

OUR PRECIOUS LIBERTIES



Introduction

This lesson focuses on active citizenship through the concept of precious liberties and consumer choice. Veganism is perfect for a citizenship lesson. Veganism is protected under human rights law and in 2020, an employment tribunal confirmed that ethical veganism is also a protected belief under the Equality Act 2010 – meaning it has the same legal protection as a religious belief. That means choosing to be vegan isn't only about changing your diet, it can be an all-encompassing belief that dictates many decisions someone makes. It can be described as an expression of a precious liberty or an example of freedom of belief. When millions of people make the same choice, it starts to affect businesses, farming, the environment, and even government policy.

This lesson follows the structure of 'I do, We do, You do', allowing the teacher to model first, then for students to work with others and finish by working independently. The idea is to build confidence as the lesson progresses. Timings are suggested for each stage, with a breakdown for tasks within the stage.

Relevant Links

Why go vegan? – [The Vegan Society](#)

What rights do vegans have? – [The Vegan Society](#)

Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights – [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

Human Rights Act – [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 – [Legislation in the UK](#)

Casamitjana Tribunal¹ – [The Vegan Society](#)

LESSON OVERVIEW

Timing
60 minutes

Setting
classroom

Curriculum links

KS3 Citizenship – this lesson focuses on the precious liberties enjoyed by the citizens of the United Kingdom and explores consumer choice as an act of citizenship.

What you'll need

Slide deck – Our Precious Liberties, Case Study Card Sort, Perspective Posters, Exit Postcard.

Additional resources

Pens, writing paper/exercise book, blue tac, green post-its, yellow post-its (every student will need about 3 of each colour).

Before the lesson

- Print Case Study Card Sort (1 per student).
- Print one set of Perspective Posters (suggested on A3).
- Print Exit Postcards (4 per page).
- Stick posters up around the room.

Learning Objectives

1. To understand the precious liberties enjoyed by citizens of the United Kingdom.
2. To analyse whether our actions – what we buy, eat, engage with – are a form of active citizenship.

¹ This tribunal was the first time that ethical veganism was recognised under the Equality Act 2010

THE LESSON

Timings are a guide – adjust to suit your class.

Slide 1 – Title page

Starter - [5 mins]

Resources: slide deck

Slide 2

The activity

- Display this slide as students settle. No action needed from you at this point.
- This slide opens the lesson with a deliberately provocative question. The goal is not to get a right answer, it is to make students curious and respond in their exercise book independently.

Potential script

- Is what you put in your trolley a political act, an act of active citizenship? Yes, no, or not sure? Let's see a quick show of hands.
- [Take the count aloud] Interesting – we have [x] yes, [y] no, [z] not sure. By the end of this lesson I want to see if any of those numbers have changed.

Slide 3

The activity

- Before introducing the learning objectives and key words, ask students what they interpret the term 'precious liberties' to mean.

Potential script

- The words 'precious liberties' come directly from the national curriculum. What do you think it might mean?
- For this lesson, we can perceive it to mean important or deeply held freedoms and beliefs that UK citizens hold.

Important note

Precious liberties is a phrase in the national curriculum but it is not a common phrase within law or politics. It is open to interpretation and this is an important discussion point for students to pause on

Task - I do - [10 mins]

Resources: slide deck

Slides 4–8

- This section is teacher-led with some questioning as you progress through the slides.

Slide 4

Potential script

- A liberty is a freedom – something you are allowed to do, or to think, or to be, without the government or anyone else stopping you for no valid reason. We call them precious because they weren't always guaranteed. People had to fight for them. And in many countries today, they still don't exist. In the UK, some of our most important liberties include...

Slide 5

Potential script

- These are some of the freedoms we value in the UK. Five of them are in the Human Rights Act 1998, a UK law that brought freedoms declared by the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into British law. They include:
 - Freedom of assembly – the right to gather with others. Protests, marches, meetings.
 - Freedom of speech – the right to say what you think, within the law.
 - Freedom of belief – the right to hold and practice your own moral, religious or philosophical views, within the law. This one matters a lot for today's lesson.
 - Freedom of movement – the right to travel and live where you choose, within the law.
 - Freedom of association – the right to choose who you spend time with, join groups, campaigns.
 - Freedom of choice – make personal decisions without outside interference. This was not specifically part of the Human Rights Act 1998, but is recognised as a liberty.
- Can anyone tell me which of these six do you think is most connected to the choice of what you eat? [Expect 'freedom of choice' and 'freedom of belief' – affirm both and note that this lesson sits at the intersection of the two.]

Potential questions

- When have you ever felt free to do something? Or not free?
- Are any of these freedoms absolute – or do they all have limits?

Slide 6

Potential script

- A consumer is someone who buys things. You have the liberty to choose what you buy, what you wear, what you eat.
- The government cannot dictate your liberties or freedoms within the law, they are your individual choice.
- Here's the interesting question for citizenship: can a simple everyday choice actually reflect your precious liberties? Could it be a political act? Can it make a difference to the world?
- Let me give you some examples: people making these choices didn't become MPs or write laws, but all of them used their freedom of choice – a precious liberty – to try to make a difference. That is active citizenship. And it happens at the supermarket every day.

Potential questions / discussion points

- Do our individual choices actually make a difference on a society level?

Slide 7

Potential script

- If asked, most people think citizenship happens here [point to Parliament]. And it does. But it also happens here [point to supermarket]. Every time you make a choice about what to buy – or don't buy – you are participating in something bigger than yourself.
- Today's lesson is about that second kind of citizenship. The kind that doesn't require you to be 18. The kind you can exercise right now.

Slide 8

This is The Vegan Society's definition of veganism, an important starting point for the tasks in this lesson.

Potential script

- Here is The Vegan Society's definition of veganism, [let students read independently], what do you notice about its reference to vegan actions, is it just about food?
- Our case study today is on ethical veganism. People

who choose not to exploit animals in any form. It is an example of freedom of choice and it is also protected under the European Convention on Human Rights and the Equality Act 2010, which was a UK law that brought older anti-discrimination laws into one Act.

- In 2020, an employment tribunal confirmed that ethical veganism is a protected philosophical belief which means it has the same legal protection as a religious belief under the Equality Act 2010.
- The tribunal was brought about by a man called Jordi Casamitjana, who was fired by his employer after raising concerns about his pension fund investing in companies that test on animals. The employment tribunal assessed Mr Casamitjana's vegan beliefs and his practice of veganism and ruled that veganism qualified for protection under the Equality Act 2010.
- This means choosing to be vegan isn't only about a diet, it is an all-encompassing way of life – a precious liberty, a freedom of belief and choice. So much so that it is protected by law. In the UK it falls within the 'religion and belief' protected characteristic as part of the Equality Act 2010.
- The thing to consider, is when millions of people make the same individual choice, it impacts the whole of our society – businesses, farming, government, the environment.
- Today we're working together to decide 'is choosing what you buy, or don't buy, an example of active citizenship?'.

Important note

Ethical veganism can be protected under Article 9 of the ECHR – the freedom of thought, conscience and religion – which was first signed in 1950. In the UK, the Equality Act 2010 is a law that combines previous anti-discrimination laws under one Act. It protects people from discrimination based on nine protected characteristics, with religion and belief being the key protection to ethical vegans. The Casamitjana tribunal (2020) was the first time that ethical veganism was confirmed to qualify under the Equality Act.

Task - We do - [15 mins]

Resources: card sort worksheet, teacher answers worksheet.



Slide 9

The activity

- Students work in pair or threes to decide why people choose to be vegan by sorting the boxes into four categories: environment, health, animal rights and all-encompassing. This can be done by colour coding or a key
- Allow approximately 10 minutes for sorting and student discussion

Potential script

- We will be looking at ethical veganism as our case study. Ethical veganism avoids all forms of exploitation of animals including every item that people buy (their consumer choices). It is a deeply held moral belief – as strong as a religious belief – and is protected under the Equality Act
- Some do not agree with it, they may view it as a lifestyle trend, or even a threat to farming communities and traditions. As citizens we all have precious liberties and part of that is holding differing opinions. Differing opinions are acceptable and part of a healthy society, but when this crosses into discrimination, harassment, or victimisation, it turns unlawful

Slide 10

The activity

- Keep 5 minutes for the class discussion and feedback.
- Work through the five questions on the slide, but do not feel obliged to cover all of them – quality of discussion matters more than coverage.

Potential script / points to address

- If students express strong views about veganism being right or wrong, redirect: that's a really interesting position – can you tell us which liberty you think supports that view?

Important note

Ethical veganism qualifies as a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. This is legal validation from a UK employment tribunal. This recognition reflects the depth of the belief held by ethical vegans and protects them in the workplace, education, and in other specific circumstances.

Task - you do [15 mins]

Resources: perspective posters, green and yellow Post-its

Slide 11

The activity

- This task requires 2 minutes to introduce the task, 8 minutes of circulation and 5 minutes for discussion and final questions.
- Posters should already be placed around the room for students to peruse and respond to. Each character describes a personal reason for and against veganism, reflecting their precious liberty and freedom of choice and belief.
- Students will need post-its (approximately three of each colour), and their pen to respond to each character.
- Students do not need to visit them in a specific order – suggest students visit three to five posters.
- A two-minute timer could be useful to signal a move to the next poster but students can move faster if needed.

The posters - a quick reference

- **Sam:** a Year 9 student; personal choice to become vegan.
- **Terry:** dairy farmer; liberty of livelihood vs freedom of conscience.
- **Priya:** student activist; consumer choice as political participation.
- **Dr Amara:** NHS GP; informed choice and equal access.
- **Zara:** administrator; ethical veganism and protections under the law.
- **Joe:** citizenship teacher; reflective choice vs habit.
- **Dr Martina:** animal welfare scientist; pig cognition and whose rights count.
- **James:** faith leader; cultural and religious food traditions.

Differentiation

The most accessible poster is Sam's. Encourage students to find two more posters of their choice. The most complex is that of Dr Martina's which refers to more philosophical concepts and ideas surrounding speciesism, though this is not named on the poster.



Potential script

- [At the end of the task] Stand next to the poster you found most surprising or hardest to argue with, [ask a few students] why did you choose that one?
- I would like to touch upon Zara's character, she talked about her vegan beliefs being protected by law. At what point do you think our beliefs become strong enough to be protected by law?
- As citizens, how can we ensure that all of our precious liberties are respected and treated fairly?

Plenary - [10 minutes]

Resources: exit card postcards

Slide 12

The activity

- Give out one exit postcard per student/alternatively students could write this straight into their exercise book.
- Give students 6–7 minutes to write their postcard –

they can decide whether to write to a friend or future them (there are prompts on the slide to scaffold writing).

- Stretch their learning by suggesting a P.S. – which person did they agree with or disagree with the most from the gallery walk and why?

Potential script

- Today we've looked at how our actions – what we buy, what we eat, what we engage with and importantly including what we don't buy, eat or engage with (!) – reflect our precious liberties, our freedoms of choice and belief.
- I want you to reflect on this by writing a postcard, this could be to a friend about what you've learnt today, or future you if you have questions and topics you are keen to investigate further.
- In the final 2 minutes, return to the question on slide 2. We started here, so is what you put in your trolley a political act? Let's have a show of hands, have you changed your mind? Why?

