

Monkeys Serving in Japan
NewsDepth December 11, 2008
Classroom Activities



<http://www.youtube.com>

Overview:

During these rough economic times, everyone is looking for a way to save money and survive. Restaurants are always hit extra hard during economic downturns, but one restaurant in Japan has a novel approach to cutting costs: replace the wait staff with monkeys. The monkeys only work two hours a day, but bring in tourists from around the globe. It would be difficult for restaurants in our own country to use monkeys as waiters because of animal rights groups, but there are ways monkeys are being used here that are very extremely valuable and not just to save money. Students will learn about this.

Grade level: 4-5

Subject: Science

Standards addressed:

Students will be able to explain how technology from different areas has improved human lives.

Students will be able to investigate ways that results of technology may affect the individual, family and community.

Classroom activities:

1. Activity #1 Monkeys as Waiters (15-20 minutes)

- How many of you have been to a restaurant and had really good service by either a waiter or waitress? What made that person good? It is recommended that a good server be tipped between 15 and 20% of the total bill. Do you think that if someone does a really good job helping you get your food that they should be paid that much, or possibly more?
- How many of you have been to a restaurant and had really bad service? Was the bad service the fault of the person serving you? If your service was slow, could it be because there weren't enough servers to accommodate all of the people? Could it be because there weren't enough people cooking in the kitchen, and the server was bringing you the food as fast as it could be prepared? If that was the case, do you think that maybe the restaurant was trying to save some money by not hiring enough people to be able to provide for good service?

- What is the restaurant in Japan doing to help save some money? (If time permits, watch the segment again about the monkeys being used as waiters.) In the feature, they pointed out that, most likely, monkeys could not be used in our country as waiters. Why is that? Do you think that they should be allowed to serve in a restaurant that you like to go to? Why or why not? <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/worldnews/article-1071289/Pictured-The-amazing-monkey-waiters-serve-tables-Japanese-restaurant.html> is an article providing details about the Monkey Waiters.
- Kids always think that monkeys would be fun pets. Ask students, “Would you like to have a monkey? Why? If you had a monkey as a pet, and you could train him to help you with one of your daily chores, what would it be?”

2. Activity #2 Monkeys really are helping serve people in our country...Find out how.

- Helping Hands is a National Nonprofit serving quadriplegic and other people with severe spinal cord injuries or mobility-impairments by providing highly trained monkeys to assist with daily activities.
- They raise and train these monkeys to act as live-in companions who, over the course of 20-30 years, will provide the gifts of independence, companionship, dignity and hope to the people they help.
- Helping Hands also educates thousands of young people annually through the Spinal Cord Injury Prevention Program (SCIPP). SCIPP teaches preventive measures for safety awareness, heightens sensitivity to the challenges of being disabled, and promotes understanding of the human-animal bond.
- Visit the website for Helping Hands where you can see a complete gallery of photos showing monkeys helping people. Also there is an excellent video showing “Monkey College” which is where these monkeys are being trained. <http://www.monkeyhelpers.org/>
- Other resources for further information about the helping monkeys <http://www.markfelling.com/helpingmonkeys.htm> Provides an excellent article including pictures entitled “Program Trains Monkeys To Help Paralyzed Patients.”
- Ask students to respond to this. Ask them if they know of any other animals that are being used to assist people in need. (Example – seeing eye dogs) <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6359754/> is a website that features a dog who saved the life of his paralyzed owner. <http://www.cnn.com/2008/US/09/15/dog.dials.ap/index.html#cn-STCOther1> features the dog, Buddy, who saved his owner’s life when he was having a seizure. You can view a video about the dog as well as listen to his 911 call.



3. Activity #3 Monkeys Helping Amputees and Paralyzed

- Rhesus monkeys have been able to control robotic limbs using only their thoughts, scientists report.
- Researchers at Duke University believe the finding could eventually lead to the development of highly sophisticated false limbs for people who are paralyzed. The technology may also aid people with stroke and spinal cord damage.
- This website provides a short video of a monkey being trained to move his arm with his mind to retrieve a banana.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/7423184.stm> (source for picture)
- PBS's NewsHour site provides an extended interview with Dr. Todd Kuiken who with his colleagues at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago pioneered the technique of using minds to control motion.
http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/science/july-dec03/roboticarms_11-18.html
- Have students respond to this extremely valuable use for monkeys. Even though the use of monkeys to help humans varies greatly in what they have discovered here and the way they are helping in that little restaurant in Japan, you have to agree that all of it is not just "Monkey Business."

