

Vegan Education in Schools

Vegan Clubs

Years 7 to 12

Book and article discussions

Overview

Book and article discussions provide students with an opportunity to dive deep into animal rights topics by engaging with thought-provoking literature. This activity encourages critical thinking, empathy and meaningful conversations about the ethical, environmental and social implications of animal rights. By discussing books like *“Chained”* by Lynne Kelly or articles on current animal rights issues, students can explore diverse perspectives and reflect on their own beliefs and actions.

How to organise book and article discussions

1. Select books and articles that cater to your group’s age and interests.

- **Books:** Choose age-appropriate titles that highlight animal rights themes.
 - *“Chained”* by Lynne Kelly - A novel about the bond between a boy and an elephant in captivity.
 - *“Animal Liberation”* by Peter Singer - A foundational text on animal ethics and rights (for older students).
 - *“Finding Sanctuary”* by Jessie Haas - A story about farmed animal sanctuaries and empathy.
 - **Articles:** Include current and relatable pieces to spark discussion.
 - Articles on animal farming, wildlife conservation or the benefits of vegan diets.
 - News stories about animal rescues or successful animal rights campaigns.
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2. Provide guiding questions to encourage thoughtful reading.

- Distribute a list of questions or prompts to help students engage with the text:
 - "What is the main message or theme of this book/article?"
 - "How does this story make you feel about the way animals are treated?"
 - "What solutions or actions does the author suggest? Do you agree with them?"
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3. Use a variety of formats to keep the discussions engaging.

- Host small group discussions for more intimate conversations.
 - Use a panel format where students present their thoughts to the group.
 - Incorporate creative formats like role-playing characters from the book or debating the author's points.
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4. Include multimedia elements to complement the readings.

- Pair books or articles with related videos, documentaries or podcasts.
 - Example: After reading an article about marine conservation, show a short clip from "Seaspiracy".
 - Listen to an author interview or TED Talk on animal rights to provide additional insights.
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5. Encourage students to reflect on how the readings apply to real-world issues.

- Facilitate discussions that connect the readings to broader animal rights and rights topics:
 - "How does this book/article relate to what we've learned about animal farming?"
 - "What can we do in our own lives to help address the issues raised?"
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6. Incorporate creative activities to deepen engagement.

- Ask students to create artwork, write essays or compose poems inspired by the readings.
- Organise a "book club showcase" where students present their favourite part of the book or article in a creative way.

7. Highlight connections to Australian animals and issues.

- Select texts or articles focusing on local topics, such as:
 - The impact of bushfires on wildlife.
 - The ethical debate around kangaroo culling.
 - The work of Australian sanctuaries like Edgar's Mission.
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8. Facilitate respectful and inclusive discussions.

- Set clear ground rules for discussions, ensuring everyone feels comfortable sharing their views.
 - Encourage active listening and respectful disagreement to foster a positive learning environment.
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9. Share resources for further exploration and learning.

- Provide a list of recommended books, articles or online resources for students interested in diving deeper into the topics.
 - Suggest follow-up actions, such as writing letters to the editor about animal rights or volunteering at a local rescue centre.
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10. Connect the readings to actionable steps students can take.

- Use the discussions to inspire real-world action:
 - Start a petition or campaign based on an issue raised in the readings.
 - Plan a fundraiser for an organisation mentioned in the texts.
 - Encourage students to make changes in their daily lives, such as living vegan or educating their peers.
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Outcomes

- **Critical thinking and reflection:** Students analyse complex topics and form their own opinions about animal rights and ethics.
- **Empathy and awareness:** Reading and discussing animal-centred stories fosters emotional connections to the issues.
- **Engagement and creativity:** Creative activities and group discussions help students process and express their learning.
- **Inspiration to act:** The readings provide concrete examples of advocacy and solutions, motivating students to take meaningful action.
- **Broader perspective:** Students gain insights into local and global animal rights issues, understanding the interconnectedness of ethical, environmental and societal challenges.