



THE INSTITUTE FOR HUMANE EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 260
SURRY, MAINE 04684
207.667.1025
info@HumaneEducation.org
www.HumaneEducation.org

THE DREADED COMPARISON

Grades: 7 and up

Time: 45-60 minutes

Materials: Large pieces of paper (easel-sized); markers; black/white board with chalk/markers; photos that depict injustices toward humans and other species; (Marjorie Spiegel's *The Dreaded Comparison* is a good book for this.); student journals

Relevant Subjects: Social Studies, History, and Language Arts

1. Divide the class into two groups. Give each group an easel-sized piece of paper. Ask one group to list all the **Reasons Why** one group of people may oppress another group of people (e.g., power, belief of superiority, control, financial gains, etc.). Ask the other group to write down all **The Ways** that one group of people has oppressed another group of people. (Allow 10–15 minutes for this.)
2. Post the two pieces of paper in the front of the room so that all the students can see the Reasons Why and The Ways lists.
3. Ask students whether each Reason Why and each Way also applies to other animals; if it does, draw a star next to the Reason Why or the Way. (Note that 95-100% of the items on the lists will also be true for nonhuman animals).
4. Ask students what the definition of racism is; write their response on the board. Then ask students what speciesism is. (If they do not know, ask them what species means and what it usually means when *-ism* is part of a word.)
5. Show students photos that depict similar injustices perpetrated on nonhuman animals and humans, such as a slave ship and a modern factory farm, syphilis experiments on African-Americans and chimpanzees, choke collars around a slave and a dog, etc. (Many pictures can be found in *The Dreaded Comparison*, or you can find your own.)
6. Ask students what connections they see between the two sets of photos and what they think about the comparison.
7. Explain that these comparisons are not meant to suggest that people and nonhuman animals are the same -- because we are obviously different -- but to illustrate that the

roots of oppression are similar, that the execution of oppression is similar, and that if we understand these connections, we can create a more humane world for both people and other species. Hold a discussion exploring these issues.

8. Ask the whole class to list **Reasons** that people choose not to oppress other people (love, compassion, understanding equality, etc.), and **Ways** people have worked not to oppress other people (campaign work, marches, protests, letter writing, boycotts, etc.). Ask if all these reasons and ways can apply to other species.

9. Ask students to do a free write about their feelings on oppression and to write one thing they can do to help create a world that is more humane for everyone.

Activity by Kimberly Korona (M.Ed. Graduate)