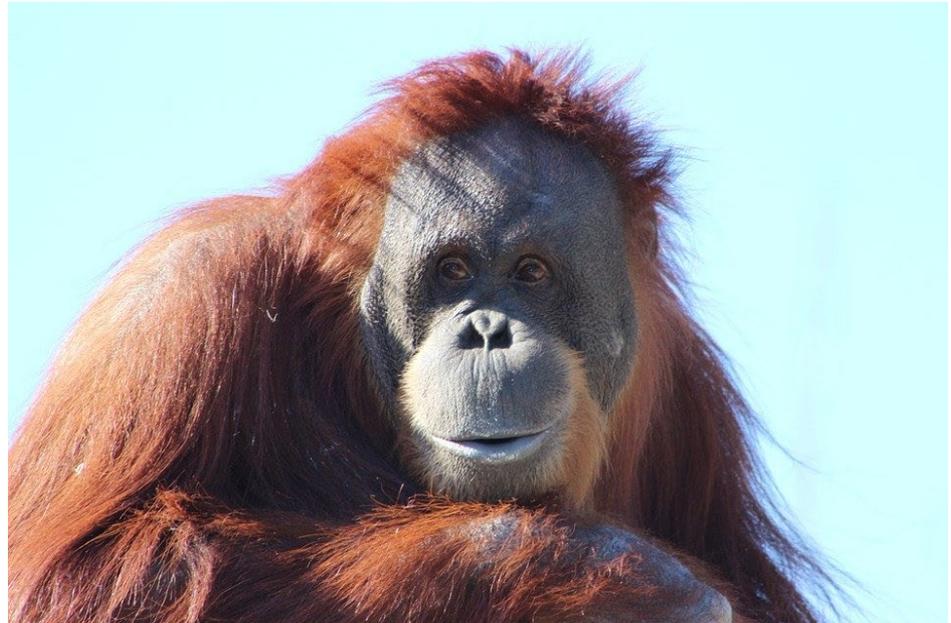


Animals in Captivity

Today we have some stories to share with you. We'll be doing lots of thinking in question time, and we'll be hearing from other children, too. Are you comfortable?

Let's get started with a story.

It's the holidays, and Mei and Sophie have just finished watching a movie. It was a science fiction movie set in the future.



The movie tells the story of an expedition of aliens who were scientists, sent to explore and learn about life on Earth.

The alien scientists decided to collect some human specimens to take back to their planet so that they could study them more closely. They created an enclosure for them, with houses for them to live in - just like the ones they had on Earth, and provided them with the same food, the same books and the same sports and entertainments. And they used force fields to keep them safe - and to stop them running away.

After a while they put the humans on display, so other aliens could see them too and be entertained by their interesting behaviours.

When the movie finished, Mei was thinking about how the humans who were captured would feel.

Mei: It would be so cool to live there! You wouldn't have to go to school and then get a job - the aliens would just give you everything you needed.

Sophie: I wouldn't like to be there. How would you feel if you were kidnapped and taken away to some other place to live? You wouldn't be free. You couldn't just travel to see friends and family. What if the aliens kept waking you up because they wanted to see you play!

Mei: Yeah, maybe you're right. What if they didn't kidnap my friends too - I'd really miss them.

Sophie: You know, it's really got me thinking... about the way we keep animals in captivity – in zoos and in theme parks. Maybe we're treating the animals the way the aliens in the movie treated the humans.

Mei: No, it's completely different. Humans and animals are completely different. It's okay to keep an animal in captivity - but it's not okay to do that to humans."

Let's explore this further.



Have you ever been to a zoo or a theme park where animals were on display? Do you think it's ok to keep animals in there? ... Can you say why... or why not?

Let's listen to what some other children have said.



Sragvee: Yes, I think it's okay, because it is really fun to watch them - especially the monkeys.



Is that the same reason the aliens had? Remember they said they would put the humans on display so other aliens could see them and be entertained by their interesting behaviours. Do you agree that that's a good reason? Or do think it's not a good reason?



Toby: I don't think that keeping animals as entertainment is a good reason, because that doesn't help the animals ... but a better reason to keep animals in zoos is because then people can learn about them and how their habitats are disappearing, and then people will care and try to help in some way.



Is it true that people who go to zoos learn about animals and their habitats?



Sragvee: I go to the zoo to just see the animals really. I know that there are information boards near all the cages, but we never read them.



What if the evidence showed that people mainly go to zoos simply to look at the animals and don't learn much about them or how to help them. Would that mean it is not okay to keep animals in zoos?

What if it were true that lots of people at zoos did learn something about the animals, does it always follow that learning about them leads to people trying to help them?

Is keeping animals in zoos the only way for people to learn about animals and how to help them?

What do you think?



Mac: They have fantastic documentaries on TV - like the ones David Attenborough does. You get to see the animals close up, in their natural habitat. That's a much better idea than keeping animals in zoos just so we can look at them, and maybe learn about them.



Does Mac think it's ok to keep animals in zoos or theme parks? What reason did he give?



Claudia: I have a different reason why I think it's ok to keep animals in zoos. There are lots of animals that are endangered in the wild, and zoos breed them and build up their numbers, and then they release some of them back into the wild.



*Is that a good reason to keep animals in zoos?
What questions should we ask about this to help us decide if it is a good reason?*



Harriet: Maybe ask which animals they breed?

Toby: And how many of them?

Claudia: And whether the animals survive when they are released into the wild?



*How could we find out the answers to those questions?
If it is true, and keeping animals in zoos does help build up the numbers of endangered species, would that be a good reason for keeping animals in zoos?*



Edward: But there are lots of animals in zoos that aren't endangered. It's horrible for them.

Do you agree it's horrible for animals in zoos?



*How horrible is it?
What would it depend on?*



Harriet: It depends on what sort of animal it is. It's worse for some animals than for others. It's worse for animals with big brains that understand they are locked up.

Edward: And it depends on how big their enclosure is. Because some animals like more room to roam around

Claudia: And it depends on how long they are kept at the zoo.



*There are lots of ideas to explore there, aren't there?
Let's think about this: that it depends on how long the animals are kept in the zoo.*

How does that make a difference? If they were there their whole life – say they were born in the zoo and they never left until finally they died in the zoo, would that be worse than being there for just part of their life? ... Or would they be better off if they never knew what life would be like outside the zoo?

Would it be okay to keep an animal in a zoo, even if it is horrible for them, if it means that the species survives rather than becoming extinct? Why, or why not?

Is stopping a species from becoming extinct a stronger reason to keep animals in zoos than keeping animals to entertain us? If so, can you explain what makes it a stronger reason?



Harriet: I don't see what's wrong with keeping animals in zoos. It doesn't really hurt them - they're not people, after all.'



Do you agree?

How different are we from other animals? Can you think of some ways in which we are different?

Can you think of some ways in which we are similar?

Are we more similar to some animals than others? Can you give some examples?

Do you remember what Mei said after she watched the movie?

Mei: It's okay to keep an animal in captivity - but it's not okay to do that to humans.



Do you agree, and what are your reasons?

We heard some really interesting ideas today!

Thank you for joining us. You might like to keep thinking about them and have a talk to family and friends about what they think, too.

Thank you to our wonderful actors Ellie, Charlie, Sragvee, Toby, Mac, Ellie, Claudia, Edward and Harriet who helped us to hear different points of view. While sometimes these points of view might have reflected their own opinions, at other times they were asked to express an opposing view in order to help us think more deeply about the topic.