

Recommended Reading about Animal Issues for Elementary and Middle School Students



For Developing Readers

Arnold, Caroline. *Pets Without Homes*. Clarion Books, 1983.

In this picture book illustrated with photographs, Buffy and Max are unwanted or lost and must go to the animal shelter.

Bix, Daisy. *Buddy Unchained*, The Gryphon Press, 2006.

Buddy, a lovable mixed-breed dog, is happy in a new home; he tells the story of his former life, and of how he was rescued and came to live with a caring family. Buddy's story shows that a neglected or abused dog can be rescued to live a good life in a new home through the efforts of those who care.

Buchwald, Art. *The Bollo Caper; A Fable for Children of All Ages*. Doubleday, 1974.

Bollo, a leopard brought to New York to be made into a fur coat, manages to escape to Washington to try to get Congress to declare him an endangered species.

Cleary, Beverly. *Socks*. HarperTrophy, 1990.

After a rough start, and a brief internment in a mail box, Socks the cat has landed on his feet. He lives with the Brickers--a young couple who dote on him. Then a baby arrives in the household and Socks discovers that the people he'd trained so well no longer consider him the center of their universe. This is devastating, but eventually he finds a new place that everyone can be happy with.

Dahl, Roald. *The Magic Finger*. Puffin, 1998.

The Gregg family loves hunting, but their eight-year-old neighbor can't stand it. After countless pleas for them to stop are ignored, she has no other choice--she has to put her magic finger on them. Now the Greggs are a family of birds, and like it or not, they're going to find out how it feels to be on the other end of the gun.

Jeschke, Susan. *Perfect the Pig*. Henry Holt and Co., 1996.

This is a story about a pig who rises from a lowly birth and sees his dreams come true. The relationship between Perfect and his guardian Olive is lovely. Young children who read this book simply adore it, even for the tenth or twelfth time.

McNulty, Faith. *The Lady and the Spider*. HarperTrophy, 1987.

Soft pastel drawings complement the simple text of this serene tale of a green spider who makes his home in a lettuce patch. Drama enters when the lady who owns the garden harvests the lettuce for lunch. She discovers the spider among the leaves in the kitchen sink and is about to discard him with the trash when she suddenly takes a good, long look and marvels at his perfection and will to live. The lady returns the spider to the garden and places him on a new plant to resume his useful, busy life.

Morehead, Debby. *A Special Place for Charlee: A Child's Companion Through Pet Loss*. Partners in Publishing, 1996.

A truly touching and sensitive story of a little boy and how he deals with the death of his best friend and canine companion, Charlee. With expressive pen and ink illustrations, this is a good book to accompany any child through the grief of losing a companion animal.



Peet, Bill. *The Gnats of Knotty Pine*. Houghton Mifflin, 1984.

The animals of Knotty Pine Forest must come up with a plan to drive away the hunters. Luckily, the clever gnats come to the rescue and save the day with their ingenious plan.

Pilkey, Dav. *Twas the Night Before Thanksgiving*. Scholastic, 1990.

Pilkey has adapted Clement Moore's classic poem for another holiday. The day before Thanksgiving finds eight boys and girls taking a field trip to a turkey farm. Horrified to learn the turkeys' fate, the children plan to help them escape.

Vignola, Radha. *Victor the Vegetarian: Saving Little Lambs*. Aviva!, 1994.

Victor wants to save his two lambs when he hears about his father's plans to eat lamb chops. He runs away with the lambs and gets lost in the woods. When his parents find them, Victor has decided to be a vegetarian.

Vignola, Radha. *Victor's Picnic: With the Vegetarian Animals*. Aviva!, 1996.

A great follow up to *Victor the Vegetarian*. After deciding to be a vegetarian, Victor goes to the library to learn how to stay healthy without eating meat. On his way home, a deer invites him to a picnic where animals share their food, and he learns what to eat to stay healthy.

Wildsmith, Brian. *Hunter and His Dog*. Oxford University Press, USA, 1987.

This is the story of a dog that is trained to hunt. But the problem is that the dog is also compassionate and kind. Every time he finds a wounded duck, he doesn't bring it to his master, the hunter. Instead, he looks after the injured bird. What will the hunter do when he finds out?

For Experienced Readers

Baylor, Byrd. *Hawk, I'm Your Brother*. Aladdin.

In this Caldecott Honor Book, a boy steals a young hawk from his nest. After realizing that the bird is unhappy, the boy sets him free.

Byars, Betsy. *The Midnight Fox*. Puffin, 1981.

After Tom saw the fox he thought, "There is a great deal of difference between seeing an animal in a zoo in front of painted fake rocks and trees and seeing one natural and free in the woods."

Coates, Anna. *Dog Magic*. Skylark, 1991.

Matt and Kate can hardly believe it when their dog, Toby, speaks to them. The frightened pooch manages to summon up enough "dog magic" to communicate that something terrible has happened to his offspring. Matt and Kate discover that the puppies have been secretly sent to a laboratory to be used to test cosmetic safety. In a tumultuous finish, they save the puppies.

Duel, Debra. *William's Story*. Storytellers Ink, 1992.

This moving story is told from the point of view of an abandoned cat. It describes the threats to a domesticated animal and clearly defines what animals need from humans.



Girzone, Joseph. *Kara, The Lonely Falcon*. Touchstone. 1997.

Kara, the falcon, loses the desire to kill in this sophisticated fantasy. As he learns to subsist on berries and plants, the other animals have to learn to accept his new way of living. Kara, who has never had a friend, becomes friends first with a dove whose life he saves and then befriends the other small animals.

Goodall, Jane. *My Life With the Chimpanzees*. Aladdin.

The story of Goodall's life with the chimpanzees of Gombe has long been available to adults; in this book she brings that world to young readers. The book begins with tales of her childhood in England and her earliest awareness of the needs of animals, her friendship with Louis Leakey, and her trip with her mother to Gombe. She tells stories of the chimps and encourages young people to nurture an interest in nature, giving advice on observing animals, and stressing the importance of preserving wildlife.

Hurwitz, Johanna. *Much Ado About Aldo*. Viking Childrens Books, 1989.

A highly appealing story about Aldo, a curious third-grader who becomes passionate about a classroom science experiment. When he learns that some chameleons are to be put in the same tank as his beloved crickets, Aldo takes action.

King-Smith, Dick. *Ace: The Very Important Pig*. Yealing, 1992.

King-Smith recounts the adventures of a highly unusual pig in this fanciful sequel to *Babe: The Gallant Pig*, which introduces Babe's great-grandson Ace. Much to the amazement of the other barnyard animals, Ace understands the language of human beings and, although his own vocabulary is limited, communicates quite well with Farmer Tubbs. With the help of a clever house cat, Ace gains entry to the house and makes himself comfortable watching the magic television box.

LeRoy. *Taxi Cat and Huey*. HarperCollins, 1992.

Told from the point of view of the dignified basset hound Huey, this very funny book explains how the family adopts a cat, Taxi, who Huey calls a "fur-covered disaster area." Taxi thinks he is a ninja warrior and tells Huey that a piece of string he plays with is a snake. Children will enjoy the antics of Taxi and Huey as they become friends.

Locker, Thomas. *The Mare on the Hill*. Dial Books, 1985.

A horse, mistreated by her first guardians, is gently taught to trust humans again.

Newkirk, Ingrid. *Kids Can Save the Animals!* Warner Books, 1991.

A book filled with fascinating facts about animals, whimsical drawings, and more than 100 projects and activities that kids can do to help animals.

O'Brien, Robert C. *The Secret of NIMH*. Scholastic, 1995.

This book is about rats that have become smarter widow named Mrs. Frisby, who is trying to save her son Timmy from pneumonia, meets the rats and the adventure begins!

Read, Nicholas. *One in a Million*. Polestar, 1996.

Told in the voice of a stray pup who finds himself in the dog pound, this story follows a dog who finds himself in a lot of sad and scary places before ending up with a loving family. Covers issues of overpopulation, the consequences of bringing a dog home on impulse, and the differences between dog and human communications.



Saunders, Susan. *The Dolphin Trap*. Avon, 1998.

Two cousins work to help Boone the dolphin brought to Project Neptune, a non-profit organization that works to rescue sick and injured sea animals. This book does a great job of addressing wild animals in captivity and entertainment.

Weil, Zoe. *So You Love Animals*. New Society Publishers, 2004.

This book teaches children what is happening to other species, enabling them to turn their care for animals into effective and positive choices that improve their lives. Covering companion animals, farmed animals, those used in entertainment, sport, experimentation, and wildlife, it engages kids with facts, games, skits, experiments, and exciting activities, empowering them to make a difference.

For Mature Students

Ames, Mildred. *Who Will Speak for the Lamb?* Harpercollins Childrens Books, 1989.

Against the background of a tale of college romance, this novel describes a controversy over the use of animals in education and experiments. With an absorbing plot and sympathetic characters, the author asks readers to consider whether all living creatures have the right to be free from exploitation.

Krizmanic, Judy. *A Teen's Guide to Going Vegetarian*. Puffin, 1994.

Much more than a guide to diet, this book explains why vegetarianism is beneficial both to the individual and to the planet. Drawing on numerous resources, Krizmanic thoroughly investigates various reasons people choose not to eat meat--health benefits, ethical concerns, and environmental factors, among them--and by listing organizations and newsletters of interest, she encourages readers to become actively involved in their lifestyle choice.

Patterson, Charles. *Animal Rights*. Backinprint.Com, 2000.

Written for young people, this book explores the way in which animals are used for food and entertainment, as well as in experimentation and education. It also addresses the problem of puppy mills and the overpopulation and euthanasia of unwanted companion animals. The author presents a broad range of the concerns of people involved in the animal rights movement.

Sewall, Anna. *Black Beauty*. Signet Classics, 2002.

This classic tale is told from the point of view of Black Beauty, a horse who is sold to a cruel master. Black Beauty is sold again and again until, after a terrible injury, he is lucky to find the right home.

Note: Some of these books may be out-of print, but can still be obtained through online sellers such as amazon.com.