

## Lesson 2: Hierarchy of Being

### PURPOSE

To understand the special nature of human persons.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

1. Understand the powers that humans share with animals and other living beings.
2. Understand that the two powers to think and to choose are specifically human powers.

### MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- Game: Stand Up, Sit Down
- POWERS: Acrostic Poem
- Think You Can worksheet

### VOCABULARY

- Hierarchy: a system in which things are arranged above and below one another according to their importance or perfection
- Power: the ability of a living being to do something on its own
- Power to think: the human ability to know and connect ideas
- Power to choose: the human ability to knowingly select between options

### PROCEDURE

**Step 1:** Review the previous lesson. Recall the purpose of the course and the main topics that will be covered.

**Step 2:** Explain that in this lesson, students will learn about the Hierarchy of Being. All beings in the world can be grouped into four categories: non-living beings, plants, animals and humans.

To introduce students to this concept, play the game: [Stand Up, Sit Down](#).

**STAND UP, SIT DOWN GAME**

Have students write down on a piece of paper one of the following: a non-living thing, a plant, an animal or a type of person (e.g. pen, daisy, cat, basketball player). Just one! Then, have students display their paper on their desks in a way that is visible. As the teacher reads aloud from a list of verbs, the student should stand up if they think the verb applies to their choice of non-living thing, plant, animal or person. If the verb does not apply, then the student sits down. (For example, if a student writes down “chair” then the student would only stand when “Support a Person” is read aloud from the list. If a student writes down “Superman” then they could stand when “Fly” is read, but if a student wrote “basketball player” then they technically cannot fly and “Superman” would stay standing but “basketball player” would sit down. The student who stands up when they should sit down is out of the game.

The teacher should read the terms faster and faster, and repeat (reading certain words out of order) to make the game more challenging. To be read out loud by the teacher:

Fly  
Bark  
Grow  
Talk  
Read a book  
Support a Person  
Shout  
Run  
Kick  
Take in nutrients  
Paint  
Die  
Take in water  
Jump  
Make another being of its own kind  
Solve mathematical problems  
Play video games  
Ask questions in a conversation

**Step 3:** After playing the game, explain that non-living beings such as stone, iron or minerals do not have powers. Write the definition of power on the board:

**Power: the ability of a living being to do something on its own**

Only living beings (plants, animals, and humans) possess certain powers. For example, plastic and glass does not turn into a camera without the help of an engineer to arrange the materials in a certain way and program the software.

Non-living beings, plants, animals and humans form a hierarchy according to the complexity and perfection of the powers they possess. e.g. A rock does not possess the power to grow. Therefore, we do not evaluate the perfection of a rock according to whether it can grow, but a rock is less complex than a human being.

Write the definition of Hierarchy on the board:

**Hierarchy: a system in which things are arranged above and below one another according to their importance or perfection**

To determine those powers that are shared among all living things and those that are unique to humans, draw an empty table on the board and ask the students to fill it in with the powers corresponding to the category of being.

The correctly filled table should look like the one below:

POWERS	Plants	Animals	Humans
Eat	x	x	x
Grow	x	x	x
Reproduce	x	x	x
Move from place to place		x	x
Use the senses		x	x
Feel emotions		x	x
Think			x
Choose			x

**Step 4:** After analyzing the table together with the class, highlight that there are three powers that all living beings share: eat, grow, reproduce. There are those that only humans and animals share: move, use the senses and feel emotions. Finally, there are two powers that distinguish humans from all other beings: the power to think and the power to choose.

Highlight that the powers to think and choose are unique to humans and enable human beings to pursue excellence. Human beings are different from animals in many complex ways. Humans use the powers to think and to choose to do amazing things like create art, solve complex math problems, build a transportation system and even self-sacrifice for the good of another human being.

For example, one study found that while a chimpanzee can learn cooperation, moving a rock in order to get a banana, the chimp would bail on their partner who helped them move the rock to get the banana and take the banana for themselves. By comparison, a 3-year-old child will continue in the task until their partner receives a reward, too. The 3 year old will even protest if their partner doesn't receive a reward.

**Step 5:** To experience the unique human powers to think and to choose, have students create an acrostic poem using the word "POWERS" or "HUMAN". An [Acrostic Poem](#) is where the first letter of each line spells out a particular word.

Share the following example with students, to spark their creativity:

**P**ersonally, I'm glad  
**O**nce I was created  
**W**onderfully born on  
**E**arth  
**R**ising and  
**S**ilently growing

Encourage students to get creative with their poems, thinking about what makes them special or what it's like to be a human? See what words they select to describe their thoughts, feelings and ideas. Ask volunteers to share their acrostic poem with the class.

**Step 6:** Recall the three powers that all living beings share (eat, grow, reproduce), those that only humans and animals share (move, use senses, feel emotions) and two that distinguish humans from all other beings: the powers to think and choose. Highlight that the powers to think and choose are those which distinguish humans from all other beings, and enable human beings to pursue excellence.

### **SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS**

Give students the [Think You Can](#) worksheet to reinforce the vocabulary for the lesson.

**NOTE FOR TEACHER:** Don't forget to follow up with any parents or guardians who have not yet submitted a "Dear You" Letter to their student; the letter should explain the reasons why the parent/ guardian loves the student and why they are special to them. *(Please note: in certain cases it may be necessary for the teacher or principal to write the letter for the student if the family is unresponsive, so that every student receives a personal letter.)*

**THINK YOU CAN****1. Use your unique *abilities* to unscramble the words below!**

HNKIT \_\_\_\_\_ NPLAT \_\_\_\_\_

COEOSH \_\_\_\_\_ TEA \_\_\_\_\_

UNMAH \_\_\_\_\_ WROG \_\_\_\_\_

SOREPW \_\_\_\_\_ CRRDEUPOE \_\_\_\_\_

AANIML \_\_\_\_\_ SSESNE \_\_\_\_\_

VOME \_\_\_\_\_ EFLE MEOITSNO \_\_\_\_\_

BRAVO! Could your pet animal unscramble those words? Didn't think so! There's a reason you're unique!

**2. Fill in the unscrambled words on the spaces below, to read the rhyme**

There once was a \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_  
UNMAH SOREPW

to \_\_\_\_\_ and to \_\_\_\_\_ every hour!  
HNKIT COEOSH

Who one day said, "Oh, to be a \_\_\_\_\_ instead!"  
NPLAT

'Til the rain poured all night with cold showers.

**THINK YOU CAN - Answer Key for the Teacher****1. Use your unique *abilities* to unscramble the words below!**HNKIT     **THINK**NPLAT     **PLANT**COEOSH     **CHOOSE**TEA     **EAT**UNMAH     **HUMAN**WROG     **GROW**SOREPW     **POWERS**CRRDEUPOE     **REPRODUCE**AANIML     **ANIMAL**SSESNE     **SENSES**VOME     **MOVE**EFLE MEOITSNO     **FEEL EMOTIONS****2. Fill in the unscrambled words on the spaces below, to read the rhyme**

There once was a HUMAN with POWERS

to THINK and to CHOOSE every hour!

Who one day said, "oh, to be a PLANT instead!"

'Til the rain poured all night with cold showers.