# Introduction to humanity

Learning objectives

Children will:

* Explore the word ‘humanity’ and think about what it means.
* Consider what is meant by the idea of ‘shared humanity’.
* Be introduced to the idea of helping themselves and helping others.

Suggested age range: 7–11

## Introduction

­The word and idea of ‘humanity’ is central to understanding the work of the Red Cross as a humanitarian organisation. The activities in this resource build an understanding of humanity for younger learners by starting with what it means to be human before moving on to explore the key concepts underpinning wider notions of humanity. The concepts and activities are ideally suited to learners aged 7–11, but some may be suitable for younger learners (aged 6–7) also and at points alternatives are suggested to support differentiation.

## Starter: I am human because…

1. This is a warm up to help children begin thinking about the idea of humanity but beginning with themselves as a humans and the question “What makes us human?”
   1. Organise the children into a single circle (this can standing or sitting) and ask them to turn to one person next to them in the circle so that all learners are in a pair. *[teachers, assistants or leaders can join in to make up any odd numbers]*
   2. Ask one of the pair to begin by completing the sentence “We are human because we…” to their partner. The partner then replies with the same sentence starter, and they continue to take it in turns to give reasons why they are human. *[You may wish to give an example such as “We are human because we both need water to survive”]*
   3. Once they have had a few turns each *[suggest maximum of 3 each]* bring the circle together and go around asking children to introduce their partner and one example of being human using the phrase “This is XXXXXX and we are human because we both XXXXXXXX”. Record the ideas about what makes them human on a whiteboard or flipchart for later use. *[Note that at this stage the idea is to gather thoughts rather than say what is right or wrong. This warm-up will help you assess their understanding. If you get unusual ideas that you need to respond to then perhaps say something like “that’s an interesting idea. We can explore that later” or “I’m not sure about that, perhaps we can think more about that in a minute”]*

## Raising awareness: From being human to shared humanity

For many children at this age-level the word ‘humanity’ may be new or unfamiliar to them. This next section allows children to build the bridge between their understanding of ‘human’ and the related idea of ‘humanity’. *[This initial part is necessarily led by the educator to introduce the new definitions of ‘humanity’, but need not take long. Activity 2 below will give children a chance to explore and test their new understanding of humanity.]*

There are three main definitions of ‘humanity’ that children can be introduced to. Use the following to introduce the first two of these, perhaps writing them down somewhere for children to see. The third definition will be introduced a little later.

The first is closely connected with the warm up activity:

**Definition 1:** ***Humanity is the state or quality of being human.***

*[explain that this means ‘the things that make us human’, like the ones that they were sharing in activity 1 above. Perhaps refer to the responses that you have earlier recorded from that activity. If it is not already clear in their responses it is important to help children understand that the state of being human can include positive things (like being kind and loving) but also weaknesses (such as making mistakes – ‘human error’) because no human is perfect.]*

An example sentence for this definition would be: *“Differences between people are important but our common humanity is even more important”*

**Definition 2:** ***Humanity is the collective name for all human beings.***

*[explain that this means all humans on the planet. It is used to describe all human beings as a group together, a bit like a species.]*

An example sentence for this definition would be: *“If the meteor had hit the Earth it would have been a threat to humanity.” Or “In October 2011 humanity welcomed the birth of its 7 billionth member.”*

1. In this activity children should work together in small groups of around 4 *[vary according to total group size and age of learners]* to develop their understanding of shared humanity.
   1. Provide learners with a large sheet of sugar paper/flip chart paper and ask them to draw a large outline of a human in the centre of the page with space around the edges. *[See Human Outline download which could be copied onto A3 paper as an alternative.]*
   2. Now give each group or learners a set of the **downloadable images** showing young people from other parts of the world. Ask them to look at each of the images and try and think of things that they have in common with the children in image (a shared humanity). They can write their ideas inside the person outline on their paper. If they identify things that are different (diversity in humanity) then they can place these around the outside of the person shape. If they need a little support to help them explore the images then you could give each group a set of the four **‘shared humanity cards’** to prompt their thinking.
   3. Once groups have shared and recorded their ideas (around 10-15 mins), play some music for a few moments and ask them to move carefully around the room to see what other groups included inside their human shape as being part of shared humanity.
   4. Bring the group back together and share their thoughts about shared humanity. You may wish to organise these around the four prompts that explore shared humanity in:
      1. ***relationships*** (we all have a mother, we are all part of the human race – humanity etc)
      2. ***feelings and emotions*** (we can all be happy, sad, cross, sorry, we can all show love etc)
      3. ***basic needs*** (we all need food, we all need water, we all need the right amount of warmth etc)
      4. ***actions*** (we can all show affection, we can all be kind, we can all help someone else etc).

## Raising awareness: Humanity and being humane

At this point learners should have developed a clearer understanding of humanity as the state of being human and also explored the idea of having a shared humanity with others on the planet. This next section of the resource introduces the third understanding of humanity and begins to relate this directly to the role of the British Red Cross. It begins with the third definition.

**Definition 3:** ***Humanity is the quality of being humane.***

*[this third definition introduces the idea of ‘being humane’ which can be explained as ‘being kind and caring towards others’. It is possible to show this humanity through empathy (sharing the feelings of others) and through actions (directly helping others). The idea of being humane can apply not just to other people but also to animals that we share the planet with. We talk about the ‘humane treatment of animals’ for example. The idea of being humane might be quite complex for younger children to grasp, but if explored instead through ideas like kindness, caring and helping, then the underlying concepts can be understood by even very young children.]*

1. This activity builds on what it means to ‘be humane’ through allowing children to explore the related concepts of kindness, caring and helping. This is done through a co-operative learning method called ‘Hand, Pair, Share’ which works as follows:
   1. Makes sure the room is safe for children to move around *[this could be done outside if space/weather allows]* and explain that in a moment they will begin to move around quietly whilst thinking about a question or idea.
   2. Once they have thought of a response they should raise one hand in the air and look for someone else who is ready to share (they will also have their hand in the air) and walk over to them and pair up.
   3. Once paired up they share their thoughts about the question or idea with each other.
   4. The Hand, Pair, Share’ cycle is then repeated for each new idea or question with children encouraged to pair with someone new in each cycle. In this activity the following are suggested prompts for each Hand, Pair, Share cycle:
      1. Think about an act of kindness that someone has shown to you and an act of kindness that you have shown to someone else.
      2. Think about a moment of caring that someone has given to you and a moment of caring that you have given to someone else.
      3. Think about an example of when someone has helped you and an example of when you have helped someone else.
   5. At the end of each cycle interview the room by asking some of the children to share their discussion, perhaps choosing a few pairs in each case to draw out some common understanding of what it means to be humane – kind, caring and helpful.

[Note: until learners are familiar with this method of sharing ideas you might need to manage it a little more directly through a series of instructions such as “Ok, so begin to take a gentle walk and think of a response to the question. Now HAND – raise one hand in the air and keep gently walking looking for someone to pair with and now PAIR with that person and once you have a pair SHARE your thoughts with each other.”]

## Taking action: Helping others

This next part helps children to focus in more depth on ‘helping’ – both themselves and others. Helping is at the heart of the work of the British Red Cross who refuse to ignore those in need and offer help to all in times of crisis. The British Red Cross recognise that people can help themselves to avoid suffering at a time of crisis as well as help others. For younger learners this might initially be quite an abstract idea so this next creative activity begins by simply thinking about help.

1. This activity uses a **‘helping humanity outline’** template that can be downloaded and photocopied so that each child is given one copy of the template. Each child should complete their own template individually as follows:
   * 1. Think about ways that they help themselves to be safe, well and happy. *[Examples might include, listening to instructions, being safe near the road, wearing a cycling helmet when on their scooter or bike, not staying out in cold weather too long.]* Write or draw these into the head section of your outline human to show how you can help yourself.
     2. Think about the things that others around you, at home, at school, in the community, even in the country or wider, do to help you stay safe, well and happy. *[Examples might include road safety person helping cross road to school, dinner staff making sure get food and water, brother or sister reading stories or playing games at home.]* Write or draw these into the lower body and legs section of your outline human to show how others help you.
     3. Think about what you do to help others around you, at home, at school, in the community, even in the country or wider, stay safe and well*. [Examples might include helping to unpack shopping or to get dinner ready, caring for younger brothers and sisters, keeping bedroom tidy.]* Write or draw these into the upper body and arms section of your outline human to show how you help others around you.
     4. If children leave the grey shaded area at the tip of the arms and legs clear then the individual shapes could be cut out and glued together at these points to make a chain of helpful humanity that can be used for display or decoration and as a way of sharing the learning.
2. The follow-on activity encourages learners to work together to build on their individual ideas and collectively create a freeze-frame that shows forms of help. This could be done in small groups of 3-4 children who should work together to produce a freeze frame that shows a form of help that the others watch and ‘interview’. If you are not familiar with using this drama technique then here is a brief overview.
   1. First children think of a scene that will show something (in this case based on the theme of helping) to those watching. You can explain it a bit like pausing a film or TV show in mid action. When presenting a freeze-frame it can be done as a static scene or alternatively you can show a few seconds of activity before then freezing in mid-action. *[Note: dialogue or other sound should not be used so that the focus is on the visual, but props can sometimes be used.]*
   2. The next stage is for them to decide how to show this and who is going to do which role. This may take around 5-10 mins dependent on the age and confidence of learners. Give each group a little time to practice their freeze-frame and improve on it.
   3. When ready each group presents their freeze frame and at the point that they freeze the audience can ask questions of the characters to find out more about the scene. These questions could be very practical (“what are you holding?” for example), but just as importantly they could relate to feelings and emotions such as “how does it feel to help that person?” or “how would you have managed if they had not helped you?”

*[If support is needed for this activity, you could suggest different groups of children focus on different types of help as used in the previous activity – helping themselves, helping others, receiving help – and that they pick one example from their own ideas to turn into a freeze frame in their group. The act of turning ideas into a drama expression like this is known to strengthen understanding and foster emotive aspects of learning.]*

**Differentiation for younger learners:** The above freeze-frame activity can be adapted for younger or less able learners by making it more educator-led. The same idea is being used, but the educator provides more leadership to boost confidence and engagement. Instead of asking children to think of their own ideas, you present them with a number of scenarios and ask them to go into role and act out their response. This could be done as individuals or in pairs or small groups. Once the children are acting it out the educator calls ‘freeze’ and can interview some of the scenes in the same way.

Some suggested prompts for this approach include:

Show me a scene where you are helping yourself to be safe?

Work with a partner and together show me a scene where one of you is helping the other.

Find a different partner and show me a scene where you helping each other to do something.

On your own show me a scene that shows how you feel when someone has helped you.

## Closing reflections: Why help others?

Close the learning in this resource by asking children to think about why we help others? This could be done in small group discussions or as a whole group depending on the learners and the choice of the educator.

Once some ideas have been shared ask children to write a short piece of reflective writing to share their own thinking about this. You could use one of the following to support this:

1. Use the sentence starter “Helping others is an important part of humanity because …”
2. Take the word humanity and use it to write an acrostic poem about helping others, each line beginning with the next letter in the word.
3. Write a diary entry reflecting on the day someone helped you and how it made you feel, or the day you helped someone else and how that made you feel.

**Differentiation for younger learners:** As this reflection involves writing a simpler way to share thinking for younger learners or those less able to write would be to place their hand on a sheet of paper, spread out their fingers and draw around the outline of their hand. Once done they can put 5 reasons why we might help people into the hand – one in each finger perhaps if writing simple words – or decorate with drawings or writing around the helping hand as to why we might help people. These could be used for a display also.

Finish by explaining that sometimes people may face a crisis situation caused by a natural disaster like a flood or earthquake, or maybe by people fighting in a conflict. Ask learners why it might be especially important to help these people?

*[In the discussion try and link back to the idea of shared humanity and that being human means being kind, caring and helpful to those who might need support even if they are people we don’t know and may never meet. Share that in a crisis situation those normally able to help may not be able to and may need help themselves. Explain that when we can’t do something directly organisations like the British Red Cross have workers and volunteers who they can send to help those who are suffering.]*