

Date 12 / 15 PV Log: (circle one) Poem / Movie / Picture / LyricTitle Altruism in ChimpanzeesAuthor / Director / Source: National Geographic

Context (Where Found / Viewed / Read?)

I came across this photo while skimming through an article about altruism, or kind and selfless behavior, in chimpanzees.

Content / CD / Summary / Precis (Say? "Plot? Setting/Situation? Key lines/phrases scenes, etc? )

The photo clearly depicts two chimpanzees whose faces are not directed at the camera but instead directed at each other. One of the chimpanzees is standing on some sort of a platform while the other is holding onto a tree trunk and is slightly elevated in the air. They are holding their hands out to each other, and it appears that the chimpanzee on the ground is either trying to help the other one, who looks younger, get down from the tree trunk or trying to hand it something that it needs. The two animals are in a barren environment.

Content / CM / Meaning? / Theme(s)?

Chimpanzees, because they share ninety-eight percent of their genome with humans, possess intelligence to some degree of complexity. In fact, studies have been shown that chimpanzees have actually performed better than humans on certain memory tests. Despite their knowledge, self-awareness, and emotions, chimpanzees do not abuse their intellectual capacity much like humans do. Humans have been corrupted and made selfish by possessions, borders, and differing opinions, which are all a direct result of their cognitive abilities. Chimpanzees, on the other hand, are not indecent, and they use their potential for the betterment of their kind, which is evident in this inspiring picture. Altruism and selflessness, qualities that are ever so present in nature, are definitely lacking in humanity.

Form (Diction? Construction Terms? Symbolism?)

This photo is taken in black and white from an angle that is straight on with the chimps. Although the photographer obviously didn't position the chimpanzees, their fingers almost touching resembles *The Creation of Adam* by Michelangelo, which illustrates the creation of the first man on earth. God originally made humans so pristine and selfless, just like the chimpanzees in this photo.

Commentary (What do you want to say? Why like? Questions? Synthesis / Allusions-Connections / Relevance to personal experience, to literature, 20Q's? etc.)? "Poetic" Traits?

Despite the fact that this photo essentially puts humans to shame, it is rather interesting recognizing that animals other than humans can behave on such a high emotional and psychological level. Moreover, the photograph ultimately makes humans contemplate and wonder whether evolution into such a complex species like themselves is actually worthwhile. Humans kill each other because of greed and malice, oppress each other for power, and are selfish as a means of self-preservation, while so many organisms in the wild exhibit a much more sophisticated morality based on justice and fair play. This idea of devolution and degradation due to the fall of Man may be unsettling and bothersome; however, it is ultimately a reality and it must be accepted. Mark Twain discusses this concept in his essay "The Lowest Animal," in which he describes the descent of innocence, righteousness, and good judgment along the pathway of evolution. Humans, the most evolved, are also the most corrupted and unethical species to inhabit the earth. As depressing and humiliating as this picture is in terms of human nature, I do find it quite poetic because it is humbling yet inspiring at the same time. Humans should feel put down by and ashamed of their own nature by this photo, but they should also be motivated and urged to transform themselves and to attain the selflessness and benevolence that is exhibited by these chimpanzees.

over (do not mix logs; e.g., no poem log in front, and movie log on back)