NEWS BREAK

Article: Meet Tacoma’s walruses

Section: NW, C1

Sunday's News Break selects an article from Sunday, November 19, 2023, of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some teachers might use this as a take-home assignment and others might read and answer the questions in a small group or larger, class discussion.

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

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1

- Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2

- Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Objectives:

Students will learn about the walruses at Point Defiance and Aquarium in Tacoma. They will discuss whether zoos should keep them in captivity, or whether they should be released to their natural habitats, and whether they think animals are happier in a zoo, or in their natural environment.
Pre-Reading Discussion:

- What do you think the article will be about, using these pictures?
- Are there any clues? What can you infer?

Vocabulary Building:

Read this sentence, what do you think the highlighted words mean using context clues? A *context clue* is a word or words that are hints and refers to the sources of information outside of words that readers may use to predict the identities and meanings of unknown words.

“Because there is no *onomatopoeia* that could distill the noises this animal makes.”

*Onomatopoeia Guess:*

*Onomatopoeia Definition:*
Comprehension Questions:

1. __________ _____________ & ________________ is one of the few places to see them in the U.S.
2. Point Defiance has ______ walruses, both 7 years old.
3. What are sounds compared to, that are produced by two juvenile walruses at the Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium in Tacoma?
4. Just 11 other walruses live in captivity. Where?
5. While walruses are not yet endangered, they are a good animal for showcasing the effects of climate change, said Malia Somerville, the director of Point Defiance’s zoological department. In the wild, where do they like to sprawl out? How are those spaces being impacted?
6. The zoo also has other animals affected by climate change-who are they?
7. It doesn’t take that much time around them or their keepers to understand why they’re not the most sought-after animal for zoos. “They’re very _______ and ____________,” said Maggie Santangelo, a staff biologist at Point Defiance.
8. Over the course of five daily feedings, the zoo gives its walruses a combined _______ pounds of restaurant-grade seafood.
9. At their top size, male walruses can weigh up to _______ pounds, almost as much as a Cadillac Escalade.
10. Though intimidating, in body shape and demeanor, walruses resemble their close relatives, ____________. They are extremely playful and bond with their trainers. Like house pets, they tend to gravitate toward the toys you least expect them to.
11. World Walrus Day is ____________.

Discussion Questions (small/large groups), Journal Prompts or Essay Questions:

- What surprised (or stood out to) you in the article?
- At first, I thought ______________, but now I think ____________?
- What things did you already know from prior experience?

All of the walruses living in American captivity were either rescued or born at zoos, said Somerville. E.T., who resided at the zoo until his death in 2015, was brought in as an orphaned calf from the wild. A consortium of zoos, of which Point Defiance is a member, decides collectively where the walruses should be housed at a given time, a United Nations of sorts for walruses.

- Should zoos keep them in captivity, or should they be released to their natural habitats?
- Do you think animals are happier in a zoo? Why or why not?
News Break is posted to the Web on Tuesday. Please share this NIE News Break program with other teachers. To sign-up for the print replica for your class, please register online or call 206/652-6290 or toll-free 1-888/775-2655.
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