

**Jessica Alleva**  
**Is Dissection Really that Bad?**

This is a question I have many answers for, seeing as I recently excused myself from my Grade 11 Biology fetal-pig dissection. First, I researched all the pros and cons of animal dissection, and printed this information. I wanted to see both sides of the fence, from the teachers' and students' points of view. Clearly, there were more arguments against dissection than for it. Armed with this information, I went to speak to my biology teacher. I asked her if she would consider an online, virtual dissection as a cruelty-free alternative. She'd predicted I'd come to her with this proposal, but said that it was good only for "pre-dissection" information, that it simply could not replace an actual dissection. Nevertheless, I left the information with her to read. She did, but still insisted on ordering two class sets of fetal pigs.

The day they came in she announced it to me, "Guess what arrived today, Jessica?" as if she delighted in telling me. Because I go to a Catholic School, I couldn't help but protest, "But Miss, Jesus wouldn't dissect animals." She replied with an equally awkward response as her first statement to me. She said, "Jesus sacrificed animals. He WAS the sacrificial lamb." I knew Jesus never harmed an animal in such a way, but I left it at that, knowing my best shot would be talking to the principal. My teacher did, however, tell me that on the dissection days, I would go straight down to the library, so as to not "make a scene." Are our ethical morals to be hidden so long as they don't agree with authority?

Afterwards, I proceeded to share my opinions with other students, who saw my point of view and sympathized with me. A lot of them, in fact MOST of them, even expressed fears and worries about the pig dissection but were too afraid to defy the teacher. I told them that they had the option of going to the library with me, but they were still unsure of going against the teacher. Some students said such things as, "But, it's part of the course!" and, "It's for the gaining of knowledge." Are not books, CD-ROMs, the Internet, encyclopedias, videos, etc. for the gaining of knowledge? Must we dissect 60 pigs for such now-common knowledge?

I talked to several other teachers about the dissection issue as well. I told them my point of view, and most of them agreed with me. Some of them told me that it was the reality of any science-based university program. Of course, I told them, even the most up-to-date universities are now opting for ethical alternatives.

The days of the dissection came and went, and I spent my time in the library studying. In the evenings at home I would do an online, virtual dissection, which I learned a lot from. There were real-life pictures and diagrams, plenty of information, a zoom-in, zoom-out feature, and quizzes available on the website.

Our class was let out early, one day, because of the strong fumes emitted from the fetal pigs, the fumes of the preservatives. Few safety precautions were taken: For example, they neglected to require wearing gloves. Students were to bring in their own gloves, or

have the choice of not wearing them. Even the lab in the textbook insisted upon wearing gloves, for safety from the harmful preservatives.

After the dissection, all students were assigned a question sheet, which would be heavily graded. I, too, was given these questions. I answered them as best as I could with the information from the virtual pig dissection website. And guess what? I did the best on the assignment.

Throughout my rather peaceful opposition, my father supported me 100% of the way. He is writing a letter to the school board and my high school on the issue as well. My friends encouraged and supported my actions, even the ones who partook in the dissection. I was very grateful and appreciative that I had such support, such respect for my views.

Now my biology class is over. I ended up with a 96 as my final mark. Clearly, not partaking in the cruel dissection had no effect whatsoever on the knowledge or experienced I gained. What I did learn, however, is that following your heart and sticking to your morals will ultimately lead to success and self-contentment. I know that the stand I took was the most ethical and friendly one, and I hope that others will follow in my example in the years to come. As for the future, I still plan on discussing the matter with the principal, and will soon be forming an animal-rights club at my high school.

**The negatives to dissection far outweigh the [few] benefits.**

1) Dissection encourages disrespect for life, and teaches that life is disposable. At such an age when children and adolescents are forming life-lasting opinions and ideals, compassion should be stressed above all. Does this world need more compassion? Yes. And to teach that it is all right to needlessly kill animals for dissections and consumption purposes is unethical.

2) While I believe that fetal pigs are not killed for the sole purpose of being dissected, these fetal pigs are taken from slaughtered sows at the abattoir (slaughterhouse). Schools can purchase their supply of pigs for as much as \$600. This money, therefore, pays the slaughterhouse and feeds into the whole cruel animal industry.

3) Other organisms used for dissection include worms and other various insects. Some classes may even dissect cats, rabbits, mink, etc. The latter are raised in labs specifically for the purpose of dissection, and are abused and treated horrendously. Other organisms are simply taken from the wild, and this greatly disrupts ecosystems.

*--Jessica is a 17-year old high school junior who went veg at age eight after watching the movie Babe and then went vegan. She volunteers at local animal sanctuaries and several animal and human rights organizations, including PETA and Amnesty International.*

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