

A DIFFERENT PAIR OF EYES



Introduction

Many of us have watched a non-human animal and wondered, even briefly, what they were thinking. This task turns that instinct into a piece of descriptive writing and into something else too: a genuine act of perspective shifting. Writing convincingly from inside another animal means setting aside a human vantage point entirely: what it notices, wants, and fears aren't what we would notice, want or fear in its place. This is where empathy lives, not in being told to care, but in doing the imaginative work of understanding a life organised around entirely different priorities to our own.

For teachers, this is a low prep, high return task: 10–45 minutes, no assumed context and it rehearses skills your students need: descriptive and narrative techniques, sustained viewpoint, sensory precision. This is planned as a KS4 English Language task, but it could also be used at KS3 with more scaffolding. It can be used as a starter in a ready-made Scheme of Work or as a main task.

Relevant Links: [Compassion for animals – The Vegan Society](#)

TASK OVERVIEW

Timing
10–45
minutes

Setting
classroom
(or outside to
use nature as
further creative
inspiration)

Curriculum links

English Language

- **AQA (8700):** Paper 1, Section B – Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing: descriptive or narrative writing from a choice of scenario, written prompt or visual image. Assessed on AO5 and AO6.
- **Pearson Edexcel (1EN0):** Paper 1, Section B – Fiction and Imaginative Writing: a choice of two writing tasks, one linked to the theme of the Section A reading extract and one offering a pair of images as a stimulus. Assessed on AO5 and AO6.
- **OCR (J351/02):** Paper 2, Section B – Exploring Effects and Impact: Writing Imaginatively and Creatively. Assessed on AO5 and AO6.

What you'll need

Slide deck – A Different Pair of Eyes and Student Support Sheet.

Additional resources

Pen, highlighter, lined paper/exercise book.

Learning Objectives

1. To create a piece of descriptive writing that reconstructs a single moment entirely from an animal's point of view, using sensory detail and a sustained viewpoint to build compassion through imaginative perspective taking.

Where this might sit in a Scheme of Work

This could sit in any unit consisting of descriptive or narrative writing, viewpoint and voice, or non-human narrators. It has the possibility to be a stand-alone starter, a shorter warm up task or main task. It works equally well as a one off between units and could be adapted to KS3 if required.

Timing options

The task is set out as a main task but feel free to adapt:

- **Starter – 10 minutes** – show the image stimulus and get students to plan their creative writing response.
- **Shorter main task – 20 minutes** – introduce the task, students plan their creative writing and then practise a few chosen paragraphs or points to focus on.
- **Full main task – 45 minutes** – introduce the task, encourage planning time and then students respond in full in exam conditions.



Note on framing

If a discussion about diet or animal ethics comes up during this task you can encourage open-minded and reflective conversation. Allow students to ponder their own choices, especially after empathising with a non-human animal perspective.

THE TASK

Timings are a guide – adjust to suit your class.

Introduction [5 minutes]

- Display slide 3 which shows a photo stimulus. Students will be using this image to practise their creative writing skills.
- Give students a minute to look at the image, suggesting that they 'zoom in' on different parts of the photograph.
- Students jot down what the animal in the photo senses, wants, and fears in that moment.
- Feedback some ideas before introducing the rest of the task.

Suggested teacher script

- Look at this photograph for a moment before we do anything else. What's the first thing you notice?
- I want you to disappear into this animal. Not describe it, actually become it. See the world through their eyes.

Main Task [~30 minutes]

- Students should spend a short period planning before starting their creative writing task.
- Move to slide 4 where there are some prompts for students to refer to if needed.
- Encourage them to shift their perspective and find a way of building compassion and empathy towards the non-human animal.
- Give out the Student Support Sheet where required.

Suggested teacher script

- Look at the non-human animal in this photograph. Choose a single moment – right now, or just before

or after this image was taken – and describe it, written so completely from their point of view that the reader forgets they're human.

- Don't describe the non-human animal from the outside, instead put us inside it. What do they notice first: a smell, a sound, a change in the light? What matters to them? What do they not understand? What does the world look like when you're not human?
- Before you write a single sentence, start by planning your work, consider: what does your animal notice first? What do they want right now? What are they afraid of?

Consolidation [5 minutes]

- Share and reflect.
- Ask students to scan through their work and choose a few sentences which help build compassion and empathy towards the non-human animal.
- Choose two or three students to read aloud and ask the class how they felt, could they feel the perspective shift in their world view?

Suggested teacher script

- Having written from a non-human perspective, I'm intrigued to hear where you believe you have been able to build compassion and empathy towards the animal. Scan back over your writing, can you highlight a few sentences where you think you may have done this?
- Let's hear a few. While you're listening, tune into your body. Can you feel the mood or emotion? What is your perspective towards the non-human animal after hearing the author's work?

Differentiation

Support – Use the printable Student Support Sheet: a senses checklist (see/hear/smell and feel/want/fear), sentence starters, and a short word bank. If you choose not to print out the scaffold work sheet then include some sentence starters on the board.

Stretch – Encourage students to introduce a small shift or turn partway through the moment (something changes, is noticed, or is decided). Ask students to identify one line in their own writing that the animal could never actually think in words – where does the writer have to quietly step in? What does that reveal about the limits of the exercise?