

Debate: Are Zoos Bad News?

Tiger Attack Spurs Debate

The phone call reached zoo director Manuel Mollinedo shortly after 5 p.m. as darkness was falling on San Francisco. One of his tigers was on the loose! She had escaped her enclosure and attacked a teenager and two other young men before bounding into the zoo's dense foliage and winding paths.

As Mollinedo rushed to work, police declared the entire zoo a crime scene. After some searching, they found the resting tiger, a 4-year-old, 350-pound Siberian tiger named Tatiana. They shot and killed the animal, but the damage had already been done. One of the men the tiger attacked, 17-year-old Carlos Sousa Jr., later died of his wounds.

No one knows why Tatiana, a favorite among zoo visitors, attacked. Some witnesses say the men were taunting the tiger, although the two survivors deny it. Police are still investigating.

Zoos Deserve Boos

Zoo critics see the attack as another example of why zoos are bad news.

Critics say that zoos are like prisons and that zoos drive many animals crazy by confining them. If the animals don't die of boredom, they snap and revert to their wild nature, they say. Anti-zoo activists talk about big cats endlessly pacing back and forth in their cages, zoo elephants constantly swaying side to side, polar bears swimming in endless circles, and monkeys and parrots "grooming" themselves until they have no fur or feathers left.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is a leader in the anti-zoo movement. "PETA is firmly opposed to keeping wild animals in captivity," Lisa Wathne, the group's exotic animal specialist, told *Current Events*. "There are some animals, such as tigers and elephants, which roam large areas in the wild, that should never be held captive. Since 1990, there have been at least 220 incidents in 40 states involving big cats. Four children and 15 adults have lost their lives, and more than 50 other people lost limbs or suffered other injuries after being mauled." She points out that the animals are victims too: 75 big cats, including Tatiana, have been killed because of such incidents.

The solution? PETA and others say get rid of zoos.

Good News On Zoos

"Getting rid of zoos would be a tragedy for all animals," says Steve Feldman, senior vice president of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. He says zoos play a major role in educating people about animals and promoting wildlife conservation.

"If visitors never got to see an elephant or a tiger, they would not have that sense of awe and wonder and not be inspired to take action to conserve the wild," he says. "A National Science Foundation study showed that people who visit zoos actually change their behavior towards animals."

Feldman says most modern zoos work hard to keep animals from being bored or becoming neurotic. He rejects PETA's charge that animals in zoos are unhappy.

"Most zoo animals are thriving," he says. "It is animals in the wild who are not happy. Most of the time, they're running for their lives."

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. In the passage, which of the following is NOT included as an example of unusual zoo animal behavior?

- A pacing in cages
- B banging on the glass
- C swimming in circles
- D swaying from side to side

2. In this passage, what is one reason given why people think zoos are bad?

- A Wild animals in captivity have attacked humans.
- B People can learn about animals from visiting the zoo.
- C Keeping animals in zoos increase costs for the city.
- D because you can only see rare animals.

3. It can be inferred from the passage that

- A animals are always dangerous
- B it is okay to taunt the animals
- C some zoos are more fun to visit than others
- D not everyone agrees on whether or not zoos are good

4. Read the following sentence: "PETA is firmly opposed to keeping wild animals in captivity."

As used in the passage, **captivity** means

- A in the natural habitat of the animal
- B in a zoo
- C in a national park
- D in a human home

5. Which title best describes the two sides of the argument presented in the passage?

- A Tigers Are Dangerous
- B Educational or Cruel? A Debate about Zoos
- C The Best Zoos to Go To
- D My Favorite Animals to Visit at the Zoo

6. What is one reason why zoos may be good?

7. Many people think that the solution to dangerous attacks and unhappy animals is to close zoos. What is another solution to this problem?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Some animals in zoos get bored in captivity, _____ they become neurotic, pacing in circles or grooming their fur over and over again.

- A but
- B before
- C so
- D after

9. Answer the questions based on the sentence below.

PETA wants to get rid of zoos because they are cruel to animals and dangerous for visitors.

What? PETA

What? _____

Why? _____

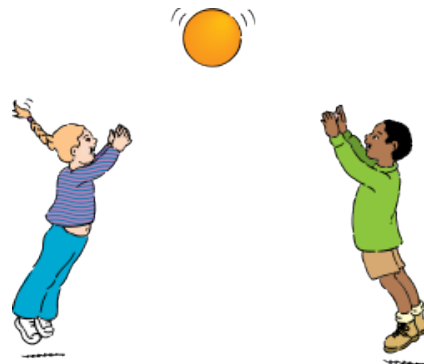
10. Read the vocabulary word and definition below and complete questions 10a, 10b, and 11.

Vocabulary Word: taunting (taunt · ing): to say unkind or insulting things about someone, often in a way so as to get someone or something to react.

10a. Read the five sentences below and underline the word **taunting** in each sentence.

1. The visitors were not allowed in the zoo again because they were taunting the tigers by hitting the glass and upsetting the animals.
2. The color red makes bulls angry, so people wave red flags as a way of taunting the animals into attacking.
3. Taunting someone by calling them names or throwing things at them is not a nice thing to do.
4. Sam felt badly as the other kids were taunting him about the style of his backpack.
5. He wanted to avoid the bus because of the taunting and bullying he experienced while riding to school.

10b. In which image is taunting being shown?



11. What is the best thing to do if bullies are taunting another student? Why?

Teacher Guide & Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 1020

Featured Text Structure: Argumentative – the writer presents evidence for both sides of an argument

Passage Summary: “Debate: Are Zoos Bad News?” presents two sides of an argument about whether or not zoos are good for wildlife and animals. One side criticizes zoos for promoting unhappy and bored animals that can become dangerous. The other side supports zoos as places that can inform visitors about the importance of conservation.

1. In the passage, which of the following is NOT included as an example of unusual zoo animal behavior?

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- B banging on the glass**
- C swimming in circles
- D swaying from side to side

2. In this passage, what is one reason given why people think zoos are bad?

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- B People can learn about animals from visiting the zoo.
- C Keeping animals in zoos increase costs for the city.
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3. It can be inferred from the passage that

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- B it is okay to taunt the animals
- C some zoos are more fun to visit than others
- D not everyone agrees on whether or not zoos are good**

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- C The Best Zoos to Go To
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6. What is one reason why zoos may be good?

Suggested answer: Zoos help educate visitors about animals, which may encourage visitors to save the environment. Zoos can also conserve animals and save them from extinction. [see paragraphs 8 & 9]

7. Many people think that the solution to dangerous attacks and unhappy animals is to close zoos. What is another solution to this problem?

Suggested answer: Another solution to this problem would be to create environments in zoos for the animals that keep them from getting bored or unhappy. Steve Feldman says that most modern zoos are now considering how to make sure animals don't become unhappy or neurotic. [see paragraph 10]

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Some animals in zoos get bored in captivity, _____ they become neurotic, pacing in circles or grooming their fur over and over again.

- A but
- B before
- C so
- D after

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

PETA wants to get rid of zoos because they are cruel to animals and dangerous for visitors.

Who? PETA

What? **wants to get rid of zoos**

Why? **because they are cruel to animals and dangerous for visitors**

10. ReadWorks recommends that you teach this vocabulary word to the whole class out loud using the four steps listed below.

Vocabulary Word: taunting

Step 1: Introduce the word

- a. Teacher writes the word on the board and divides it into syllables: (taunt·ing)
- b. Teacher says: "This word is taunting. What is the word?" [All students reply together out loud: "taunting."]

Step 2: Provide a child-friendly definition

- a. Teacher says: "Taunting means to say unkind or insulting things about someone, often in a way so as to get someone or something to react."
- b. Teacher says: "In this passage, the author talks about how sometimes people taunt animals to get them to react. Sometimes people taunt animals in zoos by hitting the glass or poking at animals to bother them."
- c. Teacher says: "What is the word?" [All students reply together out loud: "taunting."]

Step 3: Practice the word

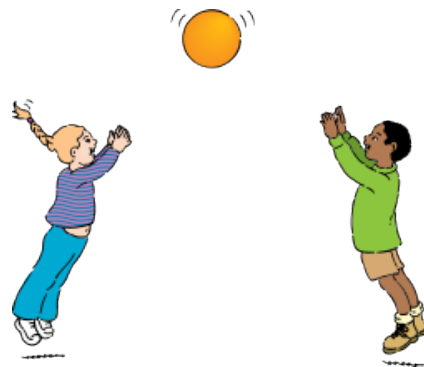
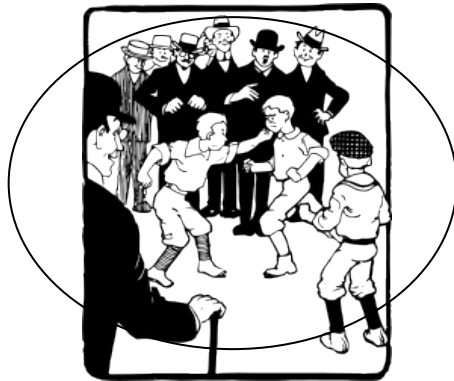
Teacher provides examples and additional opportunities to repeat the word. Read the 1st sentence out loud to your students. Begin reading it again and when you come to the vocabulary word prompt students to say the vocabulary word out loud. Then, finish reading the sentence out loud to your students.

- 10a.**
1. The visitors were not allowed in the zoo again because they were taunting the tigers by hitting the glass and upsetting the animals.
 2. The color red makes bulls angry, so people wave red flags as a way of taunting the animals into attacking.
 3. Taunting someone by calling them names or throwing things at them is not a nice thing to do.
 4. Sam felt badly as the other kids were taunting him about the style of his backpack.
 5. He wanted to avoid the bus because of the taunting and bullying he experienced while riding to school.

Step 4: Check for student understanding

This step can be completed as a whole class activity or as an independent practice.

- 10b.** In which image is taunting being shown?



- 11.** What is the best thing to do if bullies are taunting another student? Why?

Suggested answer: If a bully is taunting another student, you should tell an adult at school because the bully is probably hurting that person's feelings with their words, or could be hurting them physically.

Suggested Additional Vocabulary: investigating, thriving, conserve, captivity