

## Activities and Essays for Elementary and Middle School Students



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

### Note to teachers

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



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

