

Name: _____

Date: _____

An Untamed Debate

In “Tracking Tiny Primates” (pp. 14-15), you learned that the slow loris has become a popular pet. Millions of Americans keep wild animals as pets, but not everyone agrees that’s a good idea. Read the article, taking note of the facts supporting each side of the debate. Then use the organizer on the next page to write your own persuasive essay on the topic.

Wild Pets

Should wild animals live in our homes? By Natalie Smith

Major Tepper’s family has owned many cats over the past 10 years. One of his favorites is Simba. Major, a teenager, loves to play with Simba and curl up with him.

But Simba is no ordinary cat—he’s a lion! The Teppers have raised lions, tigers, and leopards over the past decade.

“When they’re [young], they’re almost like another house pet,” Major says.

But they do grow up—and they can become dangerous. Recent tragedies have led to a debate about whether owning exotic pets should be allowed.

A Wild Debate

Millions of exotic pets—animals that haven’t been domesticated—live in the U.S. That includes up to 20,000 big cats, like lions. And the Humane Society believes that about 15,000 nonhuman primates, such as monkeys and chimps, are living in people’s homes.

Which animals are you allowed to keep as pets? The answer depends on where you live. Some states have strict laws against owning exotic pets. In other states, you don’t even need a permit or license to own one. In recent years, though, some of these rules have been changing.

In June 2012, Ohio passed a law banning certain pets, including big cats and other large mammals. The law was passed after an Ohio man set free 56 of his exotic pets—including

tigers, bears, and wolves. Police had to shoot most of the animals to protect local residents.

In Connecticut, a chimp attacked one of its owner’s friends in 2009. After the attack, the state banned people from keeping primates as pets.

Too Much to Handle

Officials say unpredictable behavior is a big reason wild animals shouldn’t be kept as pets.

“It’s dangerous for both humans and the animals,” says Adam Roberts. He works for Born Free USA, an animal-rights group. Since 1990, the group has recorded more than 1,000 escapes and other incidents involving exotic pets.

Groups like Born Free also say that many wild animals require special care that few pet owners are able to provide. Animal owners often find that they’ve taken on more than they can handle and neglect or abandon their pets.

A Bad Rap?

Exotic-pet owners say that bad owners, not the animals, are to blame for these problems.

The Teppers’ big cats are part of a family business. The adult cats are used in a magic show in Las Vegas, Nevada. The Teppers say they know safety comes first when dealing with wild animals. Major and his siblings aren’t allowed to get too close to the adult cats.

“People who don’t follow the rules are the ones we hear about when something bad happens,” says Susan Tepper, Major’s mother.

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An Untamed Debate (continued)

When you try to get people to agree with your opinion or point of view, you are attempting to **persuade** them. Persuasive writing is a form of communication in which the writer tries to convince the reader to agree with his or her point of view, or to do something specific.

Read the article “Tracking Tiny Primates” from pp. 14-15 of this issue and the article “Wild Pets.” What is your opinion of owning exotic pets? Below, write an essay persuading readers to agree with your view.

- **START** your essay with a position statement. Clearly state your opinion, or what it is you are trying to persuade the reader to agree with or to do.

- **NEXT**, write two reasons that support your position statement. Be sure to explain each of your reasons, using facts to support your position where possible.

REASON: _____

REASON: _____

- **END** your essay with a concluding paragraph. The conclusion should show the reader why he or she should agree with your position statement. Try to include something memorable. To do this, you might ask a question that will make the reader think about the issue after reading the essay.
