



## Should Animals Be Kept In Zoos?

Should animals be kept in zoos? Our teacher asked us that question last week, and I'm still not sure how I feel about it.

I visited the zoo a while ago, and it wasn't exactly what you'd call thrilling. The tiger was asleep, the alligator didn't bother to come out of its water and don't get me started on the rhinos. But, I did notice that each animal had a display outside of its enclosure that gave information about their habitat, diet and country of origin. There was also a scale that showed how endangered they are in the wild. So many of the animals were classified as vulnerable, endangered or, even worse: critically endangered. How have we got to a point where so many amazing creatures are at risk? Surely, everybody can see how unacceptable that is?

One of the things that lots of zoos do well is to create breeding programmes for these animals. That seems like a great reason for keeping them open and for making them a home for some of the most endangered animals. These places seem to be one of the only chances these animals have. Imagine if we'd had these places when the dodo was alive, or the woolly rhino or the giant ground sloth. Would the woolly mammoth still be stomping around today if there had been a zoo to help breed them?

On the other hand, there are places out there that aren't concerned about animal welfare at all. All they are bothered about is making money. I've seen them on the news, with animals trapped in tiny cages or bare enclosures. What can we do about these places? Is it education? If they are told how to do it properly, will they? Or don't they care?

Sure, zoos are better now than they once were. In fact, one of the very last dodos on Earth died in a zoo in the 17th century. Animals are still mistreated across the world in places that don't care enough. This is a good argument for closing them all down. But you have to ask yourself, what chance do the animals have in the wild, if we do that?

There is a strong argument that the money which zoos spend would be far more effective if it was spent on conservation in the animal's own countries of origin. We might be better conserving tigers in Siberia than we are in a zoo, in England. On the other hand, most of the money that zoos spend comes from people

paying to visit these animals. If the animals go, will the money disappear as well?

I suppose that there are definitely good arguments against keeping animals in captivity, especially those that aren't endangered in the wild. However, there are equally good points that support using zoos (the good ones, at least) as part of our conservation efforts. In a perfect world, we'd all learn to respect and conserve habitats and the existence of each and every species of living creature would be prioritised. Then, zoos wouldn't be needed at all.

## INFERENCE FOCUS

1. Does the author have a clear opinion on whether animals should be kept in zoos?
2. What made the author's visit to the zoo less exciting?
3. What is the author's opinion of zoos from the past?
4. Why might it not be necessary to keep animals in zoos if they aren't endangered?
5. Why might it have been a positive if better zoos were around in the past?

## VIPERS QUESTIONS

**R**

When did the last dodo in captivity die?

**V**

Find a synonym for exciting in the text.

**S**

What are the author's main reasons that support keeping animals in zoos?

**R**

Find a phrase that suggests money might have more of an impact if it was spent elsewhere.

**P**

If you could add one animal to a zoo to make sure it was safe forever, what would it be? Why?

Answers:

1. No. They say they are not sure how they feel about it
2. The tiger was asleep, the alligator stayed inside and the rhino was a let down.
3. The author says zoos are a lot better now/they don't think older zoos were good
4. The conservation elements of the zoo won't applt to them
5. Animals such as the dodo and mammoth might still be alive today

R: 17th century

V: Thrilling

S: The money from visitors pays for conservation. This conservation helps to support endangered species in the wild

R: Far more effective