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# TRAPPED!

A WHALE'S RESCUE

A Discussion Guide Developed by Charlesbridge

A humpback whale migrating south along the California coast becomes tangled in a fishing trawler's ropes and nets. As she struggles to free herself, the ropes twist tightly around her body and dig into her skin. The whale fights to free herself until she is too tired to continue. What happens next will astound and inspire readers.

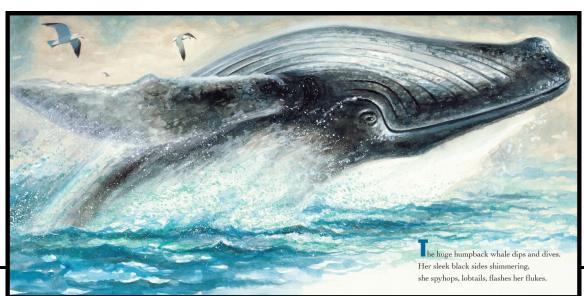
Based on true events, this is a story of interspecies cooperation and the importance of human responsibility to protect the earth and its many inhabitants.

### **Before reading:**

- The title of this book is *Trapped: A Whale's Rescue*. Ask students what they think will happen in the story.
- Show students the cover illustration. Does this give them additional ideas about what will happen in the story?
- What do they think the outcome will be?
- *Trapped: A Whale's Rescue* is about a humpback whale. Ask students if they can name other species of whales. Assign a research project to discover as many different kinds of whales as they can.
- Although whales live in the ocean, they are not fish. They are mammals. Can students name other marine mammals? Have them research what other kinds of marine mammals there are, either in books or on the internet
- Open the book and show both the front and back of the book cover. This is called a wraparound cover in which the illustration covers the front and the back. Ask students why the artist and designer decided to do this. Can they see any reasons why this might serve the story better than having an illustration on the front cover only?
- In his dedication, artist Wendell Minor acknowledged future oceanographers. Ask students if they know what an oceanographer is. What do they think an oceanographer does? Would any of your students like to become an oceanographer?
- Ask students why they think authors and illustrators include dedications in their books.

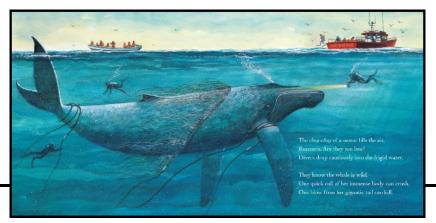
## After reading: Reading comprehension

- The whale is described as "spyhopping," "lobtailing," and "flashing her flukes." Ask students what these terms mean. Can they find examples of these actions in the illustrations?
- On pages 16-17 we see the whale entangled in the nets and ropes and she is floating in the water. The only word is "TRAPPED." Show students the double-page spread.
  - Ask students what they think is happening. What is the whale doing?
  - The word "TRAPPED" is in a different font from the rest of the story and at a much larger size. Ask students why they think this word is set apart in this way. Do they think it adds to the drama? Why is the word entirely capitalized? Do the students ever use all caps when they are writing? Why?
- On pages 17-18 we read that divers "drop cautiously into the frigid water" because "they know the whale is wild." Ask students what they know about wild animals. Why would they need to be cautious around a whale or other wild animal?
- When all the ropes were cut away and the whale was freed, she gently nudged each diver one-by-one. Author Robert Burleigh said this seemed as if the whale was saying "thank you." Do your students agree? Do they think the whale knew the humans helped her?
- Ask students if they can see how many divers helped free the whale from the ropes and nets.
- How long did it take the divers to free the whale?
- In the back matter of *Trapped: A Whale's Rescue* there is a section called "Rescuing Whales." Have students read this section, or read it aloud together. Ask students if any of them would like to become whale rescuers. What kind of training do they think is involved? What do they think they would need to learn? They can learn more about it at some of the websites listed on the last page of the book.
- Whales build up a thick layer of blubber to trap heat inside their bodies. Ask students why they think the whale needs so much fat. Have students ever been swimming in the ocean in the winter? Is it cold?
- Humpback whales are known for their songs, which scientists believe they use for communication. Visit the Whalesong Project at www.whalesong.net and play some of the songs for your students. Can they hear the different sounds the whales make? Ask students if they think the whales are communicating. What do they think the whales are saying? What would they communicate about?



## **Projects and activities:**

- A female humpback whale can grow to be 50 feet long and weigh up to 50 tons.
  - If the average second-grader is four feet tall, how many second-graders laid end-to-end would it take to be as long as a fully grown humpback whale?
  - Have students find out how many pounds are in a ton. If a fully grown humpback weighs 50 tons, how many pounds is that?
  - Have each student in the class weigh themselves. Add up the class's combined total. How many students would it take to weigh as much as a 50-ton whale? Would the entire student body of the school weigh as much as a 50-ton whale?
- An average sized humpback whale eats about 5,000 pounds of food a day. Have students guess how many pounds of food they eat each day. You could assign them to chart their food intake for a day, including weighing what they eat. Compare a whale's diet to the students' diet.
- A whale's heart weighs 400 pounds on average. Can students find out how much an average human heart weighs. How many times more does a whale heart weigh?
- In *Trapped: A Whale's Rescue* we learn that whales eat krill. Ask students to research what krill is. Can they find pictures of krill in books or on the internet?
- Author Robert Burleigh has chosen many words to describe the whale. In the opening sentences he call her "huge" and "sleek." Ask students if anyone has ever seen a whale. Do they think Mr. Burleigh's description is correct?
- Have students find other words the author uses to describe the whale throughout the book. Ask students why he uses so many adjectives to describe the whale. Then have students take out all the words that describe the whale. Do they think the story is as good?
- Artist Wendell Minor achieved his rich colors of the deep sea and the light of the ocean's surface by working with gouache on paper. Are any of your students artists? Do they know what gouache is? What medium would they use if they were asked to illustrate *Trapped: A Whale's Rescue*? Have students choose their favorite art materials and recreate a scene from *Trapped: A Whale's Rescue*.
- Have students visit some of the websites listed in the back of the book, such as Save the Whales at www.savethewhales.org. Assign students to work in small groups to brainstorm ways in which they can help save the whales. They should keep a running list. Then, as a class, everyone can compare their lists to come up with ten things that they as students can do to help save whales—from raising awareness of the dangers whales face to writing to their congressional representatives to let them know of their concerns. What else can kids do to help?



# RESOURCES

#### BOOKS

Hoyt, Erich. Whale Rescue: Changing the Future for Endangered Wildlife. Ontario, Canada: Firefly Books, 2005. Nicklin, Flip and Linda. Face to Face with Whales. Washington, DC: National Geographic Children's Books, 2008. Papastavrou, Vassili. Whale. New York: DK, 2004.

Thomson, Sarah L. Amazing Whales! New York: Harper Collins, 2005.

#### WEBSITES

#### BIOEXPEDITION'S WHALE WORLD

http://www.whale-world.com See photos, watch videos, and read about humpbacks.

#### HUMPBACK WHALES OF SOUTHEASTERN ALASKA

http://www.alaskahumpbacks.org Learn how scientists study humpback whales. View archived photos.

#### THE MARINE MAMMAL CENTER

http://www.marinemammalcenter.org/what-we-do/rescue/

Read about Californian rescue teams and learn what to do if you find a stranded sea creature.

#### NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/humpback-whale

Learn about the behavior, diet, life cycle, and physical features of humpback whales.

#### PROVINCETOWN CENTER FOR COASTAL STUDIES

http://www.coastalstudies.org/what-we-do/whale-rescue/introduction.htm

Learn about the Disentanglement Network on the Atlantic coast of the US and Canada and how to report trapped marine animals.

#### SAVE THE WHALES

http://www.savethewhales.org

Read about whale species, learn about protecting whales and their habitats, and find out how to help.

#### WHALE ENTANGLEMENT TEAM (W.E.T.)

http://www.marinelifestudies.org/index.php/whale-entanglement-team-wet.html

Learn about disentanglement efforts on the Pacific coast of the US.

#### THE WHALESONG PROJECT

http://www.whalesong.net

Listen to live streams of whale songs, watch videos, and view photo galleries.

#### WHALE TRUST MAUI

http://www.whaletrust.org

Explore photo, video, and audio galleries and learn about whale research and conservation in Hawaii.

#### WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

http://www.wcs.org/saving-wildlife/ocean-giants/humpback-whale.aspx

Read about whale behavior and some of the challenges to whale conservation.

