

Vegan Education in Schools

Vegan Clubs

Years 7 to 12

Animal rights poetry and essay competitions

Overview

Animal rights poetry and essay competitions provide students with a creative platform to express their thoughts and feelings about animals and empathy. By encouraging students to write poems, essays, or short stories, this activity fosters empathy, critical thinking and a deeper understanding of animal rights issues. Competitions can inspire students to use their voices to advocate for animals while showcasing their literary talents.

How to organise animal rights poetry and essay competitions

1. Choose a theme that inspires creativity and empathy.

- Select a theme that resonates with students and connects to animal rights topics:
 - a) **"A voice for the silenced"**: Advocating for animals who cannot speak for themselves.
 - b) **"Life through an animal's eyes"**: Imagining the world from an animal's perspective.
 - c) **"The power of empathy"**: Exploring how kindness can change the lives of animals.
 - d) **"Protecting our planet and its creatures"**: Linking animal rights to environmental issues.
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2. Provide guidelines and categories for submissions.

- Clearly outline the rules for the competition:
 - a) Length requirements: For example, poems must be under 300 words; essays and stories must be between 500–1,000 words.
 - b) Format: Typed or handwritten submissions, with clear identification of the author's name and year level.

- c) Submission deadline and process: Specify when and where entries should be submitted.
 - Include multiple categories to encourage participation:
 - a) Poetry.
 - b) Essays.
 - c) Short stories.
 - d) Visual or spoken-word poetry for a multimedia option.
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3. Introduce the competition with an engaging workshop or discussion.

- Organise a session to inspire students and provide guidance on writing:
 - a) Share examples of famous animal-themed poetry or essays, such as works by Anna Sewell or Henry Beston.
 - b) Discuss key elements of persuasive writing, descriptive storytelling, or poetic devices.
 - c) Include reflective questions to spark ideas, such as:
 - "What does empathy for animals mean to you?"
 - "How do human actions impact the lives of animals?"
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4. Offer resources to help students develop their submissions.

- Provide writing prompts to guide their creative process:
 - a) "Imagine you are a rescued animal. Write about your journey."
 - b) "Describe a world where all animals are treated with kindness."
 - Share tips on structure and style, such as how to craft a compelling argument or evoke emotion through imagery.
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5. Form a judging panel to evaluate the entries.

- Assemble a group of teachers, students, or community members with an interest in writing or animal rights.
- Develop a rubric to ensure fairness in judging, focusing on criteria such as:

- a) Creativity and originality.
 - b) Emotional impact.
 - c) Relevance to the theme.
 - d) Quality of writing (grammar, structure and style).
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6. Recognise and reward outstanding submissions.

- Announce winners in each category and provide meaningful rewards:
 - a) Certificates of achievement for all participants.
 - b) Prizes such as books, eco-friendly stationery, or donations made in the winner's name to an animal charity.
 - c) Publish winning entries in the school newsletter, website, or local media.
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7. Showcase submissions to inspire the school community.

- Organise a reading or exhibition where students can present their work:
 - a) Host a poetry reading or storytelling event during lunch or assembly.
 - b) Display excerpts of submissions on noticeboards or in a dedicated gallery space.
 - Include photos or videos of the authors sharing their pieces for social media platforms.
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8. Connect the competition to broader advocacy efforts.

- Use the competition as a starting point for further action:
 - a) Combine the event with a fundraiser for an animal rescue or shelter.
 - b) Distribute printed copies of the winning entries at community events to spread awareness.
 - c) Organise a follow-up workshop focused on advocacy writing or public speaking.
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9. Reflect on the competition with participants.

- Hold a feedback session to discuss the experience:

- a) "What inspired your writing?"
 - b) "What did you learn about animals and empathy through this process?"
 - c) "How can we use our writing skills to advocate for animals in the future?"
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10. Plan for ongoing creative advocacy opportunities.

- Encourage students to continue using their writing to raise awareness:
 - a) Submit their pieces to external writing competitions or magazines.
 - b) Start a student-led publication dedicated to animal rights and environmental topics.
 - c) Organise regular creative writing sessions as part of a school club.
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Outcomes

- **Empathy and connection:** Writing about animal rights helps students develop a deeper emotional connection to animals.
- **Creative expression:** Students gain confidence in expressing their thoughts and feelings through poetry, essays, or stories.
- **Advocacy skills:** The competition encourages students to think critically about animal protection issues and communicate their ideas effectively.
- **Community engagement:** Sharing submissions raises awareness about animal rights within the school and broader community.
- **Inspiration to act:** Participating in the competition motivates students to use their creativity for advocacy and empathy.