

KS3 Lesson Plan 3 – Exploring Secularism

History – How did Secularists influence Chartism?

Background	<p>Chartism</p> <p>The Chartist movement was the first mass movement driven by the working classes. It grew following the failure of the 1832 Reform Act to extend the vote beyond those owning property.</p> <p><i>Secularists and freethinkers (as they were generally called at this time) were at the forefront of many early nineteenth century reform and protest movements.</i></p> <p>Chartism was a working-class movement for political reform that existed from 1838.</p> <p>Secularists, such as Henry Hetherington and James Watson dominated its leadership. They were often particularly incensed by the opposition of the established church to their demands. To freethinkers the Church of England was nothing more than a prop to those who wielded political power which they had no intention of surrendering.</p> <p>This led to many Christians who supported Chartism to oppose the Church of England, its leadership or establishment. The bishops', who then as now had seats in the House of Lords, were consistent in their opposition to reform.</p> <p>Chartism took its name from the People's Charter of 1838 and was a national protest movement. Support was at its highest in 1839, 1842, and 1848, when petitions signed by millions of working people were presented to the House of Commons. The strategy employed was to use the scale of support which these petitions and the accompanying mass meetings demonstrated to put pressure on politicians. Chartism thus relied primarily on peaceful and constitutional methods to secure its aims.</p> <p>The Chartists demands can be summarised as follows.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Universal suffrage (the vote for all – later modified to universal manhood suffrage on the insistence of more cautious campaigners).2. An end to property qualifications for voters and candidates.3. Annual parliaments (general elections each year).4. Equal representation (each constituency to be roughly the same size).5. Payments of members (so ordinary people could become MPs).6. Vote by ballot (secret voting, on paper). <p>In their own era, the Chartists failed, and the movement suffered a serious blow in 1848 when a mass meeting held on Kennington Common was prevented from crossing the Thames and marching on</p>
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	<p>Parliament. When examined, the petition itself was found to be far smaller than its organisers had claimed and carried many false names.</p> <p>However, secularist aspirations for reform remained. In the 1860s electoral reform was again a key issue with the Reform League being established in 1865. Charles Bradlaugh was one of the League's founders and was ultimately to benefit from the extension of the franchise which it helped bring about when he was elected to Parliament in 1880. (NSS)</p>
<p>Subjects</p>	<p>History – aims at KS3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <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> <p>-----</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ideas, political power, industry, and empire: Britain, 1745-1901 • <i>party politics, extension of the franchise and social reform</i>
<p>Curriculum Links</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History/RE/Citizenship
<p>Key Question</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the common purposes of Chartism and Secularism? • How did secularism 'carry the baton' of the Chartists?
<p>Learning Outcomes</p>	<p>Expected: <i>I can describe some common goals of Chartism and Secularism</i></p> <p>Greater Depth: <i>I can describe how Chartism and Secularism are links in a historical chain - eventually leading to the extension of the franchise</i></p>
<p>Stimulus</p>	<p>When looked back at, the Chartist movement is often seen as something of a failure during its time of popularity, as none of its six demands were achieved. There were almost as many types of Chartism as there were Chartists, and this seemed to cause confusion amongst the public and in turn hasten its eventual demise as a movement.</p> <p>However, when looked at in the longer term, five out of the six original aims have since been achieved and the movement can now be seen to have played an important role as a catalyst for political change in Britain.</p> <p>Also, it was pressure from the by the Chartists that brought about important reforms such as the 1842 Mines Act and the 1844 Factory Act, showing that Chartism did have some successes.</p>

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	<p>Many of the leading Chartists were also secularists and members such as Henry Hetherington and James Watson played important roles in the National protest movement.</p> <p>Primary Sources – Four Quotes / Viewpoints at the time – discuss with the students and encourage their comments and thoughts on each quote.</p> <p>'Chartism is a knife and fork, a bread and cheese question' <i>Joseph Raynor Stephenson</i></p> <p>Q. What does this quote tell us about the fundamental reason for Chartism becoming so popular with working class people?</p> <p>Q. What does it tell us about society in the 1840's?</p> <p>'The Charter was a means to an end - the means was their political rights and the end was social equality' <i>Harney</i></p> <p>Q. How much of 'the end' did Chartism achieve during its lifespan?</p> <p>'No blood shall be shed by us but if our enemies shed blood - if they attack the people - they must take the consequences upon their own heads' <i>Thomas Attwood</i></p> <p>Q. What does this tell us about the moral purpose of the Chartist movement?</p> <p>Q. Why might 'enemies' feel so threatened by the movement that they might consider using violence to quell demonstrations. Who might these enemies have been – can you find evidence for this?</p> <p>"I am for a peaceful revolution - universal suffrage means meat and drink and clothing, good hours, and good beds, and good substantial furniture for every man, woman and child who will do a fair day's work". <i>John Frost</i></p> <p>Q. The issue of social class eventually became a problematic one for the movement. How does this quote demonstrate that Chartism was essentially a <i>working-class</i> political movement?</p>
Exercise	<p>Discussion – in groups or as a whole class discussion</p> <p>"The carefully organised state repression in 1848 was certainly effective in both the short-term sense of obstructing Chartist activity,</p>

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and in the long term by the demoralisation of the movement's leadership. The vast number of arrests, prosecutions and imprisonments took national and local leadership out of the struggle. The Chartists were crushed by a very well-co-ordinated state power. "(From John Charlton, *The Chartists*, published 1997)

Q1. Why do you think the government saw Chartism as a potential threat that needed to be discouraged or even 'crushed'?

The relationship between the government and the Chartists was one of mutual opposition and disagreement. Chartists described the Whigs and Tories as 'tyrannical plundering' governments, whilst the politicians of both parties saw Chartists as the enemies of property and public order.

Q2. Can you think of other times in history where poorly educated, poorly financed groups have attempted to rise up against a well-armed, well financed and politically powerful enemy?

Q3. Many of the Chartist leaders were also secularists. If Chartism and Secularism were placed on a Venn diagram, what common aims might be in the intersection?

The Chartist Legacy and Secularist Involvement

The Chartists ceased to be a significant force for reform by the late 1840s, but despite this, by 1918 all but one of their demands had been achieved.

The Chartists ceased to be a significant force for reform during the 1840s. As part of an attempt to diffuse potential unrest following the rejection of the last great Chartist petition in 1848, many Chartist leaders had been arrested. The movement ceased to be a driving force for reform, but despite this by 1918 all but one of their demands had been achieved.

1. Universal manhood suffrage (1918 Representation of the People Act)
2. Voting by secret ballot (1872 Ballot Act)
3. Payment for MPs (1911 Parliament Act)
4. No property qualification for MPs (1858 Property Qualification for Members of Parliament Act)
5. Equal electoral districts (1885 Redistribution Act)
6. *Annual elections to Parliament (not achieved)*

Despite the demise of Chartism, secularist aspirations for reform remained. In the 1860s electoral reform was again a key issue with

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	the Reform League being established in 1865. Charles Bradlaugh was one of the League's founders and was ultimately to benefit from the extension of the franchise which it helped bring about when he was elected to Parliament in 1880.
Take it Further	<p>Q. One of the original Chartist demands has never been met.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Annual elections to Parliament</i> <p>Come up with a list of <i>pros</i> and <i>cons</i> for holding annual general elections.</p>