

# Women in the history of the RSPCA

## ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

- To be able to discuss and clearly explain ideas
- To understand the different contributions that people make to communities
- To recognise the importance of using a range of sources when forming an opinion

## CURRICULUM LINKS

### England:

- PSHE
- History
- Citizenship

### Wales:

- Humanities
- Languages, Literacy and Communication

## ABOUT THE RSPCA

If you have not used any education resources from the RSPCA before, you may want to spend some time introducing the RSPCA and the work that we do. The supporting Sources Pack includes a slide to show your class.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) is a charity operating in England and Wales that promotes animal welfare. Founded in 1824, it is the oldest and largest animal welfare organisation in the world. The RSPCA's vision is to live in a world where all animals are respected and treated with compassion. RSPCA Education offers a wealth of free online resources, including lesson plans linked to the English and Welsh curricula, interactive resources and a newsletter to keep you up to date with new content. For all of this and more, visit: [education.rspca.org.uk](http://education.rspca.org.uk).

## WHAT IS TABLE TALKING?

Table Talking is a communication and empathy building activity where pupils share their opinions and practice their critical thinking. It works best if pupils are sat around a table or using chairs in a circle. Pupils will read a 'Table Talking' prompt and take turns to share their thoughts for a few minutes using one of the following starters: **"I think..."** **"I agree because..."** **"I disagree because..."**

Encourage pupils to think critically about each other's ideas. Asking each other why they have the opinion they do is a great way to start.

Table Talking prompts are designed to start discussions and we have suggested different options depending on the age and ability of your class. Remind your pupils that there are many different opinions and that some of them might change theirs after the activity.



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## STIMULUS

**Begin on page 3 of the Sources Pack.**

Without pioneering women, the RSPCA's history would look very different today. From Victorian times up until the present day, strong women over nearly 200 years have made it possible for us to improve the lives of all animals and work towards ending cruelty.

In the 1800s, women did not have equal rights to men. Women were not allowed to vote, own property or have the same access to education. It was not popular for women to make their voices in society heard. Despite this, some women still decided to campaign for the prevention of cruelty to animals.

More information about the role of women in the history of the RSPCA can be found here:  
[Pioneering women / Meet Herchy Boal](#)



Share images from **pages 4 to 7** of the supporting Sources Pack with the class. Use the questions below to discuss what they can see.

### KS1

### KS2

### KS3

What can you see?

Who do you think these people are?

How would you describe the women who were involved in the history of the RSPCA?

Who do you think these people are?

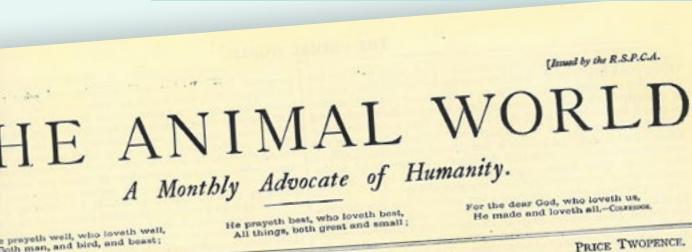
What clues can you see that tell you the pictures aren't recent?

What challenges would these women have faced that men didn't?

What clues can you see that tell you the pictures aren't recent?

Who can give an example of a 'strong' person they know? What makes them strong? Can anyone be strong?

What gender stereotypes can you think of? How might they have affected the women campaigning against animal cruelty?



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## TABLE TALK

Have pupils sit in circular groups of 3-5. Choose the prompt you think is most suitable for your groups and ask them to discuss.

Remind pupils that it's okay to have different opinions, but most importantly – it's best to keep an open-mind. This will develop their critical thinking and communication skills. Depending on needs, remind pupils of the importance of letting each other finish sharing their ideas without interrupting. This will help them to start building their debating skills.

### KS1

Look at the image on page 6. Can you think of any other people who were the 'first' to do something? What might it feel like?

### KS2 and 3

- The RSPCA needs strong women to campaign for animals
- There are different ways to be a strong person
- Only the rich and famous can protect animals

Allow a few minutes for discussion before inviting each group to share their ideas about the Table Talking prompt they discussed.

## TEACHER TALK

### KS1

What sort of personality might someone have who is the 'first' to achieve something?

How would you describe people who protect animals?

### KS2

Are there different ways of being a strong person?

Who agreed and disagreed? Why?

Did anyone's opinion change during the discussion?

### KS3

Did anyone's opinion change during the discussion?

If anyone's opinion changed, how did that feel?

Was there anything you all agreed on?



# Women in the history of the RSPCA

## IMAGERY

Using the imagery **on pages 4-7 of the Sources Pack**, highlight that women have played a significant role in the RSPCA's history. The examples include Baroness Burdett-Coutts, Ninette Gold, Pat Jones and Herchy Boal.

Baroness Burdett-Coutts was the first woman to work closely with the RSPCA and dedicate huge philanthropic efforts to preventing cruelty to animals. She used her money and her status to make a lasting difference to animals.

Ninette Gold and Pat Jones became the first ever female officers in 1952.

Hercy Boal became the first ever female Asian officer and overcame huge racial stereotypes and cultural barriers to realise her dream.

You can read more about all of these women using the website links on page 2 of this lesson. Choose from the questions below and record thoughts and new words in a word bank.

### KS1

### KS2

### KS3

What can you tell about the people from their photos?

What makes you think the women in the pictures would have to be strong and resilient?

Why is it important to explore a range of sources when doing research?

What might the Band of Mercy have taught children about being kind to animals?

What emotions would they have had to show?

What barriers might each woman have had to overcome?

68% of inspectors are female in the RSPCA today. Why might this be?

What do you think inspired each woman?

**Key vocabulary:** strong, fundraising, kindness, help, care, saving, donation

**Key vocabulary:** compassion, education, charity, empathy, sympathy, rescue, release

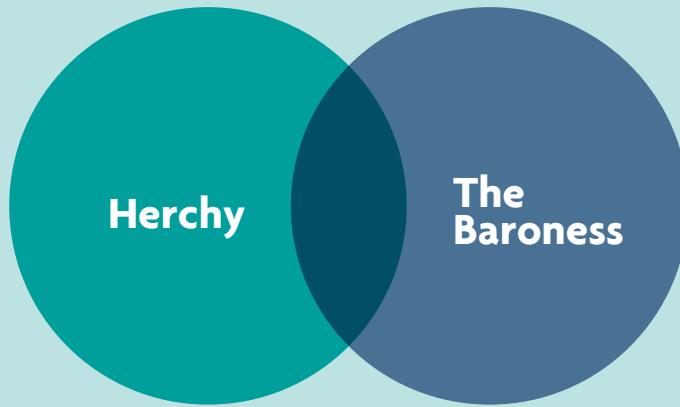
**Key vocabulary:** philanthropy, campaign, altruism, equality, humane, rehabilitation



# Women in the history of the RSPCA

## COMPARING HERCHY AND THE BARONESS

Invite pupils to sort key words into a Venn diagram with one circle representing the Baroness and the other Herchy. Depending on the needs of your group, you could guide the discussion by completing a Venn diagram on the board as a class activity. Encourage them to think about their differences (e.g. the Baroness raised awareness, as well providing financial donations, while Herchy rescues and releases animals) and their similarities (e.g. probably both faced challenges, and need to be compassionate, and they both helped the campaign for better treatment of animals). **Page 7** of the Sources Pack shows Herchy and Baroness Burdett-Coutts side-by-side.



## CHANGES IN CULTURE

Discuss with the class what might have changed in the UK since the 1800s when Baroness Burdett-Coutts was alive. Think about how attitudes and even laws relating to caring for farm animals or pets and looking out wild animals might have changed.

Today, people from different cultural backgrounds may hold different opinions of animals and how we should treat them. Animals are ‘sentient’, which means they are aware of their feelings and emotions, so to keep them happy and healthy, their needs must be met.

Ask your class the below questions to help them consider their current points of view:

**How do we know animals have thoughts and feelings?**

**If someone tried to harm a fish and a horse, would both animals try to get away to find safety? Why?**

**Should we treat farm animals differently from pets? Why? Or why not?**



# Women in the history of the RSPCA

## OPTIONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

### BEFORE AND NOW

#### KS1 and 2

Choose a picture from **page 4 or 6** of the Sources Pack, then have pupils split their page in two. On one side, ask them to write key words or draw pictures of how women might have felt in the ‘olden days’. On the other side, they could draw or write how women feel in the present day. Encourage them to think about what might have changed over the last 100-200 years.

#### KS3

Encourage pupils to use the Sources Pack and use independent research and inquiry into women working in the RSPCA today who are ‘making history’. Ask pupils to reflect on how social impact and activism might have changed since 1824. Can they think of any contemporary female activists? What challenges might they face? How might the challenges be different now than in the past?

### EMOTIVE IMAGERY

Lantern slides were used in the past in the cinema to increase awareness of compassion towards animals. Animal rights activists have used visual imagery in their efforts to shape the public’s understanding of what is means to be ‘kind’, ‘cruel’ and ‘inhumane’ towards animals.

#### KS1 and 2

Create a poster using images and/or writing that features a slogan that could be used to encourage people to think about the way animals are treated and encourage kindness. Ask them to think where the poster could be displayed – on a march, on a billboard?

#### KS3

Have pupils think about activism on social media and ask them to create their own social media post to increase awareness of compassion towards animals. What imagery and language would be best to use to encourage action? What do they want readers to do when they see their social media post? How do imagery, film, words and music influence our emotions?

