

Alien in the Ethical Universe

Suggested Grade Levels: 4-6

Subject: Social Studies/Language Arts

Character: Kindness/Empathy

Materials and technology to be used:

- Computer with audio capabilities or iPad – **x1**
- Fake alien photo, cut-out, or blow-up alien – **x1**
- Whiteboard/marker – **x1**
- Chart paper – **x1**
- Writing utensils – **x1 per student**
- “Ethical Earth? Interview Sheet” – **x1 per student**
- “Star and Hole - Exit Ticket Templates” or plain paper – **x1 per student**

Objective(s):

Students will be able to appreciate and understand other perspectives and values. Students will also learn about inconsistencies between our treatment of different species.

Anticipatory Set/Hook:

Play “alien” music in the background as students walk into class or transition from another subject. Some examples include: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVlgG-Kil1Y> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2H8kJBjdYvU> . Have a large photo of an alien (or cardboard cut-out or blow- up alien) at the front of the room. Tell students that they are going to have an extraterrestrial visitor stop by the classroom today, and this visitor is very curious about how we treat each other and our animals on Earth...

Lesson Beginning:

1. Ask students: “How do you show respect to others?” Have students turn and talk with a neighbor. Call on volunteers to share out loud and discuss. Write responses on the board.
2. Ask students: “How do you show respect to animals?” Have student “Stand Up, Hand Up, and Pair Up” to discuss this question. Share. Write responses on the board.

“Stand Up, Hand Up, Pair Up” Kagan Structure:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOUPvzaY7H0>

3. Pass out the “Ethical Earth? Interview Sheet” and a writing utensil to each student.
4. Students will engage in the following role-play activity where they answer two sets of

questions revolving around how people treat other humans and how people treat animals...

Middle of Lesson:

1. Set the scene: The teacher pretends that he/she has a "friend" who is traveling through the universe on a fact-finding mission in order to learn how different beings behave on different planets. *He is visiting Earth, and I have brought him with me to talk to you students. He loves asking young people their views since they tend to be very forthright and honest with him.* Explain that on his planet, all beings are treated equally, with respect and compassion, and that he wants to know the rules on planet Earth so he will not offend anyone. Also explain that because his planet is so far away, he travels in the form of energy and will occupy your (the teacher's) body to speak to the students. Ask if the class is willing to answer his questions and then close your eyes to let him "enter your body" – and when you open your eyes, it is the alien who addresses the class... (It may be fun to change your voice when you are acting as the alien.)
 - Another way to conduct this activity is to divide the class into groups of five. Ask one member of the group to play the "alien" who will ask a series of questions to the "Earthlings". Each group member will take a turn being the alien, choosing a subject to ask about, and recording the groups' responses on their "Ethical Earth? Interview Sheet."

Each subject question has four parts that students will need to answer:

How are you supposed to treat _____ ?
Is it ever okay to harm _____ ?
Why or why not?
Do people generally treat _____ respectfully?

2. Either provide a list of "subjects" that the alien is going to ask the students about, or have the students come up with the subjects/questions. Write these on the board for the "alien" to choose from.

In relation to humans, your subject list can include:

- People with a different skin color
- Elderly people
- Men/Women
- People with disabilities
- People with a different religion
- People who are mentally ill
- People who are poor/people who are rich and powerful
- Short people/tall people/fat people/skinny people

-People with different eye colors: brown, blue, hazel, green

And so on.

In relation to animals, your subject list can include:

-Animals in general

-Birds (in general or specific species like chickens, eagles, pigeons, etc.)

-Mammals (in general or specific species like dogs, rodents, pigs, horses, coyotes, etc.)

-Fish

-Reptiles (try using more controversial reptiles such as snakes or lizards)

-Amphibians

-Insects (try using more controversial insects like spiders, ants, and cockroaches)

And so on.

3. If the teacher chooses to play the alien, ask the class a handful of questions until you feel they are comfortable with the activity. Then, split the class up into groups of five and let the students have fun interviewing each other in their small groups.
4. Most of the time, students express the view that we should treat others with *respect*, but as the "alien" delves deeper, prejudices may come to light. In relation to animals, the discussion will bring out the inconsistencies between our treatment of different species.

End of Lesson:

1. When the students have completed the Q&A segment, have each group share their findings with the class by reading off some of their notes on their "Ethical Earth? Interview sheet." Discuss.

-Summarize the various viewpoints that students gathered on a large piece of chart paper.
2. Facilitate a discussion about the inconsistencies, complexities, and confusing aspects of our behaviors and morals. *Why do we profess certain values but do not always act accordingly?*

- This discussion about the inconsistencies of our values and actions is the purpose of the activity and sets the stage for further activities that can help students put their values into practice more consistently in their day-to-day lives.

Closure:

1. Provide students with one minute to reflect on what they have learned from today's lesson.
2. Ask students to share a major take-away from this lesson with a neighbor. Walk the room and listen to student responses. Assess understanding.
3. As an "Exit Ticket," students can fill out both a "Shooting Star" and a "Back Hole." You may wish to cut out the attached "Star and Hole - Exit Ticket Templates" for students to write on, or they can use plain paper and simply label their answers:

Shooting Star = *How will you improve your ethical self in the future?* (maybe this answer deals with how they treat animals, their actions against other people, their opinions or views of someone else, their effort in helping animals, etc.)

Black Hole = *What is one aspect of your ethical being that you want to send down a black hole and get rid of/stop doing?* (ie. Any tendencies to treat animals unfairly or unkindly? Negative stereotypes of any animals/people? Do you have a certain prejudice? Racism? Sexism? Negative actions or behaviors against others in general?)



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Name: _____

Ethical Earth?

Interview Sheet



Alien - pick two human and two animal subjects and then ask the young "Earthlings" the questions below. Record their answers beneath each question.....

Human Subjects

Number 1:

How are you supposed to treat _____?

Is it ever okay to harm _____?

Why or why not?

Do people generally treat _____ respectfully?

Number 2:

How are you supposed to treat _____?

Is it ever okay to harm _____?

Why or why not?

Do people generally treat _____ respectfully?

Animal Subjects

Number 1:

How are you supposed to treat _____?

Is it ever okay to harm _____?

Why or why not?

Do people generally treat _____ respectfully?

Number 2:

How are you supposed to treat _____?

Is it ever okay to harm _____?

Why or why not?

Do people generally treat _____ respectfully?



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