

Grade 5 Opinion Performance Task – Zoos

Task:

National Geographic is producing a special magazine edition about zoos. They want students to write opinion papers on whether we should have zoos or not. You have decided to send your writing to National Geographic magazine and hope it will be published.

The topic of your opinion paper is:

Should we have zoos?

You have researched and found a video and three articles about zoos. After you have watched the video and read the sources, you will answer some questions. Briefly scan the sources and the three questions that follow. Then, go back and read the sources carefully so you will have the information you need to answer the questions and complete your research. You may use scratch paper to take notes.

- You will write an opinion paper on this topic related to the sources.

Directions for Beginning:

You will now examine many sources. You can re-examine any of the print sources as often as you like.

Part 1

Sources for Performance Task:

Source #1: YouTube Video

You found a video [Why do we need the modern zoo?](#) by Eco Sapien published on August 1, 2014.

Your teacher will show this video twice and stop several times for you to take notes.

Source #2

You found an article about zoos from a writer for the National Museum of Animals.

The Reality of Zoos

The following article is by Michelle Carr. She is a writer for the National Museum of Animals.

A confused Animal Lover from St. Louis writes, “I’m a huge animal lover, and I understand why the circus is bad for animals, but what about zoos?”

Great question! Many people aren’t aware that zoos are cruel. When I was a kid, I went to the zoo all the time with my family. I loved pandas as a kid (still do!), and I thought seeing them in person would be neat. But once I saw them “up close and personal,” I realized that the animals were miserable. It became very clear to me that the animals in zoos are sad and don’t want to be kept in artificial environments. The animals don’t want people to stare at them. Animals don’t want to listen to children who bang on their windows or have cameras flashing in their faces. To put it simply, zoos are a prison and animals want to be free.

Animals are unable to live very well in small yards, especially with bad weather and climates. For example, elephants typically walk up to 30 miles in just one day in the wild. Lucy, the only elephant at the Edmonton Zoo in Canada, is locked inside a barn when the zoo is closed. During Edmonton’s cold winter months, she spends most of her time indoors, without much room to move. Lucy now has painful arthritis because she is inside so much during the cold winter months.

Most people only spend a few seconds at each display, waiting for the animals to do

something “exciting,” but they gain little understanding of the animals. In addition, captive animals don’t get to choose their mates, and their babies can be sold or traded to other zoos. The Chinese government “rents” pandas to zoos worldwide for fees of more than \$1 million per year.

Instead of going to the zoo, you can learn about animals by watching nature shows on TV or at the movies. Now that I know the reality behind zoos, I don’t go to the zoo. I tell my friends and family to stay away as well. I love animals. I want to see them free, not held like a prisoner behind bars.

Adapted from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), The Reality of Zoos
<http://www.peta.org/living/entertainment/reality-zoos/> Permission granted to use and modify.

Source #3

You found an article about zoos written by a staff member of Zoos Victoria, in Australia.

October 1, 2015



Photo: [Pixaby](#)

Good Zoos

Each day hard working staff in good zoos care for wildlife. Many of these animals are almost extinct. Extinction is when something such as a plant or animal species has died out completely.

We are in the middle of a global extinction crisis

Our world is currently losing species at a very fast rate. The world is experiencing the worst loss of species since dinosaurs died out 65 million years ago.

The table below shows the percentage of animals that might become extinct soon.

| Type of Animal | Percentage that might become extinct |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Mammals | 21% |
| Amphibians | 30% |
| Birds | 12% |
| Reptiles | 28% |
| Fish | 37% |
| Invertebrates (an animal with no backbone) | 35% |

Good zoos help fight wildlife extinction

Good zoos play an important role in fighting extinction. For example, zoos have breeding programs for species that are endangered.

This has made a difference. A 2010 study found that breeding in zoos and aquariums helped to recovery 28% of the species listed as threatened in the wild.

Around the world, zoo conservation efforts have prevented the extinction of various frogs, birds, tree snails and tortoises, just to name a few.

Good zoos work for better animal welfare

Animal welfare is very important. It is as important as the recovery of species in the wild. Good zoos try very hard to make sure that animals in their care have a high quality life. Good zoos care about the health, comfort and security of animals. Zoos try to create conditions where animals feel pleasure and happiness.

The care of animals in zoos needs to be based on an understanding of the needs of each animal. In good zoos, this is done through scientific research focusing on the understanding of animal welfare. This can mean studying their behavior. Sometimes their blood is sampled for research. Animal welfare science is developing fast. We are using the science to improve our ability to keep our animals happy and healthy so they have a rich and full life.

Now is the time to support good zoos

With species almost extinct, the work of good zoos is really important. And that is why now is the time to support good zoos.

*Adapted from Zoos Victoria, Five facts about good zoos <http://www.zoo.org.au/news/five-facts-about-good-zoos>
Permission granted to use and modify.*

Source #4

You found an article from a website dedicated to a 'more peaceful world where animal and human rights are respected and honored.'

Zoos

by Wanda Embar, the founder of Vegan Peace

Almost all of us grow up with fond memories of visiting the zoo. Where else do you get to see amazing, large elephants? Or cute monkeys climbing and playing? Or giraffes with their long necks? Unless you can afford an expensive trip to Kenya, a country in Africa, the zoo is the only place where you can see these amazing animals up close.

I think that zoos are bad for the animals that live in them.

Enclosures

The major problem with zoos is that the animals are kept in enclosures that don't allow them to live their lives in a natural way. Zoos try to make the enclosures really big. They have many trees. They make them beautiful with paintings on the wall. However, nothing compares with the natural habitat the animals were meant to be in. Zoo animals have to spend day after day, week after week, year after year in the exact same enclosure. This makes their lives very dull.

Elephants in the wild travel many miles a day in herds of about ten. They are very social animals. In zoos, elephants are usually kept in pairs or even isolated. Their enclosures are incredibly small, compared to what they are used to in the wild. Elephants often show many signs of being stressed out or bored, like engaging in repetitive movements.

It is no surprise that elephants don't do well in zoos at all. The average lifespan of zoo elephants is about 16-18 years, while wild elephants can live 50-70 years.

Life is difficult for zoo animals. They have hardly any privacy. They don't have a

chance to exercise. Even animals born in zoos keep their natural instincts. Tigers and polar bears still like to hunt. In zoos, they are fed every day. Animals in zoos would rather walk outside for tens of miles each day.

Breeding Programs

Zoos spend a lot of money on their breeding programs, even though breeding animals in captivity isn't the best way to help in conservation. It is at least 50 times more expensive to keep elephants in zoos than to protect the same number of elephants in the wild. It is better to use money for conservation programs in the wild by creating more protected reserves for instance. This will allow the animals to live in their natural habitat and it also helps balance whole ecosystems. Zoos main interest in breeding programs is to attract visitors, who love to see baby animals.

Teaching Tool

Zoos are considered a great teaching tool where children and adults can learn a lot about wild animals. Zoos, however, hardly teach you anything about how wild animals live and behave in nature. Zoos are not much more than a collection of sad and exploited animals. Zoos give a very bad example about how we should treat these fellow occupants of our Earth.

Adapted from Vegan Peace, Zoos http://www.veganpeace.com/animal_cruelty/zoos.htm Permission granted to use and modify.

Your Assignment:

National Geographic is producing a special magazine edition about zoos. They want students to write opinion papers on whether we should have zoos or not. You have decided to send your writing to National Geographic magazine and hope it will be published.

The topic of your opinion paper is: ***Should we have zoos?***

Make sure you clearly state your opinion and write several paragraphs supporting your opinion with reasons and details from the sources. Develop your ideas clearly and use your own words, except when quoting directly from the sources. Be sure to give the source title or number for the details or facts you use.

Opinion Essay Scoring:

Your opinion paper will be scored using the following:

1. **Ideas** – How well did you state your opinion? How well did you support your ideas with facts, details, or other information?
2. **Organization** – How well did you group your ideas to make it easy for the reader to follow? How well did you use transition words and phrases? How effective was your introduction and conclusion?
3. **Voice** – How well did you write for your audience? How well did you show your interest in this topic?
4. **Word Choice** – How well did you write ideas in your own words and use specific words appropriate for your audience and purpose?
5. **Sentence Fluency** – How well did you begin your sentences in different ways? How well did you make sentences of different lengths and patterns?
6. **Conventions** – How well did you follow the rules of grammar usage, punctuation, capitalization and spelling?
7. **Use of Sources** – How well did you use relevant and specific information from the sources? How well did you reference the sources you used?

Now begin work on your opinion paper. Make sure you:

- plan your multi-paragraph opinion paper
- write your multi-paragraph opinion paper
- revise and edit the final draft of your multi-paragraph opinion paper

Word processing tools and spell check are available to you.