

## Nelson Mandela, César Chávez, and Nonviolence

### Grades 9 & 10



The society portrayed in George Orwell's novel *Animal Farm* is a metaphor for communism, which the author feared might spread through Europe and the U.S. In the book, the animal characters overthrow the abusive farmer to create a better, more equitable society for all animals. However, with power comes the same greed and abuse that they originally fought to abolish. After taking over the Joneses' farm, the governing pig, Napoleon, establishes Seven Commandments by which all animals are to abide. The Commandments are eventually abridged to read, simply, "All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others."

How does the Commandment from *Animal Farm* compare to the U.S. Constitution's Bill of Rights, which states that "all men are created equal ... endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, [and] that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness"?

[Answers will vary. Example: Although both claim to grant equal rights to all, in reality, both applied only to specific types of individuals. At the time that the Bill of Rights was written, the rights that it provided applied only to white men who owned property. Women, blacks, and children were considered to be property and were not given equal rights. Similarly, although *Animal Farm's* Commandment stated that "[a]ll animals are equal," it did not give the same rights to all the animals.]

The Animal Welfare Act (AWA) of 1966 is the only federal law in the U.S. that regulates the treatment of animals used in laboratories, for entertainment, and by "dealers," yet it does not cover many other animals, including the most abused, animals who are raised for food. Why do you think that some animals are protected but not others? Who benefits from such selective protection?

[Answers will vary. Example: If all animals were fully protected, researchers would have to stop testing on animals, slaughterhouse workers would have to ensure that animals were not conscious at the time of slaughter and completely change many of their methods, circus employees would not be allowed to beat animals with whips and bullhooks, and operators of fur factory farms would not be permitted to electrocute animals. Those who use animals for research benefit greatly from this selective protection. About 95 percent of the animals used in research are birds, rats, and mice, but these animals were excluded from the AWA's protection when it was signed into law in 1966.]

Rather than protecting animals, the AWA establishes the minimum housing and maintenance standards for confined animals. Sadly, the minimum care that is required often becomes the maximum care that is provided. The AWA is also the standard upon which all other laws, policies, and guidelines on animal care are based.

In 2002, Senator Jesse Helms inserted language into the Farm Bill that permanently excludes the millions of birds, rats, and mice used in painful experiments from receiving the minimal protection that is provided by the federal Animal Welfare Act. The bill was passed by Congress on May 8, 2002.

In 1910, South Africa was granted its independence from British rule, but the new Union of South Africa was formed with a government that only recognized the rights of English and Dutch white colonials. Racial discrimination became institutionalized in 1948 with the enactment of apartheid laws, such as the Population Registration Act of 1950, which required that all citizens be classified in one of three categories: "white," "black (African)," or "colored (of mixed descent)."

Nelson Mandela, who, in 1994, became the first democratically elected president of South Africa, has been a voice for the oppressed people in South Africa from the time that he was a young leader with the African National Congress in 1944. He was beaten, accused of treason, and jailed for speaking out against the government and for advocating for the equal rights of all South Africans.

César Chávez, a farm worker himself, believed that farm workers in the United States deserved better wages, fair treatment, and safer working conditions. He was also an ethical vegetarian and animal rights proponent for more than 30 years. He was committed to using nonviolent actions to promote social change for people and animals.

Answer the following questions on the back of this sheet or on a separate piece of paper:

**1. Why do you think that people such as Mandela and Chávez risk ridicule, opposition, and their own lives to speak out for the rights and protection of others?**

[Answers will vary. Encourage students to share and discuss their responses.]

**2. Why do you think that people resist and criticize change?**

[Answers will vary. Discuss factors—such as fear, inconvenience, monetary factors, and social or political pressure—that affect people’s willingness to accept change, and apply these factors to the campaigns of Mandela, Chávez, and others throughout history who campaigned for changes such as universal suffrage and animal liberation.]

**3. Compare the ways that people have been discriminated against based on their skin color to the ways that animals are treated based on their “usefulness” (i.e., as food, entertainment, clothing, or research subjects) to humans.**

[Answers will vary. Example: We have learned that when the Bill of Rights was written, it granted rights only to property-owning white men. Africans who were brought to America and forced into slavery were considered to be less than human and were not given equal rights. People found it easier to justify exploiting them because many people wrongly believed that Africans did not have the same emotions, feelings, and needs as white colonial men. Similarly, some people deny that animals experience the same emotions or have the same needs as humans, and this denial makes it easier for those people to justify the exploitation of animals. Prior to the Civil War, those in power knew that if the government were to abolish slavery, they would have to go without many of the comforts and services that they had become accustomed to. Today, humans know that if animals were given the same protection from harm as humans, it would affect the way that people have grown accustomed to living.]

**4. Does belonging to a particular race, ethnicity, religious group, gender, or species give someone the right to abuse another who is “different”? Explain.**

[Discuss as a class.]

**Change does not come from acceptance but rather from a conviction and determination to make things better. Margaret Mead, Ph.D., wrote, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” What did she mean by this? Apply it to what you’ve learned about Mandela and Chávez.**

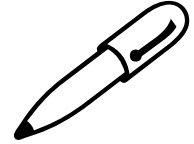
[Answers will vary. Example: Dr. Mead meant that change begins with an individual conviction and can be created by a few determined people. History has demonstrated that when an oppressed group stands up, refuses to be taken advantage of, and campaigns to educate others, change begins to take shape. But change does not always come quickly. After the women’s suffrage movement began, it took nearly a century before women were granted the right to vote, and it took Chávez and the United Farm Workers more than a decade to effect change.]

**At one time, African-Americans, women, and children were considered to be nothing more than property. Today, animals are considered to be property and are, therefore, afforded very few rights and limited protection. Often, those who speak up for animals are ridiculed and threatened. German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer once wrote, “All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as self-evident.” Germany recently included the protection of animals in its constitution. What phase do you think the animal rights movement is in? What is the future of the animal rights movement? How will protecting animals’ rights benefit all life?**

[Answers will vary.]

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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