

Teaching News Is Elementary

October 23, 2015

Each week, this lesson will share some classroom activity ideas that use the newspaper or other NIE resources. You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some classrooms may be able to use this as a worksheet and others might need to ask and answer the questions in a class discussion.

Please be sure to preview all NIE content before using it in your classroom to ensure it is appropriate for all of your students.

Materials you will need for this lesson: The Seattle Times e-Edition, Internet/library for research.

Article: Resident Orcas Robust, Sleek

Page: A1

Date: Thursday, October 22, 2015

Pre- Reading Discussion Questions:

Look at the title and the photographs. What kind of animal is an orca? Have you seen one up close? What other animals do you think they are similar to? Why?

Vocabulary:

Read the following quotes and determine the meaning of the word based on how it's used in the sentence:

“In the case of the orcas, photos and videos taken this summer using a drone about the size of a large pizza reveal the animals are looking **robust**.”

(strong and healthy)

“They not only **confine** their diet mostly to salmon, but specifically the best quality, high-fat chinook.”

(to keep (someone or something) within limits : to prevent (someone or something) from going beyond a particular limit, area, etc.)

“The situation of one endangered species relying on another animal that is also struggling for survival — chinook salmon — as its primary prey has added to the **plight** of the orcas.”

(a very bad or difficult situation)

“It makes them look very fragile ... You **cease** to see them as these big black and white animals that can eat anything in the ocean, they are fragile animals and we have to take care of them.”

(stop doing or end)

Journal Writing Prompts:

“The photos were transformational for scientists getting their first close-up look at southern-resident killer whales going about their daily lives.

‘They make visual the social bonds between these whales; they spend most of their time traveling so close together they can touch,’ said Lance Barrett-Lennard, senior marine-mammal scientist at the aquarium.”

Study the photographs in the article. Think about the social bonds between the whales. How might these bonds be similar to the social bonds between humans? In your journal, describes in detail how you think a family or orcas is similar to and different from a family of humans.

Discussion Questions:

Review the excerpt and discuss the following questions:

“The information is particularly important as a warm El Niño climate pattern sets up along the West Coast, which could lead to declines in salmon runs, especially chinook, the preferred food of Seattle’s picky cetaceans.”

What is El Niño? What do you know about the other effects of El Niño? How does El Niño affect humans, animals, and plants? What is a salmon run? Why is a decline in a salmon run a notable negative effect? What do you think cetaceans are?

Small group discussion and activity:

“The situation of one endangered species relying on another animal that is also struggling for survival — chinook salmon — as its primary prey has added to the plight of the orcas. The whales are among the eight most endangered species in the country, and are trying to survive in waters crowded with shipping traffic, tainted by stormwater runoff and other pollution.”

Research how orcas, chinook salmon, and other animals rely on each other to survive. Create a food chain graphic which illustrates the animals’ dependency upon each other.