

God and atheism: why do people disagree so much about whether God is real and what God is like?

This work will enable you to think about the two questions above. Have some paper and pens ready to work and set yourself up to use some online clips. You will be learning from a range of viewpoints and you need to be able to express your own and other people's views clearly, and to argue and give reasons for what you think. There are some right answers, but some of this work is about deep disagreements. That's where answers come down to beliefs, not proof.

First, make a note of these 7 keywords. If you don't know their meanings yet, then you soon will do. God / atheist / agnostic / omnipotent / omniscient / omnipresent / omnibenevolent.

Second write completions to these prompts:

- A. Out of about 7 billion people on the planet, about 6 billion people believe in some kind of God. I think this is because...
- B. Atheism has grown in the UK in the last 50 years. I think this is because...

An A-Z of Religion and Belief

Get ready to watch two clips from the BBC series 'An A-Z of Religion and Belief', each clip is less than 3 minutes. When you have seen it, summarise what the clip said in just 4 sentences.

The first clip is called: 'O is for Omnis' <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/religious-education-ks3-a-z-of-religion-and-beliefs-0-is-for-omnis-power-of-god/zjgv47h>



Pause to write your four sentences.

The second clip is called 'A is for Atheism'

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/religious-studies-ks3-a-is-for-atheism/zdkcwtv>



Pause to write your four sentences.

Key Questions

Write your answers in well thought out sentences.

- If there was a god, what would the god be able to do?
- The ancient gods of Egypt, Greece and Rome are not worshipped today. Why not?
- How would an atheist respond to these 4 philosophical claims, that God is 'omni-this and omni-that'?
- What does the word 'Atheist' mean?
- Why study atheism in RE?
- Are the arguments between atheists and those who believe in God endless, or can they be solved?
- Is an atheist a 'believer' too? A person who believes there is no god?

Complete the grid

KEYWORD	Your definition of the word	If you believe in this, how could it affect your life?	Give one objection to believing in this and a reason why people say it.
Omniscient			
Omnipotent			
Omnipresent			
Omnibenevolent			
Atheist			
Agnostic			
God			

How strong is this argument?

Here are 8 reasons for believing in god or not. Sort them first. Which point away from belief in god and which do not? Then rank them on the chart below: which are good reasons to be an atheist?

'The world is full of suffering and pain, which hurts innocent people.'	'Life is short: 80+ years fly by. No one can be sure of anything after death.'
'The world is beautiful, intricate, and nearly perfect for human life.'	'Religions claim to be about love and peace, but often practice hate and war.'
'For 2 centuries, things that used to look like miracles have been scientifically explained.'	'Humanity is capable of huge goodness and also of massive evil. Too random for a god to make!'
'Human psychology sometimes uses religion to prop up our sense of failure or our fear of death.'	'Life is a mystery: there's loads we cannot explain about it. That's awesome.'

Four arguments that point towards belief in God, in order of their strength	Four arguments that point towards atheism, in order of their strength

Some students expressed their views about God in art. Here's an example. You can try this task as well.



James (13).
God: Making or Marring?
“The art shows an omnipotent figure carving the world, while not explicitly stating that the figure is God. Is this figure a creator or a character manipulating the surrounding that already exists? The picture may represent creation but equally it could represent the marring of Earth. At first glance, it's easy to think that it represents a creator at work, but I also wanted a sense of ambiguity. Is this figure shaping Africa lovingly or tearing the continent apart?”

BBC Resources for RE are well planned, balanced and informative, and aimed at the right age group for learning. This series, An A-Z of Religion and belief, was made for 11-14s. Programme consultant: Lat Blaylock, RE Today.

Religion, science, creation and Charles Darwin: why are ideas about where we come from so varied?

This work will enable you to think about the question above. Have paper and pens ready to work and set yourself up to use some online films. You will be learning from a range of viewpoints and you need to be able to express your own and other people's views clearly, and to argue and give reasons for what you think. There are some right answers, but some of this work is about deep disagreements.

First, make a note of these 5 keywords. If you don't know their meanings yet, then you soon will do. Evolution / Creation / Big Bang / Designer / Origins

Second write completions to these prompts:

- A. Some people think 'science has made religion unbelievable.' I think...
- B. Many scientists are also believers in God, Muslim, Christian, Jewish or Sikh. What I guess they would say about science and creation might be...

An A-Z of Religion and Belief

Get ready to watch: two clips from the BBC series 'An A-Z of Religion and Belief', each clip is less than 3 minutes. When you have seen it, summarise what the clip said in just 4 sentences.

The first clip is called: 'C is for Creation.'

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/religious-education-ks3-a-z-of-religion-and-beliefs-c-is-for-creation-stories/zvfp382>



Pause to write your four sentences.

The second clip is called 'D is for Darwin'

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/religious-education-ks3-a-z-of-religion-and-beliefs-d-is-for-darwin-charles-theory-evolution/zmqdmfr>



Pause to write your four sentences.

A range of opinions

Next, take a landscape piece of A4 paper and write down the left hand side 'Atheistic Darwinian Ideas about the Earth' Down the other side write 'Belief in an intelligent designer of the Earth.' Cut up or copy these opinion-quotations, arranging them on the page in the right sequence.

Natural Selection can completely explain how and why humans exist	Evolution describes the processes of how humans developed better than Genesis 1-3	God is at work through human evolution.
God is the 'Great Evolver'	Genesis 1-3 is the truth. God did make the world in 6 days. Evolution is wrong.	The stories of Genesis are not science – they serve a different purpose
Nobody needs religion to explain how humanity developed. Science does it better.	Darwin is a hero to all rationalists because he followed the evidence.	Christians in the UK mostly believe in evolution and thank God for it.

Write a paragraph to explain your own view of Charles Darwin's contribution to human civilisation. Should he be admired by both Christians and Atheists?

Three points of view

Three viewpoints: read carefully and consider your own response.

Creationist: "I am a believer in God, and I think God made the world and everything in it. Genesis talks of 6 'days' but these might be periods of time – each one billions of years. I thank God for our world and our lives. I believe He made us for His own loving purposes."	Theistic scientist: "I am a scientist and a theist, I believe God is the creator, and the methods God used were the Big Bang and evolution. Genesis is an ancient story, and it is about the purpose of life: we are made to find God! God is like the mind behind the universe."	Atheistic scientist: "Science is much better at explaining things in the modern world than religion. The universe began with a 'Big Bang' 15bn years ago, and the earth has evolved to support life over the last 4.6bn years. There is no need to talk about God in explaining this."
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Tasks:

1. Global Christian leader Pope Francis said he believed in God and the Big Bang in 2014. Is it old fashioned to be a creationist?
2. Which of the views is closest to your own and why?
3. Take the view you disagree with most and write three arguments against it.

Choose three questions

Select the three questions below you find most interesting and give your answers in one paragraph of 150-200 words each.

1. What different beliefs about our origins come from religious creation stories?
2. If you believe in God, does that mean you have to take Genesis 1 – 3 literally?
3. Is the human race made from love, for love, or are we an almighty accident, a huge slice of cosmic luck?
4. Does belief in God or confidence in science help humanity most when it comes to understanding where we come from?
5. Why was Charles Darwin such a controversial Victorian?
6. Do you think belief in God will grow stronger or die out in the next 50 years? Why?
7. Why might more American Christians be creationists than British Christians?
8. Can you find out more about key Islamic scientific discoveries and beliefs?
9. Do religious scientists have the best of both worlds, believing God is the evolver?
10. Why are astrophysics and evolutionary biology important in explaining how we came to be?

A stretch and a challenge

(read the next page too!)

Do you want to go further with this work on science, creation, religion and Darwin?

If so, watch and take notes on another video, this one about ten minutes, made by Russell Stannard, a physics professor, one of series about science and belief (you can watch more if you want).

You can watch the film here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PbTA4xJoHtg&t=445s>



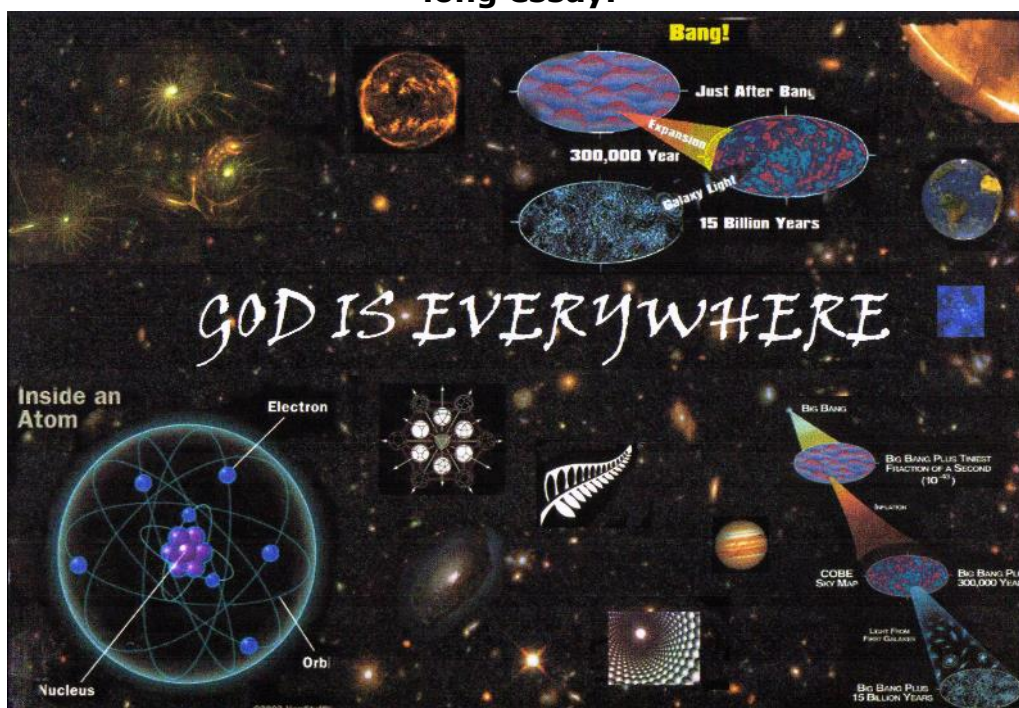
Extended writing task:

“The conflict between science and religion is exaggerated: these two forms of human learning can help each other.”

“Science without religion is lame. Religion without science is blind” (Albert Einstein)

Discuss, explaining at least two different points of view and giving your own conclusions.

Instead of an essay, Emma, 15, made this work of art and wrote her ideas about it. You could try this if you prefer it to writing a long essay.



Emma, 15, made this picture. Read what she says. Highlight 4 key points.

"I wished to convey the omnipresence of God. I believe that God is everywhere, present in the furthest stars and the smallest atoms. I used the picture of the Hubble Deep Field: this photograph was taken by the Hubble Space telescope of the younger universe, showing many galaxies in space. I used this picture to show that God fills the whole of the universe. I then placed images of smaller and more familiar things on top, an image of the Earth some of the planets and a photograph of the sun. I believe God is also present in our immediate area of the universe. Images of complex and intricate objects here on the Earth: the snowflake and the fern have amazing detailed patterns and I wished to show that God creates beauty even in the smallest things. The picture of an atom is to show my belief that God exists in the smallest quantities of matter: God is everywhere.

I believe that it is important to show the presence of God in modern science. It seems impossible to me that objects of such beauty and intricacy could have been created by mere chance: I believe that there must have been an omnipresent deity of some kind to create everything. The Big Bang marked the beginning of the universe, but no one can explain why it should have occurred. I think God was present to create our universe, and will also be present when it ends."