

Teacher Notes

THE FOUR HUMOURS

1. a) Bring out one student to be the patient and sit him/her down.
b) Arrange around him 4 other pupils (also sitting down) and give each of them a card showing which humour they are.

2. Introduce yourself as Galen, a great Roman physician, and say that you are going to explain your great theory of the Four Humours - it's brilliant because it's so simple. Now focus on the patient and explain that this patient is healthy because all four humours are in balance - i.e. in this demonstration they are all the same height (because they're all sitting down). So what might make the patient ill?

3. Tell one of the Humours to stand up - and then explain that the patient will be ill (cue groans etc) whenever he has too much (or too little) of one Humour. Your job is to restore the balance of the Humours - at this point make the standing Humour sit down so they are all back in balance - and cue smiling patient.

Introduce other layers e.g. the relation to the **seasons** (bring in 4 more pupils and discuss where they stand in relation to the Humours), how symptoms link to the Humours and seasons e.g. runny noses in winter links to too much phlegm. How much detail you go into depends on how much detail students can cope with.

A further layer of meaning could be introduced - **the signs of the Zodiac**

Debriefing

The key question is '**why was this theory last so powerful?**' - the answer being that it was neat and logical and didn't depend on supernatural explanations e.g. punishment from the gods - something that's clearer though this demonstration than simply through words.

CHOLERIC

Fluid -yellow bile

(hot and dry)

MELANCHOLIC

Fluid - black bile

(Dry and cold)

SANGUINE

Fluid - blood

(hot and moist)

PHLEGMATIC

Fluid - phlegm

(moist and cold)

SPRING

SUMMER

WINTER

AUTUMN