
HUMPHREY THE LOST WHALE: A TRUE STORY

Authors: Wendy Tokuda and Richard Hall

Illustrator: Hanako Wakiyama

Publisher: Heian International, Inc.

THEME:

Learning about whales enables us to help them survive in our environment.

PROGRAM SUMMARY:

Based on the journey of a California humpback whale, this book follows the journey of “wrong-way” Humphrey as he finds his way back to the sea with the help of some friends.

A whale-watching day at sea with a naturalist helps LeVar understand the whales’ natural environment, and practices that have threatened whales. Viewers also find out about three young pilot whales who were rescued, nursed back to health and re-released, and they see news clips of “wrong way” Humphrey’s misadventure.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Before viewing the program, find out from students what they know about whales. Record their information on a chart and display it in the classroom for future reference. As students learn more about whales, they may add to or delete information from it.

Many people, in addition to scientists, helped Humphrey get back to the ocean. Discuss with students why so many people wanted to help him and cheered him on.

Ask the students if they have ever been lost. Where were they? What did they do when they first realized they were lost? Who helped them? What did they learn from their experience of being lost that they could apply in the future?

CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Have students locate California on a map of the United States. Obtain a state map of California with an enlargement of the San Francisco Bay area that includes the Sacramento River. Have students trace the route that Humphrey took.

Have students research different types of whales. In addition to the humpback, their research might include: sperm whale, blue whale, narwhal, killer whale (orca), finback, beluga, gray whale, and others. They might begin this

activity by browsing books to find different types and listing them under the appropriate heading according to the two whale groups (“toothed whales” and “baleen whales”). Allow students to decide on the set of questions to which they would like to find answers in their research. Also have students decide how they would like to share their information, such as a bulletin board, mobile, mural, etc.

Make a Venn diagram with students comparing whales with fish.

As students acquire a whale vocabulary, collect words for an alphabet book. Focus on specific terms they have learned, such as “b for breach” (when whales leap clear of the water), “c for calf” (a baby whale), “f for fluke” (the flat part of the tail), “p for pod” (a group of whales), etc. Cut pages and the cover for the book in a whale shape, and have students write a sentence for each word and illustrate it. Bind the pages into a book.

To increase students’ understanding of the the size of whales, have them measure the lengths of the whales they researched in the above activity. Take students to a large area, such as a playground, parking lot, or gym floor. Supply them with chalk or tape to mark the ends of the measurements or adding machine tape to mark the entire length. Have them compare the sizes with statements such as “A humpback whale is about half as long as a blue whale.” Pose questions that compare their height with the length of a whale, such as “About how many first graders placed end-to-end equal the length of a blue whale?” Have them estimate first, then place themselves to measure. Help them understand that this measurement is not exact because of the differences in their heights.

Investigate the concept of migration. Enlist the aid of the library media specialist in helping students locate books and other materials about animals that migrate. Have students report their information on a chart that lists different animals that migrate, their reason for migration, and the areas they travel to and from. Have maps available so students can see migratory routes.

Obtain a sound recording of whales singing. Invite students to imagine themselves on a whalewatch and have them paint watercolor scenes of the ocean and what they might see (i.e., different movements of the whales) on their whalewatch while they listen to the recording.

Brainstorm with students a list of things to do if they should become lost. Include being lost in different places, such as a store or shopping mall, a large event (e.g., a fair or circus), a movie theater, a park, etc. Highlight appropriate actions that they should take regardless of the location (for example, never leave with a stranger).

Label the classroom walls with the directions “North,” “South,” “East,” and “West.” Reinforce the use of these direction words by having students play a

guessing game with clues such as, “I’m thinking of something on the west wall that begins with a ‘b’.” Have students orient themselves outside the classroom by using the direction words in the cafeteria, the gym, the playground, and other locations inside and outside of the school building.

RELATED THEMES:

ocean mammals
fish
preserving the ocean
endangered animals

RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:

Program #67 — Jack, The Seal And The Sea
Program #5 — Louis The Fish
Program #83 — Sam The Sea Cow

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Wendy Tokuda, as a news anchor for KPIX-TV’s Eyewitness News in San Francisco, and Richard Hall, is a news executive for KTVU-TV in Oakland, covered the adventures of Humphrey when he was lost in San Francisco Bay.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR:

Hanako Wakiyama was born in Tokyo, where she studied Japanese traditional paintings. She has since studied graphic arts and worked in the San Francisco Bay Area.

BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:

ALL ABOUT WHALES
by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent (Heian International)

WHALEWATCH!
by June Behrens, photos by John Olguin (Childrens Press)

THE LIFE CYCLE OF THE WHALE
by Paula Z. Hogan, illus. by Karen Halt (Raintree/Steck-Vaughn)

SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:

WHALES
by Gail Gibbons (Holiday House)

IBIS: A TRUE WHALE STORY
by John Himmelman (Scholastic)

BABY WHALES DRINK MILK
by Barbara Juster Esbensen, illus. by Lambert Davis (HarperCollins)

BELUGA PASSAGE

by Linda Lingemann, illus. by Jon Weiman (Soundprints)

IF YOU EVER MEET A WHALE

by Myra Cohn Livingston, illus. by Leonard Everett Fisher (Holiday House)

WAITING FOR THE WHALES

by Sheryl McFarlane, illus. by Ron Lightburn (Philomel)

GOING ON A WHALE WATCH

by Bruce McMillan (Scholastic)

LISTENING TO WHALES SING

by Faith McNulty, illus. by Lena Shiffman (Scholastic)

WHALE

by Vassiti Papastavrou, photos by Frank Greenaway (Knopf)

THE WHALES’ SONG

by Dyan Sheldon, illus. by Gary Blythe (Dial)

WHALES

by Seymour Simon (Crown)

I WONDER IF I’LL SEE A WHALE

by Frances Ward Weller, illus. by Ted Lewin (Philomel)

Notes
Lincoln

This true, illustrated story of Humphrey's adventure has been a children's favorite for more than twenty-five years. The 2014 edition has updated news on whales but retains the beloved art and text for big-ocean-mammal lovers everywhere. Adopted for Reading Rainbow.Â Humphrey the Lost Whale is a classic children's book, that is both educational and fun â€" it also featured in an original episode of Reading Rainbow. A reprinting of the original 1992 publication and based on I have a bit of a soft spot for this book, as my parents bought me a copy of the original printing after the Reading Rainbow episode aired.