Warm up:

- individually or in pairs, students make a list under the heading:  
  *What it is to be human*  
- class shares ideas and these are written on the board  
- repeat first exercise, under the new heading:  
  *What it is not to be human*  
- class share ideas on board. Compare the two columns and discuss.

Acrostic using the word HUMAN:

- Huge or [working on opposites]  
- Undersized,  
- Mean or  
- Affectionate:  
- Normal  
- Humorous [simple vocabulary exercise: positive words]  
- Undefeated [interesting letter to have to use!]  
- Magnificent  
- Adventurous  
- Necessary [not that easy either!]

Explanation:

Poetry Day on 6th October 2005 was all about choosing a poem to send to into space for the future. Of the poems nominated by The Poetry Society, Adrian Mitchell’s ‘Human Being’ was selected.

The poem can be found at [http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/npd/npdindex.htm](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/npd/npdindex.htm), together with a link to a press release giving more details.

Read the poem to the class and discuss its ‘message’.
Task:

Students write their own ‘Poem for the Future’. It is helpful to provide a structure: students could, for example, base their poems on Adrian Mitchell’s, substituting their own lines to replace or add to any of his. Alternatively, a very effective but simple idea is a list poem. For this one, students can use alternating lines:

To be human is ...
Not to be human is ...
To be human is ...
Not to be human is ...

This will provide support for their writing but also allow them to focus back on the first warm-up exercise.

Demonstrate how contrasts / juxtapositions can provide powerful effects:

To be human is to plant a tree
Not to be human is to destroy a rain forest
To be human is to love someone else
Not to be human is just to love yourself

Also, stress the powerful effect of similes and metaphors:

To be human is to talk like a flower
Not to be human is to smile in black
To be human is to exhale clouds
Not to be human is to only speak words

Rules: avoid rhyming at all costs! If students must use rhyme, give them limits, for example, only one rhyming couplet per five pairs of unrhymed couplets (this in itself could provide a useful structure/framework).

Next stage:

Students can read their poems to the rest of the class. Pairs can take alternating lines if the structure given above has been followed.