“The Anguish of Exotic Birds”

By: Middle School Student

It is a very depressing fact, but the average exotic bird spends only two years with the same person. Because jungle birds may bite, chew, and are really loud, they are continuously passed on from house to house. Often, they are warehoused in a small closet of a room or have their

cages covered all the time. Can you imagine staring at nothing but a sheet all day?

**5** Large birds, like Macaws, can live for around 100 years. A medium bird, like a Lovebird, can live for about 50 years and small birds, like Parakeets, can live around 15 years. If one of these birds ends up in an unfavorable environment, they may be in for a long lifetime of agony! The

abuse many of these magnificent, brilliant, and sociable birds experience is greater than that reserved for prisoners. Being a bird owner myself, I find this very sad!

**10** The manner in which these breathtakingly exotic birds are captured is horrendous! Hunters will stop at nothing to catch exotic birds. These cruel, ruthless hunters will catch a bird, hack off bits and pieces of their wings, and tether them to the ground so the poor victim can cry out to

their mate. Since birds are so social and loyal, this, many times, sends other nearby birds into waiting nets. It's hard to believe that these kind of things happen! If you find that appalling,

**15** then you don't want to hear this! The way these so-called hunters smuggle the birds from their jungle home is pure evil! Sometimes they tape their beaks shut, tie their wings and feet together, and stuff them in unbelievable places like floorboards, wheel wells, and trunks.

The other times they are stuffed in claustrophobic crates and cages with other birds they don't even know, with little if any food and water. The most heinous part about this is only one out of **20** five birds make it to their unwanted destination. The people who pay these dreadful hunters and smugglers for their own pleasure are just as much at fault. And to think people sometimes wonder why birds peck at their feet and feathers, and are sometimes "neurotic!" Wouldn't you if you were put through that? It is sheer evil.

This is probably the most barbarous thing you've ever heard, but the way common,

**25** domesticated birds are kept is just as awful. Birds are forced to mate and sometimes one

of the mates usually winds up killing one or the other. On a par with that, the way they are kept in "storage" until someone buys them is pretty awful; it resembles a puppy mill.

These "parrot mill" conditions are very stressful for the birds. They are stuffed in a room with hundreds of other birds. It sort of makes me afraid, thinking about how these birds are treated, **30** and where my Parakeet came from. I don't know if he was yanked out his jungle or if

he was raised in one of those gruesome parrot mills. In the wild, these magnificent creatures mate for life. They groom each other and share nesting and feeding duties. When they are captured, they are separated forever. To them, that is worse than death. These birds should not be bought, but rescued. They belong in the wild, not in a cage.

**35** The next time you go to the pet store, take a look around. Ask the managers where the birds came from. Call the Better Business Bureau and ask if there have been any complaints about the store. Don't shop in a place that contributes to this severely sinister problem…Bird abuse.

1. Which of the following *most likely* contributed to the author’s perspective?
2. bird behavior
3. owning a bird
4. societal pressure
5. friend’s opinions
6. What is the author’s viewpoint? Use information from the text to explain your answer.
7. The author uses loaded language to further his/her viewpoint when stating─
8. Being a bird owner myself, I find this very sad!
9. Can you imagine staring at nothing but a sheet all day?
10. … the average exotic bird spends only two years with the same person.
11. The manner in which these breathtakingly exotic birds are captured is horrendous!
12. Lines 18 – 19 reflect the author’s attitude because it shows─
13. a variety in the bird’s diet.
14. how birds are mistreated.
15. a lack of concern over socialization
16. how the crates are an appropriate size.
17. The words the author chooses to describe the birds are─
18. exact
19. gentle
20. humorous
21. overemphasized
22. The words the author uses to describe parrot mill conditions shows his/her─
23. curiosity
24. frustration
25. indifference
26. determination



The ALF Mission Statement: We work to effectively allocate resources (time and money) to reduce animal suffering in the world. What to do, what not to do. Our short term aim is to save as many animals as possible and disrupt the practice of animal abuse. Obusiness.

**Gary Yourofsky**'s powerful and enlightening message about the true meaning of animal rights has been heard by more than 50,000 students in 160 middle schools, high schools and universities across the nation. Gary, a practicing veterinarian, uses thought-provoking prose and inspiring stories to deliver his message.



If you could be any animal on Earth, what would you be? A bird, because they can fly? Maybe that would have been fun long ago, but here and now, birds are, in terms of numbers, probably the most abused animals on the planet. And where do all these pet store birds come from? Yes, along with puppy mills and rabbit mills, there are bird mills, too.

**BIRD BREEDING MILLS**
from <http://petstoreabuse.tripod.com/>

Most of us have heard the sad stories about puppy mills. Hundreds of miserable creatures huddled in crowded cages-- their only purpose in life being to breed. However, most people have not been exposed to the avian equivalent, the bird mill. Bird mills are facilities which are used to mass produce parrots for the pet trade. Almost all pet stores, especially the larger chains, purchase their parrots from bird mills.

Most bird mill breeding facilities resemble warehouses. Breeder birds, many of them former pets, are kept in small cages with nothing more than food, water, and a nestbox. They are never handled or given any mental stimulation. Confinement in such conditions leads to neurotic behavior in many breeder birds. In my practice, I see many bird owners unable to cope with these behavior problems. Not all breeder birds are compatible with each other. If introductions are not carefully done with acute observation and possible intervention--and they rarely are in bird mills--one or both birds of a prospective breeding pair can be seriously injured or killed.

If a pair does successfully breed and a female lays fertile eggs, they are removed from the nestbox and placed in an incubator. Chicks are not allowed any contact with their parents. Assembly line-type tubes are used to put food directly into the baby birds' crops. This tube feeding makes it very hard for a chick to be weaned later on because the chick associates eating with a tube instead of food. Bird mills wean baby birds using a technique called deprivation, or forced, weaning. During deprivation weaning, chicks are refused formula with the assumption that when they get hungry enough they'll eat solid food. Deprivation weaning can result in malnutrition, starvation, and permanent behavior problems.

Most bird mills wean chicks to cheap seed-only diets in order to save money. This can cause serious health problems and often makes it difficult for the birds to be converted to a more nutritious diet later on. The birds the mills are unable to wean are often turned over to inexperienced pet shop employees, who in turn sell the fragile creatures to uninformed buyers. These unfortunate birds usually starve to death or die at the hands of misdirected people attempting to handfeed them.

The less obvious result of production breeding in bird mills is young parrots that have not been handled or socialized. These chicks often develop serious behavioral problems as they mature and make horrible pets. Across the country bird rescue groups are overflowing with abandoned birds--no doubt most the result of production breeding in bird mills.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO**

Unfortunately, the Animal Welfare Act doesn't cover birds. So, unlike puppy mills, the USDA has no authority over bird mills. But there are still a few actions you can take against bird mills:

\* Never buy a mass-marketed bird from a chain pet store! These companies will not stop mass-producing and selling birds until it is no longer profitable to do so.

\* Encourage pet stores to provide the same adoption services for parrots that they do for dogs and cats instead of selling birds in their stores.

\* If you see a bird being neglected or abused, report it to your local humane organization or animal control agency; or contact the local law enforcement office or nearest humane agency.

Bird care: Many people, ourselves included, know very little about birds and therefore cannot always tell when a pet store is abusing these animals. We understand that one place where bird people exchange information about how to properly care for birds is the forum at <http://www.birdsnways.com/>. Please note that we do not support the breeding and selling of birds that is also mentioned on this site; we encourage people to adopt homeless birds and leave healthy wild birds in the wild.



1. The author chooses to use the information on puppy mills in order to—
2. develop his/her position on the wrongs in puppy mills.
3. broaden his/her focus in order to change people’s minds.
4. provide background on a topic that is similar to his/her focus.
5. prepare readers to take a stand on puppy mills and bird mills.
6. The author’s choice to include a section entitled “What You Can Do” was mainly to—
7. change the USDA’s involvement in bird mills.
8. give suggestions on how to care for caged birds.
9. offer consumer choices that are beneficial to birds.
10. help pet stores sell their birds to responsible owners.
11. How is the author influenced by bird mills?

a. He works with the USDA.

b. He wrote a book on birds.

c. He is motivated to inform others.

d. He bought his bird from a chain pet store.

1. Choose one author and explain how he/she emphasizes different evidence in order to shape his/her position? Use information from the text to explain your answer.
2. How are the birds influenced by the Animal Welfare Act?

a. They are left unprotected.

b. There are some regulations.

c. They have the same rights as puppies.

d. The number of birds in stores is increasing.

1. Which sentence describes a contributing factor to Gary’s bias?
2. Most bird mill breeding facilities resemble warehouses.
3. Yes, along with puppy mills and rabbit mills, there are bird mills, too.
4. Across the country bird rescue groups are overflowing with abandoned birds…
5. In my practice, I see many bird owners unable to cope with these behavior problems.

Answer Key

1. B

2. CR

3. D

4. B

5. D

6. B

7. C

8. C

9. C

10. CR

11. A

12. D

2. What is the author’s viewpoint? Use information from the text to support your answer.

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| --- | --- |
| **Score** | **Description** |
| 2 | This response has an *adequate* explanation that shows *satisfactory* understanding of the author’s viewpoint, supported with *relevant* information from the essay. |
| 1 | This response has a *limited* explanation that shows *partial* understanding of the author’s viewpoint, supported with *general* information from the essay. |
| 0 | The response is totally incorrect or irrelevant. |

Sample responses might include:

The author feels that birds are abused. He/she feels strongly that the bird mills need to be abolished because those birds are treated poorly (like being crammed in cages and having little food or water). People can stop this abuse by refusing to purchase birds from bird mills because they may have suffered extreme conditions while being captured.

1. Choose one author and explain how he/she emphasizes different evidence in order to shape his/her position? Use information from the text to explain your answer.

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| --- | --- |
| **Score** | **Description** |
| 2 | This response includes a choice and has an *adequate* explanation that shows *satisfactory* understanding of the different evidence emphasized, supported with *relevant* information from the text. |
| 1 | This response includes a choice and has a *limited* explanation that shows *partial* understanding of the different evidence emphasized, supported with *general* information from the text. |
| 0 | The response is totally incorrect or irrelevant. |

Article 1: The Anguish of Exotic Birds: The student (author) chose to emphasize the way birds are caught for bird mills to persuade people to not buy from bird mills. He/she provided specific gruesome details (like hacking off bits and pieces of bird wings) to further explain that birds mills create and support unnecessary treatment of birds.

Article 2: Animal Liberation Front: Gary (author) chose to emphasize a suggested section for people to take action against bird mills (What You Can Do.) This supports the position that there are ways for people to prevent bird abuse since no laws (Animal Welfare Act) protect birds.