

## Research and Discussion Topics for High School and College Students



- **Describe the differences** between the farmed animals we heard of as children (e.g., “Old MacDonald’s farm” or Wilbur in *Charlotte’s Web*) and the animals in modern agriculture’s factory farms.
- **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 companion animals. [Suggested resource: [HelpingAnimals.com](http://HelpingAnimals.com)]
- **Find out the source** of animals at a local pet store and investigate the number of animals being raised by dealers and breeders to be sold in your area. Also, contact your local animal shelter and find out how many stray or abandoned animals are euthanized per year. Compare the data and formulate an argument for or against puppy mills and other dealers who breed animals to sell.
- **Research the topic** of animal behavior. Is there evidence that animals experience stress and depression? If so, what could be some causes? Give examples of animal companions as well as of other animals (such as those who live in zoos or circuses). Are there solutions?
- **Evaluate** how everyday speech (e.g., “chickening out,” “being a guinea pig”) is a reflection of how we perceive the world and our relationship to its inhabitants.
- **Discuss the question**, “Is it ever acceptable to break a law (such as breaking into an animal laboratory and freeing animals) if there is proof that animals are being abused?”
- **Choose an event** involving animals, such as an animal rights demonstration, a fur fashion show, or a circus. Examine and compare several perceptions of the same event. For example, discuss a circus from the point of view of an animal rights activist, a circus trainer, a spectator, and an elephant. What motivates each? Which motivation is the most compassionate?
- **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 elephants’ 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?
- **Examine** the environmental impact of classroom dissection. What happens when a large number of animals, such as frogs, are taken from the wild? How are the

### 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.



animals killed? What chemicals are involved when the animals are “processed,” and how are the chemicals disposed of? Are the chemicals dangerous to humans? What happens to the animals after the dissection is completed?

- **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?
- **Compare** the progression of the civil rights movement in the U.S. to the current animal rights movement. What methods did each use? What are the most effective methods of changing attitudes and changing traditions?
- **Research** the family and social structure and mating patterns of various animal species. Discuss the strong bonds present among members of many species (for example, some animals mate for life, elephants stay with their mothers for years, etc.). When humans disrupt these patterns (for example, by capturing animals for aquariums, zoos, and medical experiments or by hunting), how are the animals affected?
- Some people say that animals are so like humans that we must use them for medical experiments and even for organ transplants. On the other hand, they also say that animals are so dissimilar to humans that they do not experience pain, loneliness, and sadness and that they have no souls so they are not due the same ethical considerations given to humans. Can both of these arguments be true, or are they contradictory? Debate the issue or research and present your own conclusions.
- **Research the origins** of the practice of classroom dissection. How has the focus of science changed since then? Does dissection provide essential information that students need? If so, are there humane ways to learn it? Is there other information that you think is more worthwhile for students to learn?
- **Investigate the sources** of animals used for classroom dissection. Are they bred for this purpose, captured from the wild, stolen from families, purchased from a shelter, or a “byproduct” of the meat industry? Do their origins affect the ethical consideration we give them? Are some sources considered more acceptable than others? Why?

