

# Bringing **Animal Issues** Into the Classroom

## **Activities and Essays** for Elementary and Middle School Students



- If you could be any animal, what kind of animal would you be and why?
- Describe a time when you rescued an animal.
- Did you ever have to give up an animal companion? Why? How did you feel? How do you think the animal felt?
- Write about something nice that you did with or for an animal.
- Describe a trip to the veterinarian's office.
- Explain why it's important to train your dog in a kind way.
- Explain why it's important to spay or neuter cats and dogs.
- Describe ways that you give attention to your animal companion.
- Do something kind for an animal in the next week, then describe the experience in an essay.
- Write a story about an experience (such as going to the veterinarian's office, getting lost, etc.) from the perspective of your animal companion. Describe how things might have looked from where your animal companion was standing. How might things such as chairs and stairs have looked to him or her (compared to the way they look to humans)? What might he or she have been thinking? How did your animal companion communicate his or her needs to you or to other humans?
- Try writing the same story from your own point of view. What were you thinking? Did you pay attention when your animal companion tried to communicate with you? How did you communicate with him or her?
- Read *Charlotte's Web*. Then make a Venn diagram to describe the differences between the lives of animals we see in books, cartoons, and comics and the lives of real animals (e.g., Wilbur in *Charlotte's Web* vs. real pigs). Put information unique to the fictional animals in one circle, information unique to the lives of real animals in the other circle, and information that is common to both fictional and real animals in the area where the two circles overlap.
- Interview a veterinarian to discover ways that humans can reduce illness and injury in their animal companions. Report your findings in a poster.
- Identify famous vegans and vegetarians throughout history. What reasons did they give for their decision to go vegan or vegetarian? Was the decision based on compassion for animals? What other reasons might there be for choosing a vegan or vegetarian lifestyle?

### **Note to Teachers**

Using PETA literature, introduce students to animal rights issues. Encourage discussion in class, comparing older, widely held beliefs with a more modern understanding of our relationships with our fellow animals. Assign these ideas as essay or research topics or use them as guidelines for class discussions.



© Photodisc/Animal Attraction/Getty Images

**TeachKind.org**

- Research ways that humans have used animals throughout history that were later replaced with more modern and humane alternatives. For example, animal bones were used for tools, and elephant tusks were used to make piano keys. What other examples can you find? How are animals still being used today, and what alternatives can you suggest?
- Research the physical and psychological needs of a particular kind of animal. What does this animal need to be healthy? Don't pick an animal you are familiar with—read about an animal who doesn't usually live in a human's house, such as a cow, a chicken, or an elephant. What does the animal eat? What temperature suits this animal the best? What else does this animal require? Make a diorama out of a shoebox showing the home that the animal would choose, or present drawings of the animal showing his or her unique characteristics. Write a report or give an oral report about this special animal. (*Note to teachers:* The video "Let's Ask the Animals," available from PETA, is great for addressing this activity and the next one below.)
- Research the psychological needs of a particular kind of animal. What does this type of animal need in order to be happy? For example, do animals of this species need the companionship of similar animals or the opportunity to perch? What else is needed? Make a chart comparing these needs to your own needs. Draw a conclusion from your chart. Do both you and this animal species have needs? Are they similar? Find out!
- Research local animal shelters (find out their names, addresses, phone numbers, hours of operation, services provided, etc.). Gather the information and use it to make a brochure. Then make copies and give them to classmates so that they will know where to go if an animal needs help.
- Use a flow chart to illustrate how not spaying or neutering a cat or a dog can result in the births of thousands of kittens or puppies in a short amount of time. Include the average number of offspring per litter and the frequency of reproduction. Use these statistics to argue the case for spaying and neutering companion animals. (Suggested resource: [HelpingAnimals.com](http://HelpingAnimals.com))
- Research a particular animal species, gathering information about its natural habitat, diet, natural predators, physical characteristics, social structure, travel patterns, maternal and paternal behavior, etc. Next, find works of fiction that depict this species, and gather the information presented there. Compare and contrast fact vs. fiction.



© Photodisc/Animal Attraction/Getty Images