

"zebra" word essay sample

[Parts of the World](#), [Africa](#)



" The name " zebra" comes from the Old Portuguese word zevra which means " wild ass". The pronunciation is ZEB-rə internationally, or ZEE-brə in North America. (Zebra)" Zebras have always been a fascination of mine while growing up. It was just their extreme rarity of an animal. Mainly the fact that they looked like a horse but with stripes like a reptile would have. Unique stripes and behaviors make these among the most familiar animals to people. Zebra stripes have entered and left the fashion world and the once almost extinct equus is a well-known and revered animal to us. They can be found in a variety of habitats, such as grasslands, savannas, woodlands, thorny scrublands, mountains and coastal hills. They are great runners achieving speeds of up to 40 mph. Although the zebra is considered a horse there are many difference as there are similarities.

Zebras's physical characteristics are very similar to that of any horse that we know. " Zebras are generally 2. 3 meters (8 feet) long, stand 1. 25 – 1. 5 meters (4 – 5 feet) at the shoulder and weigh around 300 kilograms (660 pounds), although some can grow to more than 410 kilograms (900 pounds). (Zebras at Animal Corner)" These statistics are very similar to a large number of horse breeds. Zebras, horses and wild Asses are all equids. They move quickly for their large size and have teeth built for grinding and cropping grass. Zebras have horse like bodies but their manes are made of short hair, their tails are Hard at the tip and their coats are striped. They are slower than horses but their great lungs helps them outrun predators. Zebras will run side to side making it more difficult for the predator. When cornered the zebra will back up and kick or bite it's the predator.

(Hound) Just like every other animal in the animal kingdom there are many characteristics that separate one from the other. Other than the over 100 different breeds of horses that there are in the world there are also 3 different types of zebras. To make situations more complicated in these 3 different types of zebras there are over 12 other sub-species under them.

These are the 3 main types of zebra found around the world, three species of zebra still occur in Africa, two of which are found in East Africa. " The Plains Zebra (*Equus quagga*, formerly *Equus burchelli*) is the most common, and has or had about twelve subspecies distributed across much of southern and eastern Africa. It, or particular subspecies of it, have also been known as the Common Zebra, the Dauw, Burchell's Zebra (actually the subspecies *Equus quagga burchellii*), Chapman's Zebra, Wahlberg's Zebra, Selous' Zebra, Grant's Zebra, Boehm's Zebra and the Quagga (another extinct subspecies, *Equus quagga quagga*). The Mountain Zebra (*Equus zebra*) of southwest Africa tends to have a sleek coat with a white belly and narrower stripes than the Plains Zebra. It has two subspecies and is classified as vulnerable. Grevy's Zebra (*Equus grevyi*) is the largest type, with a long, narrow head making it appear rather mule-like.

It is an inhabitant of the semi-arid grasslands of Ethiopia and northern Kenya. Grevy's Zebra is the rarest species of zebra around today, and is classified as endangered. (Zebra)"" There are three live species of zebra, with several subspecies. The fourth one, the Quagga Zebra (*Equus quagga quagga*), is extinct. However, aims to reintroduce the Quagga Zebra have been attempted by selective breeding on the ' Quagga Project' started by

Reinhold Rau in South Africa. It was reported that the third and fourth generations of the project have produced animals which look very much like the depictions and preserved specimens of the Quagga. (Zebras at Animal Corner)"" Although zebra species may have overlapping ranges, they do not interbreed. This held true even when the Quagga and Burchell's race of Plains Zebra shared the same area. In captivity, Plains Zebras have been crossed with Mountain zebras.

The hybrid foals lacked a dewlap and resembled the Plains Zebra apart from their larger ears and their hindquarters pattern. Attempts to breed a Grevy's zebra stallion to Mountain Zebra mares resulted in a high rate of miscarriage. In captivity, crosses between zebras and other (non-zebra) equines have produced several distinct hybrids, including the zebroid, zeedonk, zony, and zorse. (Zebra)" The biggest attribute that a zebra has is its black and white stripes. This separates it from all of the other breeds of horses. Some zoologists believe that the stripes act as a camouflage mechanism. The vertical striping helps the zebra hide in grass. " While seeming absurd at first glance considering that grass is neither white nor black, it is supposed to be effective against the zebra's main predator, the lion, which is color blind. Theoretically a zebra standing still in tall grass may not be noticed at all by a lion.

Additionally, since zebras are herd animals, the stripes may help to confuse predators – a number of zebras standing or moving close together may appear as one large animal, making it more difficult for the lion to pick out any single zebra to attack. A herd of zebras scattering to avoid a predator

will also represent to that predator a confused mass of vertical stripes traveling in multiple directions making it difficult for the predator to track an individual visually as it separates from its herdmates, although biologists have never observed lions appearing confused by zebra stripes. (Zebra)" Stripes are also believed to play a role in sexual attractions, with slight variations of the pattern allowing the animals to distinguish between individuals. " Some authorities believe that the stripes evolved as visual identification to reinforce social bonds with other zebras, rather than for disguise or insect protection. (Research Topic: Zebra)" Zebras are described as black with white stripes rather than the reverse for the following three reasons.

" White equids would not survive well in the African plains or forests. The quagga, an extinct Plains zebra subspecies, had the zebra-stripping pattern in the front of the animal, but had a dark rump. When the region between the pigmented bands becomes too wide, secondary stripes emerge, as if suppression was weakening. (Research Topic: Zebra)" Stripes while making zebras indistinguishable to other animals, zebra stripes actually help zebras recognize one another. Stripe patterns are like fingerprints; every zebra has a slightly different pattern. Scientists believe this is how zebras distinguish who's who in a zebra herd. " A zebra mare and her foal can keep track of each other in the large herd, for example, and a zebra can very quickly distinguish its own herd from another. This also helps human researchers, because it enables them to track particular zebras in the wild. (How do a zebra's stripes act as camouflage?)" Humans and natural predators have

hunted zebras alike. Their predators are bigger grassland animals like lions and hyenas.

On the other hand we have hunted them for their skins and relocated some of their habitats. Poachers kill countless animals every year primarily for financial gain and this act causes many species to go extinct. " The Cape mountain zebra was hunted to near extinction with less than 100 individuals by the 1930s. However the population has increased to about 700 due to conservation efforts. Both Mountain zebra subspecies are currently protected in national parks but are still endangered. (Zebra)" One reason all horses are vulnerable in the face of hunting pressures and habitat loss is that they reproduce slowly. " Gestation lasts eleven to thirteen months, depending upon the species, and almost always only one foal is dropped each season. Most researchers, however, report that mares foal only every other year. Sexual maturity occurs at age two in females and age three to five in males. Life span can extend twenty or more years. (Zebra)" I guess the fact that females develop quicker is a common trait between mammals.

Zebras are very good at grazing grasslands. They feed mainly on grasses but will also eat shrubs, herbs, twigs, leaves and bark. They have adapted to eat lower than necessary for herbivores. Through many years of adaptation to the wild they have matured and with a little help from us have thrived safely in the wild and in captivity. Even though they are in the same family as horses they tried to be domesticated but their temper was too high. Riding a zebra has been done but has been deemed unsuccessful as a practice.

All in all zebras are a very popular animal to children and adults alike. The zebra has been depicted in many movies and also many games throughout the years. " When in movies and cartoons zebras are most often miscellaneous characters but have had some starring roles, notably in Madagascar and Racing Stripes. Zebras are also serve as mascots and symbols for products and corporations, notably Zebra Technologies and Fruit Stripe gum. Zebras are featured on the coat of arms of Botswana.

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