

The Baghdad Zoo Rescue: A Tale of Compassion

Overview:

Our relationship with animals is an essential aspect of being human. During times of conflict, human actions have a significant impact on the animal world. In this lesson students will learn about the rescue of the animals at the Baghdad Zoo during the United States invasion of Iraq. They will listen to a podcast featuring environmentalist and animal conservationist Lawrence Anthony, write in journals, summarize and synthesize information and create a class mural.

Grade Level: 6-12

Subject:

Language Arts, Arts, History

Learning Objectives:

Students will do the following:

- brainstorm ideas
- engage in small-group and whole-group discussion
- conduct Internet research
- summarize and synthesize information
- respond to writing journal prompts
- listen to a podcast
- create a class mural

Learning Activities

Building Background

Activity One: Who Cares About the Animals?

The purpose of this activity is to help students develop background knowledge about the human impact on animals during times of conflict.

1. Ask your class to brainstorm responses to the following question:

- What happens to animals during times of war and conflict?

Record students' responses on the board.

Tell the class that they are going to learn about how environmentalist and conservationist Lawrence Anthony was involved in the rescue of the animals from the Baghdad Zoo in the wake of the United States invasion of Iraq. Read aloud the brief introduction to this story on the following website:

<http://www.lawrenceanthony.co.za/News.aspx?tid=7>. Ask students to share their responses to what they read, and have them generate a list of questions they have about the rescue. Post the list to use as a shared resource for subsequent lesson activities.

2. Divide the class into small groups. Tell the students they are going to research information about Lawrence Anthony's book entitled *Babylon's Ark: The Incredible Wartime Rescue of the Baghdad Zoo*. Tell the students that they must find and summarize an article about the book or a review of the book. Some possible sources include the following:

- <http://www.paraview.com/anthony/>
- <http://www.thulathula.com/baghdad.htm>
- <http://search.barnesandnoble.com/booksearch/isbnInquiry.asp?z=y&EAN=9780312358327&itm=2>
- http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/04/29/sunday/main2739181_page2.shtml

Provide time for each group to share its summaries with the entire class.

Steps for Learning

Activity One: Podcast

The purpose of this activity is to provide students with an opportunity to listen to a podcast and summarize, synthesize and evaluate information.

1. Divide the class into small groups. Provide each group with a copy of the "Podcast Review" handout below. As a class, listen to the National Public Radio broadcast entitled "Author Describes Rescue of Baghdad's Zoo Animals" at

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7757568>. Click on "Listen Now." When the podcast is complete, ask the students to complete the handout. Lead a class discussion based on the students' responses.

Answer the questions below after you listen to the podcast.

- What was Lawrence Anthony's first reaction?
- Describe how the animals were traumatized.
- How did this situation make you feel?
- How did Anthony make a connection with the animals?
- What tasks did Anthony feel needed to be done?
- Who got involved in helping the animals?
- What did they do?
- What surprised you the most?
- How did people come together?
- Why do you think people rallied around the cause of helping the animals?
- How did Anthony find food for the zoo animals?
- What does Anthony think about zoos in general?
- Why do you think people came to view the animals and clap and cheer for the animals that were rescued from

the zoo?

- Where are the rescued animals now?

Activity Two: Journal Writing

The purpose of this activity is to provide students with an opportunity to reflect on what they learned from listening to the podcast.

1. Ask the students to respond in writing journals to the following prompt:

Lawrence Anthony was watching the fall of Baghdad on TV from the relative comfort of Thula Thula in April 2003 when he realised that he, of all people on earth, was going to do what he could to rescue the animals of Baghdad. He says:

Standing out there on that magnificent African starlit night, watching my elephants contentedly showing off their progeny, I decided for once I was not going to be a bystander. Enough was enough. It was time for me to make a stand, even if I failed.

Source:

<http://charlotteotter.wordpress.com/2007/11/02/why-animals-matter/>

What do you think inspired Lawrence Anthony's rescue efforts?

Divide the class into small groups, and invite students to share their responses. Ask for volunteers to share the results of their small-group discussion with the entire class.

The Baghdad Zoo Rescue Mural

The purpose of this activity is to provide students with an opportunity to create a dramatic artistic response to what they learned about the rescue of the animals in the Baghdad Zoo.

1. Tell the students that they are going to create a class mural dramatizing the rescue of the animals at the Baghdad Zoo and their response to this event. Have each group create one panel of the mural. Tell the students to review their handouts and their writing journals to help them develop ideas for the mural. Invite others in the school and community to view the students' work.

Extension Activities

Activity One: The Berlin Zoo

1. Ask your students to conduct research on the events that occurred at the Berlin Zoo during World War II. The following website is a good place to begin research:
<http://www.zoo-berlin.de/en/understand/about-the-zoo.html>

Invite the students to share what they learn with their classmates.

Activity Two: Animal Care Efforts

1. Ask your students to research efforts that are being made to help animals across the world. Some excellent sources include the following:

- Elephant Art & Conservation Project
<http://www.elephantart.com/catalog/aboutus.php>
- Cambodian Wildlife Rescue
<http://www.cambodianwildliferescue.org/>

Invite the students to share what they learn with their classmates.

Activity Three: Letter Writing

1. Ask your students to write a letter to the editor of a newspaper explaining why it is important to care about animals in the middle of a conflict. Invite the students to

share their letters with their classmates.

National Education Standards

www.mcrel.org

READING

Standard 7.

Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/standardDetails.asp?subjectID=7&standardID=7>

Level III (Grades 6-8)

1. Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of informational texts (e.g., electronic texts; textbooks; biographical sketches; directions; essays; primary source historical documents, including letters and diaries; print media, including editorials, news stories, periodicals, and magazines; consumer, workplace, and public documents, including catalogs, technical directions, procedures, and bus routes)

3. Summarizes and paraphrases information in texts (e.g., arranges information in chronological, logical, or sequential order; conveys main ideas, critical details, and underlying meaning; uses own words or quoted materials; preserves author's perspective and voice)

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

1. Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of informational texts (e.g., textbooks, biographical sketches, letters, diaries, directions, procedures, magazines, essays, primary source historical documents, editorials, news stories, periodicals, catalogs, job-related materials, schedules, speeches, memoranda, public documents, maps)

WRITING

Standard 4.

Gathers and uses information for research purposes

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/standardDetails.asp?subjectID=7&standardID=4>

Level III (Grades 6-8)

3. Uses a variety of resource materials to gather information for research topics (e.g., magazines, newspapers, dictionaries, schedules, journals, phone directories, globes, atlases, almanacs, technological sources)

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

2. Uses a variety of print and electronic sources to gather information for research topics (e.g., news sources such as magazines, radio, television, newspapers; government publications; microfiche; telephone information services; databases; field studies; speeches; technical documents; periodicals; Internet)

ARTS CONNECTIONS

Standard 1.

Understands connections among the various art forms and other disciplines

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/standardDetails.asp?subjectID=9&standardID=1>

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

1. Knows ways in which various arts media can be integrated

HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING

Standard 2. Understands the historical perspective

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/standardDetails.asp?subjectID=3&standardID=2>

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

5. Understands that the consequences of human intentions are influenced by the means of carrying them out

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Standard 1.

Contributes to the overall effort of a group

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/Benchmark.asp?SubjectID=22&StandardID=1>

Level IV (Grade K-12)