



# Living with Animals

## Grade Level: 4–7

**Essential Understandings:** Our relationship to the natural world has changed over time. Modern life has both its benefits and its costs.

**Activity Description:** Students will look at Russell's art to explore the importance of animals to Russell and the people he painted. They will compare the role of animals in nineteenth-century daily life and their role today. Students will look around their classrooms to see how many animals/animal products they can find, talk about how animals affect their daily lives, and brainstorm ways in which animals affected daily life in the nineteenth century. They will examine Russell images and sort them into categories (wildlife, animals we eat, animals as friends, animals as recreation, etc.) and discuss their reasoning. By the end of the lesson, students will understand that both Indians and non-Indians relied on animals in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and that animals are still important to many people today—sometimes for the same reasons as in earlier times, but sometimes for different reasons.

**Time:** One class period

**Objectives:** Students will

- Learn more about the role of animals in the nineteenth century
- Think about what animals mean to us today
- Sharpen their powers of observation
- Make inferences and drawn conclusions
- Work effectively with other students
- Analyze information and use evidence to support conclusions
- Analyze Charles M. Russell's works of art
- Make meaningful comparisons

## Standards

### Social Studies Content Standards

4—Students demonstrate an understanding of the effects of time, continuity, and change on historical and future perspectives and relationships.

### Montana Common Core Standards

**CCRA.SL.1** Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**CCRA.SL.2** Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

**CCRA.SL.4** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**MMP.3.** Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.

## Materials

Student Group Photo Worksheet: Living with Animals (below)

Images from the *Montana's Charlie Russell* packet or the [Russell Images PowerPoint](#)

Projector

## Pre-Lesson Preparation

Make copies of the images and the worksheet, one set for each group of two to four students.

Arrange to project York.

(continued)

## Procedure

**Step 1:** Ask students to look around the classroom (including at their clothing and other personal possessions) and list all the animals or animal products they can find.

**Step 2:** Project the Russell painting *York*. Ask students how many different animal products or images they can find in the painting. (These should include the leather parfleche, hide painting with horses, pemmican hanging from ceiling, buffalo skull, saddle and hide shield hanging from the center pole, feathers ornamenting hair, leather leggings, fur tails attached to leggings, fur hat, etc.)

**Step 3:** Discuss the ways in which the presence of animals/animal products in your classroom is similar to and different from the way animals were used by both Indians and non-Indians as depicted in *York*. Discuss the ways in which we currently interact with animals besides those examples found in the classroom. (Possible answers: Animals are pets, we eat them, wildlife is fun to watch, we ride them, we hunt them, etc.) How else were animals used during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (both before and during the period Russell painted) in addition to what you saw in *York*? Discuss the options we have available to replace the animal products that nineteenth-century Montanans did not have (for example, canvas tennis shoes instead of leather moccasins, polar fleece jackets rather than buffalo robes, ripstop nylon backpacks, etc.).

**Step 4:** Pass out a set of images to groups of two to four students. Ask each group to divide the images into like categories (for example, wildlife, work animals, animals we eat, animals as companions, animals used in recreation). Note that students don't have to use all or any of the categories given as examples. There are many ways to sort these photos, and there are no right

or wrong categories within this activity. There are only three rules:

1. Every category must contain at least two images.
2. Students should try to find as many different categories as they can. (The goal is to have many groupings, each with two or three images.)
3. Every category should have something to do with animals. (Emphasize this.)

**Note:** Depending on your students, you may need to define and discuss the concept of "category" before distributing the images.

**Step 5:** After the groups have sorted their photographs, allow time (about 10 minutes) for each group to discuss and fill out the worksheet.

**Step 6:** Using the worksheets as their presentation guides, have each group explain to the class their categories, providing evidence for their decisions.

**Step 7:** Hold a final discussion using some of the following questions (or ask students to answer one or more of these questions as a writing assignment):

- What evidence is there that animals were important to Russell?
- Why were animals important to people in earlier times?
- Why are animals important to us today? Are these reasons the same or different from the reasons people have historically valued animals?
- In the context of how people value, use, and relate to animals, what benefits do you see of living today? What benefits do you see of living in earlier times?

# Student Group Photo Worksheet: Living with Animals

## Remember:

1. Every category must contain at least two images.
2. Every category should have something to do with animals.
3. Try to find as many different categories as you can. (Try not to make just two big piles; instead, sort images into smaller groups of twos and threes where possible.)

List the categories you created. Why did you put the images you did in these categories?

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Choose **one** grouping/category and complete the following statements:

The pictures in this grouping are similar because . . . \_\_\_\_\_

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The pictures in this grouping are different because . . . \_\_\_\_\_

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List three interesting details from **one** of the images in this group that someone might not notice at first glance.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

List two questions you would like to ask someone (person or animal) in **one** of these images.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_