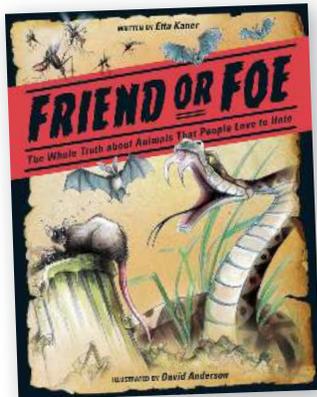


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## Classroom Activity Guide



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### *Friend or Foe: The Whole Truth about Animals That People Love to Hate*

By Etta Kaner, illustrated by David Anderson

**Grades** 3 to 8

**Reading levels** Fountas & Pinnell: T  
Lexile® Measure: 850L

**Curriculum links** **Language arts:** reading comprehension; understanding informational text  
**Science & technology:** life science; animals; environment

### *About the book*

Are cockroaches smelly, disease-spreading, allergy-inducing vermin or eco-friendly bugs that clean up the forest floor – or could both statements be true? This book sets out the arguments for and against 10 different animals that people love to hate: rats, cockroaches, snakes, leeches, bats, sharks, spiders, wolves, mosquitoes, and vultures. It's up to the reader to weigh the arguments for and against, to decide whether each animal is a friend or foe.

The purpose of *Friend or Foe* is to show that people can have different points of view about the same object or idea. It also encourages readers to challenge their perceptions of animals that humans love to loathe, to see if their attributes outweigh their negatives. The main areas for study in classrooms are as follows:

#### **English Writing, Media Literacy, and Oral Language**

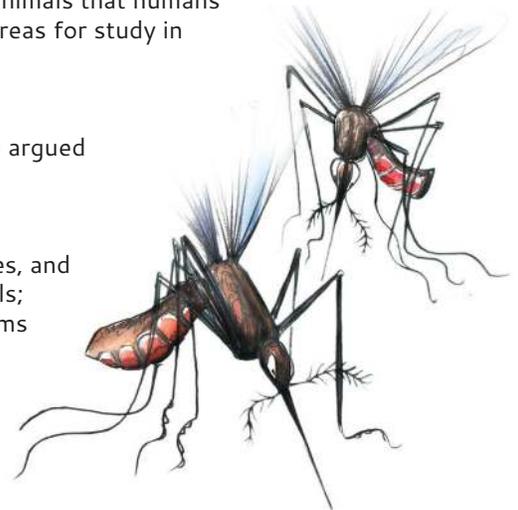
The book exposes readers to persuasive writing, showing how points can be argued successfully from both sides.

#### **Science**

Many topics are supported, including: the spread of disease (rats, cockroaches, and mosquitoes); the observation of the life cycles and behavior of various animals; the important ways that animals and habitats are linked together in ecosystems and food chains; and the use of animals in medical science (rats trained to detect human diseases and the use of leeches to aid healing after surgery).

#### **Design and Technology/Science**

Some parts of this book look at how the natural world provides inspiration for inventions and the development of new materials.



For instance, inventors have tried to replicate the strength and flexibility of spiders' silk to create a new and versatile man-made material, and they have copied the grooved skin of sharks to design swimsuits for elite swimmers.

## Writing Style

The engaging style of writing encourages readers to think, argue and challenge the information and ideas themselves. While the book is written in an entertaining style, it also gives much information about the natural world.



## Beyond the book

### 1. Speaking and Listening

Each short section can be used as a discussion prompt. After reading the information, the class can give their view about whether they think the animal is a friend or a foe. Does everyone agree? Take the cockroach (pages 10–13), for instance: since cockroaches love to eat dead plants and animals, they serve a useful purpose in the wild. But could they ever be considered useful in the home? So what is the verdict? Friend or foe?

### 2. Writing

Ask students to choose an animal and then write a persuasive piece about it addressed to a specific audience (e.g., health officials, children, pet owners, pest controllers, veterinarians, or zoo keepers).

Have students find some or all of the persuasive tactics used in the book. Then ask them to write a persuasive piece using some of these strategies:

The writer...

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| • says that the animal is popular         | page 17                             |
| • compliments us                          | page 28, 29                         |
| • tries to scare us                       | pages 14, 26, 38                    |
| • uses words to disgust us                | pages 23, 26, 42, 43                |
| • tries to impress us                     | pages 8, 24, 32                     |
| • makes comparisons to animals we like    | page 37                             |
| • defends the animal's actions            | pages 9, 28                         |
| • plays on our emotions                   | pages 9, 25, 17                     |
| • describes characteristics we don't like | pages 10, 14, 26, 36, 43            |
| • describes characteristics we like       | pages 25, 36                        |
| • gets us involved                        | pages 10, 12, 18, 23, 32, 36        |
| • urges us to agree with the writer       | pages 24, 42                        |
| • makes us feel what the animal feels     | pages 26, 38, 39                    |
| • appeals to our interests                | pages 4, 12, 16, 17, 21, 24, 29, 37 |

### Point of View

Have students choose an animal that is a pet, and then write and deliver a speech that the pet might make about its owners (likes, annoyances, favorite people, etc). You might want to read *Martha Speaks* by Susan Meddaugh for inspiration.

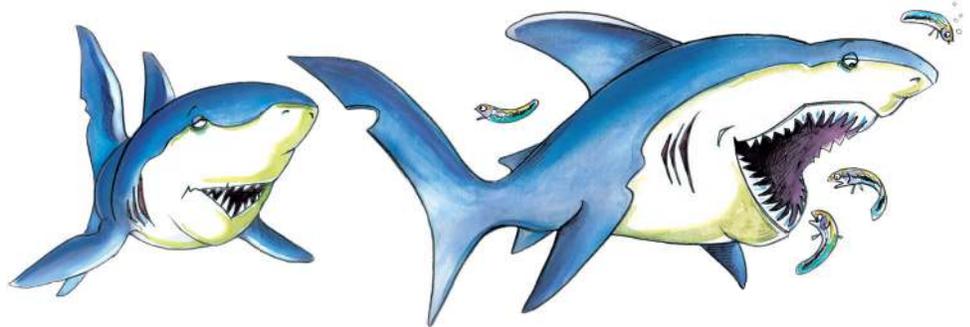
Have students read *Diary of a Worm* by Doreen Cronin. Then have them choose one of the animals in *Friend or Foe* and blog its diary. Think of likes and dislikes, daily experiences (including encounters with other animals), food and shelter, personality, and opinions.

### Creative Writing

Discuss the purpose of fairy tales. In the case of *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Three Little Pigs*, children learned to be aware of the very real danger of wolves. Ask children to recall and write down their own version of these famous fairy tales, or be inspired by the information in the book to write a fairy tale with a warning message relating to an animal.

## 3. Science

Focus on the information about wolves on pages 36–37 and use it to prompt a discussion about ecosystems and what happens when humans interfere by exterminating a “pest.” Have students choose an animal from the book and investigate how its ecosystem would be affected if it were wiped out.



Next, challenge the class to find examples of how the animals in this book are helping medical science.

## 4. Geography

Feeding our growing human population is a challenge. Cockroaches (page 13) are not the only insects that scientists are researching as a nutritious source of food. In some parts of the world, insects have always been part of people’s diets. Ask students to research and write a report about insects as a source of human food. They could start by finding out about witchetty grubs eaten by Aboriginal people in Australia or roasted chapulines (grasshoppers) eaten in Mexico.

## 5. Art and Design

Use the cartoon illustrations in this book to inspire the class to create their own cartoon animal drawings.

## 6. History

Follow up the information about the use of leeches in modern-day medicine by asking the class to research the ways that doctors used leeches to treat people's ailments in the past. When did doctors and scientists realize that bloodletting was not such a good idea?

## 7. Oral Language

Have students write and perform a conversation between two objects that have their own points of view in relation to each other (e.g., chair and floor, hydrant and dog, feet and shoes).

Read *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka. How is it different than the usual tale? Have the class perform a puppet show about another familiar story from the perspective of one of the characters (e.g., the troll in *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*).

Have a debate about an animal in this book, or one of your students' choosing.

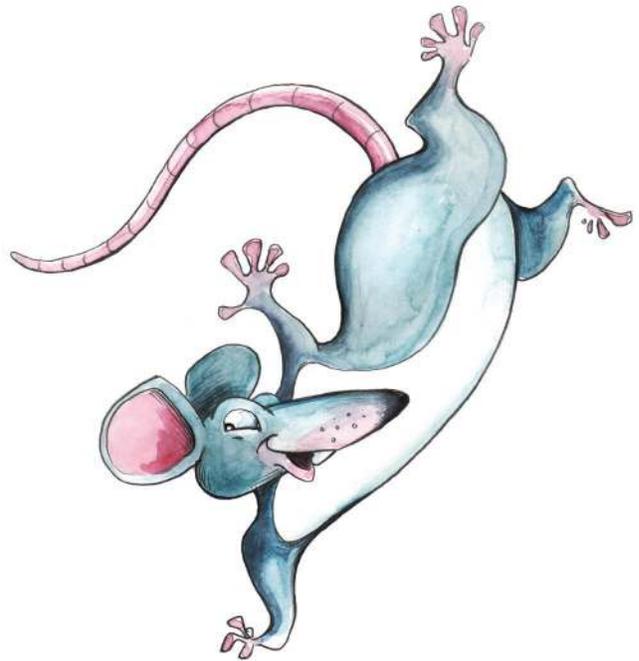
Put an animal on trial. Have your students play different roles – the defendant, lawyers for each side, the judge, and the jury.

## 8. Media Literacy

Have students create a poster showing two sides of the same animal: negatives and positives.

Have each student choose an animal that they dislike. Then use the computer program Powtoon to have each animal convince the audience about its positive qualities.

Have students pretend they are salespeople trying to sell an animal that nobody would want (e.g., a mosquito). Encourage them to use the computer programs Linoit, Pic Collage, or Bitstrips to present their sales pitches.



Guide adapted from content created by Franklin Watts UK.