

Sample Paper: Analyzing a Text (Lopez)

Lopez 1

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“A Question of Ethics” Left Unanswered

In her essay “A Question of Ethics,” Jane Goodall, a scientist who has studied chimpanzees for years, tries to resolve a complicated ethical dilemma: Under what circumstances is it acceptable to cause animal suffering to prevent human suffering? Her answer, however, remains somewhat unclear. Although Goodall challenges scientists to avoid conducting unnecessary tests on animals, she does not explain the criteria by which scientists should determine necessity.

Goodall argues that her readers have an ethical obligation to protect animals from suffering, but she also implies that it might be necessary sometimes to abandon that obligation. She points out that animals share similar traits with human beings: they have a capacity for certain human emotions, and they may be capable of legitimate friendship. Goodall’s evidence for this claim is an anecdote from her research. She recounts that one chimpanzee in her study, named David Greybeard, “gently squeezed [her] hand” when she offered him food (62). Appealing to readers’ emotions, Goodall hopes to persuade readers that the chimp is “sociable” and “sentient,” or feeling (62). According to Goodall’s logic, if researchers are careful to avoid tests that cause human suffering, they should also be careful to avoid tests that cause suffering for other life forms.

When Goodall asserts that scientists shouldn’t mindlessly

Opening summarizes the article’s purpose and notes the author’s credentials.

Thesis expresses Lopez’s own judgment of Goodall’s article.

Lopez summarizes Goodall’s main points.

Quotation is cited with an MLA in-text citation.

Lopez’s summary helps readers understand her analysis and gives her credibility.

Marginal annotations indicate **MLA-style formatting** and **effective writing**.

Source: Diana Hacker (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2006).

This paper has been updated to follow the style guidelines in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th ed. (2009).

Lopez begins to identify and question Goodall's assumptions.

test animals if alternative tests are available, she is in effect conceding that sometimes animals will have to suffer for the sake of helping human beings. Yet if it is unacceptable in some cases to cause sentient beings to suffer, why would it not *always* be unacceptable? When could compassionate people be comfortable with the prospect of causing David Greybeard mental and physical pain?

Goodall attempts to draw the line between ethical and unethical animal testing by stressing the idea of “essential” tests—those without which scientists could not adequately study certain human illnesses at all. In other words, Goodall seems to imply that it would be unethical for scientists *not* to test animals when such tests are the only tool available to alleviate human suffering.

Question serves as a transition and advances Lopez's argument.

But might there be other criteria that could determine whether animal testing is necessary? For example, the severity of a given human illness might lead scientists to identify medical conditions that justify subordinating animal welfare to human needs. For nonterminal illnesses that cause people far less pain, researchers might delay animal testing or use alternative methods because in these cases concern about animal suffering outweighs concern about manageable human suffering.

By contrast, Goodall's criterion of “essential” testing leaves open the possibility that as long as alternatives are unavailable or ineffective and as long as researchers do not differentiate among degrees of human suffering, mindless animal testing would be acceptable. Her assumption suggests that David Greybeard could suffer, for example, because inadequate computer simulations have prevented researchers from finding a cure for the common head

ache or for mildly unpleasant pollen allergies. To make a more persuasive case, Goodall should define essential and nonessential human needs.

Goodall could use another standard to determine whether animal tests are essential. Researchers might consider how society values the species of animal used in tests. Goodall has chosen in her David Greybeard example an animal whose physiological similarity to human beings encourages people to grant personhood to it. But other animals have much lower capacity for understanding and empathy than do chimps, dolphins, dogs, or cats. Rats, for example, are not typically conferred with human qualities because their emotional capacity is assumed to be far more limited than humans'. If rats are more distant from human beings than chimpanzees are, and if they justify less stringent protection, then might a test be "essential" if it could be performed on a rat, but "nonessential" if it could be performed only on a chimpanzee? Researchers could conduct more ethically responsible animal testing if they used some species and exempted others from testing based on a reasoned determination of their similarity to or difference from human beings in mental capacity.

Although Goodall perhaps intended to call for improving animal laboratory conditions, her essay has also raised some questions about this important ethical issue. The stakes of animal testing are too high and the issue too complex to leave the question of necessity unanswered. To treat human beings as well as animals with the dignity they deserve, medical researchers will need to continue refining their definition of *essential*.

Clear topic sentence announces a shift to a new topic.

Lopez raises questions.

Lopez treats the author fairly.

Conclusion returns to the thesis to show the broader issues behind Lopez's analysis.

Work Cited

Goodall, Jane. "A Question of Ethics." *Newsweek International*
7 May 2001: 62. *InfoTrac Web: Student Edition*. Web.
28 Oct. 2004.