

**LESSON 4**

# HOW BIGOTRY BEGINS

In this lesson, students examine the intersection of many forms of prejudice against humans and other animals. They synthesize information from the historical framework and use new information to explore current moral dilemmas, focusing on the theme of the systematic “othering” of and discrimination against different groups of human beings as well as members of different animal species.

### Objectives

- **Affective:** Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of reasons why we should consider all living, feeling beings in the fight for social justice.
- **Cognitive:** Students will be able to write persuasively to support claims in an analysis of a topic, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. Students will also be able to initiate and participate effectively in a variety of collaborative discussions with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own ideas clearly and persuasively.

### Background

Bigotry begins when categories such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or species are used to justify discrimination against entire groups. Many humans consider themselves entirely different from and superior to other animals, which lays the foundation for exploiting them. Animal species are different from one another, of course, but there are important similarities, too. We’re all able to experience feelings such as love, sadness, pain, and joy. And we all want to live. Humans have the ability to exploit other species and ignore their suffering, but that doesn’t mean that it’s morally acceptable to do so. **This powerful video will challenge everything your students thought they knew about bigotry and animal intelligence in just a few minutes.**

### Materials

- [“Challenging Assumptions” video “Agree or Disagree?” sheet](#) (included in the kit)
- [“Challenging Assumptions” video\\*](#)
- [“Challenging Assumptions” video graphic organizer](#) (included in the kit)

- “Is Speciesism Unethical?” debate kit ([TeachKind.org/SpeciesismDebateKit](http://TeachKind.org/SpeciesismDebateKit))
- [“Conservationist: Be Kind, Get Blacklisted” video\\*](#)

### Key Vocabulary

- exploitation:** the action of treating someone unfairly in order to benefit from their work or suffering
- rhetoric:** language designed to have a persuasive or an impressive effect on its audience but often regarded as lacking in sincerity or meaningful content
- subjugate:** bring under domination or control, especially by conquest
- barbarian:** someone considered to be uncultured
- ancestry:** one’s family or ethnic descent

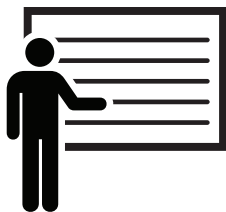
### Motivation

Have students respond to the following prompts in writing:

- Describe *bigotry* in your own words. What does it mean to be a bigot or bigoted?
- Provide examples of bigotry, either from personal experience or observation. Describe how you reacted (or would have reacted) and what events led to the incident.
- How do you think bigotry begins? What are the root causes of bigotry?

Students may choose to respond to all three prompts or focus on just one. Regardless, have them write for about 10 minutes. Assure them that their responses will not be discussed as a class—rather, each individual will revisit and reflect on their own views on bigotry at the end of the lesson.

**LESSON 4**



["Challenging Assumptions" video "Agree or Disagree?" sheet](#) (included in the kit)



["Challenging Assumptions" video](#) (available online)

**Before Viewing**

Have students complete the ["Challenging Assumptions" video "Agree or Disagree?" sheet](#) (included in the kit).

**During Viewing**

Distribute copies of the ["Challenging Assumptions" video graphic organizer](#) (included in the kit). Have students view the ["Challenging Assumptions" video](#)\* in its entirety as a class, taking notes in their graphic organizers as they watch.

Next, divide students into small groups and assign each group one of the four sections of the video:

- Why Do We Treat Animals 'Like Animals'?
- The 'Animalization' of Humans Throughout History
- Are We Really So Different?
- When We Witness Oppression, We Should Never Let It Go Unchallenged

Have students rewatch and analyze their assigned sections of the video using the discussion questions below to delve deeper into the theme explored in that section. Tell students that they should also be prepared to share their thoughts with the class, answer questions from their peers, and ask other groups questions about their findings. Students should add notes to their graphic organizers during both their group discussion and the class discussion. These notes can be used later in writing their persuasive arguments.

**Discussion Questions**

**Why Do We Treat Animals 'Like Animals'?**

1. If we know it's wrong to torture, abuse, and exploit members of our own species, why do we do these things to others?
2. Is the comment "They're just animals" dangerous? Why or why not?
3. Why is it important to refer to people as individuals rather than things (i.e., use personal pronouns like "he," "she," or "they" rather than the impersonal pronoun "it")?
4. Why do we refer to other animals as "it"? What are the consequences of doing so?
5. In grocery stores, why are animal body parts called "beef," "pork," "poultry," etc.?

**The 'Animalization' of Humans Throughout History**

1. How have humans "animalized" or dehumanized other humans throughout history, and why has this been done?
2. How does our present society's treatment of animals compare with its treatment of humans? Should there be a difference? Why or why not?
3. What makes a human a person? Can these traits apply to animals?

**Are We Really So Different?**

1. What similarities do all living, feeling beings share, and why are they more significant than our differences?
2. What does it mean to be different or the "other"? Have you ever felt different in a negative way or like the "other"? How did it feel?
3. Have you ever been bullied or been a bully? How did it feel? How do you think humans bully animals?
4. Compare and contrast racism, sexism, and speciesism. What do these forms of oppression have in common? How are they different?

**When We Witness Oppression, We Should Never Let It Go Unchallenged**

1. Are humans animals? Are nonhuman animals people? Explain your answers.

**LESSON 4**

2. How can humans challenge speciesism in their day-to-day lives? How can we work to end speciesism systemically? Do these solutions to speciesism apply to other forms of oppression like racism and sexism?
3. How do animal rights compare to human rights? Should there be a difference? Why or why not?
4. Is it ever ethical to exploit someone? Explain your answer.

**After Viewing**

Provide students with the “Is Speciesism Unethical?” debate kit ([TeachKind.org/SpeciesismDebateKit](https://TeachKind.org/SpeciesismDebateKit)) and have them prepare either a written argument (an essay) or a spoken argument (a presentation) to respond to this question. Some students may choose to argue the opposite, but they will need to substantiate their claims with valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence, which may be hard to find. These resources will assist students in supporting their pro-animal position using scientific, ethical, and philosophical arguments. The debate kit lists a variety of resources that can be used to support the argument that speciesism is ethically unjustifiable and that equal consideration for animals is the only solution.

Students will research general information about animal rights and the ethics of speciesism in the “Become an ‘Expert’” section. This research will be used to prepare a logical argument. They will then gather evidence and examples from the “Build Your Case” section to support their position. Next, using the “Finding Solutions” section, students will build a proposal suggesting solutions to issues that could arise if humans were to acknowledge speciesism and make ethical choices that wouldn’t hurt animals. Finally, students will analyze websites that support the exploitation of animals to determine their reasons for justifying speciesism and think of responses to their reasons using suggestions from the “Anticipate Counterarguments and Prepare Rebuttals” section.

**Real-World Connection**

It’s one thing to say that you’re opposed to oppression, either of humans or of other animals. It’s another thing to take action to help end it. Consider Danielle Solberg, who became a conservationist to help animals but was blacklisted by the Idaho state government when she spoke out after her non-invasive research was used in the slaughter of wild wolves. Have students watch this [short video](#)\* about reasons why she chose to leave the conservation field and become an activist.

It’s not always easy standing up for what’s right, but we all have a “universe of obligation”—our responsibilities as a member of the global community. Have students respond to this question in a journal in order to record their thoughts and explanations about the ideas covered in this lesson: “What is my ‘universe of obligation’ when it comes to addressing speciesism?”

This is a big question for students to tackle, but it’s important for young people to recognize that humans have a collective responsibility for all the Earth’s inhabitants—including animals.

**Use these questions as a scaffold to help students formulate a response:**

- What are your personal responsibilities? (Doing well in school, taking care of my physical and mental health, etc.)
- What are your responsibilities within your family? (Performing household chores, taking care of animal companions or younger siblings, etc.)
- What are your responsibilities in your local community? (Not littering, reporting criminal activity, preparing to participate in local elections, etc.)
- What are your responsibilities as a global citizen? (Making informed decisions with regard to the effects of my actions and lifestyle on others, such as my choice of diet, my purchases, my mode of transportation, etc.)

While students certainly can’t control everything, they do have power over the way they treat others. Their daily actions are significant and can have a major impact, especially collectively. Behaving responsibly starts with becoming aware of the effects that our personal actions have on others.



**“Conservationist: Be Kind, Get Blacklisted” video**  
(available online)

**LESSON 4**



**Wrap-Up Activity**

Have students reread their journal entry on bigotry from the beginning of the lesson. Ask them to revisit the following questions and add any new thoughts they may have after viewing the "Challenging Assumptions" video:



- Describe *bigotry* in your own words. What does it mean to be a bigot or bigoted?
- Provide examples of bigotry, either from personal experience or observation. Describe how you reacted (or would have reacted) and what events led to the incident.
- How do you think bigotry begins? What are the root causes of bigotry?

Then have students write a response to the question "How can we as a society end bigotry?" Once again, assure students that the thoughts they write about can remain private. As they write, give each student a sticky note. Ask them to summarize their response to the last question with one general suggestion, such as "Be kind to all sentient beings," "Use inclusive language," "Be an ethical consumer," or "Give back to your community." Collect the sticky notes and read each statement aloud—then display them on the board, a wall, or a poster.

**Assessment**

Evaluate students' writing for the use of relevant and effective reasons and sufficient evidence to support their claims.

**Common Misperception/Reality**

Common Misperception 	Reality 
<p>If we as a society eradicate speciesism and grant rights to animals, that means they'll have the same rights as humans. Animals shouldn't be able to do the same things humans do, like vote, get married, drive cars, use credit cards, etc.</p>	<p>In his book <i>Animal Liberation</i>, Peter Singer states that the basic principle of equality does not require equal or identical <i>treatment</i>—it requires equal <i>consideration</i>. This is an important distinction when talking about animal rights. All animals have the ability to suffer in the same way and to the same degree that humans do. They feel pain, pleasure, fear, frustration, loneliness, and motherly love. Whenever we consider doing something that would interfere with their needs, we are morally obligated to take them into account.</p> <p>For instance, a dog most certainly has an interest in not being subjected to pain unnecessarily. Therefore, we're obliged to take that interest into consideration and to respect the dog's right not to be subjected to pain. However, animals don't always have the same rights as humans, because their interests are not always the same as ours and some rights would be irrelevant to them. For instance, a dog doesn't have an interest in voting and therefore doesn't have the right to vote, since that right would not be meaningful.</p>

**LESSON 4****Extension**

Have students conduct an interview as part of their research. Staff members from PETA's student division are available to speak with students via phone, Skype, Zoom, or e-mail and to answer questions about our stance on speciesism. Have students e-mail us directly at [Student@peta.org](mailto:Student@peta.org)—or if you'd like to contact us on their behalf, please e-mail [Info@teachkind.org](mailto:Info@teachkind.org).

**Common Core Standards Addressed**

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1**  
Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.B**  
Develop claims and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1**  
Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1**  
Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.B**  
Develop claims and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1**  
Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

\*Indicates components necessary to implement the lesson are available online only  
Please visit [TeachKind.org/SocialJustice](https://TeachKind.org/SocialJustice) to access these materials.