

## KS3 Lesson Plan 7 – Exploring Secularism

### History – The Fruits of Philosophy Trial

Background	<p><i>The Fruits of Philosophy</i> was a little-known printed pamphlet which provided basic contraceptive information. It was originally published in the United States by a doctor named Charles Knowlton in 1832.</p> <p>In 1834 James Watson first published the pamphlet in England and it sold steadily. In 1875 the rights were purchased by Charles Watts who became the new publisher.</p> <p>The pamphlet was propelled into the public eye in 1876 when a Bristol bookseller called Henry Cook was sentenced to two years' hard labour for selling it.</p> <p>Charles Watts agreed to destroy the printer's plates and all the printed stock. When faced with the prospect of a prison sentence he decided that the pamphlet was not worth fighting over.</p> <p>Two free thinkers and early secularists, Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant, decided that this government censorship was too important to ignore and that it was worth going to prison for.</p> <p>They founded their own publishing company, made some revisions to the text, and republished the pamphlet from their London Headquarters.</p>
Subjects	<p>History – aims at KS3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>know and understand the history of these islands as a coherent, chronological narrative, from the earliest times to the present day: how people's lives have shaped this nation and how Britain has influenced and been influenced by the wider world</i></li></ul> <p>-----</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ideas, political power, industry, and empire: Britain, 1745-1901</li><li>• <i>party politics, extension of the franchise and social reform</i></li></ul>
Curriculum Links	History RE Citizenship
Key Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why does important social and political change <i>often</i> require passionate individuals to take brave, self-sacrificing or direct action?</li></ul>
Learning Outcomes	Expected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Using the Fruits of Philosophy trial as an example, I can explain how social change often requires radical individuals to fight for</i></li></ul>

### KS3 Lesson Plan 7 – Exploring Secularism

History – The Fruits of Philosophy Trial

	<p><i>what they believe in, often against great odds and at great personal sacrifice.</i></p> <p>Greater Depth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>I can draw form a range of historical examples such as the Fruits of Philosophy trial, the campaign for universal suffrage, women’s rights, the civil rights movement etc to explain how social change often requires radical individuals to fight for what they believe in, often against great odds and at great personal sacrifice.</i></li></ul>
Stimulus	<p>Ask the students to think about something that they feel passionate about. It could be climate change, animal welfare, pollution, veganism, mental health treatment, protecting the National Health Service, freedom of expression, religion, atheism etc.</p> <p>Then ask the following questions – pupils can discuss in groups and feedback or have a whole-class discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Why</i> do you feel so passionately about this subject? Explain as fully as possible – what led to your viewpoint on this subject?</li><li>• To promote, support or protect your belief, what sacrifices would you be prepared to make?</li><li>• Can you put yourself in the shoes / understand of someone prepared to go to jail for their beliefs?</li><li>• Is there anything you would be prepared to be imprisoned for?</li></ul> <p>Read through the background information at the top of the lesson plan and ask the following questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What does this information tell you about society in the 1800’s?</li><li>• Can you come up with adjectives to describe aspects of this society?</li><li>• Why do you think that the protagonists felt so strongly about sharing knowledge about birth control to working people? Can you use your existing historical knowledge of life in the 1800’s to support your hypotheses?</li></ul>

### KS3 Lesson Plan 7 – Exploring Secularism

History – The Fruits of Philosophy Trial

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Which national institutions might have wanted to keep this kind of information away from working class people and why might this have been the case?</i></li></ul> <p><b>Viewpoints at the time</b> – <i>discuss with the students and encourage their thoughts on the different views – can they come up with characteristics of each viewpoint?</i></p> <p><i>These are based upon opinions of the time but are not historical quotes or primary sources of evidence.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) <i>“I am on the side of restricting information to poor people, of keeping information in the hands of the wealthy and the medical experts – the working man will be corrupted by the type of information found in this most offensive publication.”</i></li><li>2) <i>“I believe that if the working class can access medical information about birth control that this could be a vital step towards ending the overcrowding and poverty many of these families endure – knowledge is power... the scourge of poverty is inflicted on too many children in too many poor homes – records suggest that infant deaths are twice as likely in large, poor families than small, poor families...”</i></li><li>3) <i>“There is no doubt that this shabby little pamphlet should be prosecuted as immoral and obscene – illustrations of the private parts of men and women do not belong in any form of publication – I consider it pornographic and as such the publishers should feel the full force of the law...”</i></li><li>4) <i>“This is all about the rights of women – poor women should have the same access to the same information that their wealthier counterparts have – there is nothing in this book that has not been published before – the only reason that some take against it, is that is readily available and affordable to the poor of this country...”</i></li><li>5) <i>“This is a crime against God and everything the church stands for – this publication is an open encouragement of debauchery, sexual desire and permissiveness...it is a crime against God and an insult to our state religion.”</i></li></ol>
Exercise	<b>How the story continued... read with the students</b>

## KS3 Lesson Plan 7 – Exploring Secularism

### History – The Fruits of Philosophy Trial

After selling some initial copies, Bradlaugh and Besant were quickly arrested and charged for breaching the Obscene Publications Act 1857.

Besant and Bradlaugh were charged with publishing material that was “calculated to destroy or corrupt the morals of the people” and “calculated to produce a pernicious effect in depraving and debauching the minds of the persons into whose hands it might come”

The case went ahead with enormous public interest and with the most famous judges in the land presiding.

Although Bradlaugh and Besant were eventually found guilty, they were spared prison because a technical error was found in the original prosecution. Bradlaugh and Besant had become famous names. In the eyes of some they were notorious - to others they were heroes.

During the last 20 years of the 19th century the birth rate began to decline. *The Fruits of Philosophy* was replaced by more modern birth control pamphlets.


But sadly, there had been an enormous personal cost to Annie. The courts decided that she was unfit to care for her daughter, who was handed into the care of her estranged husband.

**Questions to discuss** – in groups or as a whole class discussion

- a) The Times covered the trial in detail. It reported on the case of “The Queen v Bradlaugh and Another,” hiding Annie Besant’s name. Why do you think they might have done this?
- b) Why do you think that there was such enormous public interest in this particular trial? Can you identify the combination of specific elements that made it so interesting to people?
- c) “*In the eyes of some they were **notorious**. To others they were **heroes**.*” Can you explain the wide difference of opinions and which elements of society might have held them?
- d) In the trial, Charles Darwin was on the side of restricting information to poor people and of keeping information in the hands of medical experts. Using your existing knowledge about his theory of evolution, can you think of possible reasons for his viewpoint.
- e) “*Calculated to destroy or corrupt the morals of the people.*” This seems a very extreme viewpoint to us now – particularly referring to simple anatomical drawings and descriptions of birth control. Describe how pioneers such as Bradlaugh and

### KS3 Lesson Plan 7 – Exploring Secularism

History – The Fruits of Philosophy Trial

	<p>Besant started the process of helping British society develop and slowly become more progressive.</p> <p>f) What possible justification could the court have had for removing Annie's daughter from her care?</p>
Take it Further	 <p>Annie Besant &amp; Charles Bradlaugh</p> <p>It could be said that the overall effect of the trial was to make large numbers of people aware that having smaller families was a possibility, and that effective family planning could help them achieve this aim.</p> <p>Women who married in England in the 1860s bore an average of more than six children while their granddaughters, who married in the 1910s, bore fewer than three children. Women in England now have 1.9 children on average.</p> <p>So, it appears that, with the advent of effective modern birth control, people actually want far fewer children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can you think of reasons why historically, it would have made sense for people to have had larger families?</li><li>• Research the average numbers of children since Victorian times and plot the data on a line graph.</li><li>• Can you see an anomalies or patterns in the data specific to certain historical events?</li></ul>