

EXAMPLE COMPARE ESSAY

Prompt: Compare gorillas to humans on at least three dimensions. Make sure your theme has at least five paragraphs. Be sure to include in-text citations where needed as well as a reference list. Use MLA style.

TITLE OF PAPER: Our Close Relatives?

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Our Close Relatives?

Humans have a relative called the gorilla that displays several similarities to humans. Whether gorillas can be called “close relatives” is an interesting question. Gorillas look so much like humans that explorers thought that gorillas were a tribe of hairy people. They were given their name “gorilla” by an explorer because the word “gorilla” means “tribe of hairy people” (“Gorilla” 2). Like chimpanzees and orangutans, gorillas are anthropoids, which means “resembling man” (“Webster’s” 38). In addition to their physical appearance, their social life, and their daily activities make gorillas so similar to humans that they might be considered close relatives.

As mentioned, gorillas are similar to humans physically. Both gorillas and humans can stand upright and walk on two feet. Gorillas mainly do this when they are carrying something or using a tool. Humans walk on two feet whenever they move around. Additionally, gorillas are about the same height as humans when standing. The average height of male gorillas is five feet six inches (“All about gorillas” 2); however, male gorillas have been known to stand as much as six feet four inches tall (“What is...” 1). In the U.S., the average height of a human male is five feet ten inches (“Template...” 2). Also, gorillas and humans have fingerprints that are unique. All gorillas and humans can be identified solely by their fingerprints. Interestingly, gorilla DNA is very similar to human DNA. From ninety-five to ninety-nine percent of their DNA matches human DNA (“DNA” 1)

Another way in which gorillas are similar to humans is their social life. Interestingly, scientists have found that gorillas live together in families, like humans do. Gorilla families are called “troops,” and they typically range in size from 3 to 30 gorillas. The largest observed gorilla family had 65 members (“The Gorilla King” 1). Human families, including extended family members (grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins), can be just as large. Importantly, the leader of each gorilla family is a male called a “silverback” (“Gorilla” 4). This is an older male with gray hair on his back. His job is to protect the members of the troop and make decisions for the group. Human families have historically been led by males, and in many cultures are still led by males. Not surprisingly, female gorillas and female humans are, in general, in charge of raising the babies in their families. They feed and groom the children.

A further way in which gorillas are similar to humans involves their daily activities, including how they eat, sleep, communicate, and use tools. Each day, with the silverback as their leader, the gorilla troop walks around finding and eating food. Obtaining food is a major activity for humans, too. At the end of the day, gorillas build nests for sleeping on the ground or in the trees. They sleep close to each other. Human families sleep together in their homes and sometimes in the same bed. Throughout the day, gorillas communicate with each other. Typical ways of communicating include sounds, touch, facial expressions, and hand gestures. Humans communicate with each other in these ways, too. Additionally, both gorillas and humans use tools. For example, gorillas are known to use a stick to determine the depth of water. Gorillas have also been known to use a stick to support themselves while fishing in water. They position the stick in the mud at the bottom of a pool and lean on it. Another gorilla was seen using a tree trunk to support her digging activities. Then she used it as a bridge to move across swampy ground. Other gorillas have been known to use sticks to dig termites out of a fallen tree. Also, a

gorilla was seen breaking up a rock. Then he used its sharp edge to scrape bark off a tree. If humans were living in the wild with no resources, they would probably be using sticks and rocks as their tools in the same ways.

In sum, gorillas are similar to humans with regard to how they look, how they relate to each other, and the activities in which they engage. Mainly because they can walk upright and are similar in size to humans, they have an overall similar appearance, and their DNA is almost a complete match to human DNA. Like humans, gorillas relate to each other within families and have definite roles in these families. Also similar to humans, gorillas engage in daily activities including obtaining food, communicating with each other, and manipulating tools. All of these traits make them close relatives to humans in the animal family but probably not kissing cousins!

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