

How Should we Treat Animals?

Philosophy Smash with Henry!

Lesson plan

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Introduction for teachers.

This is a discussion of a topic in the philosophy of animal welfare. This is an area of ethics, concerning what duties we have to animals.

It can be used for lessons in RE or Philosophy, or lunchtime philosophy clubs. The lesson is intended to promote discussion about animal rights and animal welfare, with relation to zoos and meat-eating.

The lesson is designed to be done with the help of the *Philosophy Smash with Henry!* video on the same topic. It's also meant to be used with the two handouts (one on zoos, the other on eating meat). These are all available on the Philosophy Smash website (link above).

Learning Outcomes.

Emerging:

Explain some of the reasons that people may be concerned about animal welfare, and the treatment of nonhuman animals by humans.

Expected:

Engage in a sophisticated philosophical discussion.

Be respectful of other views, and recognise alternative ways of looking at philosophical questions, whilst at the same time supporting one's own view with evidence and/or argument.

Change one's own mind, in response to a good argument.

Exceeding:

Engage in respectful evaluation and critique of others' opinions and views.

Using the information provided, give a view on the ethics of zoos, and the ethics of meat-eating. Back up one's own opinions with carefully thought through reasons and evidence.



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Ground Rules.

Start by setting some ground rules for discussion. These can be varied based on the style and ability of the group, but they might include:

- 1) Remember to always be respectful of other people's opinions. Everyone's opinion is equally valuable.
- 2) You can give your own beliefs and opinions if you like, but you don't have to. If you don't have an opinion on the question, then just think about what a sensible opinion might be, and think about why someone might hold that.
- 3) Try not to just give 'yes' or 'no' answers, remember always to back up your opinions with reasons and arguments.
- 4) It's fine to disagree with other people!
- 5) It's fine to change your mind! Changing your mind when someone else makes a good point is a sign of maturity and a good philosophical brain.

Sentence stems:

Depending on the ability and age of your group, you may like to use the following sentence stems to encourage children to think:

Questions:

'Why do people think...? '

'Does anyone disagree that....?'

'Do people from other cultures think that....?'

Statement of views:

'I think that... because...'

'One view I think is wrong is ... because ...'

'Someone else might think ...because ...'

'Someone in my group thinks ..., but I think that ...'

'It's difficult to know the answer to this question because....'

'I think there's another sensible view, which is...'

'In order to answer this question, we would need to know....'



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Changing your mind:

‘On reflection, I’ve now realised that...’

‘At the beginning, I believed..., but now I’m not sure. I now think that...’

‘I’m not sure about... because...’

Teaching Activities.

There are three teaching activities associated with this topic: a general discussion, a discussion about zoos, and a debate about meat-eating. Doing all three of these will probably take at least two lessons. Depending on the interests and ability of your class, you may choose to just do one or two of them. Activities two and three each have their own handout.

The video that goes with this lesson plan is an interview between a presenter (Henry) and an expert in the field of animal ethics. The expert is Heather Browning, a philosopher from the University of Southampton.

Teaching activity one: general discussion about animal treatment.

Start off by watching the first few minutes of the video. The presenter will outline the main topic of the interview, and then encourage the children to ‘take a second and decide what you think about this’. There will then follow a cartoon image with the title ‘what do you think?’ on the screen. Pause the video at this stage.

Ask the children to break off into small groups. We find that groups of three work best, because there’s less chance of two children just having completely opposed opinions and making very little headway. Get the children to discuss whether they think zoos are okay, and whether we should eat meat, and to form their own opinions about it.

After this, collect together the opinions of the different groups. You may find it helpful to write the main views on a whiteboard, so that you can refer back to it later during discussion.

Teaching activity two: discussion about zoos.

Watch the next couple of minutes of the video, including the 45 second summary of the topic by Heather, and the subsequent discussion between the presenter and the expert. Pause the video just after Henry says ‘let’s move away from zoos for now’.

Then, distribute the first handout (‘Are zoos okay?’) This handout summarises the main ideas, in case children have forgotten them, or if they naturally learn better with written text than a video. Give the students a few minutes to remind themselves of the important ideas by reading the handout.



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It might be helpful here to point out any similarities between the views expressed in the video, and the opinions and ideas suggested by the children in activity one of the discussion (if your class did that). It can be helpful for a child's confidence to see that their own opinions are also held by the experts.

Then, ask them to decide (in their groups) which of the opinions given in the video they agree with, and to write down their own opinions, and reasons for holding those opinions. They should also write down why they *don't* agree with the other opinions.

Remind them that, if they do not agree with any of the opinions given in the video, then they should think what they do think. Also remind them that it's fine for them to say that we don't know the answer, but they need to justify this opinion as well. 'I don't know' is also an opinion!

Then, ask the children to feed back their opinions to the classroom.

Teaching activity three: debate about meat-eating.

Watch the entire rest of the video, including the discussion of meat-eating, the final thought section, and the goodbye.

Distribute the second handout ('Is it okay to eat meat?') to the children. These summarise the main ideas, in case children have forgotten them, or if they naturally learn better with written text than a video. Ask them to quietly think about whether they think meat eating is okay. Then, take a vote on whether eating meat is okay. Divide the children into two groups depending on their opinions, and ask them to have a debate with each other. If one group largely outnumbers the other, try to balance the group out, and explain to children that it's often good to argue for views you don't agree with.

Each group is to be given time to prepare their case, five minutes to make their argument, and then one minute to respond to the other side's arguments. At the end, they should take another vote on whether meat eating is okay.

This activity requires children to be respectful toward other opinions, so (depending on the group) it may require reinforcing the ground rules (above), and there may have to be a rule whereby teams aren't allowed to talk while the other team is talking.

Potential Assessment:

There is a potential assessment for this lesson, which is an essay.

Ask the children to write an essay summarising the main question, as well as the arguments for an against the main different opinions. They should also give reasons their own favourite opinion, and give reasons to think that this is the best opinion.

This assessment option is designed to push the children to *engage with others' opinions*. Try to emphasise how they should not just list the 'for and against' but also say why they think one opinion is more plausible than another, and say whether they think the arguments are good or bad, and why?



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Additional Resources

Here are some extra things you can use to make this subject more accessible to your children:

- <https://www.animal-ethics.org/> Has a lot of free videos on animal ethics and welfare topics
- <http://www.aedilemma.net/> has interactive animal ethics tools

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