



MAGNIFICENT BOY AND THE SPIRIT OF THE GREY HARE

**An e-book with lesson plans
and interactivities that are aligned
with the CAPS curriculum**

These lesson plans are designed to encourage teachers to bring in their own ideas to further inspire learner participation and development.

Grade 5 Term 2

TOPIC: Social responsibility – Child abuse

- Different forms of child abuse: physical and emotional
- Effects of abuse on personal health
- Strategies to deal with abuse
- Where to get help and report abuse

Reading with understanding and using a dictionary

Reading about ways to protect self and others from abuse: recall and relate

Grade 7 Term 2

TOPIC: Constitutional rights and responsibilities

- Human rights as stipulated in the South African Constitution
- Application of human rights
- Application of responsibilities in relation to human rights

Grade 9 Term 3

TOPIC: Health, social and environmental responsibility

- Common acts of violence at home, school and in the community
- Reasons that violence occurs in families and communities and among friends and peers
- Impact of violence on individual and community health and safety
- Alternatives to violence: problem-solving skills and managing conflict
- Protecting oneself and others from acts of violence

Background information in a fast changing world

Recognition that many of the roots of violence are deeply embedded in our maltreatment of animals, has resulted recently, in epic changes in world ethics.

Global acknowledgement of this fact, is evident in the recent inclusion of animal welfare in the Human Rights domain.

On 18th September 2023, the United Nations officially adopted General Comment 26 Article 35 as an addition to the Charter on the Rights of the Child.

In terms of General Comment 26:

“Children must be protected from all forms of physical and psychological violence whether in their home or in society, and from exposure to violence, such as domestic violence or violence inflicted on animals.”



Why is this important?

What makes this so important is that it is an acknowledgement at the highest international level that **how we treat animals matters – for ourselves, as much as for them.**

On 8th February 2024

At the United Nations' 95th Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Vice-Chair Dr Rinchen Chopel said:



“GC26 has made a significant break-through. Various psychological studies on violence against animals have shown that witnessing or participating in such violence can severely impact children’s moral and psychological development, normalizing violence, and conditioning life-long negative behavioural patterns.”

He named bullfighting and trophy hunting as examples of violence against animals.”

What scientists say...

Social scientists have been telling us for decades that a child’s mental, spiritual and moral development is severely compromised by acts of violence.

The long-term consequences include:

- **Progressive desensitisation** to violence
- **Normalisation** of violence
- **Erosion** of empathy
- **Disruption** of fundamental human values
- **Acceptance of violence** as part of life
- **Participation** in acts of violence

In other words, exposure to violence erodes our innate capacity for empathy.

We are all born with empathy.

Without empathy the development of human society could not have evolved because civilization depends on collaboration, cohesion, understanding and concern for each other.

This is empathy.

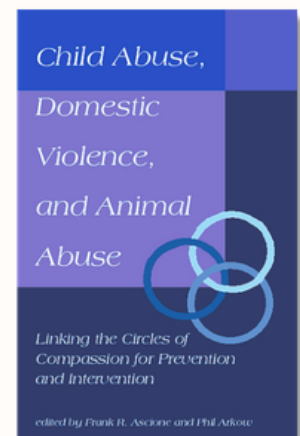
The erosion of empathy is of serious concern to world leaders

So how do animals come into the equation?

International expert on the role of animals in the nurturing and development of empathy is Phil Arkow, author of the resource:

Child Abuse, Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse: Linking the Circles of Compassion for Prevention and Intervention.

<https://view.publitas.com/p222-12894/humane-edu-news-summer-2003-2004/page/4-5>



He explains:

“The development of empathy for others, is a critical first step in preventing crime and violence. Children have an innate fascination for animals and this provides us with a golden opportunity, at a very young age, to sow the seeds of empathy, kindness and care.”

The human-animal bond

South African social scientist Dr Magdie van Heerden, who specializes in the Human-Animal Bond, agrees. She puts it this way:

“In today’s age of technology, animals have a greater role to play than ever before in the well-being of people.

“Technology has a real down-side. It is ironic that while people around the world have never been more connected through social media, they have also never felt more isolated and disconnected from each other. Humans have a deep-rooted need to care, and to be cared for, and this is why the nurturing and development of empathy should be a focal point in education.

“It starts with the teddy bear in the cot and with the companion animals in our homes. Most children relate easily to companion animals because they are not judgmental and if treated well, they are positive role-models for companionship, play, laughter, love, and having fun. Child welfare and animal welfare are intertwined and we cannot split the one from the other if we want to heal our communities and strive towards emotional health.”



So how do animals come into the equation?

South Africa's Children's Commissioner for the Western Cape, Christina Nomdo explains why the UNs' GC26 has her full support.



“As a society, we are challenged by deep cultural norms that include harmful practices against animals. We need to counter all practices that involve the abuse of animals. So it is not only about working with children but, in addition, it is about confronting the adults who introduce children to these practices and ‘normalise’ them in the minds of our children. This is the harm.”

Dr Julie Reddy, Deputy Chair of the South African National Commission for UNESCO adds her support:

“If we teach our children at a very young age about care and respect for others – it doesn't matter who they are or what they are... respect for the diversity that we find ourselves in, we will be a much, much better country and we will learn compassion.”



As we all know, the erosion of empathy through exposure to violence, is a gradual process. To remind ourselves, it takes place like this:

- **We become progressively desensitised** to acts of violence
- **Violence becomes normalised** in our minds
- **This leads to:**
 - **Erosion** of empathy
 - **Disruption** of fundamental human values
 - **Acceptance of violence** as part of life
 - **Participation** in acts of violence

In contrast, humane education — **the teaching of care and respect, starting with those who are at our mercy — the animals** — nurtures empathy and supports a sense of self-worth.

Humane Education...

- **Sensitises** us to care and kindness
- **Normalises** care and kindness
- **Builds** empathy
- **Embeds** basic human values
- **Resists** violence as an option to resolve conflict
- **Instills** a sense of self-worth, and responsibility not only for each other, but also for animals and the environment at large

Constitutional Court development...

The South Africa Constitutional Court ruled in 2016 that:

- **Guardianship** of the interests of animals reflects constitutional values and the interests of society at large
- **Animal protection** safeguards the moral status of humans and the degeneration of human values.

<https://www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZACC/2016/46media.pdf>

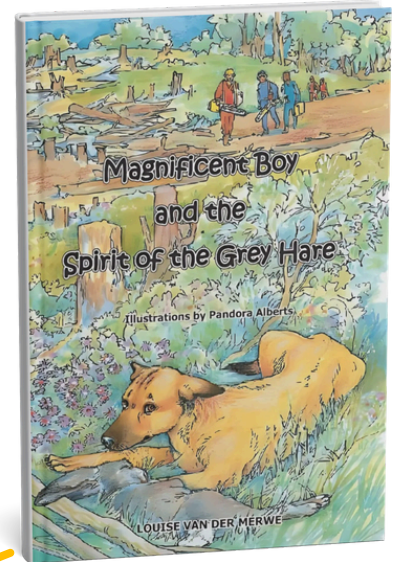
Now read Chapter 12 of the novel and take part in the interactivities

Magnificent Boy and the Spirit of the Grey Hare (*Chapter 12*)

The story so far...

A dog called Boy, and his human companion called Boetie, were parted through no fault of their own. Boy was placed in an animal shelter for adoption.

Ironically enough, Boetie was in the same class at school as Gabrielle, the daughter in Boy's new adoptive family, but neither Boetie nor Gabrielle could possibly know this.



Empathy Erosion

Mr O'Connor seemed to suffer from empathy erosion. Let's learn more about empathy.



Derogatory language

It is well-known that people use derogatory language to reduce the status of the other. Let's learn more...





Imagine you are a friend of someone who is exposed to violence — domestic or against an animal.

- ▶ **Help your friend to write a letter** to his/her Mom and Dad explaining how violence affects them.

REVISION

The impact of violence

1. **Progressive desensitisation** to violence
2. **Normalisation** of violence
3. **Erosion** of empathy
4. **Disruption** of fundamental human values
5. **Acceptance of violence** as part of life
6. **Participation** in acts of violence

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Test your knowledge





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