

# HUMANE EDUCATION QUARTERLY

## WINTER 2022

ISSUE 129

From the President's Pen  
Current State of the Field  
Lesson Plan  
Scholarships and Membership  
Book Review  
Animal Stories  
New Board Members  
Editorial Notes



ASSOCIATION <sup>of</sup>  
PROFESSIONAL  
HUMANE  
EDUCATORS  
*Empathy through Education*

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

Inge Koopman-Leyva,  
APHE President

Happy New Year APHE Members!

As I reflect over the last year, I am humbled by the dedication of our Board of Directors and our membership. While the world has had some setbacks during this last year, APHE continued to strive forward providing its members and supporters with ongoing professional development opportunities, meeting “face to face” monthly with our Coffee and Connect sessions and round table discussions. It is with admiration and gratitude that I would like to personally thank each of our Coffee and Connect speakers from last year for not only supporting APHE and humane educators across the country, but also for continuing to foster compassion and empathy and creating a kinder world for all. If you missed any of the Coffee and Connect sessions and you’d like to catch up on the recordings, please visit the APHE website, log in and go to the member resource area.



Entering the New Year also means we are a little closer to our 2022 virtual conference, *Teaching for the Future*, April 26-28 from 12:00 – 4:00 p.m. EST. We have an incredible lineup of presenters with registration beginning in early February. This year’s conference is sure to be an exceptional virtual learning opportunity for all levels of humane educators and animal welfare professionals.

We are fortunate again this year to have the opportunity to provide scholarships thanks to our Visionary Sponsor, Best Friends Animal Society. We are thankful that the funding provided will allow APHE the opportunity to engage a wider range of humane educators and professionals in the field.

Looking forward to connecting with new and old friends at this year’s conference.

With endless admiration,  
Inge

# CURRENT STATE OF THE FIELD, AND EXPLORING THE PATH AHEAD

## SHIFTING OUR LANGUAGE TO REPRESENT OUR HUMANE VALUES



**BY SHAWNA WEAVER**

Director of Education at the Walter Munk Foundation for the Oceans

“What?! That’s what a whale sounds like when they talk?!” a shocked and amazed 3rd grader exclaimed during a Zoom class about bioacoustics.

A great joy I feel as an educator is watching students experiencing aha moments like this, that magical combination of novel experience, intellectual scaffolding, and emotional connection that brings a student into a new perspective. In a class about bioacoustics, students are introduced to marine animal communication, and often realize how similar animals in the water are to animals on land (including humans). The connection enables them to understand dangers posed by human activities like sound pollution, and as they learn an entirely new concept, they increase their empathy for other beings they’ve never even seen in real life. When I was a humane educator at an animal shelter I witnessed similar moments as students interacted with animals.

Watching kids' compassion swell as they interacted gently with vulnerable animals in their care gave me hope and pride in our work. But one small detail in our communication has always stood out to me, and it’s in how animals are referenced. When we are in the classroom with an animal we know well, such as a canine ambassador, we likely all introduce them with a name and with he or she pronouns. Our students share stories about their companion animals at home, and we hear about these animals’ names, preferences, and hobbies as if the student is talking about their human sibling.

On the other hand, when talking about animals we do not know, or wildlife, we more commonly refer to those animals as “it.” And beyond our classrooms, animals are referred to almost exclusively as “it.” I’ve wondered where the line is: When does an animal earn status as a *who* instead of a *what*?

This spring I had my own aha moment when I read an open letter to the Associated Press calling for a change in guidelines for nonhuman animal pronouns. The title of the letter stated succinctly what professionals in our field already know: “animals are a who, not a what.” Therefore, it should only be appropriate to refer to them as such. The open letter was signed by professionals in various areas of animal welfare and included humane educators Jane Goodall, Sarah Bexell, Jonathan Balcombe, Zoe Weil, and several other friends of APHE. Reasons for the recommendation to use pronouns when referencing animals were outlined in the letter.



## BY SHAWNA WEAVER

Director of Education at the Walter Munk Foundation for the Oceans

The letter states:

*In an age struggling with industrialized animal cruelty, the sixth mass extinction of species, a climate crisis, and the exploitation of the natural world, the way we use language influences the way we see our relationship with our environment and the nonhuman animals we share it with...*

*Our lives intersect with nonhuman animals in myriad ways. They live in our homes as our companions and visit our yards as wild guests. They're hunted, farmed, and eaten. They're raised and killed for their skins and fur. They're used in research and entertainment and held captive in zoos and aquariums. Wild and domesticated nonhuman animals are everywhere around us, and the scientific consensus is that they too are conscious beings.*

This letter presents a perfect opportunity for our field to lead the way into this new frontier of linguistic evolution. Our work in humane education is and has always been centered around innovation: we are creating a more compassionate, responsible world through what we teach. We bridge traditional education and all of the important life skills that strengthen relationships and make healthier communities. We create transformative aha moments, we transform hearts and minds, and of course, we make the lives of countless animals—now and in the future—better. What we have always done is help people see that nonhuman animals feel and experience emotions and physical sensations as humans so. With this open letter, and hopefully new recommendations from the Associated Press, we have another big tool in our toolbox to harness the power of language to influence our culture for the better.

Because we teach social-emotional skills and encourage a growth mindset, we are well-positioned as the leading experts to bring this big idea into our communities and drive it forward. We do not have to wait for the language guidelines to change. Language is fluid, changed and shaped by people and trends as our world changes.

This linguistic trend could lead to new perspectives that will make our professional lives easier. It could help more people embrace what is already so intuitive: animals have a sex, emotions, and physical sensations whether or not they have a human-given name. While the world ushers in better linguistic justice and inclusion in this time of social justice upwelling, this is perfect timing to reexamine how we reference all beings. Maintaining this subtle but significant shift in how we think of animals could help children maintain their naturally empathetic relationships with animals and could help adults remember the intrinsic value of animals as individual beings.

How could we make this happen?



## We can start with the following steps:

Check your own language in your writing, and set yourself up to create a new habit. I recently edited the settings in my computer software to stop correcting me when I refer to animals as “they,” and instead to highlight when I use the word “it.”

Check your language when you speak. Notice how you refer to animals at work and at home. Practice making this shift every time any animal comes up in conversation. Mention your efforts to friends and family so they can join you in setting this exciting trend.

Guide meaningful discussion in your organization, using the open letter as a starting point. Add it to your next meeting agenda, write your own article about it for your newsletter, send an internal memo, and include it in your curriculum. Such discussions might lead to:

- a. Organization-wide custom or policy changes
- b. Signage changes
- c. Spreading the word to your stakeholders
- d. Spreading the word among students and schools, also influencing K-12 educators
- e. More aha moments that help students see animals as self-interested, sentient, individuals.

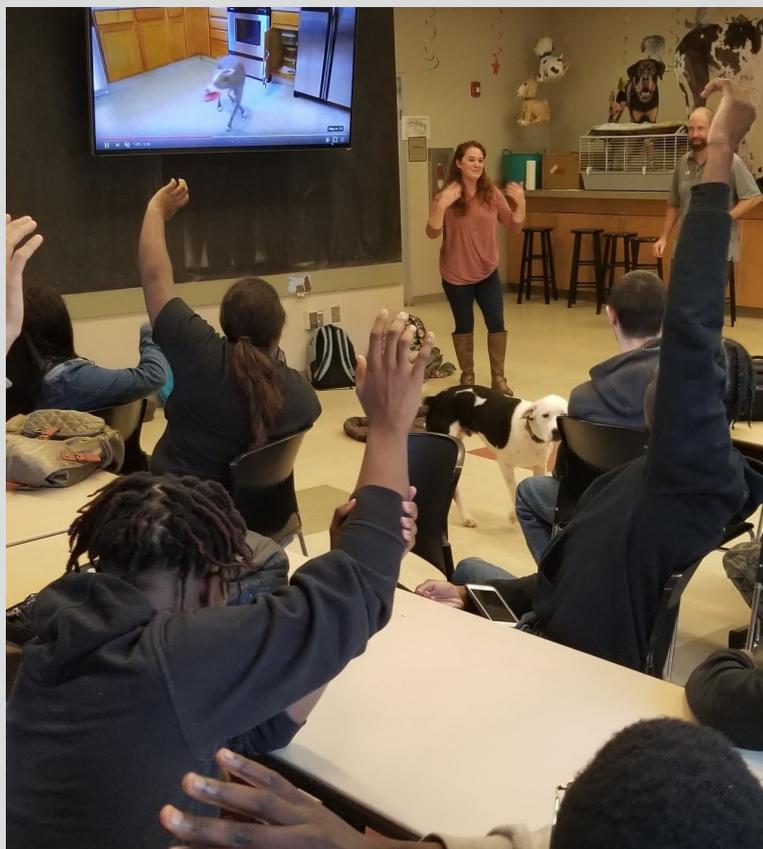
Our field never ceases to amaze me with our thought leadership, our innovative ideas, and our inspiring dedication to make the world a better place. It's exciting to imagine how we can use language to usher in more compassion for all animals.

# LESSON PLAN

## THINKING INSIDE THE BOX: COMICS AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL

By Heather Grogan, Charleston Animal Society

When creating an effective lesson, educators typically consider the intended audience, different learning styles, and the desired outcome. Ideally, the lesson needs to be replicated easily for all types of learners and impactful. To accomplish this, educators seek to make lessons that are creative, emotional, and engaging. If you are like me, just reading all of this is overwhelming and seems like a huge undertaking. That's because it is; in addition to the pressure to constantly produce new and innovative lessons! You can imagine my joy when the perfect idea hit me. The subject line read, "Get creative with our new comic strips." Okay, so it didn't hit me. It landed in my inbox in the form of an email from Canva, but it was the exact idea I was looking for to help me with the task of creating new lessons.



Canva is an easy and free online graphic design platform that can be used to create professional graphics, lessons, posters, videos, and so much more. The email subject line was enough to get me out of my brainstorm funk and excited about trying out something new in the form of a comic strip.

Comic strips can be an excellent tool for learning and are now part of my toolbox! They allow for open discussion that is guided by the learner. Instead of instructing the student on cat behavior, pet care, responsible ownership, etc. through a lecture or presentation, you can give them a short comic illustrating some of the themes you would like to discuss and have the students explain what they believe is going on. This approach is designed to be very open. For example, students can be asked questions such as, "Tell me why a cat may demonstrate some of those behaviors," or "How does Frank the dog feel in that scene?" This form of questioning is an excellent empathy-building activity, as children will have to try to understand how various scenarios may be making an animal or owner feel. The student's age, experience level, and response will help determine which of their responses will become the teachable moments for that comic strip.

# LESSON PLAN, CONTINUED

## THINKING INSIDE THE BOX: COMICS AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL

By Heather Grogan, Charleston Animal Society

Check out the example below to see what you can do with Canva and Comics.

For this comic consider:

1. Asking students to fill in the blank speech bubbles and imagine how the animals are feeling.
2. Discussing topics such as microchipping animals, the role of the shelter, how animals may feel in different situations, how animals may feel/act differently in a shelter than in a home, etc.
3. Have a comic writer competition for the student with the most compelling or creative speech bubbles.



# SCHOLARSHIP AND FREE MEMBERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



APHE recognizes 2021 has been another tough year for everyone. As such, we are offering scholarship funds to cover the cost of attending the 2022 virtual conference AND one year of APHE membership (\$75 value).

This amazing scholarship opportunity applies to both members and non-members (however, those that received the scholarship in 2021 are not eligible).

The deadline for scholarship application submission is March 1st. Scholarship award recipients will be notified by March 15th. If applying for a scholarship, please wait to register until you receive notification of your award status.

To apply, visit [www.aphe.org/scholarship2022](http://www.aphe.org/scholarship2022)

**Scholarships are made possible through the generosity of Best Friends.**

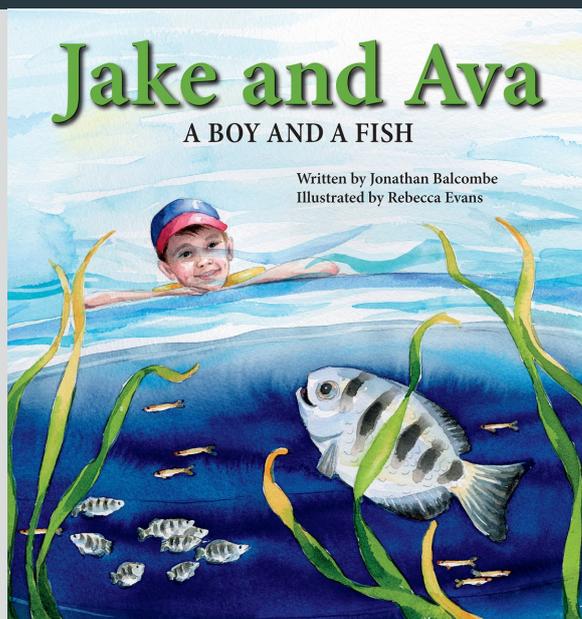


**Best Friends®**  
**Save Them All®**

Best Friends Animal Society and Southern Utah University (SUU) have partnered to create higher learning opportunities in contemporary animal services. Through this partnership, students have the opportunity to learn about proven data and science-based practices, policies and procedures through certificated programs, symposiums, and classes. [www.bestfriends.org/suu](http://www.bestfriends.org/suu)

# BOOK REVIEW: *JAKE AND AVA*

WRITTEN BY JONATHAN BALCOMBE AND ILLUSTRATED BY REBECCA EVANS



Review by Robin O'Brien,  
Wisconsin Humane Society Milwaukee Campus

*Jake and Ava* is a beautiful story that examines a common pastime, fishing, from the perspective of both humans and fishes. Page by page, readers dive into each family's "side" of a fishing trip. Jake, a human, encounters a family history of fishing and his grandfather's longtime appreciation for the hobby. Ava, an archerfish, considers the day's task of shadowing her Uncle Archie's quest for worms.

In life, it is natural for people's experiences and perspectives to shift as time goes on. It can be difficult, however, to predict how others might respond to a change in routine or tradition. It becomes increasingly more challenging to be the person who suggests or initiates the change, too.

In this story, Jake's sincere concern for Ava and his grandfather's resulting flexibility is a fantastic example of how family traditions have the capacity to change while still holding onto what's most important. In this case, what's most important is spending time together and enjoying each other's company. This is clear in both Jake's relationship with his grandfather, and Ava's relationship with Uncle Archie. Many can relate to this feeling of togetherness and kinship, and the ability to hold onto our own individual beliefs and passions, even when those ideas are different from our loved ones' opinions.

*Jake and Ava* is a story that encourages empathy for all living beings with attention to emotions of various species, in this case, archerfishes and humans. Humane educators will also be pleased to share with kids the concluding page which describes "How You Can Help Fishes Like Ava and Archie." This conclusion includes interesting facts about fishes and important takeaways for kids who care to learn about animals and their feelings.

The significance of *Jake and Ava's* written content is paired with beautiful watercolor illustrations to match the aquatic setting of the story. Furthermore, the animals are visually depicted in a realistic manner. They are not anthropomorphized (like we might see in *Finding Nemo*, for example) which allows readers to take Ava's feelings at face value and discourages us from assigning human-like personalities to the fishes. Fishes have unique, incredible qualities and a wholly different life than humans. Living beings can all share, however, the common goal of a happy, healthy, and safe life for ourselves and those we care about.

For a free downloadable *Jake and Ava* classroom guide, visit [The Gryphon Press Educator Resources](#).

# THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT STORIES WITH ANIMALS

BY MELISSA LOGAN, ALBERTA SPCA

Humane educators are keenly aware that children tend to have a natural affinity for animals. This affinity is shown through the ubiquity of animals in the lives of children—many have pets, visit zoos and sanctuaries, and observe wildlife in both urban and rural environments. Animals are also heavily featured in children’s art, film, and literature – and these media provide implicit messages on how we ought to think about and treat animals.

Messages in popular stories are not always accurate or positive, which may lead to unintended harms. As humane educators, we can encourage students to think critically about the messages that are reflected through books and film. Although there are plenty of great stories that might not accurately demonstrate appropriate care or relationships with animals, they can still provide opportunities for teachable moments if they are reflected on critically.

Here are a few things to consider when selecting or using stories with an animal theme:

## **How are attitudes about animals portrayed?**

How are people’s attitudes towards animals reflected in the story? Are any species depicted negatively? For instance, are snakes, rats or even stray cats made out to be bad or evil? Is there harm in demonizing certain species? We know from research that the animals we have negative attitudes towards have poorer animal welfare outcomes. These negative attitudes can be reinforced through stories. Ask students if they think these depictions are fair.



## **Is animal care represented in a realistic way?**

Does the story demonstrate realistic or appropriate care? Or does the story promote misconceptions? Regarding pets, it’s rare to see a film with a cat who isn’t drinking milk. Although this scene commonly plays out, it does not reflect appropriate care as many cats past the kitten stage are lactose intolerant (water is best for cats!). Encourage young people to point out when stories get things wrong.

## **Does the story depict appropriate human-animal relationships?**

Domestic animals depend on us to meet their needs. Is this reflected?

There are plenty of stories that depict domestic animals thriving without human care, which in reality is not typically the case. Does the story show potentially dangerous interactions with animals? For instance, there are many picture books where children lay on or hug their dogs. Although many dogs will tolerate this behaviour, most tend not to like it and the inability to read dog body language may lead to injury. The vast majority of dog bites that children receive are from a family or friend’s dog. Ask students to point out interactions that may be unsafe.

# THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT STORIES WITH ANIMALS

BY MELISSA LOGAN, ALBERTA SPCA

## Does the story depict animals with human characteristics (anthropomorphize)?

There are many stories where animals are anthropomorphized, or depicted with human characteristics - Disney has plenty of examples of this. Although these can be wonderful stories, they don't typically build empathy for, or understanding of, different animal species. But some degree of anthropomorphization can be positive if relationships with, and treatment of animals are realistic or if the story fosters lessons about how to recognize self in others which helps to build perspective taking.

## How is language used in the book?

As Shawna Weaver pointed out in her article, "Shifting our Language to Represent Our Humane Values" on page 2, language matters! Are any animals referred to as 'it'? Ask students what they think about the way animals are referenced. Are stereotypes of animals used? Are lions depicted as noble or brave? What harms may be caused by using stereotypes? Does this also apply to people?

## Welcome New APHE Board Members

In January, APHE was thrilled to announce the addition of 6 new board members elected for the 2022-2024 term. "This amazing group of new board members leaves us full of hope for the future of APHE. This group brings a diverse set of expertise and skills that will undoubtedly positively affect the mission of APHE," said Nominating Chair and Vice President Heather Grogan. "We have always worked to ensure APHE's board and leadership is committed to our vision and this group is no exception. We couldn't be happier!"



APHE is also very excited to announce their newest opportunity for members outside of the board interested in committing their time and expertise to the organization. Do you have a specific skill set that you feel would benefit the organization, an interest in joining an APHE committee, or are you just looking to enhance your professional development? APHE's new Advisory Council is looking to recruit members for this unique volunteer opportunity that will allow you to build leadership skills and collaborate with others in the field. To learn more about joining APHE's Advisory Council or to apply go to <https://www.aphe.org/advisorycouncil>.

# HUMANE EDUCATION QUARTERLY

## WINTER 2022



### YOUR APHE BOARD MEMBERS

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Staci Hurley, Membership Secretary  
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Christine Davis  
Erin Ellis  
Kelsey Joseph  
Karly Noel  
Cindy Walden  
Shawna Weaver

## HUMANE EDUCATION QUARTERLY EDITORIAL NOTES

Editor, *Humane Education Quarterly*  
Robin O'Brien  
Wisconsin Humane Society

President's Pen  
Inge Koopman-Leyva  
APHE President  
Humane Society of Southern Arizona

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Oceans

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"Thinking Critically about Stories with Animals"  
Melissa Logan  
Alberta SPCA

SAVE  
*the*  
DATE

APHE VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

4/26/22 - 4/28/22



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