Teaching virtually? You can use these lessons for distance learning with popular online conferencing tools like Zoom or Skype, both of which include chat features that allow students to type their responses to discussion questions and respond to each other in real time. If video conferencing tools aren’t available to you, you can have students participate in discussions in an online forum, such as Google Classroom.

INTRODUCTION

Part 1 of “Challenging Assumptions” will provide students with an overarching theme of social justice to guide their learning throughout the year as well as basic knowledge of the concepts explained in the “Challenging Assumptions” video, which is designed to be shown at the end of this unit. Parts 2 and 3 of “Challenging Assumptions” are available at TeachKind.org/SocialJustice.

WHY CHALLENGE ASSUMPTIONS?

As educators, we aim to foster the development of critical thinking and processing skills in students, which will allow them to examine and understand important societal issues even after they leave the classroom. To achieve this, it is essential to incorporate strategies that cultivate students’ higher-level analytical and communication skills.

Identifying societal assumptions and values that negatively impact others—such as the idea that humans are superior to all other animals or that some animals are to be cared for while others are to be used for personal gain—is the first step in empowering students to be consistent in their beliefs. This will help them ensure that their behavior and actions are justified, leading to improved social interactions with peers as well as greater kindness toward animals.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. How do contradictory beliefs and actions play a part in society’s treatment of animals?
2. What would it mean to give equal consideration to the interests of all sentient beings?
OVERVIEW

The following lessons are designed to help students move beyond the assumptions that they might make about other sentient beings and become more perceptive, thoughtful, and analytical about the reasons humans engage in certain behavior. They can serve as a preliminary step in helping students determine what actions are in line with their belief system and how society can challenge speciesism—the belief that all other animal species are inferior to our own.

Students begin by thinking critically about and discussing the abstract concepts of social justice with a gallery walk activity. Next, they’ll reflect on their own thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes along with any inconsistencies in their behavior with a lesson on cognitive dissonance. Then, they’ll turn their attention to a video that explores the moral considerations regarding animals and introduces the concept of equal consideration of interests. The unit will culminate with students’ viewing and analyzing the “Challenging Assumptions” video, which will help them practice identifying and challenging the assumptions they’ve made about the rights of other animals. By the end of this unit, students will better understand their identities, values, and perspectives and will be better able to recognize and respect those of others, regardless of their species.

WARM-UP ACTIVITY

Begin by instructing students to shake both hands in the air over their heads and then clasp their hands together, interlacing their fingers. Next, ask them to unclasp their hands and shake them out over their heads again. Then, have them clasp their hands together once more, this time interlacing their fingers with the opposite thumb on top. Ask students to describe how it felt to clasp their hands with the opposite thumb on top. Point out that doing so may feel uncomfortable or even be a bit challenging to do without some extra thought—much as it might feel to challenge assumptions that they’ve held for most of their lives. Inform students that in this unit, as they explore topics of social injustice, privilege, and bigotry, among others, they may feel uncomfortable or have trouble understanding new concepts at times. Assure them that your classroom—either in person or virtual—is a safe space where they can share their thoughts and feelings openly, and encourage them to ask questions and listen carefully to their peers as they participate in a variety of discussions.

Now that some expectations have been established, have students write down their responses to the following prompts to assess their prior knowledge and prepare them for the unit:

- Describe a period in history, which may be the present, when a certain group of individuals are or were harmed in some way as a result of prejudice against them. (Define prejudice as “an unfavorable opinion or feeling about a group of individuals formed without knowledge or reason.”)

- Explain the types of justification used to continue treating the group of individuals unfairly (e.g., tradition, beliefs about superiority, or perceived necessity).

Invite students to share their responses with the class. Encourage them to ask each other questions and listen attentively as their peers express their thoughts. Allow for a variety of viewpoints to be shared while ensuring that the conversation remains respectful. Explain to students that throughout this unit, they’ll be asked to challenge assumptions made about both humans and other animals and to reflect on what it means to oppose all prejudice in their day-to-day lives.
SOCIAL JUSTICE GALLERY WALK

In this lesson, students think critically about the parallels between animal abuse and human abuse and examine the causes and effects of discrimination.

Objectives

- **Affective:** Students will be able to draw parallels between the treatment of animals and the historical discrimination against people of color, women, the LGBTQ+ community, people with disabilities, and others who have been and continue to be marginalized or systemically denied basic rights.
- **Cognitive:** Students will be able to advance conversations by posing and responding to questions; to clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and to respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives.

Background

Class discussions are an excellent way to get students thinking critically about the abstract concepts of social justice. Older students, however, are sometimes reluctant to participate in these conversations if it means speaking in front of their peers, so high school teachers must get creative in order to inspire rich and meaningful dialog in their classrooms. A gallery walk is a thought-provoking activity that gets students talking to one another about important issues, such as how present-day societies strive to justify abuse just as societies of the past did—regardless of the victims’ species.

Materials

- Angela Davis’ University of Cape Town speech video* (Students will watch a three-minute clip from this video.)
- Gallery walk images*
- For a virtual gallery walk: Zoom, Skype, Google Classroom, Padlet, or another virtual tool for hosting online discussions
- For an in-person gallery walk: glue, scissors, construction paper, tape, markers, and up to a dozen poster-size pieces of paper.
- “PETA Reveals: Why Feminists Must Reject All Violence, Not Just Violence Against Humans” video*
- “PETA Reveals: Animal Rights Is Not a ‘White Thing’” video*
- “PETA Reveals: Civil Rights Icon Inspired This Lawyer to Push the Boundaries of Animal Rights” video*

Key Vocabulary

- **oppression:** prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or control

Motivation

- Begin the lesson by showing students a clip of Angela Davis’ 2016 speech at the University of Cape Town in South Africa starting at 40:13 and ending at 43:24,* when she delivers a powerful call for political activism to wipe out racism, sexism, ableism, and society’s other ills. (If you have time to have students watch the entire speech, you will see that she elaborates on ways we can oppose oppression of all groups, including animals.) Best known as a longtime human rights activist, Davis is also a committed vegan, and she made sure to highlight the connection between all forms of exploitation and oppression in her keynote address.

- Tell students to pay attention to the examples of activism (e.g., Muhammad Ali’s refusal to be inducted into the army) and prejudice (racism, sexism, etc.) that she uses throughout the video.

- Have students discuss with a partner why they think she included those examples. Davis told the packed house, “[S]entient beings … endure pain and torture as they are transformed into food for profit, food that generates disease in humans whose poverty compels them to rely on McDonald’s and KFC for nourishment.” Heroes like her leave animals off their plates as they tackle the issues that plague the Black community, because they understand that in the way that matters the most—our ability to
feel pain, love, fear, and acceptance—humans and all other animals are the same.

• Discuss this statement in particular as a class and ask, “Is civil rights related to animal rights? Why or why not?” Have students support their positions with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

**Before the Gallery Walk**

If you’re teaching virtually or if you need to limit students’ movement around the classroom to maintain social distancing, you can still conduct a gallery walk using popular online conferencing tools like Zoom or Skype. Simply display the images individually so that students can see them, or share them in the chat feature and instruct students to respond by typing their responses (as opposed to saying them out loud). You can also use Padlet, an online tool that allows students to post notes on a shared page. If these tools aren’t available to you, you can have students discuss each image in an online forum, such as Google Classroom.

**Virtual Gallery Walk**

1. Using your online forum of choice, create a separate discussion thread for each image. Include a different image in each thread, along with the following instructions: “Consider this image. What thoughts or feelings come to mind? You may write as little as one word, such as ‘suffering,’ or as much as a few sentences.”
2. Designate a time frame during which students are to post at least one response in each discussion thread.
3. Have students post a thoughtful response to at least three of their classmates’ posts.

**In-Person Gallery Walk**

• Begin by printing out the gallery walk images. Cut out each one, and glue it to a piece of construction paper.
• On the day of your gallery walk, tape the images around your classroom at eye level. Next to each image, tape a large piece of paper to the wall. Have markers available at each station.

For this activity, some teachers juxtapose images of humans and other animals (e.g., a homeless person and a homeless dog). You could also use images from your curriculum that your students have already seen.

**During the Gallery Walk**

Explain the rules of the gallery walk.
• Tell students that as they would explore an art gallery, they should walk around the room and consider each image at least once.
On the piece of paper next to the image, they should write whatever thoughts or feelings come to mind. They may write as little as one word, such as “suffering,” or as much as a few sentences. If they’ve responded to each image and time is left, they should revisit images and add more impressions to the paper.

Encourage students to circle important words or phrases on the pieces of paper, draw arrows, or use other symbols, such as exclamation points or question marks, to connect their ideas to those of others. They can even write short responses to their classmates’ comments, such as “Yes, I agree!” or “But what if …?” Remind them that they should use appropriate language, respond to one another’s comments respectfully, and avoid crossing out or obscuring someone else’s words.

All responses should be written, not spoken. Assure students that there will be time to discuss their thoughts afterward.

As students circulate throughout the “gallery,” you can play soft instrumental music. Walk around the room with them, monitoring their responses and adding your own comments to the silent conversation. Allow 10 to 15 minutes for students to complete the gallery walk.

After the Gallery Walk

Since students have had the opportunity to respond to the images in writing, without judgment from their peers, some may be more willing to share their thoughts in a group conversation. Initiate and guide the discussion by asking the following questions:

- What did you notice as you participated in the gallery walk?
- What comments did you respond to? What comments received the most attention? Why?
- What similarities did you notice between the images? What differences did you notice?
- If you had to give this “exhibition” a title, what would it be? Why?

Allow the dialog to unfold naturally, letting students do most of the talking. Pose questions, and clarify when necessary.

Then divide students into three groups. Assign each group one of the following videos to watch and discuss. Have students use the accompanying questions to guide their discussion and prepare a brief summary of their video to share with the class.

“PETA Reveals: Why Feminists Must Reject All Violence, Not Just Violence Against Humans”

1. In your own words, explain the link between the consumption of meat, eggs, and dairy and a patriarchal society (one in which men hold the power).

   **Answer:** The production of animal-derived foods that many people consume every day such as meat, eggs, and cheese involves reproductive control, the removal of babies from their mothers, and the deliberate injuring and killing of sentient beings. For example, since cows produce milk only to nourish their calves, dairy farmers keep them pregnant starting from the time they become sexually mature by artificially inseminating them—while they’re restrained in a device that the industry itself calls a “rape rack.” Like human females throughout history and at present, female members of other species have been exploited for their bodies and dismissed as unimportant, unintelligent, and unworthy of consideration.

2. Carol J. Adams, author of *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, argues that both women and animals are objectified—treated as objects rather than individuals with thoughts and feelings. Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.

   **Answer:** Will vary based on student experience. Encourage students to reflect on ways women are portrayed in the media, what they are valued for, and what obstacles they must overcome to be treated equally in society. Have them then consider these same factors as they relate to animals used for food.
3. What specific examples does the speaker provide to support her claim that animal rights is a feminist issue?

Answer: In order to force them to have as many babies as possible, pigs are forcibly impregnated and kept in metal crates so small that they can’t even turn around. Their piglets are taken away from them shortly after birth to be raised and sent to slaughter. Cows are also artificially inseminated, and their calves are taken from them so that their milk can be sold for human consumption. Hens on egg farms are kept in wire cages so small that they can’t spread their wings, and their eggs are taken and sold. When these animals can no longer breed or produce eggs or milk, they are no longer useful to farmers, so they’re sent to slaughter.

“PETA Reveals: Animal Rights Is Not a ‘White Thing’”

1. Why did the speaker feel lonely when she first started out in the animal rights movement? What helped relieve some of this loneliness?

Answer: She was often the only Black person at many of the demonstrations she attended. She felt less alone when she found inspirational Black activists online who wrote blogs about animal rights and being vegan.

2. Why is it important for people of color to be equally represented in the animal rights movement?

Possible answer: The speaker points out that “[t]o think only white people care about health, animals, and the planet is absolutely false” and that referring to the animal rights movement as a “white thing” overlooks all the Black activists who’ve contributed to it. Equal representation of minorities in the fight for animal rights is important so that everyone can contribute to and benefit from it. Many Black people face health problems like diabetes, obesity, and heart disease because food companies take advantage of them, but if they were to think that only white people can be vegan, they’d miss out on the health benefits. Similarly, many people of color care about animals and the environment and want to do as little harm to both as possible, but if they don’t see others like them represented in the movement, they might be reluctant to join.

3. What does the speaker mean when she says, “We can care about more than one struggle” (4:49)?

Answer: It’s possible to fight for multiple causes, like the rights of both humans and other animals as well as the health of the planet. In many cases, advocating for one oppressed group can also help another.

“PETA Reveals: Civil Rights Icon Inspired This Lawyer to Push the Boundaries of Animal Rights”

1. Briefly describe the case that PETA argued on behalf of Naruto the macaque.

Answer: Naruto the monkey took a selfie using a photographer’s camera. The photographer then published the image, claiming that he’d taken the photo. PETA argued that the rights to the photo belonged to Naruto because he’d taken it himself.

2. How was the lawsuit settled?

Answer: The photographer agreed to donate 25% of the money that he made from Naruto’s selfie to charities that will benefit Naruto and his community of macaques and protect their habitat.

3. Why is impact litigation significant?

Answer: Even if they’re not won, impact lawsuits such as Naruto’s first-of-its-kind case serve as symbolic stepping stones toward the larger goal of freeing all animals from exploitation and abuse. Before this history-making case was heard, many thought it was absurd to grant an animal a copyright, but now the legal community—and society as a whole—is beginning to reconsider what other animals are entitled to. Future lawyers will study this impact lawsuit, increasing the chances that other similar cases will be taken seriously and won.
4. On what grounds does the speaker claim that SeaWorld violates the 13th Amendment?

**Answer:** The 13th Amendment to the Constitution prohibits slavery. The speaker argues that it doesn’t just apply to humans but rather to all animals and that SeaWorld violated it by taking five orcas from their natural habitat, imprisoning them in its tanks, and forcing them to work and breed.

In addition to their responses to the discussion questions, invite students to share other insights that they had during their conversations with their peers. Did everyone agree with one another, or were there differences of opinion? Did any students change their minds after talking with their group? Remind students that discussing social justice issues like feminism, racism, and speciesism can feel uncomfortable, but with practice, challenging our assumptions about longstanding harmful institutions, values, and beliefs becomes easier.

**Real-World Connection**

Many of history’s most iconic leaders and thinkers have opposed violence against animals, understanding that discrimination based on species is no different from discrimination based on skin color, gender, or other arbitrary characteristics. In many cases, those who are working to break down the prejudices that cause animals to be treated as “lesser” are the same people who advocate for LGBTQ+ rights, disability rights, racial justice, religious tolerance, and other social justice issues. In his total commitment to nonviolence, Mahatma Gandhi always included animals, stating, “The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.” Martin Luther King Jr., who was inspired by Gandhi’s philosophy of nonviolence, said, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Bigotry in all its ugly forms is wrong—regardless of who the victim is. And when we witness it, we shouldn’t let it go unchallenged.

**Wrap-Up Activity**

Have students respond to one of the following journal prompts in their notebooks or on a blank sheet of paper:

- How are humans and other animals similar? How are they different? Do these differences make it right to imprison, abuse, or exploit animals? Why or why not?
- What parallels can you draw between humans’ treatment of animals and the historical discrimination against people of color, women, the LGBTQ+ community, people with disabilities, or others who have been marginalized or systemically denied basic human rights?
- Some people say that animals are so much like humans that we must capture and study them—for instance, in labs—in order to understand our own species better. On the other hand, they also say that animals are so unlike humans that they don’t experience pain, loneliness, and sadness, so they aren’t worthy of the same ethical consideration given to humans. Can both of these arguments be true, or are they contradictory? Explain your answer.

**Assessment**

Evaluate students’ written responses, and monitor group discussions for evidence that they’re questioning the status quo and responding thoughtfully to diverse perspectives.
Common Misperception/Reality

Common Misperception

The fight for animal rights takes away from the fight for human rights. Humans should be more concerned about helping members of their own species before helping those of others. When we’re still tackling the oppression of humans, it’s a luxury to be concerned about other animals.

Reality

Bullying and violence aren’t limited to humans any more than they’re limited to certain races or one gender identity. If we want a more just world, we must work to end all prejudice, not just the kinds that affect us personally.

The mindset that condones the oppression of humans—whether we’re talking about Muslims, women, older people, members of the LGBTQ+ community, or people of color—is the same mindset that permits the exploitation of animals. Prejudices arise when we start to believe that “I” am special and “you” are not and that “my” interests are more important than those of other sentient beings.

It is possible to advocate for the rights of all living beings. Many civil rights leaders, past and present, have maintained that as long as one form of prejudice exists, no form of prejudice can be completely eradicated, and thus, civil rights and animal rights are inextricably linked.

Extension

Students can watch the remaining videos in the documentary series PETA Reveals,* which highlights powerful stories from 10 individuals who recognized animal suffering and became determined to take action instead of maintaining the status quo.

Common Core Standards Addressed

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C**
  Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.D**
  Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

- **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.SL.11-12.1.C**
  Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D**
  Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.
• 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.

*Indicates components necessary to implement the lesson are available online only. Please visit TeachKind.org/SocialJustice to access these materials.
COGNITIVE DISSONANCE AND HOW HUMANS TREAT ANIMALS

In this lesson, students examine their personal beliefs and behavior, identifying areas in which they experience cognitive dissonance and analyzing their opposing attitudes and actions. They then evaluate examples of discordant beliefs and behavior in society as a whole, using their understanding of facts and opinions to challenge the assumption that animals are ours to use.

Objectives

- **Affective**: Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the psychological experience of cognitive dissonance and to reflect on and evaluate their own beliefs and behavior.
- **Cognitive**: Students will be able to initiate and participate effectively in a variety of collaborative discussions with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas, expressing their own ideas clearly and persuasively, and citing evidence to substantiate their claims. Students will also be able to draw inferences from an informational text and express their opinions in writing using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Background

Cognitive dissonance—which is defined as “the state of having inconsistent thoughts, beliefs, or attitudes, especially as relating to behavioral decisions and attitude change”—is something most people have experienced at one point or another. It’s that feeling you get when you do something like buy a case of plastic water bottles with lots of packaging while simultaneously being fully aware of the damage that plastic wreaks on the environment.

While this state can be uncomfortable, it can be used very effectively in the classroom to help students make informed choices. Studies show that the experience of cognitive dissonance can be used to foster prosocial behavior and promote positive change.

Materials

- “Grace: PETA’s Banned Thanksgiving Ad” video
- “Statements About Beliefs” and “Statements About Behavior” worksheets (included in the kit)
- “Why Are We Outraged About Eating Dog, but Not Bacon?” article (included in the kit)
- “Differentiating Animals From the Ways They Are Used” sheet (included in the kit)
- “The Hidden Lives of Animals” reading passages

Key Vocabulary

cognitive dissonance: the state of having inconsistent thoughts, beliefs, or attitudes, especially as relating to behavioral decisions and attitude change

Motivation

- Begin the lesson by showing students the video “Grace: PETA’s Banned Thanksgiving Ad,” in which a young girl says a disturbingly truthful prayer before her family’s holiday feast.
- Tell students that the ad was submitted to air during the iconic Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade but was ultimately rejected by NBC, even though it contains no graphic images.
- Ask them how they think the family in the video feels as the little girl describes the abuse that turkeys raised for food endure. (Answers could include ashamed, conflicted, disgusted, etc.).
- Ask them to consider PETA’s goal in creating
the ad (to persuade viewers to go vegan ahead of the holiday season, during which millions of turkeys are slaughtered so that humans can eat them).

• Have students share their responses as a class before explaining that the psychological phenomenon known as cognitive dissonance was purposely used in this ad.

The girl states facts about the treatment that the turkey endured. Viewers of the ad can see on the family members’ faces that they’re not comfortable with this kind of treatment, yet they’re still prepared to eat the turkey. What allows the family members to enjoy their feast without thinking of and feeling for the individual they’re eating is cognitive dissonance—a disconnect between their beliefs and their behavior. In this ad, students can see what cognitive dissonance looks like. Next, they’ll get a chance to experience it.

Part 1

Before Reading

The following activity was inspired by an in-class exercise used in the study “Bringing Cognitive Dissonance to the Classroom” by David M. Carkenord and Joseph Bullington. It’s designed to induce cognitive dissonance in students by pointing out inconsistencies between their beliefs and their behavior.

• Start by giving your students a copy of the “Statements About Beliefs” worksheet (included in the kit). If you are teaching virtually, have students complete the digital version of this worksheet. Ask them to choose either A or B as the answer to each of the questions, based on what they believe to be factual, given their awareness of the topic. Ask students to turn their sheet facedown (or minimize their digital worksheet) after they’ve completed it.

• Then have students complete the second worksheet, “Statements About Behavior” (included in the kit). Ask them once again to choose either A or B for each answer, and stress that they should be truthful in answering each question, regardless of how they answered the questions about their beliefs—even if they notice inconsistencies. Explain that inconsistencies between attitudes and actions are very normal.

• Have students identify questions that show dissonance between a belief and their behavior. Repeat that inconsistencies are normal, and explain that identifying and processing the dissonance can help them make informed choices in the future.

• Have students write down their initial reactions to this exercise on a separate sheet of paper. This can be as simple as writing a few words that describe how they feel.

• Explore students’ reactions as a class, and let them know that when people experience the feeling of cognitive dissonance, they often feel uncomfortable or defensive. Our brains are simply trying to reconcile the difference between our knowledge or beliefs and how we choose to act.

Discuss the following common reactions to feelings of cognitive dissonance:

• Attempting to rationalize the behavior (e.g., “But everybody eats meat, so it’s fine.”)

• Ignoring the truth or being in denial (e.g., “I don’t want to think about that.”)

• Reducing the importance of their belief (e.g., “Animals aren’t as intelligent as humans, so their lives don’t matter as much.”)

The above coping mechanisms are defensive reactions. The most effective way to reduce cognitive dissonance is to change either a belief or a related action so that the two are consistent. After the discussion, have students write a paragraph about a behavior they could change in their own life in order to reduce cognitive dissonance brought to light by this activity.
During Reading

The concept known as “the meat paradox” describes the cognitive dissonance experienced by people who care about the well-being of animals and also choose to eat them. They believe that animals deserve protection and care, but their actions contribute to the abuse and death of animals. Have students conduct a close reading of the article “Why Are We Outraged About Eating Dog, but Not Bacon?” by Jared Piazza, lecturer in moral psychology at Lancaster University in the U.K. (included in the kit). Have them respond to and discuss their answers to the questions with a classmate or in small groups:

1. According to the author, why is it that humans feel outraged and heartbroken by the thought of dogs being slaughtered and served as food but don’t experience the same reaction to the thought of pigs being slaughtered and served as food? Do you agree or disagree with his claim?

Answer: The author asserts that “emotional prejudice” is the reason why humans react differently to dogs and pigs being eaten as food. Piazza writes, “We just don’t care enough about pigs for their needless suffering to pull at our heartstrings.” Additional responses will vary based on student experience, but encourage students to use their knowledge of cognitive dissonance to inform their answer.

2. Is the popular argument that we should care more about dogs because of their “superior social intelligence” a strong one? Why or why not? Use evidence from the article to support your answer.

Possible answer: It is not logical or accurate to argue that dogs deserve better treatment because they’re more intelligent than pigs. The author points out that because humans typically keep dogs as companions, they’re simply more familiar with them and therefore more likely to identify with them emotionally. Dogs and pigs share many cognitive abilities, and pigs sometimes even outperform dogs on certain tasks.

3. How did the participants in the author’s lab’s study respond when presented with images of baby animals? How did they react when presented with images of adult animals? Do you think individuals who are thought to be “cute” deserve more respect and consideration than those who are not? Explain your answer.

Answer: The study showed that participants thought it would be more wrong to harm the baby animals than the adult animals because baby animals are cute. Additional responses will vary based on student experience, but encourage students to consider the moral implications of treating attractive humans with more respect and consideration than unattractive ones.

4. Explain the myside bias and the problems it presents.

Answer: The myside bias occurs when someone favors evidence that supports their own opinions. This is problematic because facts should not be up for debate but rather accepted as true. We should instead adjust our opinions to be in alignment with facts, not vice versa.

5. In Steve Loughnan’s study, how did participants’ feelings about the alien and the tapir differ from their feelings about the pig? Why?

Answer: Participants felt that it was wrong to eat the alien and the tapir but acceptable to eat the pig because it’s considered normal to eat pigs, even though their intelligence level is the same as that of the alien and the tapir.

Reconvene as a class, and have students share their thoughts on the article. Then discuss the following question:

If people treated cats and dogs the way animals used for food are treated (i.e., kept in cages so small that they can’t even turn around, etc.), they could be arrested on felony cruelty-to-animals charges. In your opinion, what’s the reason for this massive, societywide cognitive dissonance? Why are some animals considered beloved companions while others are tortured, killed, and often eaten by people who claim to love and care about animals?
After Reading

As Piazza points out, experts theorize that certain factors contribute to the greater amount of compassion that people have for some animals than others. After the discussion, share these factors with your students:

- How “cute” or “babyish” an animal looks (having characteristics such as large eyes and a round head)
- How intelligent species are perceived to be (although this doesn’t necessarily correspond to their actual intelligence level)
- How many physical characteristics an animal shares with humans
- How many admirable anthropomorphized (or human-like) qualities an animal is thought to possess (e.g., cleverness, bravery, or capacity for affection)

After reviewing these qualities, ask students to write a paragraph giving their opinion on the following questions, citing evidence to support their case: Is it fair to judge animals by these qualities? Why or why not?

Part 2

Have students respond to the two questions that follow using their opinions and conducting independent research online. This can be done either in class or as homework:

1. What laws concerning animals show inconsistencies?
   
   **Example answer:** The way animals are treated in a slaughterhouse would warrant felony cruelty-to-animals charges if someone did the same things in another setting or to an animal of a different species, such as a dog.

2. Think about the many ways humans use animals in our society (e.g., in experiments, as food, for clothing, in entertainment). What are some things that many self-described “animal lovers” do that create cognitive dissonance?
   
   **Example answer:** Some self-described “animal lovers” are horrified at the thought of using the skin of a cat or dog for leather but may buy shoes made of cows’ skin without a second thought, even though cows suffer just as much when they’re killed for leather.

Part 3

Begin this activity by writing the following words on the board, reading them out loud to students via a web conferencing tool such as Zoom or sharing them in your online forum of choice such as Google Classroom:

- Provide students with the “Differentiating Animals From the Ways They Are Used” sheet (included in the kit). As you read the name of each animal, have students write the animal under the category
that seems appropriate for the way our society treats them (as science experiments, food, clothing/fabric, companion animals, pests, or wild animals). If students need help defining the category titles, explain further. Let them know that there are no wrong answers and that they may list an animal in multiple categories. For example, mice are companion animals and also commonly used in experiments and considered by some to be pests.

- Once students have categorized each of the animals, break them into pairs or groups of three (depending on how many are in your class) and have each group read one of the “Hidden Lives of Animals” reading passages.*
- When they’re finished, have group members participate in a collaborative discussion about the things they learned and what new perspectives they have on the animals they read about.
- Then have all the groups prepare and give a short presentation to the rest of the class on the animal(s) in their reading passage. Ask them to address at least five different facts about the animal(s) in their presentation as well as at least one significant quality that they share with animals like cats and dogs. For example, many fish like physical contact with other fish and often gently rub against one another—in the same way a cat weaves in and out of a human’s legs.
- Discuss how the class initially categorized each animal, and ask students if that categorization makes sense after looking deeper. Have students address the role that cognitive dissonance plays in society’s continued exploitation and general treatment of these animals.

Real-World Connection

Ask students, “What other times in your life have you experienced cognitive dissonance? How did you respond (for example, attempt to rationalize the behavior, ignore the truth or be in denial, or reduce the importance of the belief)? Did you adjust your belief or your behavior? Going forward, how will your knowledge of cognitive dissonance inform your actions?” Have students explain their answers fully and discuss their responses as a class.

Ask students, “Why do you think many people become uncomfortable when presented with images or video footage of animals suffering (for example, homeless cats and dogs, pigs in slaughterhouses) or altogether refuse to look at them?” Have students explain their answers fully and discuss their responses as a class.

Wrap-Up Activity

Share with students the quotation below from Nobel Peace Prize winner Albert Schweitzer, and ask them to discuss what it means to them and how it relates to cognitive dissonance.

“No one must shut his eyes and regard as non-existent the suffering of which he spared himself the sight.”

—Nobel Peace Prize winner Albert Schweitzer

Assessment

Evaluate students’ written responses, and monitor group discussions for evidence of clear and persuasive expression of ideas as well as building on the ideas of others.
Common Misperception/Reality

**Common Misperception**
It’s “natural” for humans to use animals. Some animals are meant to be cared for and deserve our respect and consideration, whereas others are meant to be used in experiments, for food, for labor, or otherwise exploited.

**Reality**
Humans have categorized animals based on arbitrary characteristics. For example, someone might be moved to tears by a news story about an abused dog yet feel no remorse over eating a bucket of chicken wings that caused multiple birds to suffer and die. This is not because dogs suffer more or feel more pain than chickens but because humans ascribe a higher importance to dogs than they do to chickens.

**Extension**
If you’d like to have your students continue their research into the meat paradox, reasons why people treat certain animals differently, and reactions to cognitive dissonance, have them read the following articles or watch the documentary *The Emotional World of Farm Animals*:

- *The Independent*: "Why Some Animals Are More Equal Than Others ..."*

**Common Core Standards Addressed**

- **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.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.RI.9-10.1**
  Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

- **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.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.1**
  Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

- **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.

*Indicates components necessary to implement the lesson are available online only Please visit TeachKind.org/SocialJustice to access these materials.
Please note that starting at 11:53 in the documentary *The Emotional World of Farm Animals*, Ned Buyukmihci, D.V.M., cofounder of Animal Place, explains that his colleagues suggested “killing” Jessie, a cow who was taken to the sanctuary with a severely broken leg. While Jessie recovered from her injury, euthanasia is nevertheless a painless, quick, and dignified way to spare animals intense suffering and a prolonged death. When performed properly and by a trained professional, euthanasia is often the most compassionate option.
SPECIESISM 101

In this lesson, students define and deconstruct the speciesist mindset, identifying logical fallacies in this harmful way of thinking as well as solutions to it.

Objectives

• **Affective:** Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the concept of *speciesism* and why it has harmful repercussions in society.
• **Cognitive:** Students will be able to write informatively to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Background

Like sexism, racism, and other forms of discrimination, speciesism is an oppressive belief system in which those with power draw boundaries to justify using or excluding their fellow beings who are less powerful. This line of “reasoning” is used to justify treating other living, feeling beings like research tools, food ingredients, fabric, or toys—even though they share our capacity for pain, hunger, fear, thirst, love, joy, and loneliness and have as much interest in freedom and staying alive as we do.

Many humans grow up thinking of themselves as entirely different from and superior to other animals, which lays the foundation for exploiting them. From childhood, most humans are conditioned to view certain species as worthy of care and compassion and others as less important or unworthy—based on arbitrary human preferences. This toxic view also leads humans to draw groundless distinctions between animal species based on their perceived worth.

Because of speciesism, we learn to ignore our own conscience, which tells us that it’s wrong to mistreat others. Addressing speciesism and acknowledging other animals’ rights can be as simple as respecting their needs and leaving them in peace.

Materials

• “All Beings Bleed the Same” campaign images*
• “RZA: We’re Not Different in Any Important Way” video*
• “RZA: We’re Not Different in Any Important Way” video transcript*
• “Non-Human Animals: Crash Course Philosophy #42” (PBS video)*
• “Test Subjects” video*

Key Vocabulary

*speciesism*: prejudice or discrimination based on species

Motivation

Begin the lesson by showing students the “All Beings Bleed the Same” campaign images* and asking them to explain what they think is going on in each image and what the goal of the campaign is. Ask them how they feel when they look at the images and why. Have them share their responses as a class.

Guided Practice

Have students watch the video “We’re Not Different in Any Important Way” featuring musician RZA.* Provide them with the transcript* so they can follow along, making note of any language in the text or images in the video that stand out to them. As a class, discuss the questions that follow as well as any additional thoughts or feelings that students may have.
Discussion Questions

1. Who is usually referred to when the speaker says “we” throughout the video?
   
   **Answer:** In most instances, this refers to all sentient beings, humans and other animals alike.

2. How are humans and other animals different? How are we the same?
   
   **Answer:** As the video points out, some animals have fur, feathers, or fins. Some have long noses, some have four or more legs, and some have no legs at all. Some fly, some can breathe underwater, and some live underground. All animals have thoughts and feelings. We all love, have the ability to feel pain, and want to live free from harm.

3. What do you think the speaker means when he says, “We can all understand, but we are not always understanding”?
   
   **Possible answer:** All sentient beings are individuals with thoughts and feelings. Humans, however, don’t always respect this. Sometimes we judge others based on their outward appearance, and sometimes we even hurt them for being different.

4. The speaker says, “We experience ourselves as separate from the rest.” How can this way of thinking be harmful?
   
   **Possible answer:** When one group of individuals thinks that it is more important than another, the former may use its superior mindset to mistreat or even harm the latter in order to maintain its dominance and privilege. For example, some humans describe animals as unintelligent or unfeeling in order to justify harming and killing them for experiments, food, clothing, or entertainment.

5. The video closes with the message “Face it: Inside every body, there is a person.” Do you think animals are people, too? Why or why not?
   
   **Answer:** Will vary based on student experience. Point out that while the word “person” is almost exclusively used to describe humans, corporations have also been deemed persons in the eyes of the law. There have also been several court cases in which humans have fought for an animal’s right to legal personhood. You may also ask students to consider which noun category (person, place, or thing) they would assign animals to, arguing that they aren’t places or things.

Group Work

Put students in groups of three or four and have them watch the video “Non-Human Animals: Crash Course Philosophy #42.” Assign one set of questions to each group. Have students discuss their responses with their group and see if they can come to a consensus. Have each group present their responses to the whole class.

Discussion Questions

1. “The response to [Cecil] the lion’s death was so strong that the guy who shot Cecil basically went into hiding until he issued an apology. But isn’t that a little bit strange? We react with horror when we hear about a majestic lion being shot or sacks of kittens being tossed into rivers or owners training their dogs to fight each other for sport. But what is the difference between killing Cecil and killing a deer, or a duck, or a cow, or a chicken?” Respond to this question posed in the video. How did you determine your beliefs? Are they consistent with your behavior? How can you use your knowledge of cognitive dissonance to understand your reaction to the video and the questions it raises?

2. “How do we reconcile the strong feelings many of us have about certain animals, mainly the cute ones like kittens and puppies, with the way we actually use animals in our own lives?” Respond to this question posed in the video. The video points out that animals face harm because humans use them for their meat, milk, and skin. How can you make your actions more consistent with your feelings?
3. “Contemporary Austrian philosopher Peter Singer uses the word speciesism to describe giving preference to our own species over another in the absence of morally relevant differences.” Why does Singer believe that humans giving preference to humans over other animals is based on “morally irrelevant difference[s]”? (Hint: He reminds us that there was a time when enslaving humans was thought to be totally normal and right based on the morally irrelevant difference of skin color.) Is species a morally relevant difference? How do you think future generations will look back on us?

4. Philosopher Carl Cohen argues that “every species is struggling to claw its way to the top and that’s how it should be” and that “every species ought to be concerned with protecting itself.” He says that “humans … can pretty much do whatever we want to other beings.” Reflecting on previous class discussions, do you believe that “might makes right”? Does tradition justify everything? Is it necessary for humans to use and eat animals?

5. The philosopher Jeremy Bentham said, “The question is not ‘Can they reason?’ nor ‘Can they talk?’ but ‘Can they suffer?’” What does this statement mean to you?

Independent Work

Have students choose one way society uses animals and describe in writing what an equal consideration of interests would look like. Students may find PETA’s motto helpful in identifying the four main areas in which the largest number of animals suffer the most intensely for the longest periods of time at the hands of humans: “Animals are not ours to experiment on, eat, wear, use for entertainment, or abuse in any other way.”

Ask students to break down Singer’s principle of equal consideration by addressing the following questions in their description. Walk them through an example: As the video points out, society uses rabbits (along with mice, rats, monkeys, cats, dogs, and other animals) in laboratory experiments.

• What interests do humans and the animals in your chosen scenario share?
  
  **Example:** Both humans and rabbits have an interest in avoiding pain and suffering. This includes having all their needs met (food, water, shelter, freedom of movement, safety, etc.).

• Are these shared interests equally considered in the way society uses the animals in your scenario?
  
  **Example:** These shared interests are not equally considered in the way society uses rabbits. As the video points out, “a common method for testing cosmetics … involves restraining rabbits and putting the product into their eyes, leaving it for a set amount of time, and then washing it out and checking for ill effects.” The video goes on to note that “this can be extremely painful and often blinds the rabbits, [who] are then euthanized.”

• If not, how can the scenario be changed to consider the interests of all individuals involved equally?
  
  **Example:** Opting for animal-free testing and research methods would provide both humans and rabbits with an equal consideration of interests.

Real-World Connection

Read the following short story to the class to prepare students to watch the “Test Subjects” video:

Thanks to a rat named Ratsky, Dr. Neal Barnard, founder of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, changed the way medical schools in the U.S. and Canada use animals.

While in college, Barnard, interested in how the human mind works, enrolled in a psychology course that included placing rats in boxes and depriving them of food and water so that they would press levers or do whatever else the experimenters wanted them to do.
One day Barnard was conducting a test in which he had to drill holes into a rat's head and insert electrodes inside the brain. To steady the skull, the rats had to be placed in a device that held them in place by way of bars in their ears. Barnard's professor walked by and told him that his device was too loose. When Barnard tightened it, he could feel it pierce the rat's eardrums. He reported this to his professor, who shot back, "Well, I guess he won't be able to listen to his stereo in the morning."

Barnard was taken aback. The professor had always struck him as a kind man, but, Barnard says, "this callous remark, this disregard for the suffering of animals, was something very different." Troubled by this attitude, he took one of the rats home. He began to see, even in that tiny body, a sentient being who loathed pain, bonded with others, and had a wide range of complicated emotions. He named her Ratsky.

Ratsky lived for some months in a cage in his bedroom. And in her cage, she behaved the way Barnard assumed rats behave. But when he started leaving the cage door open so that she could scurry around, he began to see actions he hadn’t anticipated. After several days of cautious sniffing at the cage door, Ratsky began to investigate the world beyond it. "As she explored my apartment (under my watchful eye), she became more and more friendly. If I was lying on my back reading, she would come and stand on my chest," Barnard says. "She would wait to be petted, and if I didn’t pay her enough attention, she would lightly nip my nose and run away. I knew her sharp teeth could have gone right through my skin, but she was always playfully careful."

Shortly afterward, when Barnard was attending the George Washington University School of Medicine, an instructor announced that an upcoming laboratory exercise would involve giving numerous human heart drugs to a dog and recording any reactions. All the dogs would be killed at the end of the exercise. Barnard refused to participate—obvious cruelty was involved, and he felt that medical students could sufficiently grasp the concepts of pharmacology without a graphic (and fatal) demonstration using a dog. Instead, he and one other student turned in reports of the expected psychological effects of these drugs. Both passed the course.

Dr. Barnard is one of many scientists who have chosen to recognize that animals used in experiments are living, feeling beings whose bodies and lives are their own—not ours—and that abundant evidence shows that animal experimentation produces almost nothing to promote better human health, despite what we’ve been taught to believe. Challenging the status quo, especially in the world of science and academia, isn’t easy, which makes these rebel scientists all the more inspiring.

Share with students the 16-minute documentary "Test Subjects," which explores the pervasive and sometimes subtle pressure on graduate students to experiment on animals—even when doing so is contrary to good science. The film profiles three scientists whose lives were altered when they were coached by their doctoral advisers to accept that experimenting on animals was the best way to earn their diplomas, even though it was unnecessary for their research. They had all entered their graduate studies as young scientists hoping to improve human health, but they soon realized that they were being taught to perpetuate an archaic system that was impeding good research—and they’ve since dedicated their careers to ending animal tests. Have students discuss what it means to "challenge the status quo." Ask them to recall a time when they had to take a stand against something that was popular but that they felt was wrong. As a group, discuss the importance of standing up for what you believe in.

Wrap-Up Activity

Have students discuss the following common acts of speciesism and suggest ways each situation could be changed to give equal consideration to all individuals involved:

- Animal shelters hold fundraisers to help certain species (like dogs, cats, and rabbits) have a better
life, while serving the dead bodies of other species (like pigs, chickens, and cows). Although this is done with good intentions, it can confuse the people attending and can prevent farmed animals from getting the help that they need.

- The thought of drinking cat’s or dog’s milk is seen as more disgusting than drinking cow’s milk—even though all these animals produce milk for just one reason: to nourish their own young.
- Wearing the skin of a dog or cat would freak most people out, yet many wear shoes made of cow skin (aka “leather”) without thinking twice.

Assessment
Evaluate students’ written responses and group discussions for clear and accurate descriptions of complex ideas.

Common Misperception/Reality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Misperception</th>
<th>Reality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People don’t need to justify their use of animals. If they want to eat meat, wear fur, go to an animal circus, or otherwise exploit animals, they should be allowed to do so without scrutiny.</td>
<td>It’s important for people to be consistent in their beliefs and to be able to justify their actions—otherwise, everyone would be acting only in their own self-interest and disregarding the safety and well-being of others, which wouldn’t make for a society anyone would want to live in.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Extension
Like other harmful forms of discrimination, speciesism relies on the differences between groups of individuals—in this case, humans and animals. But the more we learn about animals, the more we can see ourselves in these living, feeling beings—after all, humans are animals. Visit TeachKind.org/WritingPrompts for images and videos to cultivate students’ empathy for animals.

Common Core Standards Addressed

- **CCSS.A.1-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.A.1-LITERACY.W.9-10.2**  
  Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

- **CCSS.A.1-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.

- **CCSS.A.1-LITERACY.W.11-12.2**  
  Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

*Indicates components necessary to implement the lesson are available online only. Please visit TeachKind.org/SocialJustice to access these materials.
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

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.
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**
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] 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.
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

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.

In his book *Animal Liberation*, Peter Singer states that the basic principle of equality does not require equal or identical treatment—it requires equal consideration. 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.

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.
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—or if you’d like to contact us on their behalf, please e-mail 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 to access these materials.