

Animal Election Debate

Goals	Improvement of argumentation and communication skills, support of analytical reasoning skills, emphasis on improvement of cultivated discussion skills, support of teamwork and organizational skills
Duration	20 minutes
Difficulty	Primary school
Tools and space	Animal pictures, seminar room matching the group size

Structure of the educational situation

- In the initial stage, we place pictures of animals on a free bench so that the picture of a particular animal is turned towards the bench and the empty area towards the students.
- Students, who are already pre-divided into groups of 4-5, choose a captain, while the group captain is allowed to choose exactly one picture from the offered pictures of animals distributed freely on the bench.
- Subsequently, we invite the students to agree in the group on arguments that will favor voting for the selected animal over the others, in an election to determine who should be the king or president of the animals. At the same time, they will elect a spokesperson for the group who will summarize the individual arguments in a speech of approximately one minute.
- A series of short speeches is followed by a controlled discussion in which everyone present can participate. We will tell the students the basic rules of the discussion and specify that the moderator is a teacher who also controls the time and supervises the flow of the debate.

Modification of the seminar

- A complementary activity for students of higher grades may consist in assigning pictures of animals to important monarchs of history or to portraits of distinguished statesmen of the present. Students will explain why they assigned the picture of the respective animal to the given monarch/statesman.
- In case of more time, the above can be processed as a much larger project that would lead to initiation of a more elaborate election campaign, including work on election materials (poster, brief election program, presentation on social networks, etc.).
- Depending on the timing, it is also possible to realise an anonymous vote at the end (e.g. through the free mentimeter application), on the basis of which students will determine which of the candidate animals they could best imagine in the position of the ideal "king of animals".

Methodological notes

- The choice of pictures of animals is entirely up to the educator. However, we generally recommend not using a picture of the lion, which is perceived just as the "king of animals" and thus the relevant group would gain some advantage, although it can of course be assumed that in the subsequent discussion some skillful speakers would be able to argumentatively refute the lion's leadership position.
- Therefore, we recommend choosing for example the following types of animals: elephant, giraffe, owl, dolphin, snake, dog.



Selected animal: Elephant

A question for an elephant from a snake: Doesn't it seem to the elephant that man has made an attraction of him? Even though he is so big and strong, man has tamed him, thus forfeiting his authority to me. How would he hope to regain that lost authority again?

A question for an elephant from a dolphin: Let's face it, an elephant is sometimes clumsy and can't control its movements. Moreover, if it gets angry, it can be dangerous to its immediate surroundings. How will an elephant answer for such behavior?

A question for an elephant from a giraffe: Isn't the trunk more of a nuisance for the elephant? Could he tell us the benefits of this anomaly, given his candidacy as king of all animals?

A question for an elephant from a dog: What is the elephant's relationship to the environment? Not a very positive one, I gather, given the havoc he's wreaked by breaking down trees.

A question for an elephant from an owl: It seems to me that the elephants have not solved the issue of internal politics. We have two strong candidates from different parts of the world, namely the African elephant and the Indian elephant. How did they resolve their age-old dispute over primacy?



Selected animal: Snake

A question for a snake from an elephant: The snake has no strength, it just crawls and is not visible compared to me. The king of animals should be a distinctive "personality." In what way is the serpent a leading "character"?

A question for a snake from a dolphin: Could the snake give any examples of positive alliances with another animal species?

A question for a snake from a giraffe: I don't think the snake can have sufficient vision, because it only moves on the ground. How would the snake disprove that fact?

A question for a snake from a dog: How does a snake want to develop positive relationships with people if people are afraid of it? I, on the other hand, am a great friend of man.

A question for a snake from an owl: A snake is a liar. He lied to Eve. Do you really think a snake should be the king of animals if it lies?



Selected animal: Dolphin

A question for a dolphin from an elephant: I think a dolphin lacks the ability to govern even in its own territory, and yet it wants to reign over everyone. For example, how does a dolphin manage to deal with the party opposition in the form of sharks?

A question for a dolphin from a snake: The dolphin is just a child. He prefers games and entertainment before ruling. Let the dolphin prove, with concrete examples, that he is mature enough and competent enough to reign as king of the animals.

A question for a dolphin from a giraffe: Doesn't the dolphin think it's a bad thing that gets along so well with humans? How does the dolphin achieve an equal relationship with humans? Animals don't want to submit and serve humans all the time!

A question for a dolphin from a dog: What are the dolphin's main weapons in case of a war?

A question for a dolphin from an owl: How will the dolphin compensate for the fact that it only moves in the water and hasn't knowledge of animals outside the aquatic environment?



Selected animal: Giraffe

A question for a giraffe from an elephant: Isn't the giraffe's long neck a nuisance? Could she say which benefits the long neck has, given her candidacy as queen of all animals?

A question for a giraffe from a snake: The giraffe is a typical representative of the elite. She doesn't care about the petty problems of other animals. If I'm wrong, let her disprove it.

A question for a giraffe from a dolphin: If we choose a giraffe, we'll be dominated by a faction of animals representing only African fauna. How do animals that live on other continents think of that?

A question for a giraffe from a dog: The giraffe builds its election campaign on height and vision. But what else does it have to offer other animals?

A question for a giraffe from an owl: What will a giraffe do if a group of African beasts attacks her government?



Selected animal: Dog

A question for a dog from an elephant: I think the dog is too busy and exhausted by the activities he owes to people (house-sitting, dog competitions, etc.). Some dogs are even in full service to humans. How does the dog want to combine these activities in order to be able to govern accordingly?

A question for a dog from a snake: I have recently observed dog attacks on humans. Is this a dog strategy to achieve equality between animals and humans, or how else are we to explain such behavior?

A question for a dog from a dolphin: Isn't there racial intolerance among dogs, given the number of their breeds? Do dogs have a clear idea of which representative will best defend the interests of all animals? A greyhound, a dachshund or a Saint Bernard?

A question for a dog from a giraffe: Why should a dog be a better king of animals than his close mate the wolf?

A question for a dog from an owl: How does a dog plan to break free from its constant submission to a human?



Selected animal: Owl

A question for an owl from an elephant: What would an owl do in the event of a predator revolution? I've heard that eagles and vultures will not be content with owl rulership.

A question for an owl from a snake: The owl is only active at night. How will it compensate for this fact, and how will deal with animals that sleep at night?

A question for an owl from a dolphin: I don't think the owl has any knowledge of the aquatic environment. How does it resolve this situation so that aquatic animals like me don't feel like they're being neglected?

A question for an owl from a giraffe: For what reasons should an owl, as an introvert and recluse, become the king of all animals? In what way does she intend to use these „qualities“ for the benefit of all animals?

A question for an owl from a dog: Even if he can fly, he's easy to capture. What about a king like that? We have save him all the time because he can't adequately defend himself. That's right, isn't it?

Conclusion

- Finally, we provide a short time to evaluate the activity as well as to address any questions or suggestions from the students. Subsequently, we provide the students with additional information.