

## Vegan Education in Schools

### Ethics course

### Years 7 to 12

#### Lesson 2: The ethical argument for veganism: Exploring animal rights and sentience

##### Overview:

This lesson introduces students to the ethical foundations of veganism through the lens of animal rights and sentience. Rooted in the **abolitionist framework**, it rejects the commodification of animals and promotes veganism as the moral baseline. Students will explore what sentience means, how it applies to non-human animals, and why recognising sentience requires that we stop using animals altogether - not just treat them better.

##### Objectives:

- Understand the concept of sentience and its moral significance
- Distinguish between abolitionist and welfarist animal advocacy approaches
- Develop a reasoned understanding of why veganism is a moral imperative
- Evaluate and respond to common arguments used to justify animal exploitation

##### Outcomes:

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Clearly define sentience and explain its ethical implications
- Differentiate between abolitionist and welfarist animal rights ideologies
- Present arguments for veganism grounded in the rights of sentient beings
- Critically analyse and respond to popular justifications for animal use

##### Materials:

- Whiteboard and markers
- Projector and internet access
- Access to printed or digital readings
- YouTube and article-based resources

### Core readings:

1. [Why we must respect the rights of all sentient animals](#) - Francione & Charlton, OpenDemocracy
2. [The six principles of the abolitionist approach to animal rights](#) - Francione
3. [Abolitionism and welfarism: Two animal advocacy perspectives](#) - Faunalytics

### Supplementary readings (extension):

4. [Veganism: The moral imperative](#) - Francione
5. [Sentience and personhood](#) - Francione
6. [Abolitionist outrage: What the vegan movement can learn from anti-slavery abolitionism](#) - Anima International
7. [Abolitionist animal rights: Critical comparisons and challenges](#) - Joan E. Schaffner (PDF)
8. [Animal rights vs veganism](#) - Vegan FTA
9. [Abolitionism \(Animal Rights\)](#) - Wikipedia overview

### Videos and multimedia:

10. [The Abolitionist Approach to Animal Rights and Veganism as a Moral Imperative](#) - Gary Francione (YouTube)
11. [Do insects feel pain?](#) - The New Yorker
12. [Do worms feel pain and are ants happy?](#) - The Guardian

### Lesson steps:

#### 1. Introduction (5 minutes):

Ask: "What does it mean to be sentient?"

Define sentience as the ability to feel pain, pleasure, and emotions.

Introduce the idea that if an animal is sentient, they should not be used as a resource.

#### 2. Exploring sentience and moral consideration (10 minutes):

Use Bentham's quote: "*The question is not, can they reason? nor, can they talk? but, can they suffer?*"

Discuss examples of sentient animal behaviours (elephants mourning, pigs playing, octopuses solving puzzles).

Introduce the article:

- **Why we must respect the rights of all sentient animals**
- Optional: [Sentience - Francione](#)

### 3. Abolitionist vs welfarist approaches (10 minutes):

Clarify the difference:

- Welfarist: Improve conditions (e.g. bigger cages)
- Abolitionist: End all use (e.g. no cages at all because animals are not property)

Use:

- [Abolitionism and welfarism - Faunalytics](#)
- [Six principles of abolitionism - Francione](#)
- [Animal rights vs veganism - Vegan FTA](#)

### 4. Ethical arguments for veganism (15 minutes):

Introduce the idea that sentience means animals have a right not to be treated as property.

Explore the ethical foundation of veganism: if it's wrong to hurt animals unnecessarily, we must be vegan.

Discuss and challenge common rationalisations like "It's natural" or "I need protein."

Use:

- [Veganism: The moral imperative](#) (Video)
- [Abolitionist outrage - Anima International](#)
- Optional for advanced: [Critical comparisons - Schaffner PDF](#)

### 5. Video presentation (5 minutes):

Play clip from:

- [The Abolitionist Approach to Animal Rights and Veganism as a Moral Imperative](#)  
Encourage students to jot down a key quote or question from the video.

### Homework:

- Read: [Why we must respect the rights of all sentient animals](#)

Write a 500-word essay:

**Prompt:** "How does recognising animal sentience change how we should act? Why does the abolitionist approach insist that veganism is the only ethical response?"

Extension:

- [Abolitionist animal rights Wikipedia entry](#)
- [Do worms feel pain and are ants happy? - The Guardian](#)

Differentiation:

- **For support:**
  - Provide a glossary of key terms (sentience, abolition, welfarism, moral baseline)
  - Use visual aids and sentence starters for the essay
- **For extension:**
  - Assign deeper readings (Anima International, Schaffner PDF)
  - Ask students to research and critique real-world campaigns (e.g. cage-free eggs vs total abolition)

Assessment criteria:

- **Understanding of sentience:** Accurately defines and contextualises sentience
- **Comparison skills:** Clear, accurate contrast between abolition and welfare
- **Argumentation:** Strong, logical reasoning in support of veganism
- **Critical thinking:** Demonstrates ability to deconstruct counterarguments
- **Written expression:** Clarity, structure, and thoughtfulness in reflective writing