



WHALES

by Gail Gibbons

WHALES

Reader 1: Whales live in oceans. They are not fish. They are air-breathing, warm-blooded mammals.

Reader 2: Some are small, and others are huge! The world's largest animals are whales.

Reader 3: The first ancestors of whales lived more than 50 million years ago.

Reader 4: Their fur was replaced by blubber to keep them warm. Blubber is a layer of fat between the skin and muscles.

Reader 5: Inside their flippers are bones arranged like those of a hand.

Reader 6: Whales' tails are called flukes. They don't look like fish tails. Whales push themselves through the water by moving their flukes up and down. They use their flippers for balance and turning.

Reader 7: Whales can't stay under water like fish. Beneath the surface they must hold their breath.

Reader 8: Before diving, whales breathe fresh air into their lungs through one or two nostrils on top of their heads. They are called blowholes.

Reader 1: When the whales surface, they blow out their wet, warm breath, making a spout.

Reader 2: When whales can't see well in dark and murky waters, they make clicking sounds. The sound waves travel and bounce off objects. Then they come back to whale's ears. This is called sonar or echolocation.

Reader 3: Some whales make other sounds, too. They resemble squeals, groans, chirps, and whistles like birds. Scientists believe that whales make these sounds to communicate with each other.

Reader 4: Some whales travel to cold waters to feed and live in the summer. Often they travel in groups, called pods. In the winter they go back to the warmer waters. This traveling is called migration.

Reader 5: In the warm waters, the females have babies. They can only have one baby at a time. A male is called a bull and a female is called a cow. A baby is called a calf.

Reader 6: There are two main kinds of whales. One group has teeth. They are called

toothed whales. Most toothed whale males are larger than the females.

Reader 7: A Pilot Whale is about 20 feet long.

Reader 8: The Narwhal has two teeth. In the males, one of the teeth grows into a long tusk.

Reader 1: A Beluga also called a White Whale, lives near the North Pole. It is about 18 feet long.

Reader 2: A Sperm Whale can stay under water for a very long time. It can be 65 feet long. It can dive down more than a half mile.

Reader 3: Toothed whales have only one blowhole.

Reader 4: The teeth are only for catching their food. They gulp down their food without chewing.

Reader 5: A Killer Whale also called an Orca, has sharp teeth. It eats fish, penguins, seals and even some of the bigger whales! It can be 30 feet long.

Reader 6: The other main group of whales has no teeth. Instead, they have long, fringed blades hanging from their upper jaws that strain their food from the water. The blades are called baleen, or whalebone.

Reader 7: Baleen whales eat fish and a mixture of tiny plants called plankton. In the plankton are shrimplike creatures called krill.

Reader 8: A Pygmy Right Whale is the smallest baleen whale. It's about 25 feet long.

Reader 1: The Minke Whale swims close to shore.

Reader 2: The Gray Whale has the longest migration route of 6,000 miles!

Reader 3: All baleen whales have two blowholes.

Reader 4: The female baleen whales are often larger than the males.

Reader 5: A Right Whale has a huge head and is about 55 feet long.

Reader 6: The Humpback Whale is known for its songs. It can make about 1,000 different sounds.

Reader 7: The Sei (say) Whale is about 60 feet long.

Reader 8: The Bowhead Whale has 15 foot long baleen.

Reader 1: Baleen whales are among the biggest of the whales.

Reader 2: Some baleen whales have grooves on their skin from their chin to their belly.

Reader 3: The Fin Whale is huge. It got its name from the hooked fin on its back.

Reader 4: A blue whale is the biggest creature that ever lived. It is even bigger than the dinosaurs. It is often 100 feet long and can weigh as much as 180 tons.

Reader 5: A baby blue whale is the biggest baby in the world. At birth it is about 25 feet long and can weigh 4,000 pounds.

Reader 6: A blue whale is so big that 50 people can stand on its tongue. A blue whale eats about 4,400 pounds of krill a day.

Reader 7: There used to be millions of whales in the oceans. For thousands of years they were hunted for their meat, hide, and bones.

Reader 8: About 200 years ago, whalers began hunting them even more for other products.

Reader 1: They used different parts of the whales to make lamp oil, soap, candles, and cosmetics.

Reader 2: The whalers used the baleen to make baggy whips, umbrellas, and stiffening for clothes.

Reader 3: Over the years, there were fewer and fewer whales.

Reader 4: People are worried about how small the whale population has become.

Reader 5: Some laws have been passed to protect them from being hunted.

Reader 6: Sometimes people go on whale watches to see these creatures in their natural home, the ocean.

Reader 7: Scientists have learned that there are about 100 different kinds of whales.

Reader 8: They are graceful and beautiful wonders of the sea.

If you have a Reader's Theater script that you would like to include on this page, submit it to me at readinglady1@aol.com.

Whales script sent in by Deb Smith.

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