



ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What would it really be like to experience a day in the life of another creature?

OVERVIEW

Students will read a brief story about an animal's life and will be asked to imagine life from that animal's perspective. They will then write a letter to communicate what a day in his or her life is like.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to...

- Practice perspective-taking.
- Write a friendly letter utilizing all five parts of a letter and appropriate grammar conventions.
- Write a fictional informative text from an animal's point of view.

Day 1:

1. Warm Up (15 min.)

- Ask students to imagine that they are away from their parents (at camp or visiting family) and need to write a letter home to tell their parents how they are doing and what a normal day is like for them.
- On the board or on a projection device, demonstrate the steps of writing a letter, including the elements of a heading, greeting, body, closing, and signature. Model age-appropriate level of detail, vocabulary, and content.
- Involve students in writing the details to help demonstrate the notion of writing about an imagined perspective. Explain that perspective-taking is when we try to understand a situation from someone else's point of view.
- Ask students to share times when they needed to understand someone else's perspective. If students are having difficulty thinking of actual situations, ask them to think of a situation when one of the following happened:
 - ➡ They had a disagreement with someone.
 - ➡ Someone reacted in a way that was unexpected.
 - ➡ They tried to find a compromise with someone.

GRADE LEVEL 3-5

TIME NEEDED Two 45 min. periods (plus time for revision)

SUBJECTS Social Studies, English Language Arts

STANDARDS

Common Core
ELA-Literacy: W.3.2, W.4.2, W.5.2
W.3.5, W.4.5, W.5.5

ISTE: Standard 3–
Knowledge Constructor
Standard 6–
Creative Communicator

MATERIALS

- ☐ *A Day in the Life* Photo and Story Cards

VOCABULARY

- Perspective

EDUCATOR SPOTLIGHT

Kristina Hulvershorn

Perspective-taking and role-playing are powerful ways to help students develop empathy. We are rarely asked to consider the world from someone else's point of view, much less the point of view of an animal. This activity challenges students to use their creativity and empathy, while shining light on topics that are often hidden from their view. Students are fascinated by these stories and, in my experience, appreciate the opportunity to learn about such real and important topics.

2. Meeting the Animals (15 min.)

- Put students in 10 small groups, and pass out the *Day in the Life Story Cards* so that the students can read the stories with their peers. Ask them to discuss the following questions:
 - ➡ What surprised you about the life of the animal in your story?
 - ➡ What would you like to know more about?

3. Research (15 min.)

- Explain that they will consider what a day in the life of their animal is like.
- Allow students time to research questions that arose from the discussion.

Day 2:**4. Writing (30 min.)**

- Using information from their research and story, read the following to the students: *You may have thought about what it might be like to be another person, but have you ever considered what it would really feel like to be an animal? You are going to be asked to imagine that you are the animal from the story you read and the research you just did.*

Imagine you are away from your family and need to write them a letter to tell them how things are going and what you are doing. Think about your daily routine from morning until night. What kinds of things do you do? What do you think about? What emotions do you have? What does your world smell, feel, and sound like? What do you like or not like about your experience?

Add as many details as possible to make it interesting and real. Include all of the elements of a letter and be as creative as possible.

- Set the tone by asking for a quiet writers' workshop. Allow students to revisit the story, review sample letters, view photos, and conduct research as they write.

4. Wrap Up (15 min. plus editing time)

- Encourage multiple drafts and thorough editing (peer editing).
- Once letters have been edited, invite students to read their letters to each other in large or small groups.
- Ask students to think about some of the situations these animals experience in real life. Allow them to reflect openly.
- Discuss the differences between the experiences of the same species of animals.
- Invite discussion on ways that they can help animals. Guide students to understand tangible ways they can help (awareness campaigns, letter writing, consumer action, etc.)

RESEARCH NOTE

It may save time to gather a few books, chapters from books, or articles about each animal from a library and have those available for each group. Children are often curious about details about animals, such as what types of foods they eat, their average lifespan, how "intelligent" they are, etc. If you have access to technology, consider allowing students to conduct online research. Use a safe search engine like Kidrex.org or build your own with only the sites you want students to see with a Google custom search engine.

WRITING NOTE

Some students may remark that because their animals can't write, they shouldn't have to write anything. Acknowledge that this activity requires them to use their imagination because animals do not write the way people do, but do communicate with each other and experience thoughts, feelings, and senses in very similar ways. Explain that this activity is a way to imagine what an animal would want to communicate and then put those thoughts and feelings into words.

WRAP UP NOTE

Be prepared to provide students with specific actions that they can take, related to each animal's story. If possible, allow time for a class project to follow through on one of the ideas generated when discussing ways to help animals.

EXTENSION PROJECTS

- **Art:** Provide students with an opportunity to create masks of their animal. Then, have them read their letters while role-playing as their animal. Record the readings and post them on a classroom-created website.
- **Technology:** Make the letters that your students write come to life with the website Blabberize.com. Blabberize lets you animate any picture of a character and add a sound recording so that it looks like your character is talking with your voice. Allow students to research and find pictures of animals, or find pictures for them. Students can then upload the picture onto Blabberize, and record themselves, using the microphone on a computer or tablet, reading their letter out loud. You may need to help students use Blabberize's mouth tool to locate where the mouths on the animals are. The end product is a very engaging video that helps students imagine what their animal's letter would sound like. Here is an example of Sasha the Elephant: <http://blabberize.com/view/id/1511544>

A DAY IN THE LIFE STORIES



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SASHA

Meet Sasha. She lives with her family in southwest Africa. She is an African elephant who spends her days roaming through the savanna in search of food, eating, splashing around, and drinking from water holes. She travels in a herd with her calf and other elephants. It can get very hot where she lives so she enjoys squirting water from her trunk onto her body to cool off.

She eats grasses, roots, leaves, fruit, twigs, and sometimes tree bark. She actually can eat as much as 300 pounds of food per day. Her herd members help her care for her young, and they depend on each other for protection as well as companionship. The leader of the elephant group is the eldest female elephant, Sasha's aunt. Elephants use low vibrations to communicate with other elephants up to 50 miles away. Female elephants, like Sasha, will stay with their families for their entire lives.

She occasionally visits the bones of family members who have passed away. Scientists think this is how elephants mourn and remember their deceased relatives. She will live to be about 60 or 70 years old.

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MANGO

Meet Mango. Mango is an Asian elephant who tours with a traveling circus in the United States, visiting many cities to perform various acts. He was taken from his family and herd in Asia when he was young and became a captive animal, which means he cannot roam freely or choose what he does or where he goes the way other wild animals do.

Mango is forced to stand in strange positions, balance on platforms, and perform other tricks, by his trainers who use tools called electric prods and bull hooks. Sometimes Mango screams during his training sessions. His trainers are very forceful with him because they want him to learn tricks for the circus acts. He is used to being whipped many times a day.

Circus attendees have observed Mango swaying, chewing, rocking, and licking. Some scientists think that these actions are related to stress and boredom.

He spends his days traveling from city to city in a small trailer, getting trained to learn tricks, and performing. He is alone much of the time.

Most circus elephants only live to be 14. Because they spend most of their time standing on hard surfaces like concrete, they often develop serious foot and joint problems like arthritis, which eventually become so painful they cannot stand up.

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SARAH

Meet Sara. She lives at an animal sanctuary, which is a place where animals who are in need of help are able to live out their lives in peace.

Sara was raised on a factory farm, a place where many chickens are kept indoors with very little space. She was found in a cage after a tornado destroyed the area. She was very nervous for a long time after she was rescued.

She sleeps in a barn, wakes up when she wants to, and is able to wander around the dirt and grassy areas whenever she likes. Sara is a bit shy, but she found companionship with a couple of other hens at the sanctuary. She loves spending time with her friends, investigating her surroundings, scratching in the dirt, pecking for and finding fruit, and taking naps in the sun.

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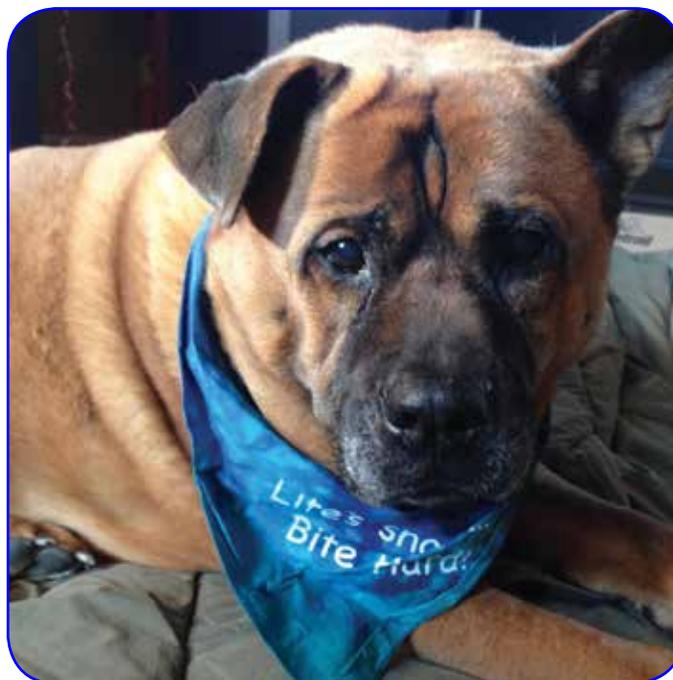


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#4654

Meet #4654. #4654 has never been given a name. She has never known her family and is used to laying eggs for people to eat. She lives in a building with thousands of other chickens. When she was younger she was debeaked, which means people used a sharp, hot blade to cut off part of her beak to keep her from pecking her cage mates. She shares a cage, called a battery cage, with 8 other chickens. She has a space that is smaller than the size of a piece of writing paper to live, so she frequently gets into fights with the other chickens. She will spend her entire life in this cage unable to stretch her wings. Her cage is made of wire and often rubs her feathers off and hurts her feet. She has to produce more than 260 eggs per year. They are all taken for food for people and none are allowed to hatch. When she doesn't produce eggs, the people starve her for a week and a half (a process called "forced molting") to shock her body into producing more eggs. She will never be able to go outside, give herself a dust bath, raise chicks, or feel sunshine.

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HANDSOME

Meet Handsome. Handsome is a 7-year-old Labrador-Chow mix. He lives in Indianapolis, Indiana. He was born near 22nd Street to a stray female dog. A woman picked him up and brought him to the vet. She fell in love with him so she decided to keep him.

The veterinarian diagnosed him with heartworm, an infection where a parasite harms the dog's heart. Luckily they were able to cure him, and he has been healthy ever since.

He loves taking walks, playing tug of war, swimming, rolling in the grass, and playing with his sister, a dog named Nia. He sleeps on his human mom's bed and always watches out for strangers, barking whenever he hears something that he thinks is suspicious. He loves treats and is often spoiled—receiving more than 3 or 4 of them a day.

He has a new baby sister who is a human and loves to watch out for and play with her. He likes scratches behind his ears and lying on the back deck when the weather is nice. Handsome is a very happy and well loved dog.

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ARLO

Meet Arlo. Arlo is a 4-year-old Shepherd-Labrador mix. He lives in New Jersey and has been tied in a backyard since he was 6 months old. His mother was a homeless dog, and several of his litter mates were hit by a car. A boy picked him up and convinced his mom to allow Arlo to stay with them. He was allowed to stay inside when he was a puppy, but when he became big, his family put him in the backyard on a chain. He has fleas, which are very itchy, so his people don't let him come inside at all anymore.

He is not fed every day because sometimes his people forget to give him food. He has only been to the vet once. When it rains, he gets stuck in puddles because he is tied to such a short chain. He gets very cold and has to live near his own waste because of the short chain. He gets very thirsty when his people forget to give him water and very lonely since he spends almost every second of his life alone. He watches birds and squirrels, but can't run to play or chase them. He gets very scared by fireworks and thunder, but does not have any way to protect himself. Arlo longs for someone to take care of him.

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HANNO

Meet Hanno. Hanno is a Philippine Eagle who lives in a protected forest in the Philippines. This means no one can harm his habitat, tear it down, or use it for farm land. He is 3 feet long and weighs 15 pounds. He is expected to live anywhere from 30 to 60 years. He has strong talons and a powerful beak, which he practices using when he is not hunting for food. He travels with his mate, Erma, and they are raising a chick, their son, named Frederico.

He is able to fly, hunt, sleep, and use his time as he wishes in his forest home.

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WINIFRED

Meet Winifred. Winifred is a Philippine Eagle. This was her home. It was torn down to harvest the trees to build furniture and other household goods. Now she is separated from everything she has ever known and is trying to survive in an unfamiliar territory, where she is struggling to find food and nesting materials. She eats all kinds of animals who live in the woods, but since the trees were cut down it has become harder to find food. More than 80% of the trees in her country have been cleared.



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TREY

Meet Trey. Trey is a wild coyote who lives inside a protected forest and prairie area in Ohio. He has a partner, May, with whom he spends most of his time. He has had several litters of pups with her. He is a wonderful hunter and lives on animals like mice and rabbits, as well as fruit and insects. There is plenty of food where Trey lives, and he has no reason to move beyond his home. He has never seen a car and only briefly encountered one human being, who was a hiker.

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JIM

Meet Jim. Jim is a coyote who was born just outside Denver. He used to live near a chicken farm. He couldn't always find enough mice or rabbits, so he occasionally took a chicken. One night the farmer caught him and tried to shoot him. The farmer shot his cubs and his partner. Jim ran almost 100 miles away. He began looking for more food near a neighborhood. He ate a lot of garbage, some rats, and whatever else he could find. He began living in some shrubs near a family's home. One night, when walking their dog, a neighbor saw him and called animal control. The big white truck chased him out of the neighborhood. He ran until he came to an airport which, to a coyote, is a loud and scary place without much food. He goes through trash cans and scavenges for food that people throw away.