

Domestication Throughout Civilization: A History of Companion Animals

Suggested Grade Levels: 4-6

Subject: Language Arts/Science

Character: Kindness/Empathy

Materials and technology to be used:

- Poster paper – **x3 large pieces**
- Whiteboard/marker – **x1**
- Computers and/or tablets – **x enough for each student**
- “Domestication Throughout Civilization Notetaking Guide” – **x1 per student**
- Writing utensils – **x1 per student**
- Crayons, markers and/or colored pencils – **x enough for each student**
- Books for research (suggestions): **x1 or more of each**
Genetics and the Behavior of Domesticated Animals: Chapter 2 by Per Jensen and Dominic Wright
Domesticated: Evolution in a Man-Made World by Richard C. Francis
Cats by Amanda O’Neill
Feral, Tame Animals Gone Wild by Laurence Pringle
The Complete Book of the Cat by Anna and Michael Sproute
The Complete Book of the Dog by David MacDonald
Where the Wild Horses Roam by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent
Who Harnessed the Horse? The Story of Animal Domestication by Margery Facklam

Objective(s):

Students will understand the history of companion animals and the meaning of domestication. Students will learn why certain animals were domesticated and how that has changed and benefited our civilization.

Anticipatory Set/Hook:

Have a variety of the above books or others of your choosing displayed at the front of the room. Ask students: “What do you think the word *domestication* means?” Call on a couple of volunteers for answers. Do not add teacher input just yet. Ask: “What is a companion animal?” and “Why do you think certain animals were domesticated? Has that changed and benefited our civilization?” Have students briefly turn and talk with a neighbor. Tell students that today they are going to explore these questions to gain a better understanding, and appreciation, of our companion animals.

Lesson Beginning:

1. Define the following terms. Write the definitions on the board:

Domesticated = A species that has been specifically changed to suit the purpose of humans; lives with and is taken care of by humans.

Wild = A species that has not been domesticated; does not live with and is not taken care of by humans.

Tame = A member of a wild species that has been living with humans. It still has wild instincts and is highly unpredictable.

Feral = From a domesticated species but has not lived with humans (EX: a cat born on the street, but whose parents or grandparents once lived in someone's home as pets).

2. Hold a preliminary discussion with students. Ask the following questions, there are numerous correct answers:

(You may wish to have the students discuss these questions in small groups, first.)

- a. What are the most common domesticated animals in our society? *Tell students that for this lesson they will be focusing on **dogs, cats, and horses**.*
- b. What jobs were various companion animals originally bred to do? *Variety of jobs and tasks to help humans – i.e.. hunting, finding things, protection, transportation.*
- c. What jobs do companion animals have in our present society? *Mostly companionship; some still have “working” jobs like herding, ranch/barn work, police work, etc.*
- d. Why were certain animals chosen to be domesticated? *To be domesticated, it is said that an animal must possess six characteristics: a diverse appetite, rapid maturation, willingness to breed in captivity, docility, strong nerves, and a nature that conforms to social hierarchy. The animal's physical ability to complete certain tasks also plays a role in domestication.*
- e. How have humans benefited from these animals? How have these animals benefited or been taken advantage of by humans? *(Unlimited answers.)*

Middle of Lesson:

1. Divide the students into three groups. Each group will be responsible for researching a common domesticated animal and creating a research-based poster on that species – **cats, dogs, or horses**. Have the students remain at their individual desks for the research portion of this activity.
2. Pass out a “Domestication Throughout Civilization Notetaking Guide” to each student. This guide will aid students in their individual research and will be turned in at the end of the lesson.

3. Using a variety of methods (i.e.. computers/tablets, books, interviewing a professional, etc.) have students research the following on their given species (these questions are all covered on the notetaking guide):
 - Where was this species domesticated?
 - When was this species domesticated (approx.)?
 - Why was this species domesticated?
 - What was happening in that part of the world at that time? (i.e.. ruling empires, inventions, popular art and music, wars, scientific discoveries, famous individuals of the period)
 - How did civilization begin to change once these animals were domesticated?
 - What were/are some of the myths and superstitions surrounding these animals?
 - Do these animals have the same jobs today as they did then? If not, how have their jobs changed? How have their lives changed?
 - How has our society benefited from these animals? How has your life benefited from these animals?
 - How has our society taken advantage of these animals? How can our society do better?
4. Once all students have gathered enough information about their given species, have each group meet up in a designated location around the classroom, or maybe even in the hallway, library, etc. Make sure each group has plenty of space to work together.
5. Each group will be responsible for creating a poster that shows a timeline and other pertinent facts about their common, domesticated animal. Tell students that they should use a combination of writing and drawing to highlight the information on their poster.

-Encourage students to take turns when adding information to the poster. You may even find it necessary to assign "roles" to each student in the group....

Examples of Group Roles:

"Illustrators" (draws any pictures, x2-3 students), "Timeline Artist" (uses appropriate tools to sketch and label the dates on an accurate timeline, x1), "Scribes" (in charge of any excessive writing, x2), "Geographer" (in charge of the information related to locations, x1), "Historians" (in charge of the information related to human civilization/societal changes, x1-2), "Time Keeper" (in charge of keeping the group on task, x1), "Reporters" (shares the poster out loud to the class, x2)

End of Lesson:

1. Have each group take a turn and present their poster to the rest of the class. If you assigned group roles to your students, the "Reporters" should be doing most of the talking.
2. Hang the posters on a wall and invite other classes to come view the information. Have your students explain what they learned to their fellow peers from other classes.
3. Hold a post-discussion with your own class:
(Utilize a variety of engagement strategies that incorporate physical movement, here....I.e. **"Stand Up, Hand Up, Pair Up," "Inside/Outside Circle," "Think, Ink, Pair, Share", etc.** If you are unfamiliar with any of the strategies mentioned, a simple *Google* search will provide numerous tutorials and video examples.)
 - a. What was the most interesting and unique fact each group learned?
 - b. How did this new information change the way the students feel about these companion animals?
 - c. What kinds of jobs do their own pets have?

Closure:

1. Have two volunteers share their take-aways (from the questions in the post-discussion) with the whole class.
2. Have students turn in their individual "Domestication Throughout Civilization Notetaking Guide" to either be graded or counted as complete.

Extension:

Have students write a story about what their lives would be like without animals in their world. Students could then form small groups and hold a "Readers Theatre" to share their work with the rest of the class.

"Reader's Theatre":

https://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/readers_theater

Domestication Throughout Civilization Notetaking Guide

Species = _____

- 🐾 When/where/why was this species domesticated?

- 🐾 What was happening in that part of the world at that time? (i.e.. ruling empires, inventions, popular art and music, wars, scientific discoveries, famous individuals of the period)

- 🐾 How did civilization begin to change once these animals were domesticated?

- 🐾 What were/are some of the myths and superstitions surrounding these animals?

- 🐾 Do these animals have the same jobs today as they did then? If not, how have their jobs changed? How have their lives changed?

- 🐾 How has our society benefited from these animals? How has your life benefited from these animals?

- 🐾 How has our society taken advantage of these animals? How can our society do better?