

Whale tales!

Go on a whale watching adventure!

This teachers' supplement should be used in conjunction with Project Pull-out #13, which is found in issue 65 of DMAG, the magazine. The pull-out will spark children's interest in the aquatic environment and will encourage them to read more in the media about a current global issue: whaling.



This supplement encourages children to:

- Understand the migration and life cycle of a whale
- Investigate how human beings interact with other living things
- Understand several forms of factual text types
- Express a personal point of view on an environmental issue and provide supporting evidence

Science and Technology Focus: Cycles in Our World

As a class, read the article on page 48-49. Ask the class why the whales migrate. Do the whales travel the same paths every year? Do the whales migrate according to the seasons? On the board, draw a migration cycle for the whales, showing at the top of the cycle June/winter and a typical location a humpback whale might be – eg off the coast of Sydney. Ask the class where September/spring should

be on the circle and where the whales will be [Ans. eg Queensland] And where will the whales be in summer? [Ans. Antarctica]. See <http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/npws.nsf/Content/Humpback+whale> for the whale's migratory pattern to help you draw this.

Life cycle mission

After the above exercise, split the class into pairs. Each pair's mission: to find on the Internet or from books in the library, five pieces of information:

1. When do humpback whales give birth? [Ans. June to October]
2. How old are humpback whales before they can reproduce? (ie have calves) [Ans: around 7 years]
3. How long are female humpback whales pregnant for? [Ans. 1 year]
4. How frequently do females have calves? [Ans. every two to three years]
5. How long do humpback whales

typically live? [Ans. up to 80 years] Before the class jumps to it, ask them to brainstorm some of the key words they might put into a "google" type search: eg + "humpback whale" +pregnant.

Life cycle compared to seasonal cycles

Regroup after a period to write the above answers, as supplied by the students, on the board. As a class, draw the life cycle for a female humpback whale using the information found in the answers. Now represent the same life cycle using the seasonal cycles. As a group, work out how you would draw this on the board. Eg draw six seasonal cycles for when the whale is a calf/teenager. On the seventh seasonal cycle, you could mark "mates" next to winter/spring. On the eighth seasonal cycle you could mark "gives birth" next to winter/spring.

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Science and Technology Focus: Environment Matters

As a class, brainstorm how humans might affect the whale's environment. Do humans and whales share the same environment? When would you find humans in a whale's environment? [Prompt: fisherman]. Would things from our environment make their way into a whale's environment? [Prompt: plastic bags]. Are whales being hunted? Write all the ideas up on the board. Then as a class read the interview on pages 52-53. What things does Dr Mike Bossley believe are affecting a whale's environment – are they similar to the list on the board?

Make a difference

Divide the class into groups and assign each group one of these topics to discuss and research:

- How does litter get into a whale's environment?
- What can fisherman do to help save whales and dolphins?
- What are toxins and how do they affect whales and dolphins?

Each group's aim is to produce a

poster that tells people not to litter/discard old fishing lines in the sea/tip chemicals into creeks etc.

Human Society and its Environment Focus: Current issue

Whale conservation is a world issue as is whale hunting. As a class discuss if anyone has seen on the news or in the media stories about whale-hunting. Ask everyone to be on the lookout over a two-week period for stories about whales, and to collect clippings from newspapers.

As a class brainstorm some news websites that they can look up to see if any stories have run recently (eg. The Sydney Morning Herald's site is www.smh.com.au). Then ask everyone to find a story that has run in a newspaper, TV news or radio news about whale hunting. Print each story and add it to the media clipping file.

English: Factual text types

Ask the class to read the interview on pages 52 to 53 (if they haven't already). Discuss what type of text it is – factual. Who is being interviewed?

Why was he interviewed? Is he expressing an opinion? Does he recount scientific facts?

Now each person is to pretend they are going to interview someone who takes whale-watching tours out to sea. Ask each person to come up with a list of 10 questions they would ask this person if they were going to use the information from the interview to write an article on whales.

After this is complete, regroup and write some of the questions they have thought of on the board. Now discuss which questions might lead to answers that are factual recounts (eg, if the tour operator is asked how many whales he/she has seen this season) and which questions might lead to answers that are opinion/exposition (eg what does the tour operator think about whale hunting).

Discussion

Discuss whale hunting. Divide the class into two groups. One group will represent the countries that hunt whales, the other group, the countries that are against hunting. Ask each group to come up with 10 reasons to support their arguments for or against.

Exposition

While you can ask each student to write an exposition on whether they're for or against whale-hunting, it would be more interesting to ask each person to write an exposition on:

Should cetaceans like whales and dolphins, be kept in theme parks?

Ask two or three students to read their expositions and then as a class discuss the results.