



The Whale — Gentle Giant of the Deep Ocean

Reading Worksheet — Level F | tahricteaches.com

The whale is one of the most extraordinary animals on our planet. Although it lives entirely in the **ocean** and can look a little like an enormous fish, the whale is in fact a **mammal**, just like a dog or a human being. There are around 90 different species of whale, ranging from the small dwarf sperm whale to the blue whale, the largest **creature** ever known to have existed, even larger than any dinosaur. A single blue whale can weigh as much as 200 tonnes, and its heart alone can be the size of a small car.

Because whales are mammals, they cannot **breathe** underwater the way fish do. Instead, a whale **breathes** air through a blowhole on the top of its head, then **dives** back down to feed or rest. Some species, such as the sperm whale, can hold their breath for over an hour and **dive** more than a thousand meters into the dark ocean in search of squid.

Whales generally fall into two groups. Baleen whales, including the blue and humpback whale, filter **huge** amounts of tiny krill and small fish through comb-like plates in their mouths. Toothed whales, such as the orca and sperm whale, actively hunt larger prey instead. Many whales **travel** thousands of kilometers every year, migrating between cold feeding grounds and the warmer waters where they breed and raise their young.

Whales are also remarkably social and intelligent creatures. Humpback whales produce long, complex songs that can travel for many kilometers underwater, while toothed whales use echolocation, a system of clicks, to **communicate** and to hunt in total darkness. Scientists believe some whale populations even pass down unique behaviors and songs from one generation to the next, much like a culture.

Despite their size and intelligence, whales face serious threats today. Commercial whaling pushed several species close to extinction during the twentieth century, and modern whales still face danger from ship strikes, fishing nets, and ocean noise. International laws now **protect** most whale species, and marine biologists continue to track migration routes and push for quieter shipping lanes. Many populations are slowly beginning to recover, but continued effort is needed to help every species **survive**.

A. Vocabulary

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 1. mammal ____ | a. to take air into the body and let it out again |
| 2. ocean ____ | b. to go from one place to another, often over a long distance |
| 3. creature ____ | c. to keep safe from harm or danger |
| 4. breathe ____ | d. one of the huge bodies of salt water that cover most of the Earth |
| 5. dive ____ | e. to continue to live or exist, especially through a difficult situation |
| 6. huge ____ | f. to jump or go down quickly, especially into water |
| 7. travel ____ | g. extremely large in size or amount |
| 8. communicate ____ | h. to share information, thoughts, or feelings with others |
| 9. protect ____ | i. a warm-blooded animal that breathes air, gives birth to live young, and feeds them with |
| 10. survive ____ | j. a living animal, especially one that seems strange or interesting |



B. True or False

1. The whale is classified as a mammal, not a fish. ____
2. The blue whale is the largest creature ever known to have existed. ____
3. Whales can breathe underwater the same way fish do. ____
4. Sperm whales can dive more than a thousand meters in search of squid. ____
5. Baleen whales filter tiny krill and small fish through comb-like plates. ____
6. Toothed whales use echolocation to communicate and hunt in darkness. ____
7. Whale songs cannot travel more than a few meters underwater. ____
8. Commercial whaling pushed several whale species close to extinction. ____
9. International laws now protect most whale species today. ____



C. Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: survive, dive, communicate, huge, travel

1. A whale must come to the surface to _____, since it cannot get oxygen underwater like a fish.
2. The sperm whale can _____ more than a thousand meters into the dark ocean to hunt squid.
3. Baleen whales filter _____ amounts of krill and small fish through plates in their mouths.
4. Many whales _____ thousands of kilometers every year between feeding and breeding grounds.
5. Toothed whales use echolocation to _____ with each other and to find prey in darkness.

D. Comprehension Questions

1. Why is the whale classified as a mammal, even though it lives in the ocean?

2. Explain how a whale breathes and why it must return to the surface.
3. What is the difference between baleen whales and toothed whales?
4. How do humpback whales and toothed whales communicate differently?
5. What are the main threats to whales today, and how are people trying to help them survive?

E. Discussion Questions

1. Commercial whaling is now banned in most countries. Do you think this ban should be permanent, or should limited whaling ever be allowed? Why?
2. Scientists compare whale songs passed between generations to a kind of culture. Do you think animals other than humans can have culture? Explain your view.
3. If you could design one new law to protect whales from modern threats like ship strikes or ocean noise, what would it be?



Answer Key

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A. Vocabulary: 1-i, 2-d, 3-j, 4-a, 5-f, 6-g, 7-b, 8-h, 9-c, 10-e

B. True/False: 1-T, 2-T, 3-F, 4-T, 5-T, 6-T, 7-F, 8-T, 9-T

C. Fill Blanks: 1-breathe, 2-dive, 3-huge, 4-travel, 5-communicate

D. Comprehension:

1. The whale is classified as a mammal because, like other mammals, it breathes air, gives birth to live young, and feeds its babies with milk, even though it lives entirely in the ocean.
2. A whale breathes air through a blowhole on top of its head; because it cannot get oxygen from water like a fish, it must return to the surface regularly to breathe before diving again.
3. Baleen whales filter huge amounts of tiny krill and small fish through comb-like plates in their mouths, while toothed whales actively hunt larger prey such as fish and squid.
4. Humpback whales produce long, complex songs that travel far underwater, while toothed whales use echolocation, a system of clicks, to communicate and hunt in total darkness.
5. The main threats are ship strikes, fishing nets, and ocean noise, along with the historical impact of commercial whaling. International laws now protect most species, and scientists track migration routes and push for quieter shipping lanes to help populations recover.

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