomes: | In what ways do science and Humanist beliefs interact? Humanism is a worldview, not a religion. There are other non – religious worldviews. Humanism, similar to religions and science, does not have answers to all human questions. There are different interpretations of science and therefore different interpretations of Humanist ideas. |
| Key teaching points: | Science and religions may be considered opposites therefore it may be said that science and Humanism agree. The link between science, belief and religion can be subjective (between religions as well as within a religion, just as between worldviews (religious worldviews and non- religious worldviews) |
| Prior knowledge: | Science originated from religion. Many scientific discoveries and education started with religion. The Golden Rule that runs through all worldviews and religions. Basic understanding of the origins and beliefs within Humanism. Basic knowledge of the scientific origins of the world. Humanism is a non –religious worldview and is, like religious worldviews, subjective in interpretation. |

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| Core Vocabulary: | | | |
| Golden Rule | Agnostic | Cosmology | neuroscience |
| Scientific method | Secular | Supernatural | Atheist |
| Critical thinking / questions | | | |

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| Summary of answers: |
| <p>The first speaker says that as a Humanist, the best way to understand the world and work out whether something is true or not is by using reason and evidence. Both are fundamental to science and to the scientific method of testing theories. He uses science to help him work out what to believe and he cannot believe in anything that science would contradict. He agrees with the 18th century philosopher David Hume ('A wise man portions his belief to the evidence'). For him there is no evidence of anything supernatural in the world like gods or an afterlife. He doesn't believe he had a life before he was born or will have a life after he dies. While as an atheist, he doesn't believe in any gods, he doesn't think it is possible to prove there is not a god. He doesn't think it is possible to come up with a scientific experiment to see if a god exists and so he would also describe himself as an agnostic. There is only one life, and it makes sense to try and get as much out of that life as possible using scientific evidence and personal experience. The best ways to find happiness in the world is to help other people to be happy and that can even help people to live longer.</p> <p>The second speaker talks about how for our ancient ancestors, life was full of uncertainties: crops were ruined by storms and people died from mysterious illnesses. Not knowing the cause, people put it down to supernatural beings, a malevolent spirit, or an angry god. Now, thanks to science, humans know so much more: they have mapped the earth and know it is a planet that revolves</p> |



around the sun. We know when it was formed. We know how life came into existence: bacteria, then multi-celled animals then mammals. We know when the first humans stalked the planet; we know how the body works; we've invented vaccines to solve diseases. We understand electromagnetic waves and we can send signals all around the world. We can even put a man on the moon. Humanism, in its current form, would not have existed without the knowledge of science. We would never have been able to answer the 'why' and 'how' questions that religious people would have asked. With this knowledge comes great power – we can bend nature now to our will and it is our responsibility to preserve that nature for future generations.

From the point of view of the third speaker, Humanists believe that science and reason are best at explaining the world and reality using observation of evidence such as fossils. Humanists see the world as a natural place with no discernible purpose. As such, Humanism is a non – religious approach to life, scientific endeavour based on evidence and reason is central to the Humanist worldview. Since the Enlightenment 400 years ago human life has flourished and improved driven by the democratisation of knowledge since the invention of the printing press. Modern medicine, hard won social freedoms and economic development means that most people have a standard of living today that even billionaires could not aspire to 150 years ago. Humanists believe that much of this progress has been predicated on Humanist principles such as using reason, evidence, science and technology to improve the quality of our lives. Humanism is not a religion as they do not believe in a god or a supernatural entity however Humanists do wonder at the beauty of the universe and the mystery of existence but also observe the brutal struggle to survive in the natural world. They celebrate how mankind has managed to transcend these brutal origins. Humanists have a deep faith in the innate goodness of humans, an evolved sense of altruism, a kindness and a shared humanity that help to overcome the darker primitive instincts. Humanism is therefore a positive life stance which puts human beings and other living things at the centre of the humanist moral outlook. Humanists actively encourage thinking based on reason and evidence using a balance between heart and head. Humanists are atheist, agnostic and secular and believe there should be freedom for all religions as well as freedom from religion. Belief in secular democracy and evidence-based science is the best way to manage human affairs.

The fourth speaker was drawn to humanism because of his background in science. Science is about examining things closely and looking for patterns and explanations to explain the patterns, then evidence to support or contradict the explanations. When there is uncertainty, scientists look for new ways to test the theory; if there is a contradiction the theory can be altered and tested again. People think science is hard but it isn't. Police, lawyers, newspaper reporters and anyone seeking the truth uses the same ideas. The key thing is to keep testing the story or theory using critical thinking and actively seeking evidence to confirm or deny the story. Science is a common sense way of trying to get to the truth. He talks about how initially he had been inspired by emotions at Christian events, such as communion, but later began to reason critically that the ceremonies were designed to do that. He was not prepared to believe in miracles and could not find the evidence to support his beliefs. So, the scientific approach made him decide that he could not believe in God. He became an atheist and soon after, found Humanism. Science is compatible with Humanist beliefs. All that happens is natural so there is no need for supernatural explanations. He loves the science creation story beginning with the evidence of cosmology that gives us galaxies, stars and planets like earth. The story continues as life evolved into the many plant and animal species we see today. It is a convincing creation story based on evidence from geology, archaeology, chemistry, botany and biology. Of course, there are things that science doesn't yet know: was it a big bang or a big bounce at the start of our universe 14 billion years ago? What caused the first living thing – something that was able to reproduce itself to emerge from non-living materials? How does the brain build a sense of identity? He is excited we don't know these answers but is sure that through questioning and using science we will get to



understand more and more. Until recently scientists struggled to understand emotions and beliefs; the nature of ethical behaviour. But in the last 50 years advances in psychology and neuroscience have begun to show how emotions and morality develop. The Golden Rule (treat others the way that you would like to be treated) emerges naturally from the human need to cooperate. As a Humanist, he looks to science to increase our understanding and sees no need for supernatural explanations.

Next Steps:

Comparison of different religions, worldviews and science and origins of the universe.

Comparison of different Humanists belief in science.

Consider a wide range of philosophical questions that are raised by these speakers, such as whether miracles need evidence, whether humans can trust their senses, and whether there can be things that we do not see.

Different interpretations of Science (Consider the origins of the universe, e.g. Big Bang and the latest pictures and theories from the James Webb Space Telescope)

Investigation into why people think science and religion are in conflict, rather than in agreement. .