

## Appendix 2

# What is the Mind? How does it work?

### **What makes us human: a question, and some student responses**

#### *Question*

Responses from the students were elicited by asking them to write an explanation based on the prompt:

Visitors from another Galaxy are approaching Earth. They are (not unnaturally,) interested in us. You have been asked to contribute to intergalactic understanding and explain what makes us Human.

Your task is to explain:

what the human Mind is;

how it works.

*Answers*

Student comments have been arranged thematically and in terms of student cohort.

*The Mind as the control agent of the body*

The human Mind is a kind of machine, it helps us to move around.  
(Boy, Year 7.)

Its purpose is to control the human body.  
(Boy, Year 7.)

The Mind is the human instruction manual. It is the controller of your body. It is more powerful than a computer or anything else known to man.  
(Boy, Year 7.)

The Mind is something in our head that controls what we do and what we remember.  
(Boy, Year 7.)

The human Mind is the part that controls the body.  
(Boy, Year 8.)

The human Mind is complex. It physically works by giving instructions to the rest of the body. It is the control centre of a human being.  
(Girl, Year 8.)

You control the human Mind and what you do is your business.  
(Boy, Year 8.)

The human Mind is what humans use to do things.  
(Boy, Year 8.)

The human Mind is a collection of thought and emotions which controls the body.  
(Boy, Year 9.)

It controls the body and determines what sort of person you are.  
(Girl, Year 9.)

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Everything we see, hear, witness or feel is locked in our Minds. These things are then followed by a reaction, and the whole process is repeated.

(Girl, Year 9.)

The human Mind well, scientifically it is the control centre of the body, a large mass of tissue which has cells that are interconnected by pathways along which electrical impulses flow, but as humans we know that there is a lot more to it than that.

(Boy, Year 9.)

The human Mind works in combination with the brain. Your brain tells you your knowledge and your Mind thinks about it. The Mind is not a physical thing, but in a way it is.

(Boy, Year 9.)

Human behaviour cannot be predicted, as it is not controlled by anyone, just the Mind.

(Girl, Year 9.)

*The Mind as synonymous with brain*

The human Mind is called a brain, it controls our thoughts and feelings.

(Girl, Year 7.)

The Mind and brain are not the same, the brain is an object, the Mind isn't.

(Girl, Year 7.)

The brain (Mind) works by sending signals through nerves which tell a certain part of the body to function.

(Girl, Year 7.)

The human Mind is the brain.

(Girl, Year 7.)

The human Mind is not a 3D thing so it can not be touched. It is part of our brain.

(Boy, Year 7.)

Our human Mind is the brain and the brain, if you think about it, is like a control that operates the rest of the body.

(Boy, Year 7.)

Your Mind is controlled by your brain and whatever that's thinking.

(Boy, Year 8.)

The Mind is actually part of our brains, our brains are what do all of the thinking (like the processor of a PC) but the Mind is where all the memories of the past are stored.

(Boy, Year 8.)

The Mind works because of your brain. The brain gives you thoughts and that's what we call the Mind.

(Boy, Year 8.)

The human Mind exists in the brain, although it does not exist, if you know what I mean.

(Boy, Year 10.)

*The Mind as the process of thinking*

The human Mind is a thing in our head, it helps us think before we do anything.

(Girl, Year 7.)

...we are free to do and think what we want most of the time.

(Girl, Year 7.)

The human Mind uses information from the past to help decide the future and works on early experiences.

(Girl, Year 7.)

The human Mind is the centre of our thoughts.

(Girl, Year 7.)

It works by thinking ... when somebody comes up and asks you, you can say it quick and sharp without trying to think what it is or trying to stand there mumbling in your head.

(Boy, Year 7.)

Your Mind is where all your logic is, but no feelings.

(Boy, Year 7.)

The human Mind is the thinking chamber of the human body.

(Girl, Year 7.)

The Mind is the thing that thinks.

(Boy, Year 8.)

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Your Mind is what you think.

(Boy, Year 8.)

A thinking place full of emotions, it makes decisions and controls your feelings. It is controlled by your thoughts.

(Boy, Year 8.)

It allows you to think privately to yourself.

(Girl, Year 8.)

The human Mind allows people to think and act for themselves. It is a message centre for all your thoughts.

(Girl, Year 8.)

The Mind is a complex thing which makes you think, it works with the brain. The Mind, in a way, dictates the things you do or think.

(Girl, Year 8.)

The Mind allows us to produce ideas, to work out things, the Mind is helping me to decide what I am writing down this very minute, in fact.

(Girl, Year 8.)

I think the human Mind is like your own private library, it is where you can think about anything you want.

(Boy, Year 8.)

The Mind is not the visible part of the brain but is the part in which all the problems and judgements are made.

(Girl, Year 9.)

It works by gathering thoughts and processing them through the body.

(Girl, Year 9.)

It is how you perceive reality and life.

(Boy, Year 10.)

It doesn't exist in the physical state, but it handles the thought matrix.

(Boy, Year 12.)

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*The Mind as storage; memory*

The human Mind is like a memory bank which stores all your memories.  
(Boy, Year 7.)

The Mind is a thing which we use to think of things that we need, have or want and keeps everything in order and in the right place.  
(Boy, Year 7.)

I think that the human Mind is a big roll of paper and a pen inside your head that never ends and the pen writes down anything you want on the paper.  
(Girl, Year 7.)

The human Mind stores information, memories, intelligence and most things that happen to a human.  
(Girl, Year 7.)

I think the human Mind is like a big encyclopedia. It stores knowledge.  
(Girl, Year 7.)

(It) is split into sections for each of our five senses and a section for storing information and controlling the body...  
(Girl, Year 7.)

Our Mind takes all our memories and helps us all the time until we die.  
(Boy, Year 8.)

It's like an organizer, you remember everything in there.  
(Girl, Year 9.)

*The Mind as emotions, feelings*

Your Mind is different from your brain because your Mind goes on feelings and thoughts. Your brain is controlled by cells but your Mind is free.  
(Girl, Year 7.)

Some of us have a Mind where we are very emotional but some have very strong Minds and can 'fight back' not flood into tears.  
(Girl, Year 7.)

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It can make illusions seem real.

(Girl, Year 7.)

Humans have emotions which control our temperament.

(Boy, Year 7.)

It helps people think about their feelings.

(Girl, Year 8.)

The human Mind is different to the brain because the Mind deals with emotions and that sort of thing and the brain deals with sending messages to different parts of your body.

(Boy, Year 8.)

It gives you feelings, say if you've fallen in love or someone hurts you.

(Girl, Year 8.)

The brain helps you see, hear and smell, but the Mind has feelings and thoughts.

(Boy, Year 9.)

*The Mind as ethical standards*

Also it is our conscience telling us what to do.

(Girl, Year 7.)

It can determine right from wrong ... it sets a person's own morals to live by.

(Girl, Year 12.)

*The Mind as an individual's identity*

The human Mind is our body. It makes us who we are and what we are.

(Boy, Year 7.)

If we didn't have a Mind we would not be human.

(Girl, Year 7.)

It gives you a personality that makes you an individual in your own Mind.

(Boy, Year 7.)

It is what makes you. It's your personality, your feelings, your views.

(Boy, Year 7.)

I think the human Mind is whatever you want it to be.

(Girl, Year 8.)

I think it's like where your personality is.

(Girl, Year 8.)

Your character and personality come from your Mind.

(Boy, Year 8.)

The human Mind is what makes us individual or special. If you took away our Minds we would all be the same - like robots.

(Boy, Year 8.)

The human Mind is the thing inside that makes us have a unique personality.

(Girl, Year 8.)

We cannot be human without our Minds, but we can be human if we don't have something else.

(Girl, Year 8.)

I think the human Mind is like a second self. You know what you are doing but you can only think.

(Girl, Year 9.)

Without our Mind, we are nothing apart from raw materials. A Mind makes us what we are.

(Girl, Year 9.)

The human Mind is a genetic masterpiece. It is unique in everyone and everything and operates the thoughts of everyone. It cannot be replicated.

(Boy, Year 9.)

We are not like computers because computers can't change what they do unless they are programmed to, but we can change what we do whenever we want. I think that we are the person that our Mind is.

(Boy, Year 9.)

It seems a very unusual thing to say, but your Mind is you and who you are.

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(Girl, Year 9.)

The human Mind is a construct of our inner emotions and deep thoughts.

(Boy, Year 10.)

Images which you can see in your head but not necessarily through your eyes, as you normally see.

(Boy, Year 10.)

The human Mind is what makes us individuals, but what links us as humans. It is what helps us perceive the world as individuals.

(Girl, Year 12.)

*The Mind as a computer*

The Mind is like a computer because it stores lots of information in its memory database and it has many output devices like speaking, moving etc. It works by taking in a huge quantity of information.

(Boy, Year 7.)

It is like an on board Apple Mac (computer). It stores memory. It learns things.

(Boy, Year 7.)

It works like a big computer and we humans only use about 10%.

(Boy, Year 7.)

It works like a computer, you can't get information from it without someone putting it in, like disks.

(Boy, Year 7.)

The human Mind works like a computer, we input things and output things.

(Boy, Year 8.)

The Mind is like a computer and our nervous system is like the wires we have a hard drive (memory) and many programs (moods) but only one screen personality.

(Boy, Year 8.)

You could describe the Mind as a computer also full of information.

(Girl, Year 8.)

The human Mind and brain is slightly like a very sophisticated computer.

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(Girl, Year 8.)

It is like a computer, it stores images as well as thoughts and feelings.

(Boy, Year 8.)

Your Mind is your own imaginative personal computer.

(Boy, Year 9.)

Like a computer where you type things in and the human does it. The Mind is like the Internet a bit - now that's amazing.

(Boy, Year 9.)

I think that the human Mind is like a massive computer that stores loads of information and has a massive memory. When you are born it is switched on and when you die it switches off.

(Boy, Year 9.)

*Metaphysical concepts of the Mind*

I think when you die you can never turn off you become something else but you just don't remember your past life.

(Girl, Year 8.)

It's the untouched part of your body, it's your self-conscious.

(Boy, Year 8.)

The Mind is a deep psychic connection between body and brain.

(Boy, Year 9.)

*An Inner Voice*

The Mind is where a human's thoughts are transferred from everything in a human's brain to a silent voice in the human's head. The silent voice or Mind is speaking all the time.

(Boy, Year 8.)

You have conversations with your Mind and it helps you decide things.

(Girl, Year 8.)

It's like your inner self, a voice that is telling you what to do and how to live.

(Girl, Year 9.)

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It is a voice within, and is active all the time: it is a voice within a person telling them things that no-one else should know.

(Girl, Year 12.)

*The Soul*

Some people believe that you have a soul, this might be part of the Mind and some people believe that when you die this part of you rises to heaven. The Mind can play a great part in religion.

(Girl, Year 8.)

Your Mind is not an organ you could never find it. Your Mind is the same as your soul, it goes to heaven.

(Girl, Year 8.)

I believe that the human Mind is our soul ... our soul never dies, and if the soul doesn't die, the Mind doesn't, either.

(Girl, Year 9.)

This could be said to be a soul, without which the human would just be an empty body with no personality.

(Boy, Year 9.)

The human Mind is our sort of soul.

(Boy, Year 9.)

*God/Supernatural*

The human Mind is part of God. It is his way of controlling human beings.

(Girl, Year 10.)

The human Mind is the control station to your body. God is the Lord of the control station. If God is not believed in the Mind has another controller.

(Girl, Year 10.)

*A Myth, Dream, Abstraction*

I think that the human Mind is like a dream machine and when you do not dream the dreams and the body stop.

(Girl, Year 9.)

The Mind is capable of dreaming up many wonderful things which don't have to exist.

(Boy, Year 9.)

The human Mind is a dream.

(Boy, Year 9.)

The human Mind is built to succeed, every human being, no matter what age, sex or colour has a dream and a goal. As soon as we were born we were trying to reach that dream, and our aim in life is to succeed. Without the human Mind it is impossible to have the ability to do that.

(Girl, Year 10.)