

## Question #2

**You have 60 minutes to respond to the following prompt. Allow yourself time to read and annotate the passage and to organize your ideas.**

This prompt presents opposing points of view with respect to zoos. Take those points into consideration. Add to them examples derived from your observations of the world around you; your knowledge about human nature and social organizations; your reading and study on the subject; or your own experiences. Then answer the following question posed by a different New York Times essay on June 2, 2016: What should the zoo of 2050 look like? Be sure you also consider and respond to possible objections to your argument.

### **Do Gorillas Even Belong in Zoos? Harambe's Death Spurs Debate**

By [NATALIE ANGIER](#) JUNE 6, 2016

Harambe, the 17-year-old Western lowland gorilla shot dead at the Cincinnati Zoo late last month after a 3-year-old boy fell into his enclosure, may be physically gone, his tissues harvested for research and his sperm extracted to help diversify the captive breeding gene pool.

Yet the 440-pound silverback leaves another metaphorical gorilla in the room, raising questions that extend far beyond the particulars of the case, including whether the zoo or the boy's mother were more to blame for Harambe's death.

For primatologists and conservationists who devote their lives to studying the great apes and to doing what they can to help protect the rapidly vanishing populations of the primates in the wild, a linked set of ethical and practical dilemmas looms almost unbearably large.

As research continues to reveal the breadth of our genetic, emotional and cognitive kinship with the world's four great apes — gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos and orangutans — many primatologists admit to feeling frankly uncomfortable at the sight of a captive ape on display, no matter how luxe or “natural” the zoo exhibit may be.

Peter Singer, a bioethicist at Princeton University, said, “Our primary concern ought to be the well-being of gorillas, but zoos are constructed the other way around: The primary concern is that humans can see the gorillas.”

The look and logic of zoos have changed drastically over time. When the first apes were exhibited in the West, in the late 18th century, they were seen as trophies, evidence of imperial victory over savagery. The unfortunate souvenirs usually died within months of their arrival from disease or malnutrition.

As zoos sought to improve the health of their resident apes, the enclosures often assumed a blandly sterile configuration, devoid of risky foliage or toys. That approach led to problems of its own, like boredom, repetitive behaviors and depression. More recently, most zoos have worked hard to give apes the mental and emotional stimulation they need, with tires for swinging, rocks for climbing, social groups for mutual grooming or bouts of contagious laughing or yawning.

At the same time, researchers acknowledge that apes in today's zoos, at least in the industrialized world, were all born and raised in captivity, and could no more survive being "set free" into the forests of Africa or Indonesia than could the average tourist on safari. . . when the British aristocrat Damian Aspinall released 11 of his captive-bred lowland gorillas into the wilds of Gabon in 2014, five were soon violently dispatched, probably by a resident gorilla, while others disappeared.

Frans de Waal of Emory University and the Yerkes National Primate Research Center said he was a "big fan" of quality zoos, although perhaps not for large, gregarious animals like killer whales and elephants. "But for great apes, the record now is excellent," he said.

Their health is good, they reproduce readily in captivity and they live 10 years or more longer than their wild peers. Indeed, the first gorilla born in captivity, a female named Colo, is still alive at the zoo in Columbus, Ohio, for which she was named. She will turn 60 in December . . .

But what the public must accept, he said, is that the pleasant notion of zoos as nurseries for restocking wild populations of endangered animals has proved a fantasy in all but a handful of cases, most notably the successful reintroduction of zoo-bred golden lion tamarins into the Atlantic Forests of Brazil.

No matter their feelings about zoos, primatologists despair at the shocking statistics on wild apes.

According to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, all species and subspecies of wild apes rank as endangered or critically endangered, and in all cases, the trends point implacably downward. Apes are being lost to poaching, the bushmeat trade, habitat destruction and disease. Since the 1990s, 80 percent of Eastern lowland gorillas in Central Africa have died of Ebola. By the Red List reckoning, the planetwide total for all wild apes amounts to 350,000 individuals, down from premodern figures estimated in the millions.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/07/science/gorilla-shot-harambe-zoo.html>. August 3, 2016