Worldviews vocabulary cards

Use twelve vocabulary cards and eight fictional statements to practise careful use of words. Pupils explain which terms fit, where meanings overlap and when a statement does not tell them enough.

TEACHER NOTES

Learning objective: explain key worldview and reasoning terms, use them in context, and recognise when a label would go beyond the available information.

Planning detail	Suggested use
Audience	Approximately ages 11-16; adapt vocabulary and reading demands.
Duration / preparation	30 minutes / 10 minutes. These are planning estimates.
Prerequisites	Pupils can distinguish a statement from a question. No personal belief disclosure is needed.
Materials	One vocabulary set and statement sheet per pair; paper or the response sheet; scissors only if cutting cards.

Teacher introduction

Explain that these are working definitions for an activity. Some terms have several accepted uses. A good response identifies the wording it relies on and acknowledges ambiguity; it does not guess a person's identity from one sentence.

Read the humanism guide and atheism and agnosticism guide when preparing. Check the curriculum context alongside your own school's programme.

Run the activity

1. Introduce the question (5 minutes): What does a word help us understand, and what can it leave open? Read the worldview card together.

2. Explore the cards (10 minutes): pairs group terms they think are connected. Ask them to explain two connections, rather than finding one prescribed arrangement.

3. Sort the statements (10 minutes): choose terms for statements A-H. Allow more than one term and 'not enough information', with a reason.

4. Review (5 minutes): compare one straightforward case and one ambiguous case. Finish by revising an overconfident label.

> **What to assess**
>
> Look for accurate explanations, attention to wording and recognition of limits. Do not award marks for a pupil's religion, non-religion or agreement with any worldview.

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Vocabulary cards: ideas and reasoning

Read each explanation with its example and caution. These cards can be cut apart or read as a sheet.

1. Worldview

A way of understanding life and the world, involving beliefs, values and ways of living.

Example: A person's ideas about meaning and responsibility can be part of a worldview.

Take care: People within one named tradition can have different worldviews.

2. Belief

Something a person accepts as true, or a conviction they hold.

Example: A fictional speaker believes that keeping promises matters.

Take care: A belief may be well supported or poorly supported; the word alone does not decide.

3. Knowledge

What someone knows, rather than merely guesses. What counts as knowing can itself be debated.

Example: A pupil knows the result written in a supplied fictional results table.

Take care: Feeling certain is not, by itself, a guarantee of knowledge.

4. Evidence

Information offered to help establish or assess a claim.

Example: Recorded bridge-test results can support a claim about those tests.

Take care: Ask whether the evidence is relevant, reliable and sufficient for this claim.

5. Reason

A consideration offered to support a conclusion or decision.

Example: A speaker supports turn-taking because everyone should have a chance.

Take care: Giving a reason does not automatically make the conclusion correct.

6. Assumption

Something an argument takes for granted rather than establishing within it.

Example: A proposal assumes that everyone can attend the chosen meeting time.

Take care: An assumption is not always false; identify it and ask whether it is justified.

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Vocabulary cards: ethics and worldviews

The words below do different jobs. Some describe an ethical outlook; others concern belief, knowledge, identity or belonging.

7. Ethics

Thinking carefully about how people ought to act and what matters in a good life.

Example: Discussing whether a fair rule should allow an exception is ethical reasoning.

Take care: A popularity vote does not, on its own, establish that a decision is fair.

8. Humanism

A non-religious worldview concerned with human welfare, responsibility and reason, as described by Humanists International.

Example: A humanist may consider how a decision affects people's lives.

Take care: Not every non-religious person identifies as a humanist. These concerns are not exclusive to humanists.

9. Atheism

Often used for lack of belief in gods; also used for the view that no gods exist.

Example: 'I do not believe in any gods' fits the first usage.

Take care: Say which usage you mean. The label alone does not explain someone's ethics.

10. Agnosticism

Used for positions about not knowing whether gods exist, or suspending judgement on that question.

Example: 'I do not know whether any gods exist' expresses uncertainty about knowledge.

Take care: Some uses overlap with atheism; others treat the positions differently.

11. Religion

A varied category involving such things as traditions, beliefs, practices, communities and questions of meaning.

Example: A fictional speaker describes a festival as part of a religious tradition.

Take care: No single short checklist describes every religion or every member.

12. Non-religious

A broad description for people or perspectives that do not identify with, or are not based on, religion.

Example: A speaker describes their outlook as non-religious.

Take care: This does not tell us everything they believe, value or practise.

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Sort and discuss the statements

All statements A-H are fictional teaching examples. For each, choose one or more useful vocabulary terms. Explain the exact wording you used. You may decide that there is not enough information for a particular label.

Card	Fictional statement
A	I do not believe in any gods, but I am not claiming certainty about whether gods exist.
B	No gods exist.
C	I do not know whether any gods exist.
D	Our club should keep its promises, even when breaking one would be convenient.
E	The plant by this window grew three centimetres this week. Therefore all plants always grow faster here.
F	I belong to a religious community, but other members and I disagree about some practices.
G	I do not follow a religion. I have not explained how I decide what is right.
H	Humanists International describes humanism in terms of reason, human welfare and responsibility.

A response structure

'The term ___ fits because the statement says ___. It does not tell us ___.' For example: D concerns ethics because it proposes how a club should act. It does not tell us the speaker's religious or non-religious identity.

Questions for a partner

- Which statement could fit more than one label? Explain the definitions you are using.

- Where would a further question be more useful than a quick label?

- Which statement moves from a small observation to a much larger claim?

Use the response sheet for any three statements, or make the same table on paper. Do not classify members of your class.

PUPIL RESPONSE SHEET

Record and review your choices

Choose three statements. Write about the fictional wording, not your own or another pupil's beliefs.

Card	Term or terms	Reason from the wording	What remains unclear?
Letter.	Give a working definition.	Identify the words that support your choice.	Write a question or a limit.

One label I would use more carefully now, and why:

A sentence I can revise to avoid overgeneralising about a group:

Success check: I have explained a term, supported a choice and identified at least one uncertainty. Recognising a limit is a thoughtful answer.

TEACHER RESPONSE GUIDE

Compare vocabulary responses

Card	Possible reasoning, not an identity test
A	Atheism in the lack-of-belief sense; agnosticism may also fit a use concerning knowledge. Do not force one exclusive box.
B	Atheism as a proposition denying gods. The sentence does not state how certain the speaker is or what their reasons are.
C	Agnosticism fits a knowledge-related use. The sentence does not fully settle the speaker's beliefs or identity.
D	Ethics and a value judgement about promises. A religious or non-religious person could use this reason.
E	An observation is offered as evidence for a broad belief. The step to all plants and always is not justified by this one observation.
F	Religion, belonging and variation within a group. Disagreement does not, by itself, cancel a person's stated membership.
G	Non-religious. Humanist would be an unsupported extra inference from this statement alone.
H	An attributed description of organised humanism. It does not report what every non-religious individual thinks.

Accept alternative answers when a pupil states a defensible working definition and identifies the relevant wording. Ask a further question when a response goes beyond the information given. The aim is conceptual precision rather than a single label for each speaker.

TEACHER NOTES AND USE

Adapt the vocabulary activity

Address misconceptions; adjust the task

If pupils treat belief as a synonym for unsupported opinion, return to the evidence card. If they define agnosticism as not caring, ask what the statement actually says. If one label is treated as a full biography, ask what remains unknown.

For more support, use six terms first, read statements aloud and supply the response structure. For extension, ask pupils to write two fictional sentences using different senses of the same term, then explain the difference. Accept spoken or written responses and allow thinking time.

Source and use notes

Terminology was checked against the academic SEP discussion, Humanists International's own description and the RE Council's professional explanation of worldviews. These sources have different roles; none endorses this activity. The IPO source explains the limits of educational copyright exceptions.

All classroom examples and figures in this pack are original fiction, not findings from a study or accounts of real pupils. Timings are planning estimates. Teachers should adapt the material to their learners and curriculum.

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Version 1.0. Prepared 3 November 2026. The complete text is also available as an HTML resource, which can be enlarged and read with assistive technology.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Atheism and Agnosticism https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/atheism-agnosticism/ - checked 3 November 2026.

Humanists International: What is humanism? (organisational self-description) https://humanists.international/what-is-humanism/ - checked 3 November 2026.

RE Council: Religion and Worldviews Approach - FAQs (professional guidance) https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/resource/worldviews-introduction-faqs/ - checked 3 November 2026.

Intellectual Property Office: Exceptions to copyright https://www.gov.uk/guidance/exceptions-to-copyright - checked 3 November 2026.