

## Voices for the Animals: Part 1

### Jigsaw Reading Assignment

Read this and be ready to tell the rest of the group about it. If you wish, you may read parts of the quotes (in italics) to the group.

Several times in *The Witness* Eddie refers to the fact that animals don't have a language that we readily understand, yet have thoughts to communicate:

*I don't know what I thought a cat was. I guess I thought a cat was no more than an ambulatory organism, and that's it. You know, it meowed, it had fur, it walked, and that was basically it. But then I found out it was more than that. The kitten actually had preferences--likes, dislikes. Tried to communicate to me what she wanted.*

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*But they left me there, thinking I was dead. And I just felt empty, and alone and afraid. And I know the feelings... -- the fear I had in me, the bewilderment -- ... I wouldn't want anyone that could possibly feel those things to feel it. It's really such a horrible place. And it doesn't take a brain surgeon or an expert animal behaviorist to know that animals fear, man. They know they're going to get killed. They know that. And to think that their cries will be unheeded -- and they are unheeded, nine billion times a year for the most part.*

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*Another area that I feel they are even more helpless than human beings, is that they can't express themselves. You know, a pig cannot tell you, "Please, please, do me a favor. Don't kill me or the kids, for a pizza with sausage. Please don't do that, I don't want to die." They can't say that. All they do is try to scream when they're going to slaughter, and that's it.*

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*I said, well, he's about ten times smaller than I am, and if I'm smoking one cigarette, he's smoking ten. And concurrently with this thought came the idea that this animal had no choice. I ruled over him. He couldn't possibly get up, go to the door, turn the knob and say, "Look, Eddie, I'm getting out of here. There's just too much smoke here."*

Various books and movies have, over the years, given a voice to animals. In *Charlotte's Web*, by E. B. White, published in 1952, animals speak, and so does Fern, a little girl, as her father is about to kill the runt of a pig litter:

*"Control myself?" yelled Fern. "This is a matter of life and death, and you talk about controlling myself." Tears ran down her cheeks and she took hold of the ax and tried to pull it out of her father's hand.*

*"Fern," said Mr. Arable, "I know more about raising a litter of pigs than you do. A weakling makes trouble. Now run along!"*

*"But it's unfair," cried Fern. "The pig couldn't help being born small, could it? If I had been very small at birth, would you have killed me?"*

*Mr. Arable smiled. "Certainly not," he said, looking down at his daughter with love. "But this is different. A little girl is one thing, a little runty pig is another."*

*"I see no difference," replied Fern, still hanging on to the ax. "This is the most terrible case of injustice I ever heard of."*

## Voices for the Animals: Part 2

### Jigsaw Reading Assignment

**Read this and be ready to tell the rest of the group about it. If you wish, you may read parts of the quotes (in italics) to the group.**

Different authors have tried to give a voice to animals. One of the first, and most successful, was Anna Sewall, author of *Black Beauty*. First published in 1877, more than 30 million copies have since been printed, which some sources claim is the all time record for a fiction book.

The book is subtitled "The Autobiography of a Horse" and is written as though the horse, Black Beauty, is telling the story. Here are a few excerpts:

*Again I started the heavy load, and struggled on a few yards; again the whip came down, and again I struggled forward. The pain of that great cart whip was sharp, but my mind was hurt quite as much as my poor sides. To be punished and abused when I was doing my very best was so hard it took the heart out of me.*

*Those who have never had a bit in their mouths cannot think how bad it feels; a great piece of cold hard steel as thick as a man's finger to be pushed into your mouth, between your teeth and over your tongue, with the ends coming out at the corners of your mouth, and held fast there by straps over your head, under your throat, round your nose, and under your chin; so that in no way in the world can you get rid of the nasty hard thing.*

And a character in the book states:

*We have no right to distress any of God's creatures without a very good reason; we call them dumb animals, and so they are, for they cannot tell us how they feel, but they do not suffer less because they have no words.*

Note that the word dumb, as used here, means the inability to speak.

The awareness raised by *Black Beauty* resulted in more humane treatment of horses. The bearing rein (or check rein), for example, went out of favor. This is a rein which holds a horse's head toward his or her chest in order to force a graceful arc to the neck. The bearing rein produced respiratory problems, severely limited the horse's vision, and caused a loss of balance, making it much harder for a horse to pull a load. *Black Beauty* also called attention to the cruel practice of tail docking, a shortening of the tail which causes pain and leaves the horse with no way to swat away insects (tail docking is a practice still used today on dogs, pigs and dairy cows). Most importantly, *Black Beauty* reminded readers that animals have emotions and can suffer.

*Black Beauty* helped launch humane education in the US, with two million copies of the book distributed for free by the newly formed American Humane Education Association of the Massachusetts SPCA, created by George Angell. (George Angell also published the first edition of MSPCA's *Our Dumb Animals* in 1868—the first magazine "to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves").

## Voices for the Animals: Part 3

### Jigsaw Reading Assignment

Read this and be ready to tell the rest of the group about it. If you wish, you may read parts of the quotes (in italics) to the group.

Published in 1893, *Beautiful Joe* by Marshall Saunders was the first book in America to be written from a dog's perspective. It was based on the true story of the real Beautiful Joe, who was cruelly beaten and had his ears and tail cut off, and then was rescued by a family which nursed him back to health (the family was Saunders' sister-in-law's family). Margaret Marshall Saunders entered her Beautiful Joe story in a contest held by the American Humane Education Association which was looking for a sequel to *Black Beauty*. Because female authors were not popular at the time, she submitted the story under her middle name, Marshall. Her story won the contest, and was published as *Beautiful Joe: an Autobiography*. It became the first Canadian book to sell more than one million copies. By 1930, sales were more than 7 million copies worldwide. Here are some excerpts:

*I love my dear mistress....I have heard her say that if all the boys and girls in the world were to rise up and say that there should be no more cruelty to animals, they could put a stop to it. Perhaps it will help a little if I tell a story. I am fond of boys and girls, and though I have seen many cruel men and women, I have seen few cruel children. I think the more stories that are written about dumb animals, the better it will be for us.*

Note that "dumb" is used to mean "without the ability to speak." Beautiful Joe in the novel also comments on the treatment of other animals he knows. In fact the book addresses cruelty to performing animals, fur bearing animals, farm animals, horses and more. Here is some of what Beautiful Joe "wrote" about cows:

*I used to wish that some of the people that took milk from him would come and look at his cows. In the spring and summer he drove them out to pasture, but in the winter they stood all the time in the dirty, dark stable, where the chinks in the wall were so big that the snow swept through almost in drifts. The ground was always muddy and wet; there was only one small window on the north side, where the sun only shone in for a short time in the afternoon. They were very unhappy cows, but they stood patiently and never complained, though sometimes I know they must have nearly frozen in the bitter winds that blew through the stable on winter nights. They were lean and poor, and were never in good health. Besides being cold they were fed on very poor food.*

In one section of the book, Beautiful Joe overhears a human talking about trapping a moose:

*Well, we used to like to catch a moose, and we had different ways of doing it. One way was to snare them. We'd make a loop in a rope and hide it on the ground under the dead leaves in one of their paths. This was connected with a young sapling whose top was bent down. When the moose stepped on the loop it would release the sapling, and up it would bound, catching him by the leg. These snares were always set deep in the woods, and we couldn't visit them very often; Sometimes the moose would be there for days, raging and tearing around, and scratching the skin off his legs. That was cruel. I wouldn't catch a moose in that way now for a hundred dollars.*

## Voices for the Animals: Part 4

### Jigsaw Reading Assignment

**Read this and be ready to tell the rest of the group about it. If you wish, you may read parts of the quotes (in italics) to the group.**

Jack London was an author who spoke on behalf of animals. Though his books were not written as though an animal were doing the writing, the books did let the reader see the animal's thoughts. His most famous book, *Call of the Wild*, was first published in the magazine *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1903, and told the story of a dog named Buck. Here is an excerpt from the first chapter, describing Buck's thinking:

*"There he lay for the remainder of the weary night, nursing his wrath and wounded pride. He could not understand what it all meant. What did they want with him, these strange men? Why were they keeping him pent up in this narrow crate? He did not know why, but he felt oppressed by the vague sense of impending calamity."*

In 1917, Jack London's *Michael, Brother of Jerry* was published. Michael is a dog and his story highlights the cruelty of circuses. Here is part of a description of Mulcachy, the trainer in the arena, "training" a tiger, Ben Bolt, who has a rope around his neck, held by ten men outside the caged arena.

*Before he could regain his feet, Mulcachy was upon him, shouting to his small audience: "Here's where we pound the argument out of him!" And pound he did, on the nose with the butt of the whip, and jab he did, with the iron fork to the ribs. He rained a hurricane of blows and jabs on the animal's most sensitive parts. Ever Ben Bolt leaped to retaliate, but was thrown by the ten men tailed on to the rope, and, each time, even as he struck the floor on his side, Mulcachy was upon him, pounding, smashing, jabbing. His pain was exquisite, especially that of his tender nose. And the creature who inflicted the pain was as fierce and terrible as he, even more so because he was more intelligent. In but few minutes, dazed by the pain, appalled by his inability to rend and destroy the man who inflicted it, Ben Bolt lost his courage. He fled ignominiously before the little, two-legged creature who was more terrible than himself who was a full-grown Royal Bengal tiger. He leaped high in the air in sheer panic; he ran here and there, with lowered head, to avoid the rain of pain. He even charged the sides of the arena, springing up and vainly trying to climb the slippery vertical bars.*

This book opened people's eyes to the cruelty behind circus acts and resulted in Jack London clubs. Members of these clubs would stand up and walk out any time wild animals were made to perform... just as London had suggested they do in the foreword of his book.

## Voices for the Animals: Part 5

### Jigsaw Reading Assignment

Read this and be ready to tell the rest of the group about it. If you wish, you may read parts of the quotes (in italics) to the group.

Poets, as well as novelists, have written on behalf of animals. Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1850-1919) wrote "Voice of the Voiceless," a poem about speaking for animals. It is from her *Poems of Experience*, published in 1913. The first three stanzas of the poem are below. Like many poems of that period, it contains religious references and gender restrictive terms.

Wilcox makes a special point to include birds in her poem, which is not surprising, given the mass slaughter of birds which occurred during her lifetime. Tens of millions of birds were killed for their feathers, breasts and wings for use in hats between 1870 and 1920, the height of the feather trade. Especially popular were the feathers of white egrets/herons and small terns. Women even wore hats that cheerfully displayed little stuffed birds such as the Least Tern.

By the end of the 1800's, many birds had become extinct, but the feather trade was just one factor. For example, the Great Auk was first hunted for food and bait, and then the hunting continued for its fat and feathers. It became extinct circa 1844. The largest mass slaughter of wildlife in US history was not of the bison, but of the passenger pigeon, who once numbered 5 billion. Though their feathers were valued, the pigeons were primarily killed as a cheap source of meat. The last survivor of the slaughter died in captivity the year after this poem was published. That same year, the Wild Bird Protection Act of 1914 was passed. This undoubtedly saved some birds, such as the egrets, the Roseate, the Least and the Common terns, which had almost become extinct, due to slaughter specifically for decoration of hats.

Note: the adjective "dumb" is used here to mean "without the ability to speak."

#### Voice of the Voiceless

***I am the voice of the voiceless:  
Through me, the dumb shall speak;  
Till the deaf world's ear be made to hear  
The cry of the wordless weak.***  
*From street, from cage, and from kennel,  
From jungle and stall, the wail  
Of my tortured kin proclaims the sin  
Of the mighty against the frail.*

*The same force formed the sparrow  
That fashioned Man, the King;  
The God of the Whole gave a spark of soul  
To each furred and feathered thing  
And I am my brother's keeper,  
And I will fight his fight,  
And speak the word for beast and bird  
Till the world shall set things right.*

*I am a ray from the centre;  
And I will feed God's spark,  
Till a great light glows in the night and shows  
The dark deeds done in the dark.  
And full on the thoughtless sleeper  
Shall flash its glaring flame,  
Till he wakens to see what crimes may be  
Cloaked under an honoured name.*