

Vegan Education in Schools

Case study of speciesism

Questioning pork - ethics, justice and the future

Years 7 to 12

Lesson 1: The life of a pig - Who are pigs, really?

Overview: This lesson introduces students to pigs as sentient individuals with emotional complexity, intelligence and social bonds. It contrasts the lives of pigs in sanctuaries with those exploited in the pig industry. The lesson uses sanctuary footage and factual resources to build empathy and challenge speciesist assumptions, forming the foundation for the abolitionist vegan framework that will run through the series.

Objectives:

- To develop an understanding of pigs as sentient beings with individual personalities
- To foster empathy and critical thinking about the use of pigs in the farming industry
- To introduce the concept of speciesism and its impact on pigs
- To lay the groundwork for evaluating the pig industry from an abolitionist vegan perspective

Outcomes: By the end of the lesson, students will:

- Describe key aspects of pig sentience, intelligence and social behaviour
- Identify common misconceptions about pigs
- Compare the lives of pigs in sanctuaries with those in farming systems
- Demonstrate an understanding of the concept of speciesism

Materials:

- Video: "[Esther the Wonder Pig's Story](#)" (Caters Clips)
- Video: "[Mind-Blowing Facts About Pigs That Will Leave You Speechless! | Intelligence Of Pigs](#)" (Facts About Fauna)
- Video: "[Piglet on Wheels, Leon Trotsky](#)" (Edgar's Mission)
- Article: "[Pigs Are Intelligent and Clean Animals, Actually](#)" (Sentient Science)
- Whiteboard or digital board for class brainstorm
- Student devices for individual research
- Student notebooks or digital documents for notetaking

Lesson steps:

Introduction (10 minutes):

1. Ask students: "What words come to mind when you hear the word 'pig'?"
2. Record responses on the board.
3. Briefly discuss common stereotypes (dirty, greedy, unintelligent).

Activity 1: Meet the pigs (15 minutes):

1. Watch "[Esther the Wonder Pig's Story](#)" (3 minutes).
2. Follow with discussion:
 - What surprised you about Esther?
 - How did Esther's story challenge your ideas about pigs?

Activity 2: Pigs in sanctuaries (20 minutes):

1. Watch "[Mind-Blowing Facts About Pigs That Will Leave You Speechless! | Intelligence Of Pigs](#)" from Facts About Fauna (4.25 minutes).
2. Watch "[Piglet on Wheels, Leon Trotsky](#)" from Edgar's Mission
3. Students take notes on behaviours they observe (playfulness, affection, curiosity).
4. Class discussion:
 - What needs do pigs have beyond basic survival?
 - How do these sanctuaries meet those needs?

Activity 3: Pig intelligence and speciesism (25 minutes):

1. Read selected sections from Sentient Science article (10 minutes).
2. Small group discussion (10 minutes):
 - What examples from the article show pigs' intelligence?
 - What is speciesism and how does it relate to how pigs are treated?
3. Groups share key points with the class (5 minutes).

Activity 4: Compare two worlds (15 minutes):

1. Students create a two-column comparison:
 - Column 1: A pig's life in a sanctuary
 - Column 2: A pig's life in a typical Australian intensive piggery (based on prior knowledge and upcoming lessons)

2. Students reflect in writing: "Which world do pigs deserve and why?"

Conclusion (5 minutes):

1. Recap key points.
2. Reinforce that pigs are sentient individuals deserving of rights.
3. Preview next lesson on the horrors pigs face from birth in the industry.

Homework: Students write a personal reflection (minimum 150 words) on what they learned about pigs in this lesson and how it affects their views on using animals for food.

Differentiation:

- Provide video transcripts and printed articles for students who prefer or require text-based learning.
- Offer the option for oral reflections instead of written homework for students with writing difficulties.
- Encourage artistic students to draw a sanctuary pig scene instead of a written comparison if preferred.

Assessment criteria:

- Engagement in discussions and activities
- Completion and thoughtfulness of the two-column comparison
- Depth and insight in written or creative reflection
- Ability to explain speciesism in the context of pigs