

Is believing in God reasonable?

(Intention) What we intend to cover in our learning: (Topic web of concepts here)

Engage

Session 1: Use the Duck/Rabbit illustration to start a discussion about Fact, Belief and Opinion. What do you see? Is it 'right' or 'wrong' to see the other creature? Is it widely true that we make interpretations where other possibilities exist, and assume ours are certain? Pupils to provide a fact, belief, and opinion statement of their own and explain how someone else might interpret their statements legitimately but differently. Can something be true for one person and not true for another?

Enquire and Explore

Session 2: Introduce the 'Big Question'. Collect questions that they have (KWL Chart) to look at again in Evaluate part. Using the 'Knowledge' part of the chart, add to the 'Wonder Wall' - display their questions and add knowledge through the Enquire and Explore lessons.

Session 3: Sorting Activity – introduce the three viewpoints that we are going to explore with the sorting activity described in the Resources section. Make sure the children have a clear understanding of the definitions.

Session 4: Christian – What is belief? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONY4ACYxwdY> Explore what Christian faith rests on. Ask a Christian visitor to come and talk about their belief in God, their faith in what cannot be seen and what they put their trust in.

Session 5: Humanist – How do we know what is true?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yk5IWzTfWeM&t=35s> The Humanist viewpoint comes from a belief in observation, experimentation and the testing of theories against evidence. Use Understanding Humanism PowerPoint pages 5 and 6 to explore Humanist responses to the arguments for gods. Challenge the children's thinking with questions e.g. Can a Christian be a scientist?

Session 7: Pascal's Wager – What rational choice did Pascal offer? Why was it rational? Encourage the children to use philosophical vocabulary in their responses. What flaws does Pascal's Wager suffer from? Explain the argument analyses whether we should believe, it says nothing about whether a god actually exists.

Evaluate

Session 8: Evaluation activity – What is their Personal Response? How has this unit challenged their thinking? Use Evaluation technique explained in Supplementary Ideas. Sentence stems/Writing frames will help the children be more confident in expressing their response.

Express

Session 9: Children to write a Balanced Argument in response to the Big Question. Basic structure could include an Introduction. A paragraph from a Theist perspective with Christianity as the example. A paragraph from an Atheist perspective with Humanism as the example. A Conclusion, that includes a personal viewpoint.

(Implementation) Key words I will use and need to know:

Humanist

Christian

Atheist

Agnostic

Faith

Theist

Reason

Evidence

(Implementation) Key information we will learn:

- ✓ Definitions of belief: Atheist, Agnostic, Theist.
- ✓ Pascal's Wager, as an example of a philosophical explanation.
- ✓ Humanism, as an example of a philosophical stance.
- ✓ How to explain, using a range of reasons, whether a position or argument is coherent and logical. Use philosophical vocabulary e.g. knowing, truth, proof, reality, fact, opinion.
- ✓ How to form a coherent argument to support or oppose the existence of God.

(Implementation) Things to do and find out at home:

What is Philosophy? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueYzYTrMLXk>

Children talk about their beliefs: Kids of different religions describe God
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPYyWhTDMQ>

Understanding Humanism offers many extra resources
<https://understandinghumanism.org.uk/>

(Implementation) Some key information you can find more out about:

- ✓ Definitions of belief: Atheist, Agnostic, Theist.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gQ1iB_hTt4
- ✓ Pascal's Wager, as an example of a philosophical explanation.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2F_LUFleUk0
- ✓ Humanism, as an example of a philosophical stance.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yk5IWzTfWeM>
- ✓ How to form a coherent argument to support or oppose the existence of God.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEM1AYoSsYQ>

(Impact) What we will aim to do at the end of our learning:

By the end of our learning we will:

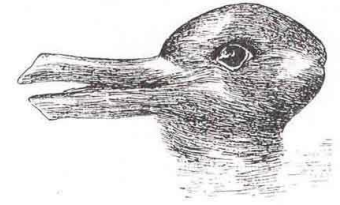
- ✓ Explain different philosophical and theological answers to questions about a belief in God.
- ✓ Explain some of the different ways in which philosophers understand abstract concepts such as arguments for the existence of God e.g. Pascal's Wager and Humanism as a philosophical stance.
- ✓ Explain, using a range of reasons, whether a position or argument is coherent and logical.
- ✓ Link a range of different pieces of evidence together to form a coherent argument to support or oppose the existence of God.

(Impact) The RE Age Related Expectations we will cover and be assessed against:

Philosophy

	Year 5	Year 6
A. The Nature of knowledge, meaning and existence	Explain different philosophical answers to questions about the world around them, including questions relating to meaning and existence. Explain some of the different ways in which philosophers understand abstract concepts.	Begin to analyse and evaluate a range of philosophical answers to questions about the world around them, including questions relating to meaning and existence. Begin to analyse and evaluate different ways in which philosophers understand abstract concepts.
B. How and whether things make sense	Explain, using a range of reasons, whether a position or argument is coherent and logical. Link a range of different pieces of evidence together to form a coherent argument.	Begin to analyse and evaluate whether a position or argument is coherent and logical and show increasing awareness of divergence of opinion. Use well-chosen pieces of evidence to support and counter a particular argument.

Supplementary Ideas:



Resources:

Do you believe in God?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ohqb4vbDrYI>

Duck-Rabbit Illusion <https://www.illusionsindex.org/i/duck-rabbit>

Christian

How do you know if what you believe is true?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6e4af15WGY>

10 Top Christians in Science on Science and Faith

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8XmXSMxXHQ>

What is Belief? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONY4ACYxwdY>

What is Faith? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLzBOnlyN4w>

Humanist

How do we know what is true? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yk5IWzTfWeM>

Understanding Humanism – Humanist Perspectives – Arguments for gods: Download presentation – PowerPoint pages 5 and 6

Pascal's Wager:

The French philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal put forward an argument for why we should believe in a god:

Either god exists or doesn't exist.

- If god exists and we believe, we will be rewarded with infinite happiness (an infinite gain)
- If god exists and we don't believe, we will be punished with infinite pain (an infinite loss)
- If god does not exist and we believe, we will miss out on some finite pleasure (a finite loss)
- If god does not exist and we don't believe, we will gain some finite pleasure (a finite gain)

	God exists	God does not exist
Believe in god	Eternal happiness	A small loss
Don't believe in god	Eternal punishment	A small gain

The rational choice, according to Pascal, was therefore to believe in god: if you are right you gain much, and if you are wrong you lose little.

Evaluation technique

Set up the strategy called 'Reflection Alley'.

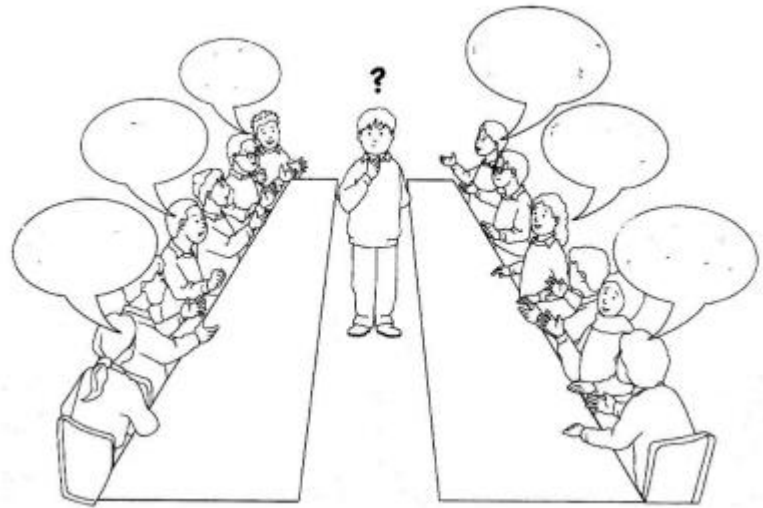
Arrange tables so that a pupil can walk down the corridor between them. Raise a question for the class such as:

- Does it make sense to believe in God?
- Is it possible that God creates beauty and love in the universe?
- If I suffer, then am I less likely to believe in God?

Ask pupils to think about the question, and come to stand behind the desks if they have something to say about it – to the left

if they agree, and support the statement, to the right if they disagree and want to attack it. One volunteer then walks along 'reflection alley', and asks for the view of each person in turn – positive, then negative, positive then negative. At the end of the alley, they have a minute to collect their thoughts and reflections, and give their own answer to the class. After the 'alley' has been played out, ask pupils to produce an assessment piece of writing based upon these two questions:

- What activities and ideas about God have you studied in this unit?
- In what ways are your own views about God changing and developing? A writing frame and some prompts will help pupils to respond in depth and detail.



Atheism: is an absence of belief in the existence of deities. Less broadly, atheism is a rejection of the belief that any deities exist.

Agnosticism: the view that the existence of God, the divine, or the supernatural is not certainly known. If the question is "Does God exist?", yes would imply theism, no would imply atheism, and "I'm not sure" would imply agnosticism.

Theism: belief in the existence of a god or gods, specifically of a creator who intervenes in the universe.

Sorting Activity:

Stick one word: Theist, Atheist and Agnostic in three different locations in the room. Share a series of descriptions of people's beliefs – definitions above. After reading out each example ask the pupils to move to the word that most accurately describes their belief. Ask pupils why they have made their decision? Do they agree or disagree with the opinion offered.

- I believe in following reason and science. These guide me in my life decisions.
- I think there is more to life than what is here on earth but I can't quite decide what it is.
- I know that there is more than just us and my faith guides me
- I need more evidence to make any decisions about God
- I have thought a bit about God and haven't made my mind up but to be honest I'm not all that bothered about it
- God is hard to define and unknowable
- I need evidence and no-one has shown me evidence of God yet