

## 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 humans share with animals and other living beings and recognize the powers to think and choose as specifically human powers.
2. Understand different types of natural and social hierarchies and how all beings form the hierarchy of being according to their powers.
3. Understand that all human persons are unique and unrepeatable.

### MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- Examples of Natural and Social Hierarchies
- Different and Unique Powers of Living Beings worksheet
- The Hierarchy of Being Pyramid worksheet
- Game: Be Unique
- [Video](#): What distinguishes humans from other animals?

### VOCABULARY

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

### PROCEDURE

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

**Step 2:** Introduce the concept of hierarchy. Explain that the term “hierarchy” signifies a system in which things are arranged according to their importance or perfection – those “above” having more importance or perfection, and those “below” having less importance or perfection.

Write a definition on the board:

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

Recall that in Grade 6, the students learned about different examples of hierarchies in nature, such as “food chain hierarchies”. There is another important hierarchy in nature:

**Astronomical Hierarchy,** between different bodies and systems in space, in which the smallest units are planets such as Earth, Venus, Saturn, etc. Planets orbit around the stars, such as the Sun, and together with it form a Solar system. A system of more stars and solar systems, together with stellar remnants, interstellar gas, dust, and dark matter form a galaxy, and numerous galaxies form the universe.

Explain that besides natural hierarchies, there are also social hierarchies in which different social units, such as organizations or governments are organized hierarchically. Give examples of two social hierarchies:

**College Management Hierarchy,** in which the Dean is on top, below him is the Deputy Dean, who is in charge of Heads of the Departments. Departments are formed by teachers who are responsible to the Heads of the Departments, and below them are the Administrative Staff.

**Company Hierarchy,** in which the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is at the top, leading Managers of different departments, who then supervise the staff in their departments.

Give students the [Examples of Natural and Social Hierarchies](#) handout so that they can revise the different types of hierarchies.

**Step 3:** Explain that in this lesson, the students will explore different hierarchies. Non-living beings, plants, animals and humans form a hierarchy of being according to the complexity and perfection of 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.

Non-living beings such as stone, iron or minerals do not have powers. Only living beings (plants, animals, and humans) possess certain powers. Write the definition of power on the board:

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

Highlight that to have a certain power, a being should be able to perform it on its own, without outside help. For example, aluminum and plastic does not turn into a computer without the help of an engineer to arrange the materials in a certain way and program the software. In the same way, a plant does not move or run from one place to another in the same way as a cheetah or an olympic sprinter.

To determine those powers that are shared by plants, animals, and humans, and those that are unique to humans, divide students into groups and have them brainstorm the [Different and Unique Powers of Living Beings](#) worksheet. Each group should determine which powers are shared among all living beings and which are unique to humans.

After the groups finish working, lead the class in discussion, using the Teacher’s Answer Key as a guide. Help students to correctly assign the powers to the appropriate groups.

Highlight that plants have three powers: the power to grow, to eat, and to reproduce. Animals also have these three powers. Animals can use several powers which plants cannot, such as moving from one place to another, using their senses (taste, touch, smell, sight, hearing), feeling emotions (pain, fear, excitement, etc.), and using instinct and memory.

Humans have all these powers, as well as two others: the powers to think and to choose. These powers enable the human person to do unique and exceptional things.

Animals have a basic form of understanding, for example, when a dog learns commands such as “sit”, “stay”, “go”. However, this understanding is not, strictly speaking, the power to think. Humans alone can think about complex concepts, such as solving a math problem, composing music, brainstorming new inventions, coming up with jokes, or expressing their interior life through art. Animals have a certain degree of choice, such as whether to sneak up on their prey or run directly towards it. However, this is more driven by their instincts and senses. Humans can choose not just between whether they will have pizza or soup for dinner, but they can also choose to sacrifice a meal by giving their food to the hungry, exemplifying the habit of self-determination.

**Step 4:** To correctly recognize the hierarchy of beings and their powers, ask the students to fill in [The Hierarchy of Being Pyramid](#) worksheet. After students finish their worksheet, ask them to share their answers and lead the class discussion using the Teacher Answer Key to help students correctly identify and understand the hierarchy of being.

Emphasize that due to human intelligence and the power to choose, all humans are capable of excellence. This places them on the top of the hierarchy of being and gives them the potential to do great things. This also means that human beings should develop these powers in the best way possible in order to live a fully human life. Explain that in this curriculum, the students will learn how to use these powers in an excellent way.

Write the definitions of the powers to think and choose on the board:

Power to think: the human ability to know and connect ideas

Power to choose: the human ability to knowingly select between options

Highlight that the fact that humans have a special place in the hierarchy of being also means that they should treat each other with respect and that they should not hurt animals and exploit nature.

**Step 5:** Highlight that although all humans are placed on the top of the hierarchy of being, this does not mean that they are all the same as a species. No human person is merely a member of the species, but every person is a unique and unrepeatable human being. Likewise, although some humans are at the top of a social hierarchy does not mean that they have more value than any other human being.

Write the two characteristics of human beings on the board:

Unique: each person has characteristics which exist only in them

Unrepeatable: there can never be two same persons

To reflect on these two characteristics of human persons, play the [Game; Be Unique](#). Have the students form a circle. Every student says something unique about themselves. For example: "I have four brothers." If another student also has four brothers, the students who share the not-so-unique aspect sit down. The goal is to stand as long as possible and therefore to see which special things about oneself are unique in the class. Repeat the game as necessary, to convey the idea that each student has something unique about them.

After the game ends, highlight that all humans share the powers to think and to choose. All human beings are equal in value. And at the same time, each human person is unique and special in their own way. Everyone has their own special talents, interests, personality, and characteristics.

Note that earlier in the lesson students learned about different types of social hierarchies. Some people are more experienced, skilled or knowledgeable in different areas of life. In this way, an employee with more experience and competence in a company's division of work can become manager and CEO. But this hierarchy applies only to the organization, and not to the worth of any person as a human being. In the next lesson, the students will learn more about what is human dignity and why all humans are equal in dignity.

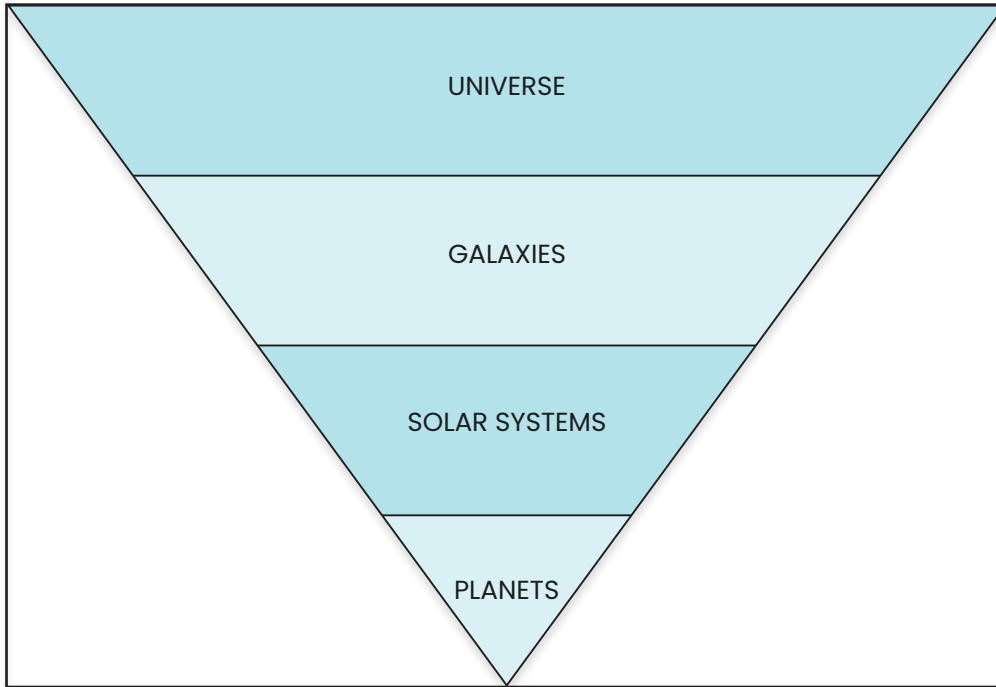
**Step 6:** Summarize. Recall different types of social and natural hierarchies. Review the three powers that all living beings share (eat, grow, reproduce), those that only humans and animals share (move, use senses, feel emotions, use instincts and memory) and two that distinguish humans from all other 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 MATERIAL**

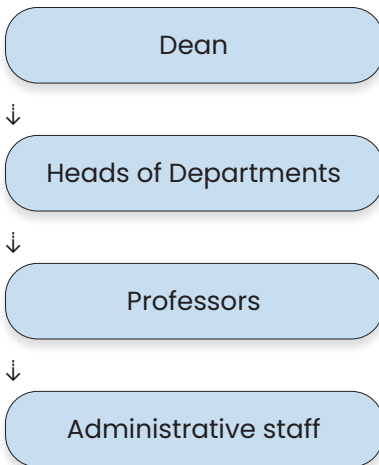
To capture the difference between humans and all other beings, play the [video What Distinguishes Humans from Other Animals?](#) and ask the students to share their reflections on it.

**EXAMPLES OF NATURAL AND SOCIAL HIERARCHIES**

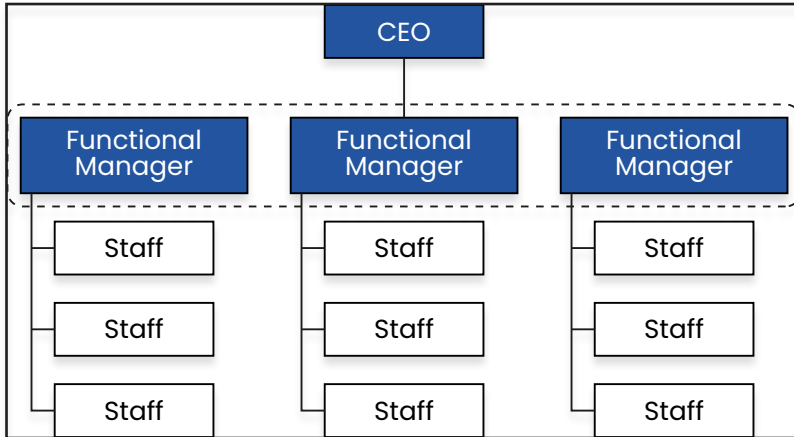
1. Natural Hierarchies: Astronomical Hierarchy



2. Social Hierarchies: University Hierarchy



3. Social Hierarchies: Company Hierarchy



### DIFFERENT AND UNIQUE POWERS OF LIVING BEINGS

Think about the different powers that living beings (i.e. plants, animals, and humans) possess. Some of the powers are shared by different living beings and some are unique to each type of being. Write the powers which *all* plants, animals and humans have. For example, dogs can bark (i.e. this is their power), but not *all* animals have this power.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Powers that all plants and animals share:</b>         | <b>Powers that animals share and plants do not:</b>                |
|  |  |
| <b>Powers that all animals and humans share:</b>         | <b>Powers that all animals and humans share and plants do not:</b> |
|  |  |
| <b>Powers that all plants, animals and humans share:</b> | <b>Powers that all humans share and animals and plants do not:</b> |
|  |  |



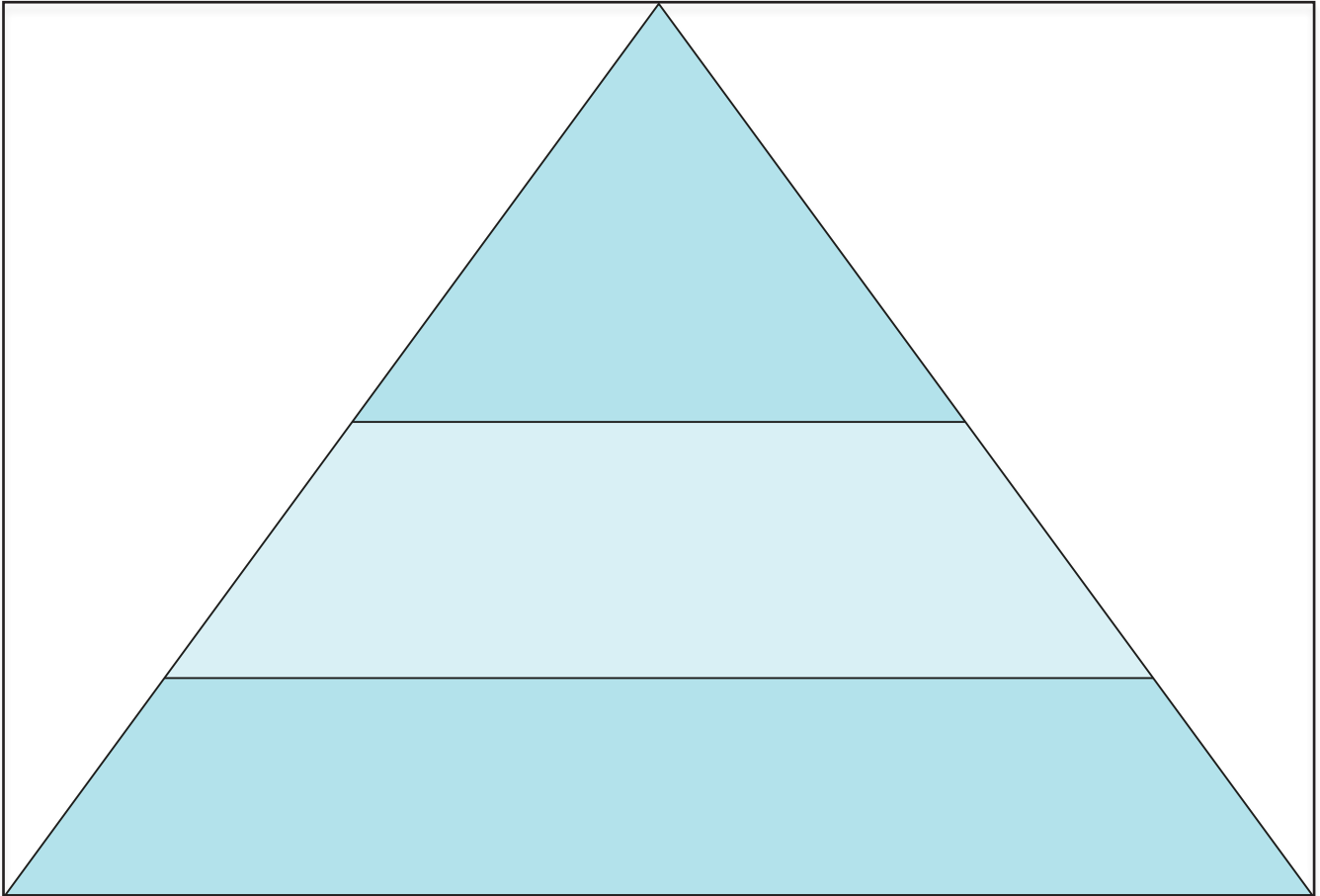
### ***Different and Unique Powers of Living Beings – Answer Key for the Teacher***

Think about different powers that living beings (i.e. plants, animals and humans) possess. Some of the powers are shared by different living beings and some are unique to each type of being. Write only the powers which all plants, animals, and humans have. For example, dogs can bark (i.e. this is their power), but not all animals have this power.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Powers that all plants and animals share:</b>  | <b>Powers that all animals share and plants do not:</b>   |
| Eat<br>Grow<br>Reproduce  | Moving from one place to another<br>Use senses: taste, touch, smell, see, hear<br>Feel emotions: feel pain, fear, excitement, etc.<br>Use instincts<br>Use memory |
| <b>Powers that all animals and humans share:</b>  | <b>Powers that all animals and humans share and plants do not:</b>  |
| Eat<br>Grow<br>Reproduce<br>Moving from one place to another<br>Use senses: taste, touch, smell, see, hear<br>Feel emotions: feel pain, fear, excitement, etc.<br>Use instincts<br>Use memory | Moving from one place to another<br>Use senses: taste, touch, smell, see, hear<br>Feel emotions: feel pain, fear, excitement, etc.<br>Use instincts<br>Use memory |
| <b>Powers that all plants, animals and humans share:</b>  | <b>Powers that all humans share and animals and plants do not:</b>  |
| Eat<br>Grow<br>Reproduce  | To think (to understand science, invent things, etc.)<br>To choose (to take the course of action despite their impulses and outside influences)                   |

**THE HIERARCHY OF BEING PYRAMID**

Place plants, animals, and humans in the appropriate place in the pyramid according to the complexity and perfection of powers they possess. Assign corresponding powers to each type of being.



***The Hierarchy of Being Pyramid – Answer Key for the Teacher***

Place plants, animals and humans in the appropriate place in the pyramid according to the complexity and perfection of powers they possess. Assign corresponding powers to each type of being.

