

**Class Pet 3**

**Main Goal**

Students will understand conformity and nonconformity as it relates to interplay in human groups.

*Affective: Foster students’ open-mindedness toward (rather than disapproval of) nonconformity. [For clarification of this affective goal, please see the explanatory note on page 11.]*

**Subgoal**

To have students reach consensus on an issue and then set rules for group action, deciding what to do about any students who do not wish to or cannot conform with the group’s decisions.

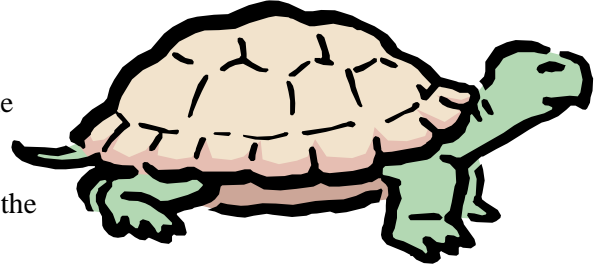
**Lesson Context**

Knowledge and Cultural Understanding		Skills Attainment and Social Participation	
	<i>Historical Literacy</i>		<i>Basic Study Skills</i>
	<i>Ethical Literacy</i>		<i>Critical Thinking Skills</i>
X	<i>Cultural Literacy</i>	X	<i>Participation Skills</i>
	<i>Geographic Literacy</i>	Democratic Understanding and Civic Values	
	<i>Economic Literacy</i>		<i>National Identity</i>
	<i>Sociopolitical Literacy</i>		<i>Constitutional Heritage</i>
This lesson relies on Lesson 1 (or equivalent knowledge)		X	<i>Civic Values, Rights, and Responsibilities</i>

# Class Pet

## Concept Building Objective

Given a set of rules, commonly adopted, the students will acknowledge and appreciate the fact that some students may have good *reasons* they do not want to abide by the rules (*logic underlying nonconformance*).



## Materials

*Per student:* Duplication Sheet 1—“**Dear Teacher Form**”

Means of recording and displaying results of group actions and decisions

## Strategies

*Advance Note:* Because this lesson involves much student discussion and sharing of information, you may wish to subdivide it and conduct portions across more than one class period. In advance of the lesson, you may want to gather resource materials to stimulate divergent thinking (beyond cat, bird, snake, dog, hamster, frog, etc.) concerning the request you will be making of the students. You may want to modify how you present the situation to ensure that students do not misunderstand your *actual* intentions concerning the reality of the class acquiring a class pet (we presume here you really do *not* intend to acquire one).

1. Divide the class into convenient groups to advise you on selecting the most *appropriate* pet for the classroom (were you to acquire one, or *another* one). [You might ask them to discuss and determine what *appropriate* means for this classroom.] Set a time limit for the task. Each group is to come to consensus on *one pet only* and write down their choice. They must also be prepared to argue their case before the rest of the class. Groups do NOT communicate with each other.
2. Have a representative from each group present the group’s decision (write on the board) and the group’s argument for its choice.
3. From the available choices, conduct a class vote to determine the class pet.
4. Put the students back into groups to make *classroom rules* for how to handle and care for the new pet. Food, water, cages(?), excrement, cleaning, grooming, socialization, exercise, vacation times, ownership, costs if sick, and so forth can be considered as appropriate.
5. Adopt class rules. Be sure to write them for display so students can view the rules throughout the subsequent discussion and writing activity.
6. ISSUE: Can everyone go along with this choice of pet (and/or these rules for its care)?

7. If everyone says “yes,” then say something like: “I wonder if there are any individuals out there who are *thinking differently* about this but do not want to say so. I truly would want to know their thinking before I would take any action to acquire a pet for this class. So, I’m going to ask you to clue me in. Here’s what we will do.”
8. **WRITING TASK:** Proceed to ask each student in the class to write you a short “Dear Teacher” letter. It will be **anonymous**. In the letter the student is to express her *secret* disagreement with the group’s decision (on pet choice and/or rules and responsibilities). The student has two choices: 1) If the student is secretly in honest disagreement on any aspect, she should use **her own ideas**. 2) If she agrees 100% with the group on every decision thus far, then she should use **her imagination** instead, conceiving of why someone in the class might not be in accord with the group. Request that the student take on the “different thinker” role and briefly disclose their reasoning.

*Note:* You could rule out for students “being lazy” or any other “not acceptable reasons” for the nonconforming thinking. On the other hand, you could encourage students envisioning some real reasons for thinking differently. Students may generate such reasons as: terrified due to a prior experience, allergic to pet, thinks it is wrong to pen up this type of animal, parental distaste for that kind of pet.

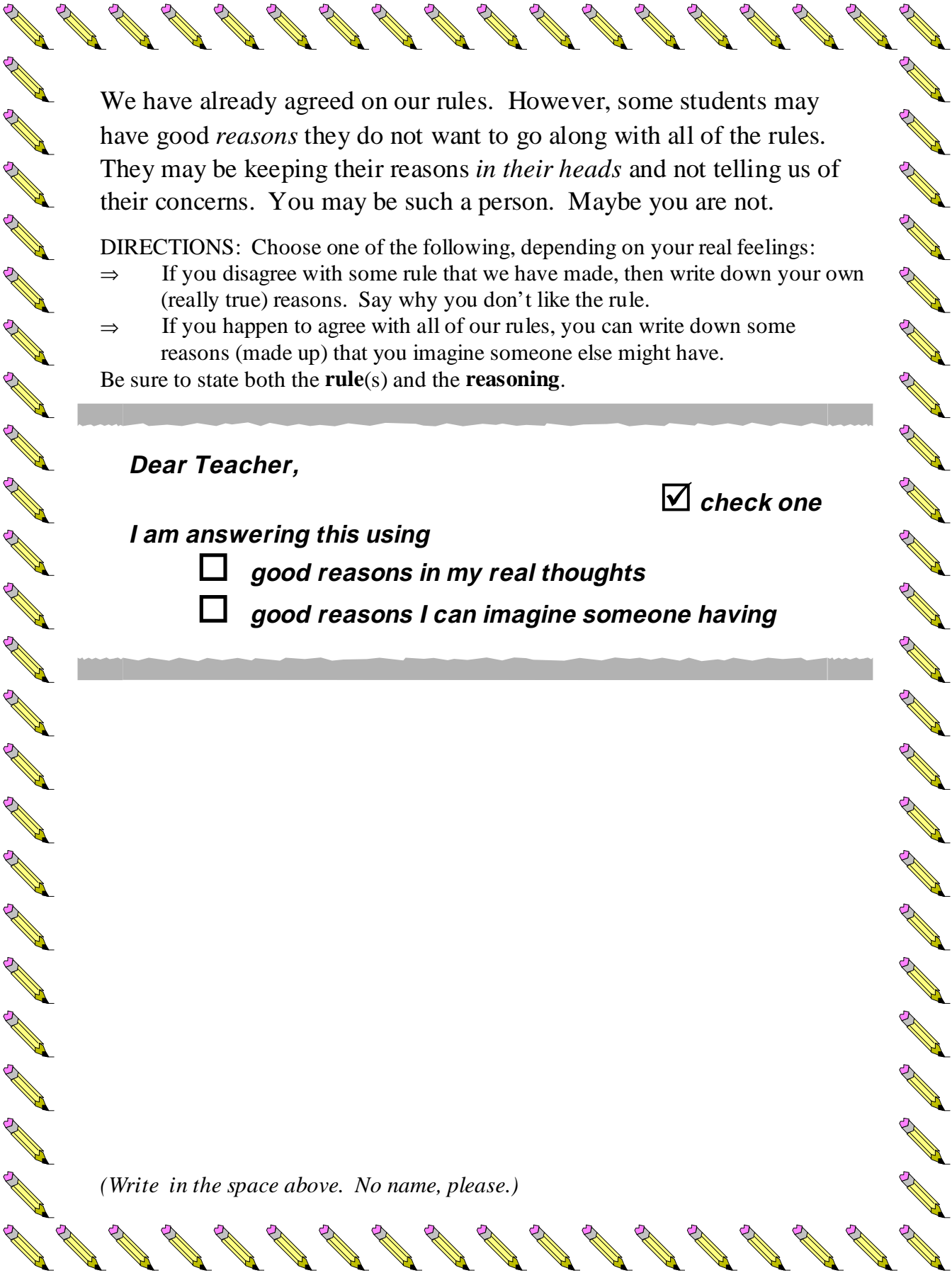
### **Appraisal of Understanding**

1. Evidence: As class work each student has completed a letter of conformity or nonconformity.

### **Continuation Activities**

1. After personally reading the products of students’ writing task, follow up with a summary review for the class of its own “consensus thinking” as contrasted with any particular “different thinker” example(s) that impressed you as most valid and worthy of sharing with the class.
2. Conduct a class discussion on such themes as:
  - What should a group do about the “fact” that someone in the group thinks differently (explore varied suggestion)—go ahead and get the pet anyway?
  - What is the different thinker likely to do in response?

How is the group likely to respond?



We have already agreed on our rules. However, some students may have good *reasons* they do not want to go along with all of the rules. They may be keeping their reasons *in their heads* and not telling us of their concerns. You may be such a person. Maybe you are not.

DIRECTIONS: Choose one of the following, depending on your real feelings:

- ⇒ If you disagree with some rule that we have made, then write down your own (really true) reasons. Say why you don't like the rule.
- ⇒ If you happen to agree with all of our rules, you can write down some reasons (made up) that you imagine someone else might have.

Be sure to state both the **rule(s)** and the **reasoning**.

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*Dear Teacher,*

*check one*

*I am answering this using*

- good reasons in my real thoughts*
- good reasons I can imagine someone having*

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*(Write in the space above. No name, please.)*