

How do Christians and non-religious people

FOR
YOUR
EYES
ONLY

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE FOR THE TEACHER

- Christians often find ways of coping with difficult times that are connected to their beliefs and practices – for example, praying; looking for guidance in the Bible; or going to church or chapel, where they can find comfort and advice from other believers or religious leaders in the community.
- People who are non-religious are unlikely to pray or attend a place of worship to seek advice or comfort, but they may well meditate, or look in books or other texts for advice or wisdom (they may be non-religious books, like books about psychology or philosophy, but sometimes Humanists find wisdom in religious books as well, even without believing in the supernatural aspects of religion). They might also be part of a community related to their beliefs about the world, such as a Sunday Assembly, where they too can seek comfort and advice from like-minded people.
- Many Christians and Humanists agree that difficult times are a natural, unavoidable and sometimes even helpful part of life for everyone. Difficult times can help people to become stronger and more resilient, and give people opportunities to help one another, bringing people together.
- Christians and Humanists would also say that sometimes people need to take responsibility for difficult times when those times result from something they have done or not done. For many Christians, this shows God gave people freedom to choose how to behave, even if it has bad consequences for them – this is called ‘free will’.
- Many Christians believe that going through difficult times can be part of God’s plan – it helps people to build character, strengthen their faith and become closer to God; for example, through prayer. Often, Christians will believe the reasons why people experience difficult times are known only to God and remain a mystery to human beings. Some Christians believe that difficult times can be a test from God.
- Humanists, the majority of whom do not believe in God, believe that difficult times arise from the way that the world is, and the way humans behave in it. For them, there is no supernatural higher being with a plan. Often, people will experience difficulties because of natural phenomena, human action or inaction, or even just purely random chance – this is why bad things might well happen to good people.

Pupils will explore different ideas about why difficult times are a part of our lives, and ways of dealing with them. They are introduced to Christian and Humanist perspectives on difficult times, through Grace (Christian), and Howard (Humanist). After considering these perspectives, pupils will be encouraged to consider and compare, discuss and reflect on what they mean in typical real-life situations.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE FOR THE PUPIL

By the end of this unit pupils should know:

- some of the things that Christians and Humanists might do to help them to face difficult times in their lives
- that some things that Christians and Humanists might do are similar or the same, while others are quite different
- that Humanists believe there is no god

Key vocabulary:

Christian, prayer, vicar, Bible, God, Jesus, church, sin, Humanist, community



PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

In order to access the learning in this unit, pupils should have:

- learnt about Christian belief, and be familiar with key terms such as ‘Bible’, ‘church’, ‘vicar’ and ‘prayer’
- an understanding that some people do not believe in God

ASSESSMENT FOR 5-7s

The statements below suggest expected outcomes from this unit for 7-year-olds. Adapt them for the age of pupils you are teaching. These link to the outcomes for this series of books shown on the webpages. You may need to adapt them slightly for the syllabus or guidelines you follow.

Expected

- Explain some ways in which Christianity and Humanism respond to difficult times, giving reasons for some of the differences and similarities in their approaches.
- Talk about how religious and non-religious beliefs and practices can help people to get through difficult times.

This unit helps pupils in Scotland to achieve RME 0-01a, 1-01c, 1-02a, 1-04a, 1-04c, 1-09a and 1-09c.



ERESOURCES

Go to www.natre.org.uk/bqic-big-questions-big-answers to access the resources below:

- information for teachers on Humanism and on suffering
- Members are able to download extra resources to support this unit:**
- a copy of the unit
 - a PowerPoint presentation
 - Resource 3.2 as two separate pages

deal with DIFFICULT TIMES?

Thinking about emotions

ACTIVITY 1:

Explain that all of us experience different emotions at different times and that some of those emotions can be hard to deal with.

Ask pupils to suggest different emotions and show these emotions on their faces. If they do not suggest them, introduce the following feelings, explaining what they mean: anger, sadness, disappointment, loneliness, shock, jealousy, worry, fear and confusion.

Talk about times when the pupils have felt these emotions.

Thinking about difficult times

ACTIVITY 2:

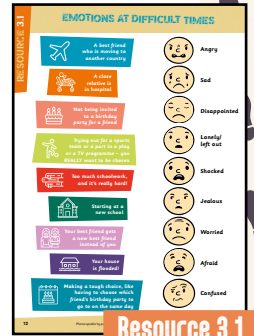
Explain that everyone, at some points in their life, will experience difficult times. These times can make us feel a lot of different emotions.

Get pupils talking about difficult times. Can they think about an emotion they felt at the time?

Arrange pupils into small groups with Resource 3.1 on p. 12. Ask them to:

- match each situation to the main emotion they might feel
- discuss which would be the easiest and hardest to deal with

Pupils can use the emotions more than once, and they may wish to think of an emotion that is not given on the resource. Can pupils arrange these situations to show what they would find the most or least difficult, or can they say which would be most difficult for them?



Resource 3.1

Discuss the ideas from different groups as a whole class.

When doing this activity, bear in mind what you know about the personal circumstances of pupils in the class. You may feel it is appropriate to manage this as a whole-class activity or adapt some of the scenarios suggested in the resource.

Positive thinking: good things from difficult times

ACTIVITY 3:

Discuss the idea that difficult times are not always bad times. Suggest that even when they are bad times, some good things can come out of them.

Ask pupils if they can give an example, based on Resource 3.1 on p. 12, of where a difficult time could actually be good for a person. For example, trying out for a sports team is a great opportunity but it will take lots of hard work and could be stressful and worrying, so it could be a difficult time in a person's life, as well as a positive one. Explore the less obvious ones, too. Can pupils think of positive outcomes for the difficult situations in Resource 3.1?

Invite pupils to write about and create a drawing to show a time they found difficult in their life that led to something good. Use the following prompts to support their drawing and/or writing:

- A difficult time in my life was when ...
- The thing that helped me in the difficult time was ...
- A good thing that came out of this difficult time was ...

Select a number of pupils to show and tell, with a class discussion, following this activity. Try to choose pupils with diverse responses and ways of dealing with the difficult time that could be seen as religious as well as non-religious. Thinking 'spiritual, psychological/emotional, practical action' may help you to choose who should show and tell.

Doing some deep thinking about difficult times, and reflecting on an example from their own lives, will prepare pupils to think about religious and non-religious perspectives.

Grace and Howard: Christian and Humanist thoughts about difficult times

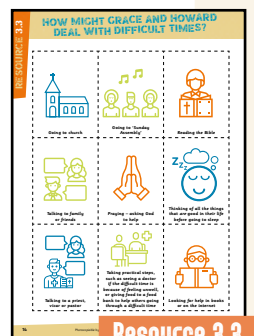
ACTIVITY 4:

Introduce pupils to Grace the Christian and Howard the Humanist (you may wish to use suitable persona dolls to help with this activity). Use Resource 3.2 on p. 13 to tell the pupils about Grace and Howard's different views about difficult times. Test pupils' listening and understanding by asking them questions about each character. If using persona dolls, you might invite questions from the class and answer in character. Encourage pupils to make comparisons between Grace and Howard's beliefs and ways of dealing with difficult times and their own and their classmates'.

Resource 3.3 on p. 14 is a set of nine cards showing ways that a person might respond to difficult times. Taking each card in turn, ask pupils if Grace or Howard would respond in this way, or could they both respond in the way shown on each card? In this way, pupils can think about the differences and similarities between the Christian and Humanist perspectives.



Resource 3.2



Resource 3.3

What would Grace and Howard do?

ACTIVITY 5:

Revisit the situations in Resource 3.1. Put pupils into groups of about four, and give each group one of the situations to discuss. Ask them to think about what Grace and Howard might do in the situation they have been given to think about.

Share ideas as a class. Did different groups talking about the same situation have similar or different ideas? What do pupils think about Christian and Humanist approaches to dealing with difficult situations?

Children over the age of 7 using this resource may be able to present an imaginary discussion between Grace and Howard about the situation. To extend and deepen critical thinking, ask pupils to think about what Grace and Howard might say about why the situation happened and whether it could have benefits for the person who experiences it.

EMOTIONS AT DIFFICULT TIMES



A best friend who is moving to another country



A close relative is in hospital



Not being invited to a birthday party for a friend



Trying out for a sports team or a part in a play or a TV programme – you REALLY want to be chosen



Too much schoolwork, and it's really hard!



Starting at a new school



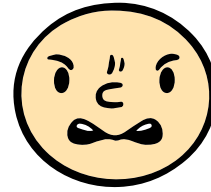
Your best friend gets a new best friend instead of you



Your house is flooded!



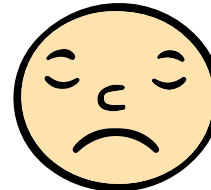
Making a tough choice, like having to choose which friend's birthday party to go to on the same day



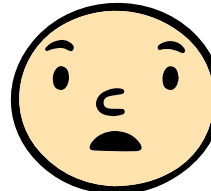
Angry



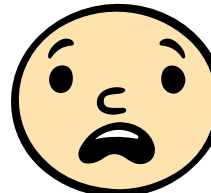
Sad



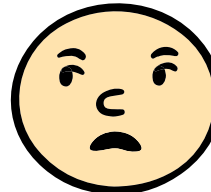
Disappointed



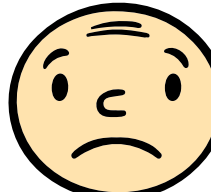
Lonely/
left out



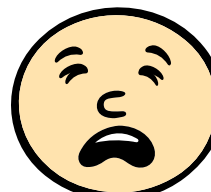
Shocked



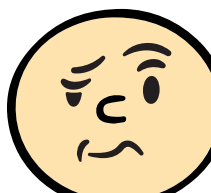
Jealous



Worried



Afraid



Confused

GRACE AND HOWARD: CHRISTIAN AND HUMANIST THOUGHTS ABOUT DIFFICULT TIMES

I believe that difficult times are part of God's plan. Everyone faces difficult times. Even Jesus had some.

Sometimes difficult times are my fault because I worry about getting things right, like when I arranged a party. I wanted it to be fun and it was hard work, and then I worried if people liked it. Once I was mean to someone and this made life difficult. I knew it was wrong. Jesus said, 'Love your neighbour', but I still chose to be mean. Christians call this bad choice 'sinning'.

Sometimes, difficult times are not my fault. I have an illness that will be with me all my life. Sometimes I am in pain or very tired, so this can make things difficult for me and my family. I don't believe God sends these times to punish me, but I don't always know why I have this illness. When I am facing difficult times, I pray more, read the Bible more carefully and go to church more too, so I feel the difficult times actually bring me closer to God and help me to be a better Christian. It also means I can help other people going through difficult times. Our church does lots of that.

Difficult times are part of life for everyone. Maybe it helps us notice the good times. I don't believe there is a god. So, when times are difficult, I think this is because of how people choose to behave or the way that the world works. If you're having a difficult time because you are being bullied, that's because a bully is being nasty to you. If you are having a difficult time because your house was wrecked in a storm, this is because of the way the world works – sometimes nature can be dangerous and scary! It's all very simple, and there is no need to think about a god being part of it all.

Sometimes, going through difficulties can be a good thing because we can learn from them, and they can help us to be better people. In my town, we have a 'Sunday Assembly'. Humanists get together for an hour and listen to speakers, sing songs and talk about important issues. Not all Humanists do this, but we do. For some people, being part of a community really helps them get through difficult times. It's like going to a church every week but without religion or a god.

If someone is experiencing difficult times, Humanists believe it is important to help them in practical ways. We run a food bank as part of our group. Humanists trust in what they can actually see in the world around them. We know that the food we donate will help stop someone from going hungry. While Christians see difficult times as a time for prayer, Humanists would not agree. This is because most Humanists don't believe in a god (so who would they be praying to?) and they don't believe praying works.



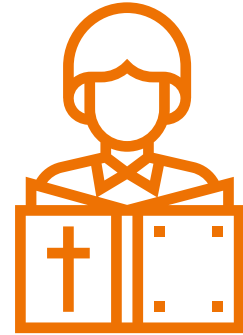
HOW MIGHT GRACE AND HOWARD DEAL WITH DIFFICULT TIMES?



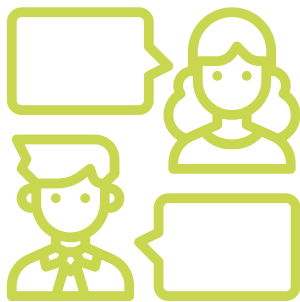
Going to church



Going to 'Sunday Assembly'



Reading the Bible



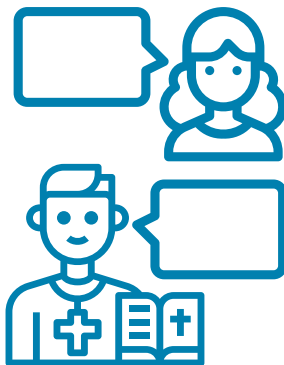
Talking to family or friends



Praying – asking God to help



Thinking of all the things that *are* good in their life before going to sleep



Talking to a priest, vicar or pastor



Taking practical steps, such as seeing a doctor if the difficult time is because of feeling unwell, or giving food to a food bank to help others going through a difficult time



Looking for help in books or on the internet