

**Out of Bounds:
Freethinkers and Friends**

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Main Goal

Students can analyze situations in which dramatically nonconforming thought meets up with strongly held societal norms.

They understand the importance of our country’s constitutional protections for religious liberty to its free and independent thinkers.

Affective: Cultivate in students a sense that those who think “too differently” may be vulnerable and in need of legal protection.

Subgoal

Students contemplate how society could marginalize a category of people for holding beliefs it considers too contrary to mainstream thinking.

Lesson Context

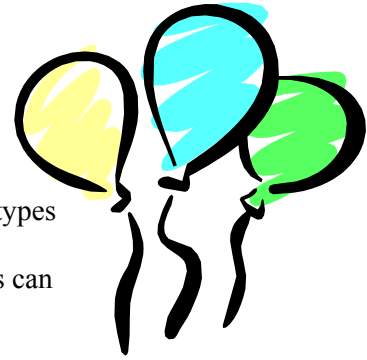
Knowledge and Cultural Understanding		Skills Attainment and Social Participation	
	<i>Historical Literacy</i>		<i>Basic Study Skills</i>
X	<i>Ethical Literacy</i>	X	<i>Critical Thinking Skills</i>
X	<i>Cultural Literacy</i>	X	<i>Participation Skills</i>
	<i>Geographic Literacy</i>	Democratic Understanding and Civic Values	
	<i>Economic Literacy</i>	X	<i>National Identity</i>
X	<i>Sociopolitical Literacy</i>		<i>Constitutional Heritage</i>
Check the Table on page 4. Make sure your students have the concepts in Rows 1 and 2.		X	<i>Civic Values, Rights, and Responsibilities</i>

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Concept Building Objective

Given quotations and/or invented statements from any of five types of “nonconformers to belief” who are to be found among the nonreligious persons of history and in the present day, students can *identify the type of thinker by the expressed reasoning*.



Contextual Introduction

Holding to certain worldviews can be “out of bounds”—*unmentionable, forbidden, proscribed*—if the sentiments involve nonconformance to a broadly (and deeply) held societal conviction. This lesson involves nonconformists whose outlooks, if expressed, may make listeners *uneasy*.

In the United States at large, the view—“There *is* a God”—is widely held. This generalized god-belief (one supernatural God) is the dominant worldview in the country. It is expressed in ubiquitous forms and forums and, according to polls, is intensely felt by the vast majority of citizens. God-belief may be pervasive in the culture, but there reside in the country citizens such as those who are depicted in this lesson. They are the nonbelievers, whose thinking represents *departure from* the strong and omnipresent perspective. These are people whose independent reasoning has led them to reach *other* conclusions. They do not accept god-belief in *any* form, not even minority religions’ acknowledgement of multiple gods.

By thinking differently—*too* differently—about such an all-embracing sentiment, this small minority group makes mainstream society a bit wary. Hence, its members are susceptible to discrimination, marginalization (shunting to the sidelines), spurning, and so on by the huge majority. The U.S. rule of law may protect these citizens from outright ostracism or injury or other forms of oppression, but they are likely to feel the pervasive force of societal censure, nevertheless. Their action of rejecting, doubting, questioning, or failure to accept or express the existing god-belief of the cultural surroundings is deemed *out of bounds*—not acceptable.

Materials

Per student: Duplication Sheet 1—“**Freethinkers and Friends**” (a *What To Look For* table naming and describing the categories of the nonreligious)

The “standard lesson” will acquaint students with the reasoning involved in *five* typical categories: *freethinkers, skeptics, agnostics, atheists* and *deists*. All lead a nonreligious lifestyle and are nonconformers to mainstream theistic beliefs. (Deists, the last category of persons, lead a nonreligious lifestyle, although they are not strictly nonbelievers since they have a sort of “belief in a deity of days gone by.”) You may simplify the lesson by eliminating one or more categories. Or, if you wish, you may substitute categories such as *humanists* or *rationalists*. Skeletal information that indicates the corresponding reasoning for extra categories is provided in this lesson’s “Background for Teachers” section. You do need to nail down the *specific* nonreligious categories you wish your students to learn before the lesson so you can prepare a revised table of “Freethinkers and Friends” and the other materials named below to match.

Per student or group: Duplication Sheet 2-4 —“**Remark Strips**”

For reasons of manageability, these strips are best duplicated on card stock or somewhat heavier weight paper. As an option, they may initially be provided to students *uncut*, to assist in their mastering the categories they are to learn. For the main activity, students use them in a cut-up fashion as they sort a mixture of quotations and invented statements into categories. The *ideal mix* to provide for sorting would be a cluster of strips containing at least one remark *per* category of nonreligious types the students are learning, and at least one remark by a “believer.”

Per student or group: Duplication Sheet 3—a “**Classification Sheet**” (for sorting the remarks)

The classification sheet uses the term “believers” to represent *theistic* perspectives, with remarks representing mainstream monotheistic belief being most numerous.

For teacher use: A dishpan or pail to use in mixing up remark strips, and several labeled paper cups or containers to collect remark strips by category during the lesson.

To facilitate reuse of remark strips subsequently (and also discussion when the class is comparing the sorted strips across student groups), you may wish to put a unique number on each statement strip to code them. For example, all strips of a category could be numbered in advance to end with the same numeral—believers with a 1 (1, 11, 21, 31), deists with a 2 (2, 12, 22, 32) and so forth.

Strategies

During the activity, students classify quotations and invented statements into appropriate categories based on the reasoning of each type of thinker. It will be helpful during class discussion if by step 4 below you have the specific category names you are featuring displayed (on the blackboard or on transparency).

1. Introduce the lesson by informing students that there are many kinds of independent thinkers who are “free” from belief in a God or in gods. Let them know that the *reasoning* of the thinkers sets them apart not only from believers, but also from each another. Tell students you will give them information to help them identify some of the major categories of such thinkers.
2. Present the class at large with the identification table (Duplication Sheet 1), and conduct a discussion so that all students generally understand how to use the table to learn to identify the types of nonbelievers by the *recognizable elements* of their *thinking*.
3. Group students to read, study, and discuss the definitions among themselves. For reinforcement, let students take turns saying one example characterization statement from the table aloud to the rest of their group, who then try to identify the type thinker.
4. (Optional) When a group seems to be comfortable with the basic information, provide pages of uncut remark strips to study by category. (When students are satisfied they “know” a category of remarks, they may cut them out and deposit them into a dishpan or other container you will be using in step 5 to distribute mixtures for sorting.)
5. Provide each group a classification array and a set of several remark strips from the various categories of nonreligious types. (You may cut and make the sets yourself, or if students did step 4, you may want to let them draw a set number of strips from a large container of well-mixed strips.) Ask students to try to match each remark to what they think is the *most likely* category of its speaker. If the group is unsure or if the remark does not seem to fit any category, they may use the “can’t tell” category.
6. When groups have completed a careful sorting their remark strips, ascertain the outcomes before the class. The following is one method to use to “harvest” the results:
 - Ask for one Reporter from each group to read aloud to the class all the “*believer* remarks” the group received. Ask the class at large to listen

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- Ask the class now to ponder the “*agnostic* remarks” offered by each Reporter across the groups. Refer students to the agnostic identifiers in the table and the corresponding sample remarks to assist students in evaluating any remarks on which there are differences of opinion. Collect all agnostic remarks approved class-wide.
 - Continue the exercise across the remaining forms of nonbelievers, with each group presenting its “*atheist* remarks,” followed by class discussion and approval of a cluster of remarks for your set. It helps if the teacher reinforces the reasoning patterns noted in the *What to Look For* information table on a frequent basis by verbally repetition.
7. When you have completed *all* categories, as time permits choose a category (cup) and reread its set of remarks aloud to the class. Or, ask for volunteers to select a cup and role-play a type of believer by reading remarks before the class. Organize a “Who Is This?” game if there is time and interest.
 8. When a class can comfortably express the reasoning of the specific nonbeliever types under study, conduct a class discussion having students ponder the extent to which society accepts these persons. Use the goals on page 55, the contextual information that introduces this lesson, the teacher background “Discussion” that follows on page 59, and your own experience and wisdom to guide you in conducting such a deliberation.

Appraisal

1. Evidence: The lesson, as presented, provides no residual results that are concrete. But the teacher can evaluate general understanding by inference from the class discussion.
2. Assessment: Students can listen to multiple statements drawn from one single category (See #7 above) and be asked to identify the likely category of the thinker. Or students can be given a category and charged to search a set of mixed remarks for two or three clear examples to show the reasoning of the named thinker.
3. Transfer: Students could be provided additional remarks, or could be asked to author their own statements to correspond to the category of thinker.

Continuation Activities

1. Students in groups can generate additional remarks for a *hush-hush* category of nonreligious persons. They can then present their “mystery nonconformer” to the class at large or exchange their work in small groups.
2. Use the *Pictorials* section of this manual to select for class use some historic independent thinkers who fit the categories of nonconformists your students are studying. (The symbol on a card’s front designates the category of nonconformity to god-belief to which the person belongs.) Here are some activity ideas using the cards.
 - Distribute a single “type of thinker” to each of several student groups. Ask each group to judge if the information on their card offers any clues *besides* the symbol to the person’s nonconforming to god-belief category and to share their “findings” with the rest of the class.
 - Randomly distribute (deal) some independent thinker cards to student groups. Students can search their set to get a “head count” for the different kinds of free and independent thinkers represented. Ask students to find the outlook most highly represented in their “hand,” and request they read and discuss the quotations to see if they offer any hints of the people’s reasoning or if they can detect any commonality in reasoning among the various individuals. (They can prepare to report their findings and to explain to the class any similarities they might discover.)
 - Distribute groups of cards without or with a classification array. Ask students to cluster historical figures (or position on the array) according to their categorization on the card’s front and then to study the card information on the back for any clues to the individual’s outlook on god-belief.

carefully, and use the table and to ponder each remark in turn to make sure that the statement is more likely those of a god-believer than any of the various types of nonreligious persons. Collect all “approved” remark strips that clearly pass class scrutiny into a cup. Lay aside for later consideration any remarks that do not garner common consent rather quickly.

- Ask the class now to ponder the “*agnostic* remarks” offered by each Reporter across the groups. Refer students to the agnostic identifiers in the table and the corresponding sample remarks to assist students in evaluating any remarks on which there are differences of opinion. Collect all agnostic remarks approved class-wide.
 - Continue the exercise across the remaining forms of nonbelievers, with each group presenting its “*atheist* remarks,” followed by class discussion and approval of a cluster of remarks for your set. It helps if the teacher reinforces the reasoning patterns noted in the *What to Look For* information table on a frequent basis by verbally repetition.
7. When you have completed *all* categories, as time permits, choose a category (cup) and reread its set of remarks aloud to the class. Or, ask for volunteers to select a cup and role play a type of believer by reading remarks before the class. Organize an “Who Is This?” game if there is time and interest.
 8. When a class can comfortably express the reasoning of the specific nonbeliever types under study, conduct a class discussion having students ponder the extent to which society accepts these persons. Use the goals on page 55, the contextual information that introduces this lesson, the teacher background “Discussion” that follows on page 59, and your own experience and wisdom to guide you in conducting such a deliberation.

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3. Transfer: Students could be provided additional remarks, or could be asked to author their own statements to correspond to the category of thinker.

Continuation Activities

1. Students in groups can generate additional remarks for a *secret* category of nonreligious persons. They can then present their “mystery nonconformer” to the class at large or exchange their work in small groups.
2. Use the *Pictorials* section of this manual to select for class use some historic independent thinkers who fit the categories of nonconformists your students are studying. (The symbol on a card’s front designates the category of nonconformity to god-belief to which the person belongs.) Here are some activity ideas using the cards.

Background for Teachers

DISCUSSION

God-belief is just *one* selected aspect from the religious domain, but it is a good example to use in this lesson, in part because the theistic worldview is such a *substantial feature* of the worldview spectrum in the United States. For an overview of this spectrum of belief diversity, go to the web site <www.teachingaboutreligion.org> and click on the “WORLDVIEW DIVERSITY SAMPLER.”

Straying Out of Bounds

God belief is particularly strong in the United States (compared to other nations). Such belief is common to many religions in the world, but it is far from universal. Many indigenous religions have no such conception.

Some categories of major world religions such as Buddhism may have “supernatural” beings as part of their worldview, but they do not have an omnipotent creator God. Neither do Taoists believe in a single supreme God (there are thousands of popular gods.)

These various religions, although present in the United States, are among the nation’s minority religious worldviews and, although many are growing, none comprise any significant fraction of the population.

The nonreligious who are subjects for this lesson are even further “out of bounds” because they live their lives *without any gods or God whatsoever*.

Outside a Boundary

Interestingly, nonbelievers are present in rather large numbers in the United States. They significantly outnumber Jews and Buddhists in the American population, and they swamp the representations from Hindus and Sikhs. Yet a nonbelieving worldview is not considered as “acceptable” as almost any category of belief. In fact, in many regions of the country, nonbelief is not considered acceptable *at all!*

Note: A teacher can get a sense of *the force of the societal pressure on behalf of God-belief* simply by examining his or her own disposition toward teaching *this* lesson, which is purely a *survey lesson* focusing on many types of nonbelievers.

Compare the keenness to teach this lesson with the level of willingness that would accompany a similar survey lesson on variants of nontraditional minority religions or indigenous beliefs.

Most teachers have a far greater comfort level with the latter. *Why?*

Acquainting pupils with the tenets of recognized belief systems is seen as “cultural edification.” Informing youngsters about the outlooks of varied *nonbelief* systems, on the other hand, is almost a taboo. [*Taboo* = forbidden by tradition, convention]

Why would teaching about the tenets of recognized categories of nonbeliefs *not* be as apropos as teaching about the tenets of recognized categories of religious beliefs?

An excellent reference for interested teachers is “The Last Taboo,” by Wendy Kaminer. *The New Republic*, October 14, 1996. A Public Policy Fellow at Radcliffe College, Professor Kaminer’s article delves into the *cultural stereotyping of nonbelievers*, particularly the atheists.

Monotheistic religious beliefs have been dominant in the U.S., and as such permeate the nation’s civic affairs. They are voiced in its laws and rituals (e.g., Pledge of Allegiance) and in auxiliary social institutions (e.g. Boy Scouts). So, although they are *constitutionally able* to hold to an alternative worldview—one that does not acknowledge God (whether it is religious, such as

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Shinto, or nonreligious)—it is the monotheistic worldview to which all citizens of the country are in many ways *pressed to conform*.

Examples in this Lesson

In general, this lesson’s “nonreligious” categories [see table below] simply list philosophical outlooks that position their holders *outside* the framework of traditional monotheistic religious views concerning god-belief with which students are most familiar. The table listing on the *next* page includes several *additional* forms of nonbelievers that are not dealt with in the lesson for reasons of simplicity.

In the U.S. there is a wide spectrum of nonreligious persons. Nonbelievers (in all sorts of religions) are present worldwide, but the labeled categories/statements for this lesson show the nonreligious through a lens of *present-day* Western thinking only, and hence may not match perfectly categorizations that would have existed previously.

The table is a device. As such, it appears to separate nonreligious people based on individual reasoning, but its categories are *not* mutually exclusive. To gain additional background concerning these categories of freethinkers, see the supplementary teacher booklet, *Freethought and Religious Liberty—A Primer for Teachers*, pages 7 through 10. For a summary perspective of the “nonreligious worldview” (understanding of nature/deity, time, mortality/afterlife, and so on), select that topic at <www.teachingaboutreligion.org>.

CATEGORIES OF NONRELIGIOUS PEOPLE (USED IN LESSON)

See Duplication Sheet 1

Category	What to Look For
Freethinkers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They think hard and analyze. They like to use their minds and reason. • They want to reach conclusions on their own. • They tend to not be much distracted in their thinking by what peers or those in charge may think, say, or do.
Skeptics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They question. They doubt. They challenge claims of factuality. • They don’t “buy into” beliefs and faith statements other people may readily accept. • They seek evidence. They do not accept without evidence.
Agnostics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They comfortably say, “I don’t know.” • They express lack of knowledge about topics (such as existence of God). • They stay uncertain and awaiting more information.
Atheists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They clearly lack belief in any deity at all. • While they do not “buy” the idea that a God exists, they also don’t seek to “prove” that He doesn’t. • They operate their lives “without belief.”
Deists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They suppose that laws governing nature do indicate a God. • They don’t believe God is presently involved in the world. • They operate their lives “without looking to God.

Additional Categories (Nonbelievers)

<i>Category of Thinker</i>	<i>What To Look For:</i>
Secularists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have no interest in the sacred or supernatural. • They focus on the here and now and the present world.
Naturalists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They stress humans as part of nature and all living things as interrelated. • They see science as explaining natural causes and natural laws
Materialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They focus on physical matter. • They think it is the <i>only</i> reality.
Scientism(ists)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They focus on scientific methods. • They think it is the way to truth.
Rationalists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have great faith in human reason and logic. • They don't believe in supernatural and spiritual things. • They look for consistency in reasoning and jump on flaws in logic.
(Secular) Humanists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They concentrate on humans and human needs. • They think humans can decide good and bad, right and wrong. • They do not look to scriptural teachings for guidance

Beyond Boundaries or Categories to *People*

What can we say to students about nonreligious *people*? Who *are* they?

The main perspective is that nonbelievers are people who *think rather differently* than believing persons do regarding the subject of God. They are *absent* god-belief. For nonreligious persons, this is somewhat like “swimming upstream” when everybody else “goes with the flow.” Although nonbelievers have freedom of conscience to think as they do, they are living in a society that tends to view religious faith as an admirable, if not absolutely necessary, quality to be a “good person.”

Generalization about persons who hold to an outlook listed in the previous two tables is difficult. Some persons may actually be participating in socially sanctioned religious observances, but they are *less* likely to do so. Also, these nonreligious persons are not necessarily opposed to religious belief or practice by others, though for assorted reasons many may be somewhat more disposed to be so. Other than that, there is not much to say in the way of generalization about the people behind the category labels.

The supplemental booklet, *Acknowledging Religious Diversity and Nonbelief*, provides some helpful information in this area. See especially the table on page 5 on agnostics and atheists, and the section on “Considering Societal Biases” on pages 14-16. Because of widespread cultural stereotyping in the United States, a great proportion of nonbelievers simply keep their views to themselves. They are well aware that outward evidence of nonbelief is frowned upon and tends to make the individual suspect in the sight of others. They cannot as readily “be themselves” and be accepted. Hence, there is a tendency for persons who are *vocal* about their nonbelief to be edged to the margins of society.

It is important for a teacher to have correct information in order to ensure fairness and objectivity. A teacher must avoid perpetuating stereotypes or permitting denigration of nonreligious citizens. [One needs to be able to confront such opinions if students offer them in the classroom.] Disparagement of these persons is unwarranted. On some societal variables, the nonbelieving citizens as a group surpass many traditional religious groups (lower percentage imprisoned, smaller proportion of couples divorcing, and so on).

Without data, it is best to simply note for students that a nonbeliever is no more or less moral, no more or less mean, no more or less a worthy person, etc., than any other citizen. All citizens’

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constitutional right to think differently concerning religion (freedom of conscience) should be respected and protected in classrooms and in society.

VARIED STATEMENTS OF “BELIEVERS” (USED IN LESSON)

See Duplication Sheet 2

God-Belief Statements (Theistic)

I don't know what *kind* of a God there is, but when I look out at the universe I know for sure there is *something* out there running things.

I believe in God. I try to live my life as God would want.

I believe in Allah. I seek his guidance.

I have a number of different gods, and I can communicate with them.

If I believe strongly, God will grant me my prayers.

All good comes from God. He judges what is good and bad.

I have faith that my God is the one true God.

STATEMENTS OF “NONRELIGIOUS PERSONS” (USED IN LESSON)

Statements Showing a God-Belief

From Deists

There was a God a long time ago who created the universe and left.

I think there is a God, but he doesn't have anything to do with people.

I think God created the universe and then has ignored it since.

God doesn't take part in the daily affairs of humans.

The way I see it, God set up the world for us and then it became totally up to us.

Statements Indicating Absence of Any God-Belief

See Duplication Sheets 3 and 4

From Skeptics

I think about every statement I hear, and ask the question “How do I know that is true?” So I ask, “How do I know there is God?”

Someone says “There is a God” and I say “How do you know that?”

My basic approach to things I hear is “prove it.” So, I'll seek proof of what you claim is God.

When you tell me you talk with the Almighty, I want to say, “Show me evidence.” I'd need to see it tested.

My minister said “There is a God,” and I said “How can I verify that is actually a true statement?”

From Freethinkers

There are lots of people who would like me to go along with them on this issue. But I like to reach judgments on my own, so I'll think it through carefully and decide for myself about God.

I appreciate that my friends all seem to believe in God, but I tend to base my conclusions on my own independent reasoning.

I don't like authorities telling me what to believe in. I'll decide about God for myself without their help.

I'm open. But, I'd like to do some critical thinking about it and not just decide God is out there based on what you tell me.

“Critical thinking and independent reasoning.” Those are my two ways of deciding what is and what isn't. So I'll keep analyzing the evidence and testing my ideas about God.

From Agnostics

I really don't know if there is a God or not. I've thought about it, but I just don't know yet.

People can't know whether there is a God or not; it isn't possible. So, I'll just have to reserve judgment.

There is no way a human can determine if there is a God or not.

I just don't know, sometimes I think there is a God and sometimes I think there isn't.

Knowing whether or not God exists is beyond our capabilities as humans.

From Atheists

I'm comfortable just going my way without any belief in a God whatsoever.
You may say there is a God, but I just don't believe that there is.
There really isn't any God, I am sure of it now.
I see no way there is a God out there, or here either.
There is no evidence for a God, so I can't be pretending there is one.

Additional Information for Remark Strips (NOT used in lesson)

From Rationalists

I think logic can explain anything. I see no necessity to include a belief in God.
If I use my mind, I will come to an understanding of how everything works.
If I can't intellectually explain it, then it doesn't exist anyway.
Philosophy is key to explaining anything. With human intellect, what is the need for God?
I prefer to put my faith in human reason rather than in superstition and revelations.

From Humanists

I don't believe good and bad is in God-given. I think humans decide what is right and wrong.
Humans are the measure of all things. They make the decisions.
If I want to know what is right or wrong, I will consider how a decision affects other humans.
Humans role on this planet is to make the world better for everyone.
There is no need for guidance or interference from a supernatural being. Humans can act to do what is right and to help others.

From Secularists

I am not interested in the religious aspects of life. I pay attention to everyday affairs.
What is important is not sacred things, but secular things.
Who needs a supernatural Force for guidance? Much more of relevance to living is to be gained from history and from everyday life.
You may rely on your relics or books to explain, but I prefer to look to the world we live in.
When I hear about some afterlife, I don't see any reason for thinking about it. What strikes awe in me is the here and now. Awesome!

From Naturalists

To me the physical world is the important world. I love the way things interact.
I think you can explain things best using nature's explanations.
Natural explanations are all you need, look at nature and decide for yourself.
Humans are all part of the physical world. We're part of nature and not separate from it.
Body and soul are not separate things. Humans are a product of nature, not some non-natural cause.

From Materialists






I think of everything as like a big mechanical device; it all fits together and runs.
Computers are a lot like people. I'd bet when they get more complex they will think just like people do because people are biochemical machines.
The universe is bits and pieces that work like a machine. Everything in it is matter and energy.
The human brain is a biological machine, there are no supernatural forces operating. It's all made up of the same thing everything else is—matter.
The only reality is physical reality. Everything can be explained from physical laws. It all fits together.

From Scientism(ists)

When I hear an idea, I like to check it out with an experiment. I don't believe in things that science cannot measure and explain.
I can get a complete explanation of the universe with techniques of science and without any God.
You can't prove the existence of a God because you can't conduct experiments that test the idea.
The universe we can observe is the measure of all things; it is all we need to understand. We need not look beyond it.
There is nothing worth knowing that you can't know using science.

Freethinkers and Friends

Information Table

Category	What to Look For
 <p>Freethinkers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They think hard and analyze. They like to use their own minds and reason. • They want to reach conclusions on their own. • They tend to not be much distracted in their thinking by what peers or those in charge may think, say, or do.
 <p>Skeptics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They question. They doubt. They challenge claims of factuality. • They don't "buy into" beliefs and faith statements other people may readily accept. • They continuously seek evidence. They do not accept statements without sufficient evidence.
 <p>Agnostics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They comfortably say, "I don't know." • They express their lack of knowledge about topics (such as existence of God). • They stay uncertain and awaiting more information.
 <p>Atheists</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They clearly lack belief in any deity at all. • While they do not "buy" the idea that a God exists, they also don't seek to "prove" that He doesn't. • They operate their lives "without belief."
 <p>Deists</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They suppose that laws governing nature do indicate a God. • They don't believe God is presently involved in the world. • They operate their lives "without looking to God."

Statements of God-Belief



I don't know what *kind* of a God there is, but when I look out at the universe I know for sure there just

I believe in God. I try to live my life as God would want.

I believe in Allah. I seek His guidance.

I have a number of different gods, and I can communicate with them.

If I believe strongly, then God will grant me my prayers.

All good comes from God. He judges what is good and bad.

I have faith that my God is the one true God.

Deists: *Statements Showing God-Belief*



There was a God a long time ago, who created the universe and left it alone after that.

I think there is a God, but that God doesn't have anything to do with people.

I think God created the universe and then has ignored it since.

God doesn't take part in the daily affairs of humans.

The way I see it, God set up the world for us and then it became totally up to us.

Freethinkers: *Statements Showing Absence of God-Belief*



There are lots of people who would like me to go along with them on this issue. But I like to reach

I appreciate that my friends all seem to believe in God, but I tend to base my conclusions on my own independent reasoning.

I don't like authorities telling me what to believe in. I will decide about God for myself without their help.

I'm open. But, I'd like to do some critical thinking about it and not just decide God is out there based on what you tell me.

"Critical thinking and independent reasoning." Those are my two ways of deciding what is and what isn't.

Agnostics: *Statements Showing Absence of God-Belief*



I really don't know if there is a God or not. I've thought about it, but I don't know yet.

People can't know whether there is a God or not; it isn't possible. So, I'll just have to reserve judgment.

There is no way a human can determine if there is a God or not.

I just don't know; sometimes I think there is a God and sometimes I think there isn't.

Knowing whether or not God exists is beyond our capabilities as humans.

Skeptics: *Statements Showing Absence of God-Belief*



I think about every statement I hear and ask the question, “How do I know that is true?” So I ask, “How do I know there is God?”

Someone says “There is a God,” and I say “How do you know that?”

My basic approach to things I hear is “prove it.” So, I’ll seek proof of what you claim is God.

When you tell me you talk with the Almighty, I want to say, “Show me evidence.” I need to see it tested before I can believe it.

My minister said “There is a God,” and I said “How can I verify that is actually a true statement?”

Atheists: *Statements Showing Absence of God-Belief*










I’m comfortable just going my way without any belief in a God whatsoever.

You may say there is a God, but I just don’t believe that there is.

There really isn’t any God; I am sure of it now.

I see no way there is a God out there, or here either. I can live just fine without one anyway.

There is no evidence for a God , so I can’t be pretending that there is one.

 Believer 	
Freethinker 	
 Agnostic	
Atheist 	
Deist 	
 Skeptic	
