

Name: _____ Class: _____

Can't We All Just Get Along?

By BirdBrain Science
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Earth is full of a variety of living things that interact with one another in many different ways. This informational text explains the various different types of relationships they can have with one another. As you read, identify the different types of relationships that exist.

- [1] Have you ever watched a show about the wild? A pair of deer clash horns! A shark eats a seal! Lions run down a gazelle! Is all nature like that? All about eating and blood and guts? Or is that just what keeps our eyes glued to the TV screen? Let's look at some living things who work with each other rather than rip each other apart. These are the type of things that might not make it on TV. We will start with the not so nice ones and work our way to the nicest. Maybe this will make us think better of the natural world.



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When a lion kills a gazelle, it wants to eat as much as it can and maybe share the rest with its family. Then there are some living things that will take small pieces of another living thing's body. They usually are much smaller than the thing they are taking from. **Parasitism** is when one living thing gets its energy from another living thing, does not give anything back, and hurts the thing it's taking things from. You have seen them before. Have you ever slapped a mosquito? Ever had a tick? Those are parasites. These little robbers do not want to kill their host. If they did, what would they eat? A mosquito nipping at your arm may be annoying, but that's a lot better than a lion gnawing¹ on your arm.

Now let's get a little nicer. Sometimes a living thing will live off the body of another living thing without hurting it. They do not steal anything. They do not bite. They just think the body of another living thing is a great place to hang out. **Commensalism** is when two living things live together and one gets good things out of it while the other is not hurt by it. Have you seen a picture of a whale with rocky white things stuck to its skin? Those are barnacles, living things that attach themselves to the whale. Living on a whale does two good things for them. First, nothing will try to eat them. They are on a whale! Also, they can eat things that float by. They may make the whale's skin a little itchy, but they do not hurt it. Unless, of course, the whale wants to go on a date. Barnacles do not look very pretty.

Now let's get really nice. While sharks are biting and elk are fighting, are there any animals that just get along? Yes! Actually, there are many. **Mutualism** is when two living things work together and both get good things out of it. Bees and flowers are the most common example. Without flowers, bees could not make honey. Without bees, flowers could not make new seeds. It's win-win for these two. There are lots of animals that get along. Birds will live on the backs of zebras and eat the ticks that are drinking the zebra's blood. The bird gets food. The zebra gets its ticks taken away. In some of these cases, one animal could not live without the other. So, lions, eat your hearts out. No, not that other animal's heart.

1. **Gnaw (verb):** to bite at or nibble something continually

- [5] There's a word that we use for all of these kinds of relationships. **Symbiotic** is when two living things live together and change how the other one lives. Sometimes it's good for one and bad for the other. Sometimes it's just good for one. Sometimes it's even good for both. These relationships do not end with animals living with animals. Look at humans and dogs. The dog gets food and love. The human gets a friend and a guard. If you see two living things living together, think about whether one is getting a better deal than the other.

A bird sits on a zebra. A barnacle sticks to a whale. A tick steals a little blood. These are not as exciting as watching a shark hunt or a lion roar. However, it is nice to know that there are some living things out there that are finding ways to live together. We could take note of the animals that do not always make it on TV.

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement best identifies the central idea of the text? [RI.2]
 - A. The effect of one living thing on another depends on if their relationship is harmful or beneficial.
 - B. Relationships between animals are usually violent because they fight over food to survive.
 - C. TV companies make money by showing the violent relationships between animals.
 - D. It would be best if all living things only had symbiotic relationships with each other.

2. PART B: Which quote from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
 - A. "Is all nature like that? All about eating and blood and guts. Or is that just what keeps our eyes glued to the TV screen?" (Paragraph 1)
 - B. "When a lion kills a gazelle, it wants to eat as much as it can and maybe share the rest with its family." (Paragraph 2)
 - C. "They do not steal anything. They do not bite. They just think the body of another living thing is a great place to hang out." (Paragraph 3)
 - D. "There's a word that we use for all of these kinds of relationships. Symbiotic is when two living things live together and change how the other one lives" (Paragraph 6)

3. PART A: According to the text, which statement best describes the relationship between a whale and a barnacle? [RI.3]
 - A. Neither organism benefits from this relationship because barnacles are harmed when they are attached to whales.
 - B. The whale benefits from this relationship because nothing will try to eat it, and the barnacles are not harmed.
 - C. The barnacles benefit because they can eat food while they are attached to the whale, and the whale is not harmed.
 - D. Both the whale and the barnacle benefit because both of their lives are made easier by being attached.

4. PART B: Which quote from paragraph 3 best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
 - A. "Now let's get a little nicer."
 - B. "one gets good things out of it while the other is not hurt"
 - C. "First, nothing will try to eat them. They are on a whale!"
 - D. "Unless, of course, the whale wants to go on a date."

5. How does the author structure the text to convey the central idea of the article? [RI.5]

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. What additional organism interactions can you think of that are symbiotic? How do these two kinds of organisms effect one another?
2. All over the world, bee colonies are disappearing. Some scientists hold humans responsible, believing that bees are dying because of loss of habitats and pesticides. How does the disappearance of bees effect other organisms, such as those that they have symbiotic relationships with? Can you think of other symbiotic relationships that humans might be responsible for altering?
3. In the context of the text, who is in control: man or nature? How might humans be in a symbiotic relationship with the natural world around them? Consider humans' relationships with plants and animals. Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.