Write an Opinion Essay

Directions: Read the article “Should These Elephants Be in the Zoo?” in the May/June 2021 issue of Storyworks. Fill in the chart on page 27. Then follow the steps below to write an opinion essay.

BEFORE YOU WRITE: CHOOSE YOUR SIDE

An opinion essay is all about stating a view and using evidence to try to convince your readers to agree with you. First, decide where you stand. Is it OK to keep animals in zoos? Check the box next to the point of view you will support in your essay.

❑ Yes! Keep animals safe!  ❑ No! Set animals free!

PARAGRAPH 1: INTRODUCTION

The introduction should get readers’ attention, tell them a bit about the topic, and clearly state your opinion.

Write a hook to get readers interested: ________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

Write a sentence or two explaining what the debate is all about: ________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

Write a sentence that clearly states your opinion on the topic: ________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

Continued on next page >
You've already started this part! Your three reasons should be listed in either the “Yes” or the “No” column on page 27. Copy them on the numbered lines below. After each one, add evidence—facts, details, or examples—to support the reason.

**Reason 1:**
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
Evidence:                                                                                           
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________

**Reason 2:**
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
Evidence:                                                                                           
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________

**Reason 3:**
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
Evidence:                                                                                           
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________

Continued on next page >
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PARAGRAPH 3: CONCLUSION

The last paragraph of your essay is the conclusion. You should write a few sentences restating your main points—but don’t add any new ideas. Remember, this is the last thing your readers will see, so make sure to remind them how you’ve shown that your opinion makes sense.

________________________________________________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________________________________________________

FINAL STEP!

Now copy your work onto a separate sheet of paper. Remember to indent at the beginning of each paragraph, and use transition words where necessary. Don’t forget to proofread!
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________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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PARAGRAPHS 2, 3, AND 4: REASONS AND EVIDENCE

You’ve already started this part! Your three reasons should be listed in either the “Yes” or the “No” column on page 27. You can make each one into a topic sentence for a paragraph that supports your opinion. After the topic sentence, add evidence to support the reason. Use facts and details from the article, plus any other examples you can think of or evidence you find from other sources.

**PARAGRAPH 2**

Topic sentence, stating a reason: ____________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Evidence: __________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________________________________________

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PARAGRAPH 3

Topic sentence, stating another reason: ____________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Evidence: _____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

PARAGRAPH 4

Topic sentence, stating another reason: ____________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Evidence: _____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

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PARAGRAPHS 5 & 6: MENTION THE OTHER SIDE AND CONCLUSION

Think about a point that someone on the other side of the debate might make. How would you respond? Start this paragraph by mentioning the other side, then explain why you disagree with it.

What the other side might say:

___________________________________________________________________________  
___________________________________________________________________________  
___________________________________________________________________________  

Why you disagree:

___________________________________________________________________________  
___________________________________________________________________________  
___________________________________________________________________________  
___________________________________________________________________________  

The last paragraph of your essay is the conclusion. You should write a few sentences restating your main points—but don’t add any new ideas. Remember, this is the last thing your readers will see, so make sure to remind them how you’ve shown that your opinion makes sense.

___________________________________________________________________________  
___________________________________________________________________________  
___________________________________________________________________________  
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FINAL STEP!

Now copy your work onto a separate sheet of paper. Remember to indent at the beginning of each paragraph, and use transition words where necessary. Don’t forget to proofread!
Opinion Essay Toolkit

Use the words, phrases, and ideas below to help you write a powerful opinion essay!

1. INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH

Writing Your Hook
The beginning of your essay is called the hook because it “hooks” your readers’ attention. Here are some ideas for writing a great hook:

- **Question:** Ask your readers a question that leads them to take your side on the issue.
  
  Example: What would a school birthday party be without cupcakes?

- **Quotation:** Start with a powerful quote from a well-known person. (Don’t forget to mention the source!)
  
  Example: Albert Einstein once said, “Imagination is more important than knowledge.”

- **Short experience:** Start with a few sentences describing something that happened to you or someone else, to show your main point.
  
  Example: Twelve-year-old Sarah Patel was texting her sister while walking to school one morning. All of a sudden—SMACK. She slammed right into a brick wall.

- **Surprising Fact:** Catch your readers’ attention with a piece of information they aren’t likely to know.
  
  Example: American elementary school students produce 1.2 billion pounds of lunch trash every year.

- **Vivid Scene:** Use descriptive details to drop your readers into a scene to make your point.
  
  Example: The sky is dazzlingly blue. A warm breeze carries the scent of wildflowers. Something floats up lazily from behind the trees—a bird? A butterfly? No: a plastic bag.

Don’t forget to put a comma after the words that introduce the main part of a sentence!
Opinion Essay Toolkit, p. 2

2. BODY PARAGRAPH(S): REASONS AND EVIDENCE

Transition Words and Phrases: Giving Your Reasons
Use these words or phrases to introduce each reason you give.
- First/second/third
- To begin with
- One reason is
- Next
- Besides
- Furthermore
- In addition
- Most important
- Of course
- Finally

Transition Words and Phrases: Providing Evidence
Use these words or phrases to introduce the details or examples that support your reasons.
- For example/instance
- In fact
- As evidence
- In support of this
- Specifically
- In particular
- To illustrate
- This can be seen

Words and Phrases for Arguing Against the Other Side: Introducing the Other Side (Optional)
Use these words or phrases to introduce the other side.
- Opponents may argue
- I realize some may believe
- I understand others feel
- Even though some claim
- Some people favor
- It may be that you support

Words and Phrases for Arguing Against the Other Side: Explaining Why You Disagree (Optional)
Use these words or phrases to explain why you disagree.
- However
- But I doubt
- Yet I question
- On the other hand
- Nevertheless
- Even so
- On the contrary
- But let me explain

3. CONCLUSION PARAGRAPH

Words and Phrases for the Conclusion Paragraph
Use these words and phrases for your conclusion.
- For all these reasons
- As you can see
- As I have noted
- On the whole
- In short
- In conclusion
- To sum it up
- As I have said
- To summarize
- You can see why
- Therefore
- The time has come to
Debate Quiz

Directions: Read the debate “Should These Elephants Be in the Zoo?” in the May/June 2021 issue of Storyworks. Then fill in the bubble next to the best answer for each question below.

1. According to the article, why were the first zoos opened?
   A. to take care of injured animals  
   B. to entertain people 
   C. to save animals from going extinct 
   D. to study animals

2. What is one reason animals should not be kept in zoos, according to the article?
   A. Animals are safer in zoos than in the wild. 
   B. Zoo visitors learn about wildlife. 
   C. U.S. laws help make sure zoo animals are well cared for. 
   D. Zoo enclosures are too small.

3. Which line from the debate best supports your answer to question 2?
   A. “Some zoo creatures show signs of being bored and unhappy.”
   B. “To give a polar bear the space that it has in the wild, its enclosure would have to be bigger than the state of West Virginia!”
   C. “Zoos have saved creatures like the black-footed ferret and the California condor from becoming extinct.”
   D. “The reality is that life in a zoo is different from life in the wild.”

4. In the sentence “The St. Louis Zoo uses spices, perfumes, and even poop to imitate the smells of an animal’s natural habitat,” imitate means ______.
   A. change 
   B. include 
   C. copy 
   D. get rid of

5. Why is it “especially important” for endangered animals to be in zoos, according to the article?
   A. Keeping these animals safe in zoos can save them from becoming extinct. 
   B. Scientists need to study these animals before they become extinct. 
   C. These animals have no place to live in the wild. 
   D. These animals attract more zoo visitors.

6. What is one thing that zoo critics and supporters can likely agree on?
   A. Everyone loves going to the zoo. 
   B. Zoos give animals all the space they need. 
   C. Animals are happy in zoos. 
   D. Zoos have improved since the 1800s.

Constructed Response

Directions: On a separate piece of paper, write your answer to each question in a well-organized response. Make sure you support your answers with information and details from the debate.

7. Which argument for or against keeping animals in zoos did you find most convincing? Why?

8. The end of the debate says that “zoos are an important place for . . . education.” Based on the article, what do you think you could learn by going to a zoo?