



Whale Song Acrostic
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Elementary School Poet-in-Residence 2010

Grade Level: 3 - 5

Time Frame: 60 minutes

Learning Objectives: Students will learn (or review) a new form of poetry (acrostic), practice active listening, writing, brainstorming ideas, and develop empathy for and learn scientific detail about a fellow mammal

Prior Skills and Knowledge: None required.

Sequence of Activities

Warm Up, 10 minutes.

Introduce acrostic poem (or for older students, ask them if they remember what it is--by 4th grade, most students have made an acrostic poem out of their names). Show examples of different acrostic poems (relating to the ocean theme). Create a quick acrostic poem together. SEA - soft eventually angry; so what if I/eat all the lobsters/at dusk? or OCEAN - Oh, clouds!/Can't you hush the/excited gulls/all over the sky?/ Nope.

Brainstorm, 10 minutes.

Play the sound of a whale (don't tell them what it is) and ask the students to listen to the sounds- what do they hear? What kind of place might this be? What kind of sounds are they? Do the students associate feelings with the sounds? Do the sounds remind them of anything? Ask them to guess what kind of animal is making the sound.

Ask students to visualize what the animals might be doing and what the animals might be saying to each other. Write what the students heard on the board.

Discussion, 15 minutes.

We were just listening to the song of a humpback whale. Have you ever seen a whale? (Optional: show pictures) We only listened to about 2 minutes of song, but the humpback whale song typically lasts from 10 to 20 minutes, and sometimes they sing non-stop for more than 24 hours.¹

Did you know:

- The whale makes the loudest sound on earth (can be heard underwater 2,000 miles away). Can you imagine if your friends/mother could call you from 2,000 miles away?
- Scientists used to think whales lived to be 50-60 years, but now they know that some live to be over 200 years old.
- (endangered species, whale hunting was a huge problem 100 years ago; the humpback whale was almost extinct - so whale hunting was made illegal, and the whales are recovering now (Wikipedia is a great resource, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humpback_Whale)

(Begin writing prompt ideas)

- Scientists don't know why whales sing. Why do you think they sing? What you would sing about if you were a whale? If your species was endangered? (Whale history? A lullaby? About danger/warning? The news?) Write ideas on the board.

Play the song of the humpback whale again. (Give instructions before playing the song.)

- Ask students to write down what they hear in the song this time. What do you hear now that you know this is a whale singing? What kind of song is it? What does it remind you of? Write down their ideas on the board next to the reasons why whales might sing.

Assignment, 15 minutes.

Ask the students to write down what the whale is singing as an acrostic poem, W-h-a-l-e - S-o-n-g, from the perspective of the whale (or they can pick their own word to use if they really want to).

“Imagine that you are the whale singing...put your song into words so the people can understand what you are saying.”

They can use the ideas they just wrote down about why the whales are singing and/or the words they generated about the ocean/danger/song from the beginning of class to get started. Play the song while the students write. If they need help getting started, list some ‘w’ words on the board (whale, water, without, what, **warning**, will, **want**, wonder, **whisper**, **white**, wade, wait, waddle, wash, **whisker**, **weeds**. Hard, **honey**, help, **hope**, happy, horrible, hunt, hole, **hide**, history, hack,

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humpback_Whale, David Dunn Lecture

hiccup, hunk, hint, helter, halt, **hair**. Ale, **ardor**, **angry**, antelope, ankle, **ask**, aspirin, aggravate, **actress**, apple, axe. Lunge, lose, **life**, last, **long**, **laughter**, **light**, **loud**, licorice, **lollipop**; eventually, **eager**, **eat**, equal, **environment**, entrails, **eek**, easter, easy, **ear**. Song, super, **sick**, **surf**, sit, **stare**, soup, **sun**, slide, **sour**, sturdy, **stone**, sorry, slick, **smash**, smolder, **skin**, spy, **sprout**. **Orange**, odd, odious, **octopus**, octagon, **order**, **open**, **oh**. No, now, **night**, ninja, nil, **no one**, **narrow**, **noise**, Nana, **nest**, nurse, notorious, nasty, **need**, neat. **Gorilla**, **geese**, **go**, get, guy, grease, gospel, gore, **guts**, **glint**, **grow**, **grab**, great, giant, gem, **glow**).

III. Closing, 10 minutes. Share the songs with each other.

Materials Required:

- Recording of Humpback Whale Song
- Relevant facts about Humpback Whale songs (optional)

Student Examples from Mrs. Larson's 5th Grade Class at Corbett Elementary:

Whales
have
a
little
easy

song
octopus
nature
grow

- Mariah

What love
happiness inside my soul
angry and upset
lost I'm lost
eaten
sorry
odd movement in the shadows
noise in the water
glowing at night

- Eliza

World of Warning Water
hurts you if you get near
always angry and violent
long creature that can eat you
eat a lot of people so be careful

Smash you in half
odd looking kind of animals
not often nice more evil
get real angry very fast.

What happened with you
haw kid I told you not to go
a lot of whale

- Rafael