

Domestication Throughout Civilization, a History of Companion Animals

OBJECTIVE

To 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.

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

Students will study the history of companion animals through books and a video. Trace the history of domestication of certain species as it parallels the history of civilization and which jobs domesticated animals were originally bred to do. Students will learn the difference between "wild," "domesticated," "tame" and "feral."

MATERIALS

🐾 Two large pieces of poster paper

🐾 Books:

Cats, by Amanda O'Neill

Feral, Tame Animals Gone Wild, by Laurence Pringle

The Complete Book of the Cat, by Anna & Michael Sproule

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

🐾 Video:

Pets and their Wild Relatives, National Geographic Society; the tape is \$69 and comes with a 30-day guarantee; to order or receive a catalog, call 800-368-2728.

ACTIVITY

Preliminary Discussion

🐾 What are the most common domesticated animals in our society?

🐾 What jobs were various companion animals originally bred to do?

🐾 What jobs do companion animals have in our present society?

🐾 Why were certain animals chosen to be domesticated?

🐾 How have humans benefited from these animals? How have these animals benefited or been taken advantage of by humans?

Procedure

The first large piece of poster paper will be used to make a chart called "Domestication Throughout Civilization." Students will brainstorm about why dogs, cats and horses were domesticated, during what period of civilization. Write on the chart the information the students currently know.

Definitions of the following terms will be presented:

Domesticated - A species that's been specifically changed to suit the purposes of humans; lives with and is taken care of by humans.

Wild - A species that's not been domesticated; doesn't live with and isn't taken care of by humans.

Tame - A member of a wild species that's been living with humans. It still has wild instincts and you never know what may set it off.

Feral - From a domesticated species, but hasn't lived with humans (example: a cat born on the street, but whose parents or grandparents have lived in someone's home as pets).

Students will divide into three groups and work on researching cats, dogs and horses. The books listed will be helpful with their research. They should research the following on each species:

- 🐾 Where was this species domesticated?
- 🐾 When was this species domesticated (approximately)?
- 🐾 Why was this species domesticated?
- 🐾 What was happening in that part of the world at that time? (i.e. ruling empires, inventions, popular art & 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 have the students' lives benefited from these animals?
- 🐾 How has our society taken advantage of these animals?

Each group will write their information concisely on the second piece of poster paper, showing a timeline and other pertinent facts. Each group will present the information they researched, to the rest of the class. The chart should be hung on the wall so other classes can be invited to see the chart and have the students explain what they learned.

Post-Discussion

- 🐾 What was the most interesting and unique fact each group learned?
- 🐾 How did this new information change the way the students feel about these companion animals?
- 🐾 What kinds of jobs do their own pets have?
- 🐾 Show the video, *Pets and their Wild Relatives* followed by discussion.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Have students write a story about what their lives would be like without animals in their world.