

WHALE REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT

To do in class after the field trip, before the final classroom visit

1. **Students will read a paragraph to reflect on the topics introduced over the course of the school year.** The reading is available on the next page and online at <http://oceanconnectors.org/resources> (under *Whales*).

The reading contains new vocabulary, indicated by *italics*, so it is best if teachers read the material in advance and prepare to work through it with the children.

2. After reading, **students respond to the reflection questions inside their journals using complete sentences.** Reflection questions are included at the end of the reading and on the website.
3. **The answer key is contained in the printed User Guide only** (not online). Please review the answers together in class.
4. This lesson covers 5th grade California Common Core standards in Reading and Writing, and Next Generation Science Standards.

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This year you learned about whales, and how people can help protect them for the future. Whales are such large, long-lived animals, that it may be tempting to think that they can withstand all the impacts of human activities. In reality, our fishing practices cause major damage to marine ecosystems, and many species drown as *bycatch*. In fact, 136 different marine species have been documented as bycatch according to the U.S. Marine Mammal Commission, although the actual number is likely much higher as a result of *entanglements* that go undetected, such as in ghost nets and abandoned fishing gear. While gray whales in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, such as around San Diego, appear to be recovering from a history of *commercial* whaling, this is not the case for many marine mammals, including the gray whales that live in the Western Pacific Ocean, along the coast of Asia. This population of gray whales is classified as critically endangered, and is estimated to contain fewer than 100 individuals.

One of the biggest ways to help whales is to put careful thought into seafood choices before buying, or to “consider a fish”. You should make an effort to only purchase seafood that is captured in the U.S., because it is regulated by strict U.S. fishing laws. People should also be on the lookout for the Marine Stewardship Council logo, a small blue symbol indicating that the fishing practices are *sustainable*. You can also cut down on the amount of shrimp you consume, as shrimp is usually captured through *trawling*, a fishing method that involves towing a net behind a boat. A great deal of bycatch is associated with trawling. Even better, try going “meat-free” at least once per week to reduce your overall impact on the environment.

Answer the questions below in your journal using *complete sentences*.

1. Why is it important to *consider a fish*?
2. What is one thing you can look for at the grocery store to help whales?
3. List three ways you can help to reduce *bycatch*.
4. What is *whaling*?
5. How is the Western population of gray whales different from the Eastern population?
6. What is the Marine Stewardship Council logo?
7. Why is it a problem when whales become entangled in fishing nets?
8. Why is it important to keep learning more about the ocean?
9. Why is *trawling* harmful to whales and the ocean?
10. How can you have a positive influence on the actions of your family?