People and Whales: A History

Students investigate people's historic relationship with whales and compare it to people's attitudes toward whales today.

GRADES
3 - 5

SUBJECTS
Arts and Music, Earth Science, Oceanography, English Language Arts, Geography, Human Geography, Social Studies, Economics

CONTENTS
2 Images, 1 PDF, 3 Links

OVERVIEW

Students investigate people's historic relationship with whales and compare it to people's attitudes toward whales today.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:
http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/people-and-whales-a-history/

DIRECTIONS

1. Activate students' prior knowledge about whales.
Ask: What are some examples of whale species? What can you tell me about them? Write students' ideas on the board. Students' responses will vary, but students may know that whales are huge mammals that live in the ocean and they may be able to name several types of whales. Students may also know that some are toothed whales like dolphins, orcas, and sperm whales, while others are filter feeders like blue, gray, and humpback whales. If students do not suggest it on their own, tell them that many whales are endangered. People used to
hunt them in great numbers, leading to their decline. Today, many whales are protected and most nations have stopped whaling.

2. **Build background with historical information about whaling and whale conservation.**

Explain that people and whales have a long history and a relationship that has changed dramatically over the centuries. Native peoples and early whalers hunted whales for their meat, **blubber** (oil), and baleen—the flexible plates that whales use to strain food from the water. Show students the image gallery Historical Whaling Illustrations. Ask students to describe what is happening in the illustrations. Then explain that commercial whaling began a thousand years ago. It was a profitable business due to the widespread use of whale oil in candles and lamps and baleen in clothing. The extensive hunting of whales nearly caused some species to go extinct. In 1860, kerosene became the primary fuel to light lamps instead of whale oil. Commercial hunting of whales for oil was no longer profitable. Unfortunately, whale numbers were low from so many years of hunting. In 1946, the International Whaling Commission was formed to help conserve whale species. In 1985, a halt, or moratorium, was put on all commercial whaling. Today, most nations no longer hunt whales. People are fascinated with whales and are thrilled to see them. Whale watching is now a profitable business in coastal communities.

3. **Have students research assigned whaling topics.**

Divide students into six small groups. Distribute one copy of the worksheet People and Whales: Research Topics to each group and assign one of the topics on the worksheet. Have group members use the provided Internet and library resources to conduct research on their assigned topic. Have each group take notes on a separate sheet of paper.

4. **Introduce the Glogster virtual tool.**

Explain to students that each small group will collaborate to produce a Glog, an interactive poster. Glogs can contain text, images, videos, and audio. Show students Using Glogster EDU, which is an example glog that can be used as a tutorial. Then provide students with enough time to experiment with Glogster and become familiar with the interface.

5. **Have students produce their Glogs.**

Have students use their research notes and Glogster EDU to produce an interactive poster on their assigned topic. After all groups have had a chance to create Glogs, provide groups with time to view one another’s work.
6. Have a whole-class discussion about people's relationship with whales.

Ask:

- *How did people of the past view whales? How have those views changed?*
- *What are some ways whales have helped to shape cultures and economies?*
- *Do you think whales should be protected? Why or why not?*

**Modification**

Students can complete this activity without using the Glogster virtual tool. Instead, have students make their posters out of paper, cardboard, and other traditional materials.

**Informal Assessment**

Use the following rubric to evaluate students’ work:

- **Excellent:** Students conducted thorough research, produced a high-quality Glog that was creative and accurate, and were engaged in class discussions.
- **Good:** Students conducted research, produced a Glog containing accurate information, and participated in class discussions.
- **Needs Improvement:** Students conducted minimal research, produced a Glog containing little or incorrect information, and did not participate in class discussions.

**Extending the Learning**

Have students research and debate the following hot topic issues surrounding whaling: The international moratorium on commercial whaling does not apply to indigenous cultures that have traditionally hunted whales, such as the Inuit people of Alaska and Greenland and the Chukchi people of Russia. Whales are also still allowed to be killed for scientific research. Japan and Iceland are the only two nations to request scientific permits to kill whales in recent years. Critics argue that no whales should be hunted and that nations hunting whales for scientific purposes are actually using the permits to get around the moratorium. Ask students to debate whether whales should be hunted at all or under certain circumstances.

**OBJECTIVES**

**Subjects & Disciplines**
Learning Objectives

Students will:

- recount a history of whaling
- compare and contrast people's views of whales in the past and today
- create an interactive poster detailing an aspect of whales or whaling

Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

Teaching Methods

- Cooperative learning
- Discussions
- Information organization
- Research
- Visual instruction

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- 21st Century Student Outcomes
  - Information, Media, and Technology Skills
• Information, Communications, and Technology Literacy
• Learning and Innovation Skills
  • Communication and Collaboration
  • Creativity and Innovation
• Critical Thinking Skills
  • Creating
  • Remembering
  • Understanding
• Geographic Skills
  • Analyzing Geographic Information

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

IRA/NCTE STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

• Standard 1:
  Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

• Standard 8:
  Students use a variety of technological and informational resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM STANDARDS

• Theme 2:
  Time, Continuity, and Change

• Theme 3:
  People, Places, and Environments

• Theme 7:
  Production, Distribution, and Consumption

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS
Standard 1:
How to use maps and other geographic representations, geospatial technologies, and spatial thinking to understand and communicate information

Standard 16:
The changes that occur in the meaning, use, distribution, and importance of resources

OCEAN LITERACY ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES AND FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

Principle 1h:
Although the ocean is large, it is finite and resources are limited.

Principle 6b:
From the ocean we get foods, medicines, and mineral and energy resources. In addition, it provides jobs, supports our nation’s economy, serves as a highway for transportation of goods and people, and plays a role in national security.

Principle 6g:
Everyone is responsible for caring for the ocean. The ocean sustains life on Earth and humans must live in ways that sustain the ocean. Individual and collective actions are needed to effectively manage ocean resources for all.

ISTE STANDARDS FOR STUDENTS (ISTE STANDARDS’S)

Standard 1:
Creativity and Innovation

Standard 2:
Communication and Collaboration

Standard 3:
Research and Information Fluency

Standard 6:
Technology Operations and Concepts

Preparation

What You’ll Need

MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE

- Paper
- Pencils
REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

- Internet Access: Required
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per small group, Projector, Speakers

PHYSICAL SPACE

- Classroom
- Media Center/Library

GROUPING

- Large-group instruction

OTHER NOTES

Before starting this activity:

- Gather age-appropriate library resources on the six topics listed in the worksheet People and Whales: Research Topics.
- Register at the Glogster EDU website. Teachers can register for a free individual account, and students can register with a teacher code. You can create, access, and share students’ Glogs using this site.

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

Attitudes toward whales have changed over the last two centuries. Whales were once hunted and now they are treasured. Whale products helped build human society; now people are learning more about whales and how to protect them.

Prior Knowledge

["general knowledge of whales"]

Recommended Prior Activities
## Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Part of Speech</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>blubber</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>thick layer of fat under the skin of marine mammals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conserve</td>
<td>verb</td>
<td>to save or use wisely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>endangered</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>organism threatened with extinction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>species</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extinct</td>
<td>adjective</td>
<td>no longer existing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>harpoon</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>long, sharp tool mostly used for hunting whales and large ocean fish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mammal</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>animal with hair that gives birth to live offspring. Female mammals produce milk to feed their offspring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ocean</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>large body of salt water that covers most of the Earth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>species</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>group of similar organisms that can reproduce with each other.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### For Further Exploration

**Websites**

- National Park System: New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park
- American Cetacean Society

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