

**Theme/Unit:** *Humanism* **Key concept:** *River of life* **Year:** 6

**Term:** Summer

**Sequence of activities:**

**Step 1 – Enquire**

Begin by showing the children a series of pictures showing rivers. Ask the children to look at the rivers and discuss what they see. *Which is their favourite? Why?* Ask them to explain to the other children their favourite picture and to explain what they see in the picture.

Go on to explain that some people use pictures of rivers to explain things in their own lives – where they have come from, what might be happening to them, how it might explain human existence. Read the quotation from Bertrand Russell about the River of life (see resources) and ask the children to discuss if they agree with this or not. Use talk partners first and then enquire as a whole class.

Ask the children to paint a picture of a river for display.

Call the children together and compare pictures, drawing out the children’s meanings in their work.

**Step 2 – Contextualise**

Explain that for many people, religious or non religious, the concept of a *River for their life* is important. In this unit, we will focus on what some people, who are non-religious and describe themselves as Humanist, might use the concept of a *River of life* for.

Go on to tell the children more information about Bertrand Russell; he was a philosopher who described the way our lives are part of something bigger – we are all part of humanity. His words help to show the Humanist belief that even though Humanists believe there is no afterlife, the way we live can live on in the world and in others after we are gone. In this way, some Humanists believe that something of us can live on after death. Explain that many Humanists believe that the atoms in our bodies will go on and form new things after death and that our genes can live on in our families. Our actions, thoughts and words can live on in the memories of others and our works may live on after we die.

Hold a class discussion or a P4C enquiry into this belief. *What do we think about it? Do we agree? Are there areas we don’t agree with? Why? What might someone who is religious believe? Can they give examples? Can the children see any areas where Humanists and people who are religious might agree? Where might they disagree?*

Ask the children to design and create a model of their own *river of life* – *think about the directions it should take, the events that are important to you and the sights you want to signpost*.

**Step 3 – Evaluate**

Once the children have completed their models, bring them together and ask them to explain why it might be important for a Humanist to use the concept of a *River of life* for themselves. Draw out what they have learnt. Go on to discuss: *do the children think it is an important concept for them too? Why?*

**Step 4 – Communicate**

Ask the children to think about their own lives and to explain what they would like to see in them in the future. Think about what they would like to contribute to the lives of others and to discuss with each other and the class. Ask the children to go on and explain these in the models they have made.

**Step 5 – Apply**

Ask the children to work either on their own or in small groups to present one of the situations that have been important to them in their life so far (for example, starting school, the birth of a sibling etc).They can present this in a way that they choose, for example, art, writing or modelling. *What impact has this event had on them? Why is it important?*

**RE KS2**

**Opportunities for promoting children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development:**

**Spiritual**: providing an opportunity to be reflective about their own beliefs, religious or otherwise, that inform their perspective on life and their interest in and respect for different people’s faiths, feelings and values.

**Moral**: giving the opportunity to recognise the difference between right and wrong and to readily apply this understanding in their own lives, recognising the legal boundaries and in so doing, respect the civil and criminal law of England.

Developing an ability to understand and appreciate the viewpoints of others on these issues.

**Social**: sharing our own experiences and respond to the experiences of others. Working and socialising with others in a range of learning opportunities.

**Cultural**: willingness to participate in and respond positively to artistic, musical and cultural opportunities. Giving children an interest in and an opportunity to explore different faiths and beliefs.

**Intended learning outcomes:**

Children will be able to:

**Step 1** explain why people might use the concept of *River of life* to explain their own life

**Step 2** explain how Humanists might use the concept to show what they believe

**Step 3** explain why it is/is not important for Humanists to use the concept

**Step 4** explain their own *River of life* in a way that is meaningful to them

**Step 5** explain situations that were important for them.

**Informed by the end of Year 6 age-related expectations**

**Cross curricular links**

**Art:**

Creating a picture of a river to begin the enquiry.

**DT:**

To design and create a model of the *River of life*

for themselves.

**Philosophy for children (P4C):**

Opportunities for enquiry into the question “*What does the River of life mean and “Is this an important concept to me?*”

**Drama:**

Opportunities for the children to role play a situation in their own lives that has been important and to show why.

**English:**

Write about their own *River of life* and explain the key events to others. Speaking and listening opportunities for discussing situations throughout the unit.

**1**

**Assessment opportunities:** Evidence can be gathered when children:

1. explain why people might use the concept of *River of life*
2. explain why Humanists might use the concept to explain their beliefs
3. explain their own *River of life* in a way that is meaningful to them.

**Resources:**

[British Humanist Association](https://understandinghumanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Death-Activity-River-of-life.docx) [2017 *The River of life*](https://understandinghumanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Death-Activity-River-of-life.docx)and [accompanying resources.](https://understandinghumanism.org.uk/uhtheme/life-and-death/)

*With thanks to Luke Donnellan (BHA) for the original idea.*