

Teachers' Notes

How Do Animals Matter? Opinions, Religious and Secular

A small group discussion exercise for Religious Studies or General Studies.

How Animals Matter – Opinions, Religious and Secular is one of three quotation-discussion exercises in this pack. The others cover *Philosophical Issues* and a more general *Range of Viewpoints* about our treatment of animals, especially those which are reared for food. Please see the separate sheet of Teachers' Notes which discusses the other two exercises.

HOW IT WORKS:

Each page contains eight "cards" like the two in the diagrams. Each contains an opinion about the status of animals or how they should be treated. In this exercise these opinions come either from a religious or secular (non-religious) point of view. Views from a range of world religions are represented.

Students can:

- Discuss how far they agree or disagree with the statement on the card
- Sort the cards into groups of world religions
- Role play how followers of different religions might sort the cards

This is a **flexible resource** which can be photocopied for use either as cards or as worksheets for discussion, individual opinion-forming, research or as general background information about the range of religious and non-religious views about animals. Individual cards can also be used in turn to stimulate lengthy whole class discussions.

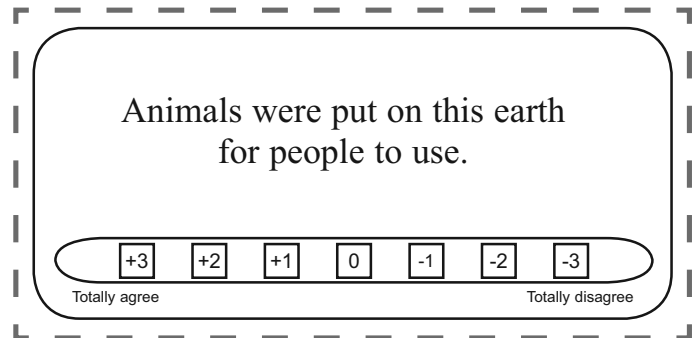


Fig 1

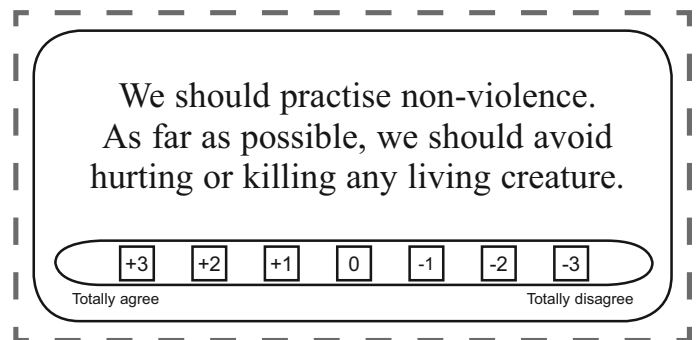


Fig 2

Use with *Farm Animals and Us* video or, for groups aged 14 and upwards, use *Farm Animals and Us 2*.



Please turn over for lesson plan suggestions, and to the separate sheet on Animals in Religion for background information.

POSSIBLE LESSON PLAN (see separate sheet on *Animals in Religion* for reference; it may be useful to have photocopies of this for more able members of the class to use, but it is primarily written for the teacher).

1. Brainstorm a list of world religions (eg Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism and Taoism). Sort religions into groups such as *Monotheistic* (“*Religions of the Book*”) and *Eastern Religions* (whole class activity).
2. Brainstorm how different religions teach us to treat animals (whether we should eat them, whether they have souls etc).
3. (Small group activity) Hand out the activity *How Do Animals Matter? – Opinions Religious and Secular* as cards or as a worksheet. Ask groups to discuss their opinions.
4. Ask groups when they finish to see which religions they feel each card goes with. They could sort the cards into piles for:
 - *Monotheistic Religions* (“*Religions of the Book*”)
 - *Eastern Religions*
 - *Secular non-religious views* (will contain a range of opinions!)
5. Encourage them also to consider whether some cards might fit into more than one category.
6. Briefly discuss the results, if appropriate. Please be clear that there may be legitimate differences of opinion as to which card goes with which group of religions. Followers of any one religion may not always agree with each other! Whilst several of the cards are based on specific teachings of particular religions, others are more general; some are non-religious philosophical statements. The separate sheet on *Animals in Religion* should help to categorise many of them.
7. Extension – ask more able groups to compare their results with a photocopy of the section on *Animals in Religion*.
8. Watch all or part of the video *Farm Animals & Us*, or for groups aged 14 or above, use *Farm Animals & Us 2*.
9. Discuss.
10. Return to the card exercise to see if any opinions have changed.

ALTERNATIVE LESSON SUGGESTIONS:

1. If more than one lesson is available, use these cards in a follow-up lesson. We suggest you try the video with the activity *How do animals matter? – A range of philosophical viewpoints*, which is also about quotations, in a previous lesson. The *Personality Test* exercise also examines different ways of looking at animal issues.
2. Divide the class into groups. Get each one to research, using the library and the Internet, the attitude of a different religion to animals, vegetarianism etc. Can they find some of the original quotes on which the card statements were based?
3. Follow the research with a role-play exercise. Ask each group to consider a particular religion, and decide how they think the followers of that religion would complete the card exercise. Encourage groups to look at each other’s results.
4. Use the cards for a whole class discussion. Sit the class in a circle and share one set of cards between them. Ask each in turn to choose one of their cards and read it out. They then suggest which religions or viewpoints would agree or disagree with this card, and state their own opinion. They then place their card in the centre of the circle on a line from totally agree to totally disagree. If appropriate, the issues can be opened to general discussion at suitable times. This method can promote long discussions!
5. Survey people from different religious groups (and people who are not religious). Do the views vary between the different groups, or are opinions similar?
6. Diamond ranking system. Choose a criterion for ranking the cards in order (eg the one I agree with most). Choose any 9 related statements, re-photocopy and cut them into cards. Groups of 2-4 students put their favourite statement at the top; the two next best in the second row; 3 in the third row; then two; then the least pertinent at the bottom. The result looks like a diamond. The principle also works with 16 statements (2 pages).

ANIMALS IN RELIGION.

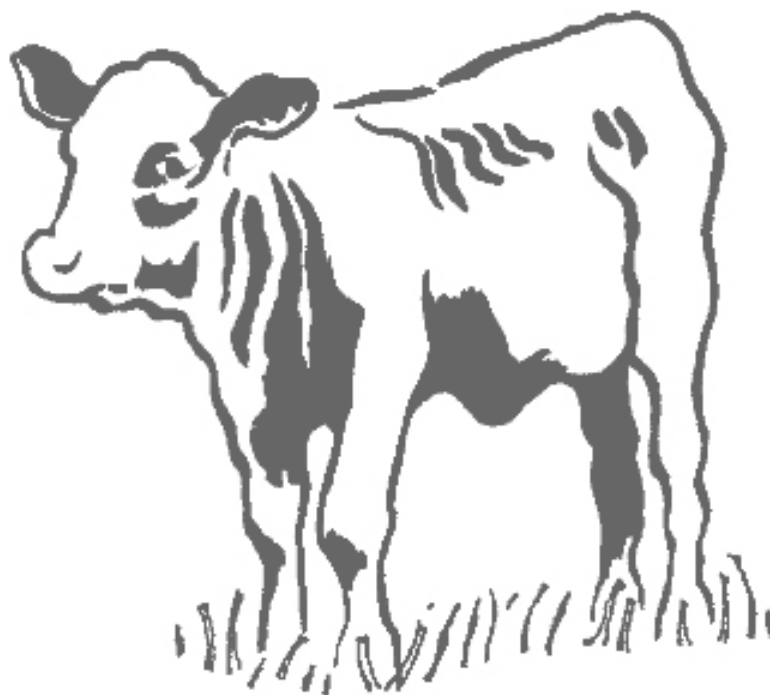
Should we be kind? The cards reflect the fact that all modern religions have teachings that support kindness to animals. In Luke Chapter 12, the New Testament states that even sparrows “are not forgotten before God.” The prophet Mohammed made a number of statements to the effect that there is a reward in heaven for every act of kindness to an animal. The Eastern religions contain many references encouraging kindness and non-violence.

Can we eat meat? You will find both vegetarians and meat eaters amongst the supporters of most religions. Some religions actively promote vegetarianism. No religion actively encourages meat eating, but some allow it. There are usually rules attached, some of which are designed to prevent cruelty.

The three “Religions of the Book” (the monotheistic religions Judaism, Islam and Christianity) teach the concept of **stewardship**. We were put here to look after the earth and we must manage it properly. People may use animals for food, but we have a responsibility to look after the animals’ welfare. The Bible starts with a description of a vegetarian paradise (the Garden of Eden); then permission to use animals is given after the flood (the Second Covenant), subject to conditions partly designed to reduce suffering; another vegetarian paradise is described in Isaiah after the Second Coming (the leopard lying down with the kid and the lion eating straw like the ox). The prophet Mohammed preached that animals should not be killed without a rightful reason. He argued that if you must kill, you must kill without torture.

Some Eastern religions (Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism especially) encourage vegetarianism. They preach non-violence (ahimsa) with the idea that, as far as possible, we should avoid hurting or killing any living creature. To the Hindu, the man who does not eat meat is a friend of all creatures; the Buddha taught that to harm one creature is to harm all; the Jains, in particular, argue that we should avoid harming even insects. The Taoists believe that people should live in harmony with nature.

There is a range of opinions and practices, within any one religion, on animal issues. As stated before, supporters of most religions include both meat eaters and vegetarians. Two more examples follow.



Do animals have souls? Some Roman Catholics, following St Thomas Aquinas, believe that animals do not have souls and that man does not have any duties towards other creatures. On the other hand, St Francis preached that animals were our fellow creatures and his followers often have a very caring attitude to animals. The Bible doesn’t answer this question directly, though the reference in Isaiah to animals at the Second Coming might suggest that they do have souls. Another point of disagreement refers to man being given dominion over animals in the Garden of Eden. Some scholars think this means that animals are there for us to use; others believe it means we have to look after them (after all, the Garden of Eden is vegetarian).

For Moslems, the prophet Mohammed preached that other animals form communities like we do, that each one knows its prayer and psalm, that Allah is aware of what they do and that the earth’s resources are to be shared between man and other animals. The Eastern religions generally believe in reincarnation, that we may have been animals in previous lives and, that if we sin, we may be reincarnated as animals again in the future.