



THE INSTITUTE FOR HUMANE EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 260
SURRY, MAINE 04684
207.667.1025
info@HumaneEducation.org
www.HumaneEducation.org

WHAT MAKES A HUMANE BEING?

Grades: 3 through 6

Time: 30-60 minutes

Materials: Two prepared poster boards (see below), individual envelopes with information and photos enclosed (see below); Velcro; pencils/pen and paper for each student; black/white board and chalk/markers

Relevant Subjects: Social Studies and Language Arts

Preparation: Find sample stories with accompanying photos (see below) that represent examples of desirable and undesirable human qualities. Depending on how you wish to lead this activity, you may want all the stories to be about the same general topic (animal cruelty/kindness, human rights/oppression, environmental preservation/destruction, or cover a mixture of topics). You should have enough examples so that small groups can each have at least one “desirable” and one “undesirable” example. Once you have enough examples for your class, laminate them and put a small Velcro strip on the back of each one. Put each one in an envelope. Number the envelopes. (Be sure that example 1 and the last example are examples of “desirable” qualities, so that you begin and end on a positive note.)

Prepare two poster boards. One with the heading “Desirable Human Qualities” and one with the heading “Undesirable Human Qualities.” Put long strips of Velcro on the poster boards under the headings (so that the sample stories can be placed on the poster board under the appropriate heading). Place the poster boards on the wall.

1. Ask students to respond to the question “What are the most desirable qualities of humans?” Give them a few minutes to write down at least five qualities they think would be the **best qualities** a human could have. [You may wish to give a couple of examples if students are unsure of what you mean (compassion, kindness, etc.)].
2. Ask volunteers to share, while you write their responses on the black/white board under the heading “Desirable Human Qualities.” (The list might include qualities such as compassion, empathy, kindness, tolerance, patience, generosity, thoughtfulness, creativity, love, etc.)

3. “Now let’s look at the other end of the spectrum....” Have students take a few minutes to write down at least five qualities they think would be the most **undesirable** qualities a human could have. Ask volunteers to share, while you write their responses on the black/white board under the heading “Undesirable Human Qualities.” (The list might include qualities such as cruelty, spite, impatience, greed, envy, jealousy, hatred, racism, thoughtlessness, immorality, etc.)

“Do we all agree that each list represents some of the most desirable and undesirable qualities of humans?”

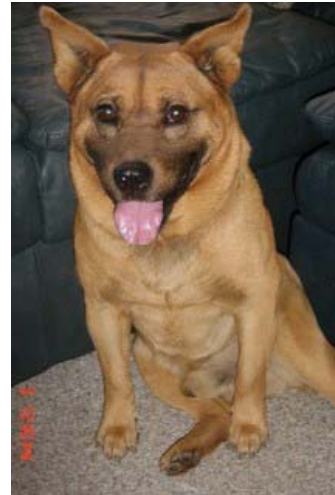
4. Have students get into groups of four or five. Pass out a couple of envelopes to each group (be sure that each group receives at least one “desirable” and one “undesirable” story). When each group receives their envelopes, have them open them one at a time, read the information on the card inside and look at the accompanying picture. As a group, have them discuss where they think this card should be placed: under the “Desirable Human Qualities” category or under the “Undesirable Human Qualities” category. Groups will also need to decide which of their members will read the information on each card to the rest of the class, and which will place each card under the appropriate heading on the poster board and explain why the group chose to place it there.
5. Once groups have had time to categorize their cards and choose readers and card placers/speakers, ask the group with the envelope marked #1 to take the card out, read what it says, and share the photo with the class. Then have that group place their card under the heading they chose and explain why. Repeat with each group until all examples have been shared and posted.
6. Once each group has had the opportunity to share their cards and hang them under the posters on the front wall, lead a discussion about what they notice about which stories fall under which categories and which qualities are desirable.
7. Ask students (as a class or in small groups) to brainstorm ways that they can encourage more desirable qualities in themselves and others.

Activity by Valerie Belt (HECP Graduate)

SAMPLE CARDS (SHOWING ANIMAL CRUELTY/KINDNESS):



BEFORE



AFTER

“Here are photos of a special dog who had been permanently chained. He was underweight, frightened and had heartworms. I found him when I responded to a complaint of animal cruelty. He decided that I needed to be his new mom. It is just amazing to see the before and after picture of my Brisco. He is now heartworm free, neutered, has all his vaccines and is never chained. You can see the happiness in his eyes now, and he never lowers his tail anymore; he carries it high and proud over his back!” ~ Animal Control Officer



TRENTON, Ohio, August 6...China came to the Humane Society as a stray on March 28, 2007, with no license, and with a chain embedded about one inch into her flesh...According to the Butler County Dog Warden, a Mr. Otis Clark was aware of the injury to his dog but placed China on a harness and left the chain in her neck. He sought no medical treatment for China. The dog soon broke free of the harness and found her way to the Humane Society.