

What does it mean to be a person?

What does it mean to truly be a person? There are many aspects that factor into what makes a person a person. It could be said that the only organisms that can possibly be referred to as persons are human beings. This is not necessarily true, as there are many qualities that human beings possess that other organisms also possess. There are many examples of this dilemma brought up in a number of readings that have been discussed throughout class. It is a debate that leads to multiple angles of discussion, but I personally do believe that human beings are the only organisms that should be considered persons.

People who would argue that the only organisms that can be persons are human beings, would argue that the qualities required to be considered a person are only possessed by humans. These qualities could be: the ability to be responsible for one's own actions, respond to their environments, be able to learn and use language, have social skills, and be able to interact with members of its species. Examples of readings that may support these claims are *Frankenstein* and *Are Apes Persons*. They portray these qualities by showing that the monster is not truly a person, and that apes also do not possess all of the identifying qualities that human beings possess.

People also could argue that there are other organisms that can be considered persons. Other organisms could possibly have the characteristics necessary to be persons, even though they are not human beings. Apes are an example of one of these organisms because they are able to interact with one another, and they can also use tools to better their lives. They would also say that in the case of the monster, because he took on the human form and could interact with other people, than he was a person.

Both arguments of what makes a person a person have very valid ideas. These ideas center around an organism ability to learn, react, and be social in their environment. The arguments that people make who believe that only human beings are persons, would say that other organisms do not possess these characteristics. On the contrary, people would say that other organisms do have the proper characteristics to be defined as persons. However, I believe that the stronger argument is that only human beings can be considered persons.