

CHIMPANZEE OR HUMAN?



Grade level: 6-9

Subject Area: Science

Time needed: 45 minutes

Objectives: To raise students' awareness of all the shared characteristics between chimpanzees and humans.

Materials: string, paperclips, 4x6 note cards

Activity:

Preparation-Make cards that say: CHIMPANZEE, HUMAN, BOTH

Then make cards that list the following characteristics (one card for each characteristic):

BOTH

- walk bipedally
- use tools
- nurse their young
- communicate
- solve problems
- territorial
- show emotions
- have wars
- groom themselves
- sleep in beds
- ticklish
- have arguments
- have opposable thumbs
- see colors
- use mirrors
- draw/paint
- laugh
- cry
- lose teeth at age 6
- make tools

CHIMPANZEE

- dense bones
- arms are longer than their legs
- pant hoot
- food grunt
- walk quadrupedally
- no wrist rotation
- short thumbs
- opposable toe

HUMAN

- speak verbally
- cry emotional tears
- legs are longer than their arms
- swim
- hair is mostly on their head
- die from AIDS
- variety of eye colors

Attach a paperclip to each card: one paper clip on the top of the card, one on the bottom (either using tape or punching a hole and threading the paperclip through). Cut a piece of string 3'-4' long and attach the three cards labeled "Chimp," "Human," and "Both" on the string spaced evenly apart. Place the "Both" card in between the other two cards.

In Class-Review with students the genetic findings between chimps and humans. Inform them that they are now going to compare chimps (free-living and captive) to humans based on characteristics of both of them. Give each student, or pair of students, 1-2 cards. Give them a few moments to decide where the card goes. You may choose to have two volunteers hold the string up so the entire class can watch the progress. Once they have decided, have the students attach the card under the correct category of "Chimp," "Human," or "Both."

After all cards have been placed under a category (by hooking paperclip to paperclip), decide as a class to see if changes are needed. If the majority of the class agrees, move the card.

Have students share their observations. Any surprises?

Conclude- "Chimpanzees are very much like us. They share many of our genes: They have feelings and feel pain. They are not necessarily treated in ways that meet their needs in many forms of captivity. It is important to treat them as our sibling species, not as biomedical research projects."

Extensions (for higher grades)

- Research DNA information; find out exactly what % different we are from chimpanzees.
- Conduct behavioral research on free-living chimpanzees.
- Have students create cards based on their own research.
- Examine hunter/gatherer data (cultural anthropology), and compare information with free-living primates.