

Year 8 RE Humanism Booklet 2

Read the booklet.

Makes notes on the booklet.

Answer the questions throughout and at the end of the booklet.

Name.....

RE Teacher.....

“

A humanist is someone who does the right thing even though she knows that no one is watching.

”

*Dick McMahan
New York Humanist, 2004*

How do humanists deal with moral dilemmas?

Learning outcomes:

To **describe** morality

To **explain** different moral dilemmas

To **evaluate** Humanist views on moral dilemmas

Starter:

What do we mean by 'morality?' Write down your answer.

Key Terms

- **Morals** – standards of behaviour; principles of right and wrong.
- **Morality** – principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behaviour.
- **Ethics** - moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity.
- **Parables** - a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson, as told by Jesus in the Gospels.
- **Fables** - a short story, typically with animals as characters, conveying a moral.
- **Conscience** - a person's moral sense of right and wrong, viewed as acting as a guide to one's behaviour.



Challenge!

Can you add an example to each definition?!

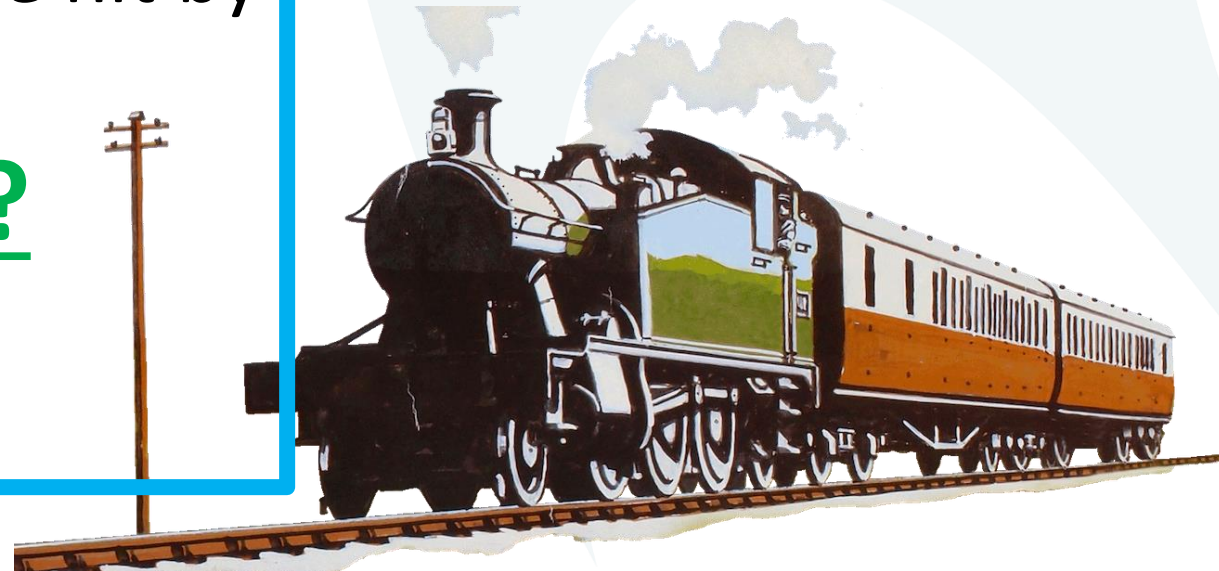
A Moral Dilemma

Five people have fallen onto a train track and a train is hurtling towards them. It is too late for the train to stop. You are the signal man and by flicking a switch you can divert the train onto a different track, saving the people who have fallen. On the other track is a workman who will be hit by the train if you divert it.

What should you do?

Challenge!

What would a Humanist do?



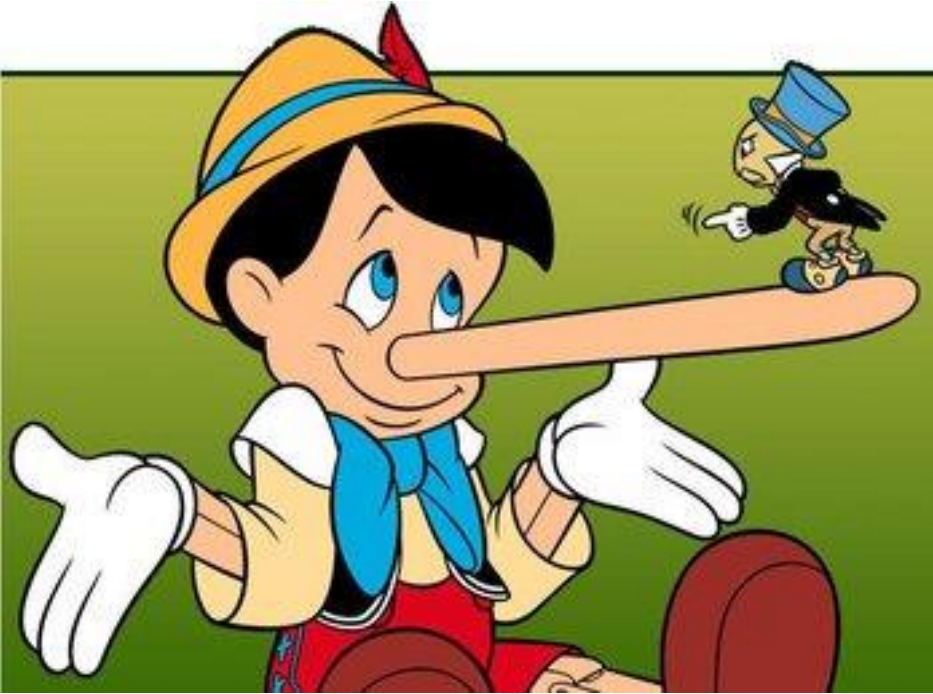
What Do Humanists Believe?

- We need to **think for ourselves** and take **individual responsibility** for our actions. Our understanding of right and wrong has **evolved naturally**, rather than been given to us from an external source.
- Human beings can be **good without a god** or sacred texts to guide us. Human beings have the right tools at our disposal to be able to work out what is the right or wrong thing to do: **reason, empathy, compassion, and respect for the dignity of others.**
- The aim of morality is to **improve human welfare** (rather than some divine purpose) and between us we can **make the world a better place for everyone.**



What is a conscience?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4bDZ_iKKlk0



How does a conscience affect our behaviour?

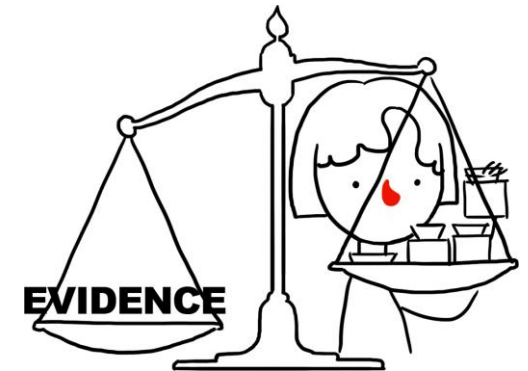
1. How does this clip relate to our lesson learning?
2. What would a Humanist do in these situations?
3. Would you have made the same choices as Mickey? Why?
4. How did Jiminy Cricket (conscience) effect his moral decisions?



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMBvjzl1M6E>

How Do Humanists Decide How To Act?

- Humanists don't allow unquestioned rules or figures of authority to command how they must behave
- Humanists believe we should use **empathy**, **compassion**, **reason**, and **respect for the dignity of others** to decide for ourselves what is right and wrong
- Humanists think about the **particular situation** and the **potential consequences** of our actions and use evidence to deliberate about their likelihood



Ethical Principles

Humanists use a number of **ethical principles** to help guide them when deciding how to act.

- The Golden Rule
- Avoiding harm
- Maximising happiness and minimising suffering
- Imagining if everyone acted in the same way
- Treating people as ends in themselves

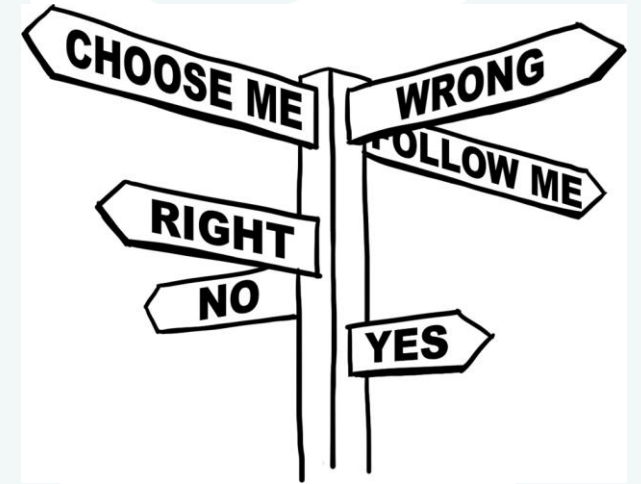


Let's look at some moral dilemmas! You will need to answer the following questions on the next slide for each dilemma we look at!



Moral Dilemmas:

- 1) What did you instinctively want to do at first?
- 2) What different options can you come up with about what could be done?
- 3) Are any of the ethical principles in conflict?
- 4) Which guiding principle do you think is the most important to follow in this situation?
- 5) What did you decide to do and why?
- 6) How did you use reason to decide what to do?
- 7) Were you all satisfied with the final decision or did it make any of you uncomfortable?
- 8) Did anyone change their mind?
- 9) Would a religious person have used different principles and would this have made them act differently?



Moral dilemma 1:

Five people have fallen onto a train track and a train is hurtling towards them. It is too late for the train to stop. You are the signal man and by flicking a switch you can divert the train onto a different track, saving the people who have fallen. On the other track is a workman who will be hit by the train if you divert it.

What should you do?

Challenge!

- What if the workman on the other track was your friend?
- What if it was a baby that had fallen onto the track and the person on the other track was a drunk man who had fallen asleep on the tracks?



Moral dilemma 2:

You are driving in your car when you see five children run out into the road in front of you. When you put your foot on the brake it does not work. The only alternative to hitting the children is to turn the car onto the pavement. However, a boy is standing on the pavement and if you drive onto the pavement you will hit him instead.

What should you do?

Challenge!

- What if the child on the pavement was your own child?



Moral Dilemma 3:

A woman you know has robbed a bank, but instead of keeping the money, she has given it to an orphanage so that it can afford to feed, clothe, and care for children in need. The police have come to ask you if you know who committed the crime. You can tell them who did it, but if you do, there is a good chance the woman will be caught, all the money will be returned to the bank and the orphanage will be forced to close down.

What should you do?

Challenge!

- What if the woman had instead stolen from just one individual rich person?



Moral Dilemma 4:

Your grandmother suffers from asthma. She has a pet cat and the doctor has told you that this is making your grandmother's asthma worse and will reduce her life-expectancy and her quality of life. You and your family do not want your grandmother to die. Your grandmother, however, lives alone and does not want to get rid of the cat. She says it keeps her company.

What should you do?

Challenge!

- What if your grandmother was smoking and said she did not want to stop even though it was damaging her health?



Moral Dilemma 5:

You are a doctor. You are standing by the side of the road late one evening when you see a cyclist jump a red light and crash into another cyclist. The cyclist who jumped the red light was not wearing a helmet while the other cyclist was. Both cyclists are badly injured. You know that there is a chance neither will survive if they are not treated straight away, but the one who jumped the red light is in more danger. No one else is around to help.

What should you do?

Challenge!

After a terrorist attack one of the terrorists is more critically injured than an innocent civilian. Who should you save first?



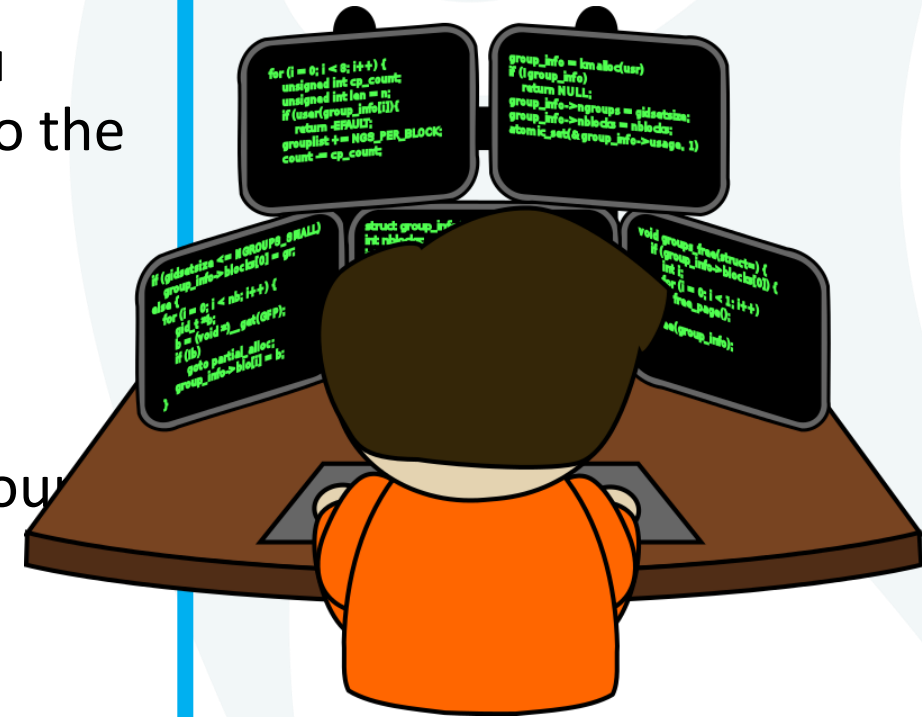
Moral Dilemma 6:

You work at a company with one of your friends. Your friend is a computer-whizz and one day he tells you that he has hacked into the company's accounts and discovered that the assistant manager is stealing money from the company. You feel you should tell the manager, but if you do, she will ask how you know. If the manager hears that your friend has hacked into the company's accounts your friend will be fired.

What should you do?

Challenge!

- What if it was you who had hacked into the company accounts and you were the one at risk of being fired?



A Humanist Approach To Ethical Decisions

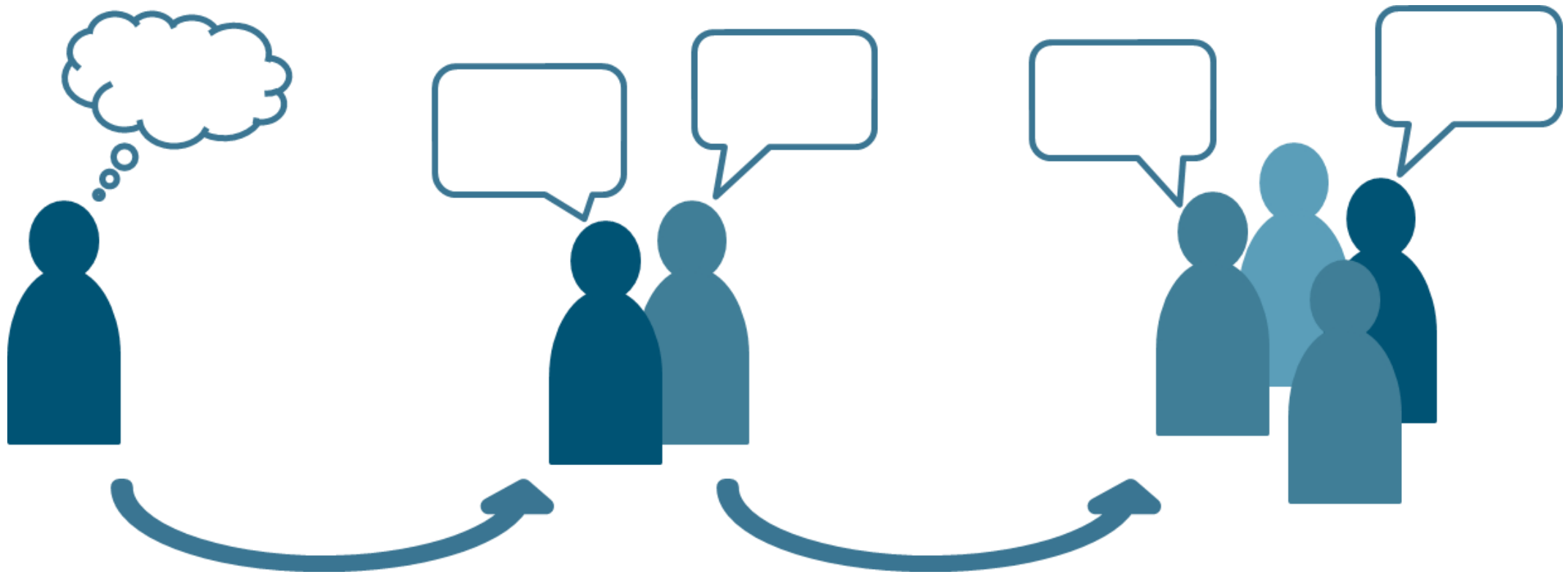
- There is not always a perfect answer.
- Humanists will sometimes disagree.
- **Reasoning**, however, means we are more likely to make more morally worthwhile choices.
- **Disagreement can sometimes be positive and productive**: dialogue encourages us to recognise, empathise with, and take into consideration opposing arguments.
- **Morality is a journey and we can make progress.**

Moral progress?

- 1) Is human morality **fixed** or does it **evolve** over time?
- 2) Has human morality made **progress**?
- 3) Do we have a better understanding of what is right and wrong today than we did in the past?
- 4) Are you happy you are alive today, or do you think it would have been better to live in a different time in human history? Why?



Is technology (i.e. social media) changing morality? Why?



Possible ingredients of happiness

Food and drink

Friends

Family

Money

Gifts, games, and gadgets

A big house

Exploring the world

Music

Being kind to others

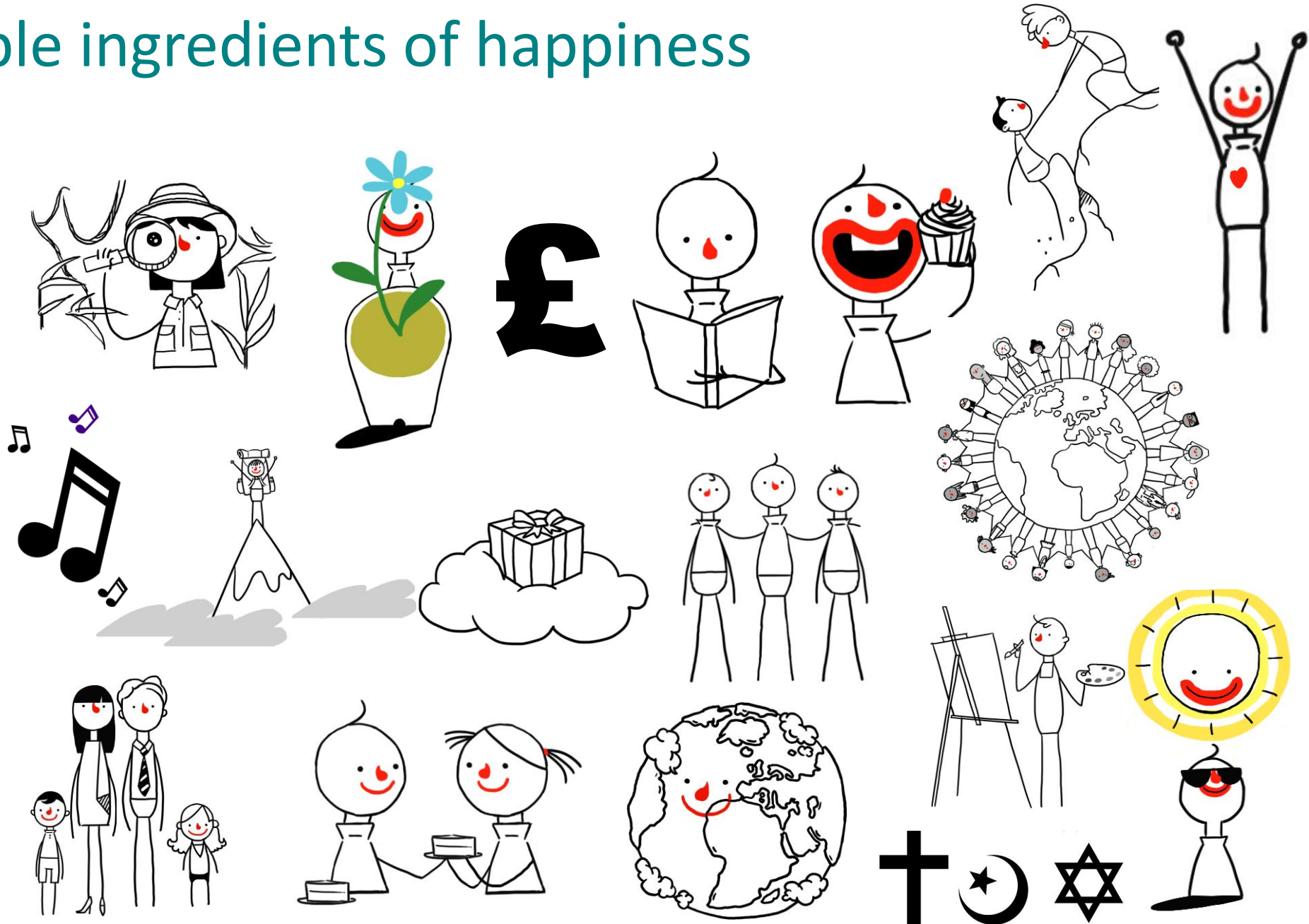
Learning new things

Completing something difficult

Good health

Your religion or beliefs

Possible ingredients of happiness



Ingredients of happiness

- 1) Share them out between your partner and yourself without looking. Would you swap any of the ingredients you have with your partner? Can you keep swapping until you are both happy?
- 2) Order the ingredients according to how happy they make you (most important for happiness at the top, least important at the bottom)
- 3) Underline or highlight any ingredients that you think are necessary for happiness (something that it is impossible to be happy without).
- 4) Underline or highlight in a different colour any ingredients that you think are sufficient for happiness (something that could make you happy even if you didn't have any of the other ingredients)

Extension questions:

- 5) Did you disagree on anything? Why?
- 6) Does everyone need the same thing to be happy?
- 7) Can any of the ingredients make everyone happy?
- 8) Can any of the ingredients make people unhappy?

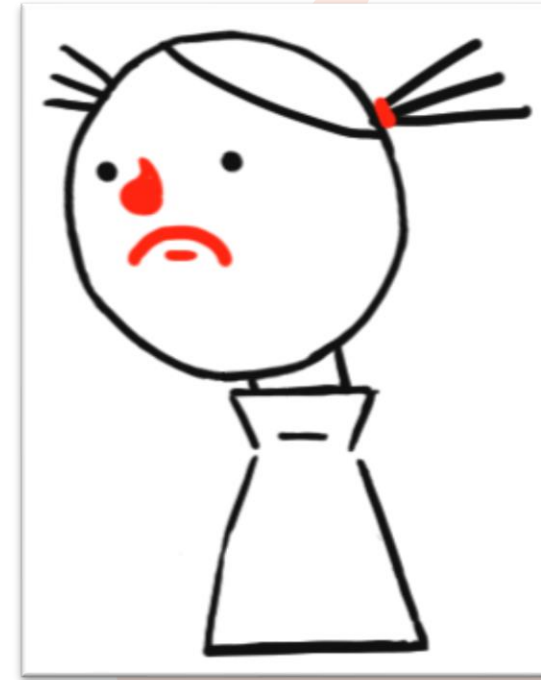
Challenge: Can you think of your own way to group the ingredients?

What about unhappiness?

What sorts of things make people unhappy or stop them from being happy?

Is it OK to sometimes not be happy?


Is it possible to make everyone happy? What would be the best way to try?



What do humanists believe?

- Humanists believe **human beings are special** and human life is valuable
- Humanists **don't believe in a god**, or believe we can never know if there is a god
- Humanists don't believe there is any evidence for an afterlife: we should therefore **make the most of this life**
- Humanists believe human beings should **try to live full and happy lives** and help others to do the same

Happiness

- 1) Why is happiness so important to humanists?
 - 2) Should we always pursue the things that make us happy? Is it just a selfish way of life?
 - 3) Is it possible to be happy if you are not religious?
 - 4) What might humanist and religious people agree or disagree on about the ingredients of happiness?
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Quotes about Happiness

‘**Happiness** is the only good.
The place to be happy is **here**.
The time to be happy is **now**.
The way to be happy is to **make others so**.’

Robert Ingersoll (1833 – 1899)

‘The happy life is to an extraordinary extent the same as
the **good life**.’

Bertrand Russell (1872 – 1970)



A recipe for happiness

Ingredients:

- Good health
- Friends
- Being good to other people
- Curiosity

Method:

First, add a heaped tablespoon of good health to a bowl (be careful not to damage it). Add a healthy mix of good friends (as many as you can manage but don't spread them too thinly). Most importantly, stir in a large cup of kindness towards others. Before you bake, sprinkle a dusting of curiosity on top to add a little surprise to the finished flavour.

Warning:

Money can help sweeten the mixture, but be sure to avoid letting it overpower the other ingredients or your happiness can turn sour.



Humanist responses

How might a humanist respond to these questions and statements about happiness?

- 1) Why is it so important to you to be happy?
- 2) You can't be happy without a god.
- 3) Wanting to be happy is selfish. You are just a hedonist.



Plenary

How might you use what you have learned today?

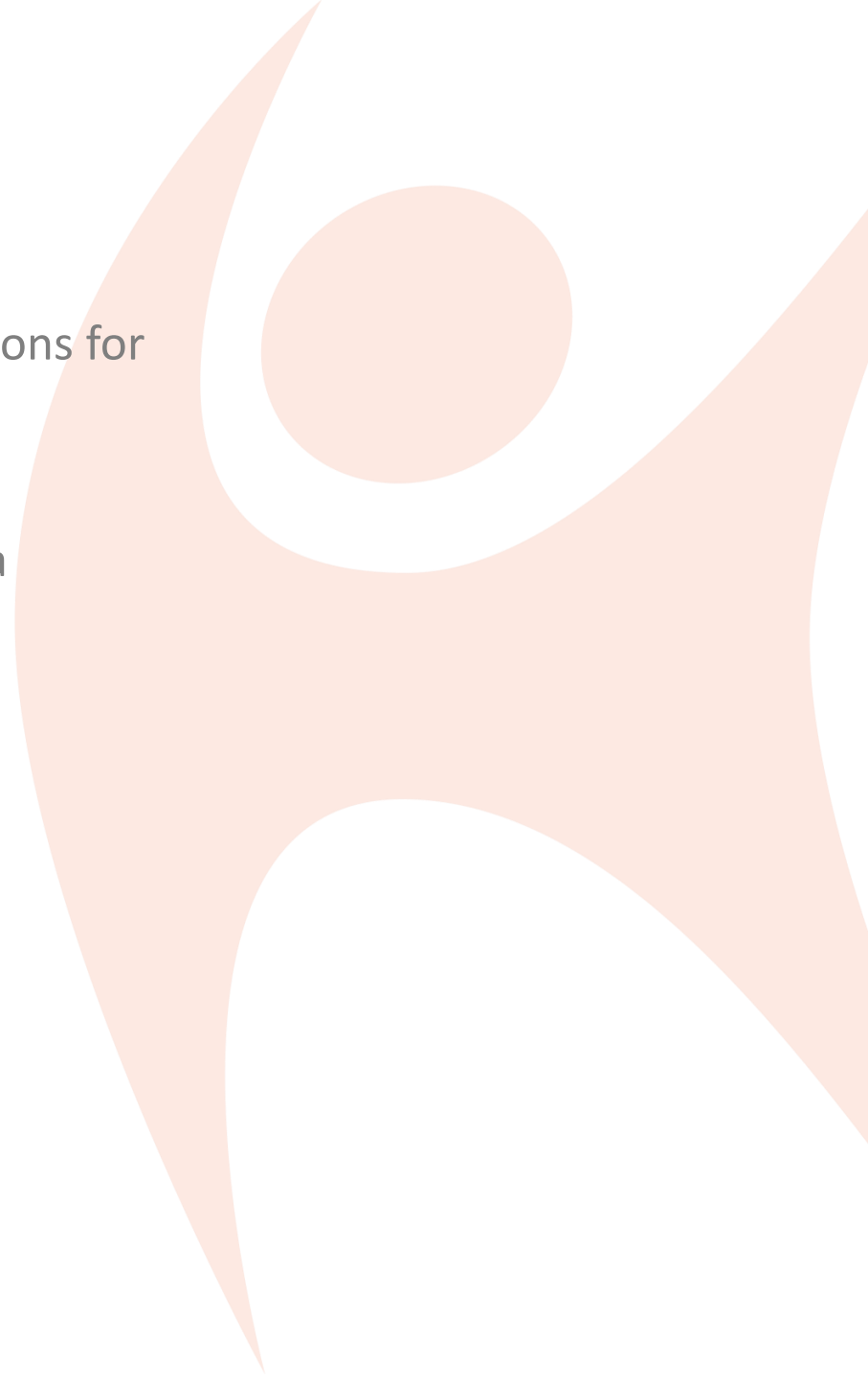
Did you change your mind about anything during the lesson?

What questions would you like to ask a humanist about happiness?



Questions

1. What are the most important aspects of how to make moral decisions for humanists?
2. How do humanists make moral decisions?
3. What is the most difficult moral situation for a humanist to make a decision in?
4. Do you think that life is made easier if you don't believe in a God?
5. What are the things that make humanists happy?
6. Do you think that there is such a thing as a 'recipe' for happiness?



‘Humanism is the best way to live.’

Evaluate this statement.

Using the FARC structure.

F-For

A-Against

R-Religious Teachings/argument

C-Conclusion

