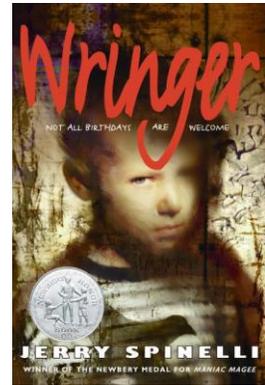




**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

Wringer Literature Circle Unit

The following unit is written for Jerry Spinelli's award-winning book *Wringer* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), in which a young boy struggles with the conflict of whether or not to take part in a cruel tradition. Upon turning 10, boys in his town are expected to become "wringers," responsible for wringing the necks of wounded pigeons at the annual Pigeon Day shoot. This book and corresponding literature circle helps students to examine ethical dilemmas, build compassion, and take an in-depth look at peer pressure and bullying.



Grade Level: 4-6

National Education Standards Addressed:

Language Arts

- NL-ENG.K-12.1 Reading for Perspective
- NL-ENG.K-12.2 Understanding the Human Experience
- NL-ENG.K-12.3 Evaluation Strategies
- NL-ENG.K-12.6 Applying Knowledge
- NL-ENG.K-12.11 Participating in Society
- NL-ENG.K-12.12 Applying Language Skills

Visual Arts

- NA-VA.5-8.3 Choosing and Evaluating a Range of Subject Matter, Symbols, and Ideas

Character Concepts: Kindness, Citizenship, Responsibility, Compassion

Materials Needed:

- Copies of *Wringer*, one for each student
- Journals or notebooks, one for each student
- Literature Circle Role Definition Sheet (see page 8)
- Literature Circle Role Worksheets, one copy for each student in the role:
 - ♦ Discussion Director Worksheet (at readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson19/RWTa11-2.pdf)
 - ♦ Summarizer Worksheet (see page 9)
 - ♦ Word Wizard Worksheet (see page 10)
 - ♦ Character Sketcher Worksheet (see page 11)
 - ♦ Passage Picker Worksheet (see page 12)
 - ♦ Checker Worksheet (at readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson19/RWTa11-1.pdf)
- Combat Cruelty HOTSHEET, one for each student (see page 13)
- Writing utensil, one for each student
- Art supplies such as crayons, markers, paint, etc.
- Word Wizard cards (these can be large index cards or 8x11 inch paper)
- Additional information sheets (optional):
 - humanesociety.org/issues/contest_kills/facts/pennsylvania_pigeon_shoots.html
 - humanesociety.org/issues/contest_kills/
 - humanesociety.org/issues/contest_kills/tips/stop_wildlife_killing_contests.html

Procedure

Opening Questions/Predictions

After passing out the books, ask students to look closely at the cover art. As they look at the cover read the back cover to the group. Ask the students to predict the following:

- ♦ Who is the visitor?
 - ♦ What is a wringer?
 - ♦ Based on the picture on the cover, describe the feelings of the boy.
1. Review with students that they are going to complete a literature circle for the book *Wringer* by Jerry Spinelli. To be sure all students understand the literature circle, complete the first two chapters as a large group with you acting as the Discussion Director and the students completing each role. Define each role for the students and show the corresponding worksheet before reading. You may wish to copy the Literature Circle Role Definition Sheet (page 8) and provide one to each student for reference.

Section One (Chapters One and Two), pages 1-10

1. Ask students to read pages 1-10 (Chapters One and Two. This may be done silently, in a round, or as a read-aloud. Acting as the Discussion Director, ask prepared questions from the Discussion Director worksheet during and after reading. (You may wish to project the page onto a white board or create a poster size sample as a model for the rest of the literature circle.)

Example:

Q. What is the significance of the newspaper article printed before the first chapter at the beginning of the book?

A. This article tells about the annual event in Palmer's town that involves shooting and killing pigeons. Palmer refers to this topic often in the book.

2. Pass out a Summarizer Worksheet (page 9) to each student. (You may wish to project the sheet onto a white board or create a large model.) Review the requirements for the role and ask each student to fill in the page numbers and key points at the bottom of the page. Create a group summary using the notes created by the students. Each student should write this on his or her sheet.

Example:

In this first section of the book, Palmer celebrates his tenth birthday. This birthday is important and represents him coming of age or growing up. Because of this birthday Palmer is now a part of the neighborhood gang of boys. They are invited to his birthday party, and they give him a nickname and gifts that are mostly trash.

3. Pass out a Character Sketcher Worksheet (page 11) to each student. Ask the students to think about Palmer LaRue, a.k.a. "Snots." Ask the students to find four character traits that describe Palmer. Write these, with corresponding page and paragraph, on the board. As each trait is written discuss the proof of that trait in Palmer.

As a group, create a question about Palmer and why he acts the way he does. Ask each student to write this on his or her worksheet.

Example:

(trait) worrier p. 4 paragraph three

Proof: It was simply, merely there, a whisper of featherwings, reminding him of the moment he dreaded above all others, the moment when the not wanting to be a wringer would turn into becoming one.

Question: Why does Palmer worry about becoming a wringer? What is a wringer?

Ask each student to create a drawing of Palmer.

4. Pass out a Passage Picker Worksheet (page 12) to each student. Ask students to find one passage that they feel is very meaningful to the section read and fill out the first four sections of the worksheet.

Example:

"The pigeon's eye is like a polished shirt button. The pigeon's eye is orange with a small black button in the center. It looks up at him...wring it!" (p. 4 par. 4)

Type of passage: Foreshadowing

Ask students to share their passages and type of passage.

Ask students to write two questions about their chosen passage. Take examples and ask the rest of the class to answer the questions.

5. Pass out a Word Wizard Worksheet (page 10) to each student. Ask students to review the first four pages of the book and write down one word that they are unsure of or do not recognize. Ask students to help you create a short list on the board. Once you have a short list review the role of Word Wizard and remind students that the Word Wizard will choose at least four important words to define for the group.

Ask the class to help you complete the Word Wizard worksheet using some of the sample words from the list.

Example:

**punctured p. 3 par. 4*

Sentence: Like air escaping a punctured tire, it would...

Definition: to put a hole or cut in an object

How does the word add meaning to the story?

It shows how Palmer felt that something was escaping from him and the escaping worry would engulf him.

**cackled p. 7 par. 1*

Sentence: Mutto cackled and did likewise.

Definition: talking or laughing in a manner that is annoying

How does the word add meaning to the story?

A witch or someone evil may cackle. Mutto may not have good intentions.

Students should then choose one word and create a Word Wizard Card using their notebooks or prepared cards.

6. Review the Checker Sheet with the class showing an example. (There is no need to make copies for each child in section one.) You may wish to restate that this is not seen by everyone and that it is between the Checker and the educator.

The students have now completed Section One of the *Wringer* literature circle. Upon completion of the Section One worksheets, split the students into groups of five using any method you see fit. (If the student number does not allow for equal groups, you may wish to combine two roles for smaller groups or have two of one role for larger groups.)

Once groups have been created, assign each person in the group one of the roles and provide him or her with the corresponding literature circle worksheet(s). You may wish to remind student that the roles rotate.

Complete the next sections of the book utilizing the same steps used in Section One. Below you will find example vocabulary words, discussion questions, and extension activities for each section of the book.

Section Two (Chapters Three through Six), pages 11-32

Important Words

hoodlums p. 11 par. 1
cringed p. 13 par. 3
yelping p. 16 par. 1
careening p. 17 par. 1
noose p. 24 par. 1
abruptly p. 28 par. 8

Questions for Discussion

- ♦ What is “the Treatment” and why is it significant? How do Palmer’s parents feel about “the Treatment”? (Hint: Mom and dad may not agree.)
- ♦ Palmer receives a special gift from his Dad. What is this gift and why is it important? What do they symbolize?
- ♦ The section ends with Palmer thinking, *You have run out of birthdays*. What do you think this means?

Section Three (Chapters Seven through Twelve), pages 33-64

Important Words

squeamish p. 33 par. 2
disdainful p. 35 par. 5
marvel p. 36 par. 3
befuddled p. 36 par. 4
rumbling p. 38 par. 3
misery p. 40 par. 2
pronounced p. 43 par. 8
nuisance p. 48 par. 10
apologetic p. 52 par. 1
winching p. 55 par. 1

Questions for Discussion

- ♦ What is Family Fest? What is the only part of Family Fest that Palmer does not enjoy?
- ♦ Palmer witnessed something horrible at his first Family Fest. What was it? How did it make you feel when you imagined the scene? Were the wringers really putting the birds “out of their misery”? Do you consider this to be a “fun family activity”? Are the birds treated kindly or humanely? Explain your thoughts.
- ♦ The gang of boys visited Palmer and helped him sneak out of the house. Where did they go? Based on Palmer’s reaction, do you think he will become a wringer? Describe how you think Palmer felt being surrounded by the crates of pigeons.

Section Three (Chapters Thirteen through Sixteen), pages 67-87

Important Words

obedient p. 61 par. 4
crimson p. 69 par. 5
plumpness p. 71 par. 2
crouching p. 73 par. 3
snooping p. 85 par.10

Questions for Discussion

- ♦ The book contains a split at the end of chapter twelve. Why do you think the author did this?
- ♦ Make a prediction: Who is Nipper?

- ♦ Draw the visual image you get when you read the sentence on page 69, “The setting sun seemed to have ladled its syrupy light over the crusted snow...” Write a metaphor or simile describing the setting.
- ♦ At the beginning of this section Palmer ignored the pigeon and called him names such as “dumb” or “stupid.” Why did he do this? Did he really think the bird was stupid? Have you ever been mean to someone when you felt uncomfortable? Why did you do this?

Section Four (Chapters Seventeen through Twenty-Two), pages 88-116

Important Words

gargling p. 88 par. 1
 acquainted p. 89 par. 1
 stupendous p. 94 par. 2
 mushy p. 95 par. 3
 primitive p. 99 par. 3
 bellowed p. 110 par. 2

Questions for Discussion

- ♦ Palmer “borrows” a book from the library without checking it out. Why does he fear the librarian? Does he plan to keep the book?
- ♦ List three things Palmer learns about pigeons in this section.
- ♦ Do you believe Palmer’s mother knows he is up to something? What proof is in this section that may show Palmer is acting “different”?
- ♦ At the very end of this section Palmer blurts out his secret. Who does he tell and why does he choose this person?

Extension Activity

Ask students to research pigeons (humanesociety.org/animals/pigeons is a good place to start). Include anatomy, communication, and the history of the extinct passenger pigeon. Students can create videos, PowerPoint presentations, or posters to educate others about pigeons.

Section Five (Chapters Twenty-Three through Twenty-Six), pages 119-144

Important Words

dilemma p. 120 par. 3
 cackling p. 123 par. 4
 carcass p. 129 par. 4
 shrieked p. 131 par. 1
 conscience p. 140 par. 3
 expression p. 142 par. 4

Questions for Discussion

- ♦ Palmer is afraid to go home at the end of this section. Why is he afraid? What does he do to make sure he stays late afterschool? What would you have done to make sure you had to stay late after school?
- ♦ Do you think Palmer usually gets in trouble? Why or why not?

Section Six (Chapters Twenty-Seven through Thirty-One), pages 145-173

Important Words

immensely p. 146 par. 7
 muffled p. 148 par. 9

murmur p. 149 par. 15
sensation p. 150 par. 5
walloped p. 151 par. 13
humanely p. 156 par. 2
dopey p. 171 par. 2

Questions for Discussion

- ♦ Family Fest is approaching and all boys aged 10 and older attend “wringer training.” Did Palmer attend? Do you think he will give into peer pressure and participate in the Family Fest shootings even though he feels it is wrong? Why or why not? Do you think it would be difficult to leave a group because you knew something was wrong or it made you feel uncomfortable?
- ♦ Palmer and Nipper had a scare in this section of the book. What happened? How did Palmer know to hide downstairs? Were you surprised by the clue?
- ♦ One of the boys in the gang warned Palmer. Who do you think it was and what does this action say about his character? Why do you feel this way?
- ♦ What is the trick Nipper learns? Did you know pigeons could do tricks?

Extension Activity

As a class, read the Combat Cruelty HOTSHEET (page 13) or complete the [Animal Cruelty 101 Humane High School course](#) to learn how to recognize and report cruelty safely.

Section Seven (chapters Thirty-Two through Thirty-Seven), pages 174-203

Important Words

roofline p. 182 par. 3
audible p. 185 par. 4
quivered p. 194 par. 1
formidable p. 199 par. 3

Questions for Discussion

- ♦ Palmer has allowed his emotions to build during the last sections of the book. How do his emotions explode in Chapter 32? Predict how the boys in the gang will react to him now.
- ♦ Palmer makes a tough decision in this section. How does he plan to save Nipper from Family Fest and the boys?
- ♦ We get to know Beans a little better in this section. Describe him, providing examples from the text as support. Do you feel Beans wants to listen to Mutto? Why or why not?

Section Eight (chapters Thirty-Eight through Forty), pages 204-228

Important Words

churning p. 204 par. 2
banishing p. 205 par. 2

Questions for Discussion

- ♦ A child at the end of the story says, “Can I have one too Daddy?” asking to have a pet pigeon. Do you think Palmer’s actions made an impact on people in the crowd?
- ♦ We often hear the phrase “to lead by example.” How did Palmer lead by example in the story? How can you, as a student, help to create change by your examples? Brainstorm a list of at least three things you can do.

♦ Pigeon shoots still occur in parts of the United States. Do they take place in your community? How does this make you feel now that you know the way the pigeons are rounded up and released from boxes?

Extension Activity

Read Pennsylvania Pigeon Shoots at humanesociety.org/issues/contest_kills/facts/pennsylvania_pigeon_shoots.html. Write to legislators or newspapers in states where pigeon shoots occur and ask them to stop the cruel practice.

Other animals are also killed in similar “contests”. Find out more at humanesociety.org/issues/contest_kills/ and humanesociety.org/issues/contest_kills/tips/stop_wildlife_killing_contests.html.

Closure:

Celebrate the closure of the book by holding a Humane Family Fest. Ask each literature circle group to create a pigeon-themed carnival game. The groups should use their knowledge of pigeons, the vocabulary words chosen by the various Word Wizards, and content from the book in creating games. Consider inviting local humane organizations to set up tables. Invite the community to the festival.

Tell Us About It:

We would love to hear about your experiences with this unit and any extension activities. Send a summary of your work with the book to Stephanie Clark at sclark@humanesociety.org. Your group may be featured on our website!

Additional Resources:

HarperCollins Reading Guide and Questions for Discussion: www.harpercollinschildrens.com/books/Wringer-Jerry-Spinelli/?isbn13=9780064405782&tctid=120&BDMode=7

Wringer Online Quiz (10 questions): www.quia.com/jq/19662.html

Author’s website: www.jerryspinelli.com

Literature Circle Blackline Masters: www.lauracandler.com/strategies/litcircleblacklines.php

Learn more about Literature Circles: www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=19

Literature Circle Role Definitions

Discussion Director

The Discussion Director/Checker is a two-part role. The first part (Discussion Director) is to create questions that involve your group by having them think about and discuss the part of the book just read. Your questions should be those that ask students to explain why, interpret, and connect with the story. Your job is to keep all of the students involved. The [Discussion Director Worksheet](#) may be used or the Discussion Director may come up with his or her own questions. (Ten or more questions are required.) These questions will be asked during and after reading. If the group is larger, this can be split into two roles.

Checker

The Checker is responsible for making sure that each role in the literary circle has been completed. The Checker will use the [Checker Worksheet](#). A checker must honestly evaluate the work of the group and his or her comments remain private between the educator and the Checker. This worksheet is turned in at the completion of each section. This role may be combined with the Discussion Director role if the group is small.

Summarizer

The Summarizer will create a summary of the assigned reading. You will write down key points of the reading using the Summarizer Worksheet (page 9). The group discussion will begin with your review which covers key points, main characters, highlights, and a general idea of the reading assignment. This may be presented in narrative or paragraph form, as a poem, a rap, or any other way you feel fits with the reading.

Character Sketcher

The Character Sketcher is required to draw and explain one or more of the important characters in the assigned section. To begin, find a minimum of four character traits or descriptors that are representative of this character as you read. (Find a list of sample traits at www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson175/traits.pdf.) Remember that some character traits will be implied, or not directly stated – you will understand the trait by the characters' actions. Use strong descriptive words. Do NOT use words like good, bad, nice, mean. Write down the page and paragraph where you found this information using the Character Sketcher Worksheet (page 11). At the bottom of the worksheet, come up with a question about this character's motives. The drawing is done last and can be placed on the back of the worksheet or on another piece of paper.

Passage Picker

The Passage Picker must find at least one passage that is important in the assigned section. Often there will be two or three important passages. The Passage Picker will fill in the Passage Picker Worksheet (page 12) information including page and paragraph location so he or she can help the group locate that passage during discussion. During the group discussion the Passage Picker asks a group member to read the chosen passage aloud, asks the group why they feel that was an important passage, and then asks the group the "thinking" question and chosen question from the bottom of the worksheet. The Passage Picker will review the questions and answers with the group.

Word Wizard

The Word Wizard will find a minimum of four important words for the assigned reading. The Word Wizard will write the word, page and paragraph where the word is found, and the sentence in which the word is used on the Word Wizard Worksheet (page 10). The Word Wizard will then look up each word in the dictionary and, using everything known about the word, create a definition and tell how the word adds meaning to the story. (Students should be encouraged to ask the educator to check the definitions.) Finally, the Word Wizard will create "Word Wizard Cards" (large flashcards) using the directions on the worksheet for each chosen word.

During group discussion the Word Wizard places the "Word Wizard Card" with the word, page number, and paragraph number side showing. The Word Wizard will ask the group to turn to the page and paragraph where the word is located and review the passage. Ask the group to look at the context clues and guess the meaning of the word, asking them to explain their guesses. Flip the card over to the side containing the definition and ask the group to add the word, page, and definition to their journal. Each student (including the Word Wizard) will then create a sentence for each word, placing these in their journals.

Summarizer Worksheet

Assignment: page _____ - page _____

Your job is to prepare a brief summary of the assigned reading. The group discussion will begin with your review, which covers key points, main characters, highlights, and a general idea of the reading assignment. This may be presented in narrative or paragraph form, as a poem, a rap, or any other way you feel fits with the reading.

Summary:

Key Points:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Word Wizard Worksheet

1. In the chart below, write down a minimum of 4 important words for the section you read. (If you find more than four, continue on the back of this paper.) Include the page and paragraph number for each word, then copy the sentence from the book in which the word appears.

Word	Page #	Paragraph #	Sentence

2. Re-read the sentence in which the word appears. Think about the word, the sentence, and the story. Look up the word in the dictionary. Using the dictionary definition and everything you know about the word, write *your* definition of the word in the space below.

Then write an explanation telling how or why this word adds meaning to the story. What does this word have to do with the story? Think about the characters, plot, setting, theme, etc.

Word	Definition	How does the word add meaning to the story?

3. Make a Word Wizard card for each word. Be sure to include, in LARGE PRINT, *your word* and the *page* and *paragraph number*. On the other side of the card, you should draw a *picture* to represent your word and write the *word* and a *definition* of the word.

Character Sketcher Worksheet

1. Write the name of the character being described: _____

2. In the chart below, write four traits that describe the character. For each trait, include the page and paragraph number where the explanation or proof of that trait appears, then write the explanation in the space provided.

Trait:	Page #:	Paragraph #:
Explanation or proof of trait:		
Trait:	Page #:	Paragraph #:
Explanation or proof of trait:		
Trait:	Page #:	Paragraph #:
Explanation or proof of trait:		
Trait:	Page #:	Paragraph #:
Explanation or proof of trait:		

2. Question about the character and his or her motives:

3. On the back of this sheet, create a drawing of the character.

Passage Picker Worksheet

1. Pick out the passage you would like to share with your group and write down the page _____ and paragraph _____ numbers.

2. Write down the first two words (_____ , _____)
and the last two words (_____ , _____) of your passage.

3. Circle the type or types that reflect the passage you picked. Possible Types of Passages:

<i>Important</i>	<i>Informative</i>	<i>Interesting</i>
<i>Surprising</i>	<i>Controversial</i>	<i>Descriptive</i>
<i>Historical</i>	<i>Confusing</i>	<i>Persuasive</i>
<i>Dialect</i>	<i>Simile</i>	<i>Metaphor</i>
<i>Personification</i>	<i>Idiom</i>	<i>Alliteration</i>
<i>Fantasy</i>	<i>Thematic</i>	<i>Scientific</i>
<i>Problem/Solution</i>	<i>Fact/Opinion</i>	<i>Cause/Effect</i>
<i>Foreshadowing</i>	<i>Step by step</i>	<i>Math</i>
<i>Funny/Amusing</i>	<i>Mysterious/Intriguing</i>	<i>Melancholy/Sad</i>
<i>Humorous/Entertaining</i>	<i>Scary/Frightening</i>	

4. This passage is a _____ type of passage because

_____ .

5. Think of a good “thinking” question about the passage. Write it in the space below along with the answer to this question.

6. Answer one of these questions in a complete sentence(s): Why did the author include this passage in the story? What does this passage add to the story?



COMBAT CRUELTY

WHAT IS ANIMAL CRUELTY?

Animal abuse has many faces and comes in many forms. It's a dog in a puppy mill producing litter after litter of puppies. It's an elephant or tiger forced to perform for a circus crowd. It's a dog or rooster thrown into a pit and made to fight to the death. It's a raccoon tortured at the hands of teenagers for "fun." It may even be a pet in your neighborhood, who is mistreated or doesn't get enough food, water, or attention. In short, it's any behavior that's harmful or life-threatening to an animal.

Why should you care? Because it's the right thing to do. Because cruelty to animals is illegal. And because people who harm animals may also harm people. Stopping cruelty to animals helps everyone.

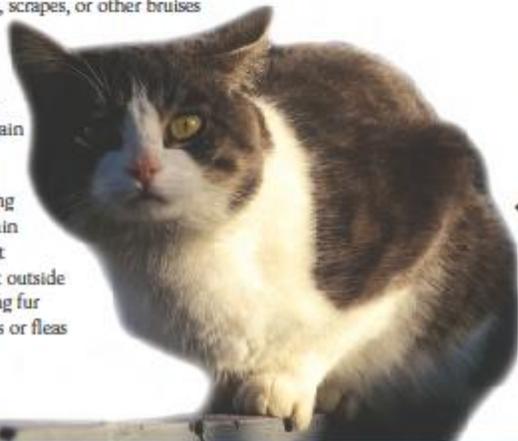
JUST THE FACTS

- ◆ Cruelty to animals is illegal in all 50 states and a felony in 44.
- ◆ Most cruelty investigated by humane officers is unintentional neglect that can be resolved through education.
- ◆ Intentional cruelty is knowingly depriving an animal of food, water, shelter, socialization, or veterinary care or maliciously torturing, maiming, mutilating, or killing an animal.
- ◆ Intentional animal abuse is often committed by a person who feels powerless and unnoticed. The motive may be to shock, threaten, intimidate, or offend others. Some who are cruel to animals copy things they have seen or that have been done to them. Others see harming an animal as a way to get revenge on someone who cares about that animal.
- ◆ Studies indicate that in homes where animal abuse takes place, child and spouse abuse are often occurring as well.

KNOW THE SIGNS

The following are common clues that an animal might be in trouble. They don't necessarily mean a pet has been hurt on purpose, but they shouldn't be ignored. Look out for animals who:

- ◆ have cuts, scrapes, or other bruises
- ◆ duck, whimper, or act aggressive when certain people approach
- ◆ are limping
- ◆ are too thin
- ◆ are almost always left outside
- ◆ are missing fur
- ◆ have ticks or fleas



FIGHTING FOR THEIR LIVES

Cockfighting and dogfighting are centuries-old "blood sports" in which two animals are forced to fight in a pit. People watching the fights bet on who will win. Those who organize and attend these fights see the animals' pain and suffering as "entertainment."

- ◆ Dogfights may last one to two hours and end only when one of the dogs is no longer willing or able to continue.
- ◆ Cockfights, which may last several minutes to half an hour, usually result in at least one animal's death.
- ◆ Dogfighting and cockfighting are against the law in all 50 states. Dogfighting is a felony in all 50 states, while cockfighting is a felony in 35 states.
- ◆ Animal fighting is usually accompanied by other illegal activities. Raids of animal fights often turn up illegal firearms and drugs. Young children are often present at animal fights, sometimes even taking part in gambling.



CAPE COD TIMES/STEVE REASLP

YOU CAN HELP!

- ◆ **Be on the lookout.** If you see any signs of animal abuse, write down the details, including date, time, location, and descriptions of the people and animals involved. If there are other people around, ask them for their names and phone numbers. Ask a parent, teacher, or other trusted adult for help in reporting the case. **You should never handle something as serious as animal cruelty alone!** Then contact your local animal shelter, animal care and control officer, or sheriff's department. (You can usually find this information in the phone book.) Provide them with the details you have gathered.
- ◆ **Be a role model.** Set a good example for others by being a responsible pet caregiver. Cats are safest when kept indoors. When outdoors, dogs should be walked on a leash or supervised in a fenced yard. Keep your pets safe and out of harm's way. Be kind to all animals and let others know that hurting animals is wrong. Speak up for animals and urge others to do the same!
- ◆ **Join Mission: Humane** and do the "Combat Cruelty" project. Spread the word about the need for tough anti-cruelty laws, and teach kids to be kind to animals. Visit humane.society.org/teens to get started!

HUMANETEEN

Want to pass it on? You have our permission to photocopy this flier to hand out to others at your school and in your community. Visit humane.society.org/teens for a downloadable version.



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