

# Alien in the Ethical Universe

Suggested Grade Level: 4-6

Character: Respect

Relative Subject(s): Language Arts, Social Studies, and History

Materials:

- alien question sheet

## ACTIVITY:

Pretend you have a friend who is traveling through the universe on a fact-finding mission in order to learn how different beings behave on different planets. She is visiting Earth, and I have brought her with me to talk to the students because she loves asking young people their views since they tend to be very forthright and honest with her. Explain that on her planet all beings are treated equally, with respect and compassion, and that she wants to know the rules on planet Earth so she will not offend anyone. I also explain that because her planet is so far away, she travels in the form of energy and will occupy my body to speak to the students. I ask if the class is willing to answer her questions and close my eyes to let her "enter my body" – and when I open my eyes, it is the alien who addresses the class.

Another way to conduct this activity is to divide the class into groups of five, to ask one member of the group to play the alien who will ask a series of questions to the others in the group, and to record the answers on a piece of paper.

Each subject question has four parts:

1. How are you supposed to treat \_\_\_\_\_?
2. Is it ever okay to harm \_\_\_\_\_?
3. Why or why not?
4. Do people generally treat \_\_\_\_\_respectfully?

In relation to humans, your 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 pink

And so on.

In relation to animals, your list can include:

Nebraska Humane Society  
8929 Fort Street Omaha, NE 68134 402.444.7800 [www.nehumanesociety.org](http://www.nehumanesociety.org)

- 🐾 Animals in general
- 🐾 Birds in general/specific birds such as sparrows, eagles, or chickens
- 🐾 Mammals in general/specific mammals such as dogs, cats, pigs, horses, or coyotes
- 🐾 Fishes
- 🐾 Reptiles
- 🐾 Amphibians
- 🐾 Insects

And so on.

Most of the time, students express the view that we should treat others with respect, but as the “alien” delves deeper, prejudices such as racism, sexism, jingoism, etc. come to light. In relation to animals, the discussion will bring out the inconsistencies between our treatment of different species.

When the students have completed the question-and-answer segment, 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 help students put their values into practice more consistently in their day-to-day lives.