

KS2 Lesson Plan 4 – Exploring Secularism
 Bradlaugh's struggle to enter Parliament

<p>Background</p>	<p>Charles Bradlaugh (1833 – 1891) was an English political activist and atheist. He founded the National Secular Society in 1866.</p> <p>In 1880, Bradlaugh was elected as the Liberal MP for Northampton. His attempt to affirm as an atheist ultimately led to his temporary imprisonment, fines for voting in the Commons illegally, and a number of by-elections at which Bradlaugh regained his seat on each occasion.</p> <p>He was finally allowed to take an oath in 1886. Eventually, a parliamentary bill which he proposed became law in 1888 which allowed members of both Houses of Parliament to affirm, if they so wished, when being sworn in. The new law resolved the issue for witnesses in civil and criminal court cases.</p>
<p>Subject/objectives</p>	<p>History at KS2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>They should regularly address and sometimes devise historically valid questions about change, cause, similarity and difference, and significance.</i> • <i>They should construct informed responses that involve thoughtful selection and organisation of relevant historical information.</i> • <i>They should understand how our knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>a study of an aspect or theme in British history that extends pupils' chronological knowledge beyond 1066</i> • <i>a significant turning point in British history</i>
<p>Key Question</p>	<p>What role has secularism played in British history?</p>
<p>Learning Outcomes</p>	<p>Expected: I can explain how Charles Bradlaugh's campaigning changed British politics.</p> <p>Greater Depth: I can explain how Charles Bradlaugh's campaigning changed British politics and refer to historical sources relating to these changes.</p>
<p>Stimulus</p>	<p>Slideshow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>PowerPoint</u> about Bradlaugh • Go through the slides with the pupils. Stop at the Q prompts and give them time to think and respond. <p>Script from PowerPoint:</p>

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Charles Bradlaugh's struggle to enter Parliament - What role has secularism played in British history?

Charles was born in London in 1833.

- He was the son of a poor legal clerk.
- As a child he liked to ask questions although this often got him into trouble.
- Q. *Have you ever asked a question that got you into trouble?*
- Q. *What could Charles have asked about that got him into so much trouble that he was told to leave his job as a Sunday school teacher, and that caused his father to make him leave home?*

The Young Charles

- As a young Sunday school teacher, Charles found he didn't understand or believe some of the things he read in the Bible
- He wrote to the Reverend John Graham Packer and asked him to explain some inconsistencies and things he was struggling to understand.
- Instead of helping Charles, the Reverend Packer reacted very angrily and spoke to Charles' father.
- Charles told his father that he no longer believed in religion.
- Charles' father told Charles that he must change his mind – or leave home.

Charles the Orator

In the years that followed he began to write and speak publicly on a range of subjects including women's rights and atheism (the lack of belief in the existence of God). He became famous for his public speaking and could attract audiences of thousands.

Primary Sources of Evidence:

"I heard Bradlaugh speak, and I can see him now as he stood on the platform. He was a massive figure, with a fine head and a powerful voice, and in declamation he was a tremendous force".

"I remember, as clearly as though it were only yesterday, the immediate and compelling impression made upon me by that extraordinary man. I have never been so influenced by a human personality as I was by Charles Bradlaugh. The commanding strength, the massive head, the imposing stature, and the ringing eloquence of the man fascinated me..."

Charles is elected

- Q. What impact did listening to Charles speak have on the two listeners - why were they so impressed?

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- Charles now had thousands of people coming to hear him talk and in 1868 he decided to stand for election for the Northampton constituency. He wanted to try and change things through politics – through being an MP.
- Charles was elected by the men of Northampton (women were not allowed to vote until 1918 and didn't have equal voting rights until 1928).

Parliament says no!

As an atheist and republican, he preferred not to take an oath of allegiance to God and the Queen as the words of the oath were meaningless to him.

Because of his atheist beliefs he was effectively barred from taking his seat in Parliament.

Six long years of struggle

- It took nearly six years for Charles to eventually take his seat in Parliament. During this time he was re-elected several times as the MP for Northampton but was never allowed to take his seat.
- Four times his constituents re-elected him; four times he made passionate speeches at the Bar of the House. The Bar marked the boundary of the House – he was allowed to speak to MPs there, because he was not strictly within the House of Commons.

Arrest and Prison

On one occasion he refused to leave Parliament when told to do. He was forcibly taken by officials and held in prison before being released the next day.

On another occasion, Charles came to the House of Commons at the head of an enormous crowd demanding that he be allowed to take his rightful place. He was thrown out by the police, suffering injuries in the process. Despite this injustice he spoke to the angry crowd and told them to leave peacefully.

Charles takes his seat in Parliament

Eventually Charles was allowed to take his seat in Parliament. After the General Election of 1885 a new Speaker took the decision of allowing Bradlaugh to take the oath, which he did on 13 January 1886. Almost six years after being first elected, Charles had won.

His victory was further underlined by Parliament passing an Oaths Act (1888) which extended the civil rights of freethinkers and secured the right to affirm when taking their seat in parliament. Many MPs take advantage of this today.

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	<p>Questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Can you explain why Charles Bradlaugh's eventual entry into Parliament was <i>a significant turning point in British history</i>?2. What would the situation be in Parliament today if Charles had not fought against the establishment? Would we have such a wide range of people as our MPs?3. Can you think of, or research, some reasons that the political establishment might have wanted to keep Charles out of Parliament.
<p>Exercises</p>	<p>Looking at primary sources of historical evidence to assess the influence of Bradlaugh on societal change and reform.</p> <p>Charles Bradlaugh, (1880)</p> <p><i>"Her Majesty is now enormously rich, and - as she is like her Royal grandmother - grows richer daily. She is also generous and has recently given not quite half a day's income to the starving poor of India."</i></p> <p>Read 'between the lines' – What did Charles really mean in this essay from 1880?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What do you think Charles thinks about the already very rich getting richer by the day?2. How do you think he feels about the Royal Family?3. Does Charles <i>really</i> think that the Queen is generous – what are the reasons for your answer?4. What job do the words 'not quite' do in the paragraph?5. Why does Charles use the adjective 'starving' in his essay – how does the word effect the reader? <p>Charles Bradlaugh (1877)</p> <p><i>"The enormous estates of the few landed proprietors must not only be prevented from growing larger, they must be broken up. If they claim that in this we are unfair, our answer is ready. You have monopolized the land, and while you have got each year a wider and firmer grip, you have cast its burdens on others; you have made</i></p>

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	<p><i>labour pay the taxes which land could more easily have borne. You have been intolerant in your power, driving your tenants to the poll like cattle, keeping your labourers ignorant and demoralized."</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can you work out and explain why Charles believes the rich landowners 'enormous estates' should be broken up? 2. How does Charles feel that that wealthy landowners have treated the workers? Pick out a phrase that provides your answer with evidence. 3. How do you think Charles believes the workers should be treated by the rich? 4. What does the word 'ignorant' mean? 5. What does the use of that word make you think Charles feels about the education of the poor? <p>To finish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think of some adjectives to describe Charles Bradlaugh. • Do you think it is sometimes important to fight against things you think are wrong? Even if others tell you are wrong? • What would you be prepared to fight for or against?
<p>Take it Further</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research some of the other causes that Charles campaigned for.
<p>What do secularists think?</p>	<p>Charles Bradlaugh was the great hero of the secularist cause and his heroism and self-sacrifice have not been forgotten. His example remains an inspiration to a new generation.</p>