

What You Can Do

If you are a student:

❗ By exercising your right not to dissect, you can help create an environment where respect for animals is the standard. Before your life science class begins, ask your instructor whether dissection or the use of live animals will be required. Find out exactly what the project will entail. Tell your instructor of your intention not to participate in experiments involving dissection as soon as possible. This will give you and your instructor time to work out a suitable alternative project. If your instructor gives you a negative response, talk to the head of the life science department or the principal.

❗ In California, Florida, and Pennsylvania, students have a legal right to refuse to dissect. Maine and Louisiana have policies (not laws) against dissection. If you need help or information on alternative projects, contact The National Humane Education Society.

If you are not a student:

❗ Talk to your children about their life science classes. Encourage them to request alternative projects if the curriculum includes dissection. Offer to contact the teacher or school principal.

❗ Work with students to introduce alternatives to dissection at your local schools. For information on alternative projects, contact The National Humane Education Society.

- ❗ Contact your local elected school board officials as well as the superintendent of your city/county schools to alert them to your concern about dissection. Request a change in the life science curriculum if dissection is included.
- ❗ Write letters to local newspapers and television and radio stations to alert them about the issue of dissection and the necessity of public involvement.
- ❗ Talk to your children, grandchildren, and the neighborhood kids about the importance of respecting all life.
- ❗ Presently, there are nearly 500 alternatives available to dissection for science education.



Fostering a sentiment of kindness to animals

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Presented by The National Humane Education Society



Classroom Dissection

an action
that is
inhumane
& outdated



Dissection of animals in the classroom is widely practiced throughout the nation as part of life science classes. Introduced in the 1920s, before the development of computers, low-cost visual aids and videos, dissection became the "hands on" method of studying biology. Although teachers and students have begun to move toward alternative methods, the prevailing method of lab experimentation still involves dissection.

Dissection is Big Business

Nearly 6 million animals a year are killed for the purpose of dissection. Habitats are decimated and ecologies threatened so that chipmunks, frogs, and snakes can be used to study life. In the late 1960s, the high usage of frogs seriously depleted the native North American frog *Rana pipiens*.

Countless mice, rabbits, pigs, cats, and other animals are also used for classroom dissections. Pounds, slaughter houses, and pet stores all contribute "resources" to this multimillion dollar business. Sometimes, the means of procuring animals is questionable. Live animals slated for biological experiments often suffer from the trauma of confinement, inadequate food and care, crude transport, and inhumane killing methods.

When asked to participate in these experiments, the initial reaction of most students is distaste. In fact, experiments intended to stimulate students' interest in biology often "turn off" career pursuits in this field because the students were repulsed at having to kill or cut up an animal when they were in high school.



Dissection Teaches Insensitivity

Dissection is an outdated and inhumane practice that does more harm than good. We should teach our children to respect life; dissection disregards the loss of animal life and sends a message that certain life is unimportant and undervalued. Taking life to study life is paradoxical.

A popular argument among educators is that dissection prepares students for work in biological and medical fields. However, a detailed knowledge of anatomical structures is easily obtained through use of computer simulations and models. Several veterinary schools and university science programs in fact do not require dissection.



Dissection is also expensive. A school with 100 biology students spends over \$1,800 a year for preserved specimens. That same money could purchase audiovisuals, software, or other educational alternatives which would serve and enhance the school's science program for years to come.

Humane Alternatives

The scope and variety of modern alternatives to dissection eliminates the need for this antiquated practice. One of the most popular alternatives is Operation Frog, a computer simulation of a frog dissection. Students can actually move organs using this program, and it teaches them structure and function.

Models of human anatomy are effective because students don't have to transfer information

from one species to another. Plastic models, charts, and other resources are readily available from biological supply houses.

Videos of a one-time dissection are also available if a teacher believes students must see actual dead frogs being dissected. Teachers can also obtain videotape of actual human operations that graphically illustrate the human heart, the cardiac cycle, and more. Students can also use books that depict animal physiology.

A Kinder Future

Fortunately, every year the number of educators who reject dissection as an educational device is increasing. Some find that it doesn't meet their objectives; others say they can better prepare their students for college with more concept-oriented experiences. Teachers who do conduct dissection in their classes are becoming more receptive to students' requests for alternative assignments. This trend against dissection is not just limited to secondary and senior high schools. Some colleges now offer medical and veterinary curriculums which do not require the use of animals.

Although there are many logical and scientific reasons for abandoning the practice of dissection, perhaps the most important is reverence for life. At home, most parents teach their children to treat their pets with respect and kindness. But dissection teaches students that animal life is expendable and unimportant. Our educational system should reinforce the message of kindness by forsaking a practice that conflicts with the basic, human instinct of compassion for living creatures.