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Fish Farmers' Cooperation

STUDYGUIDE

What to do about Whales?

A FILM BY MICHAEL MCINTYRE AND KATE CLERE. 51 MINUTES, (2003). A SECOND NATURE FILMS PRODUCTION. DIRECTOR/
PRODUCER/WRITER: KATE CLERE. DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: MICHAEL MCINTYRE

Synopsis

FROM THE BOOMING WHALE watch market to whale meat being sold on the open market...

What to do about Whales crosses the globe to the wildly different shores of Iceland, New Zealand, Japan and the United States, getting into the hearts and minds of those involved with whales and tells their stories.

Key words

Blubber, myths, legends, yarns, high seas, renowned, ancestors, transformation, woven, charismatic, species, charisma, flensing, harpoon, *Mana*, conservation.

Warning

This video contains archival and modern footage of whales being harpooned, which may cause distress to some viewers. Preview this video to decide its appropriateness for your audience. Whaling is an emotive issue and it is important to establish a safe environment in which to discuss differing cultural attitudes to treatment of animals or what animals are regarded as edible. Talk about and agree on the skills and attitudes we need for

respectful conversations about other countries' cultures

Before Viewing

Discuss the title

What sorts of questions are assumed in this title? Who do you think is asking the question? Who wants the answers?

After Viewing

Revisit these questions

What answers would students give now? Has anything changed? Why? What answers does the video provide? What new questions has the video raised?

Curriculum Links

Suitable for secondary students and tertiary students as well as community groups, and any one working in areas involving the environment, animal welfare or conservation. Useful for Science, Environmental Studies, International Law, Justice Studies, Psychology, Media Studies, Cultural Studies, English, Religious Education, Studies of Society and the Environ-

ment or Human Society and Environment, Economics, Tourism.

About the film-makers

Kate Clere was born in New Zealand, where she grew up with a love for the natural environment. She has many years experience as a theatre director internationally, focussing on environmental themes. She studied film in the USA and in Australia and she directed 'A Year on the Wing'¹, a multi-media documentary which follows the extraordinary migration of over 2 million wading birds as they travel some 25,000 kilometres each year, for the Australian Film Commission and the ABC.

Michael McIntyre was born in Tasmania, Australian. He has an extensive background in working with the film and television industry. As a cinematographer he has filmed documentaries in Canada, USA and Australia. He created the not-for-profit environmental organisation Whales Alive that led to the production of 'What to do about Whales'. At present he is the Asia Pacific Director of The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) in Sydney.

Activity



- Ask students to project themselves into their preferred future in ten years' time and write a brief biography in the third person about their life and achievements to that point.

Introduction

Here are some quotes from various people in the video.

The narrator: 'We will see how these countries are deciding how best to utilise whales to suit their own needs'... 'Countries are making choices over whether whales are worth more dead or alive.'

The Director of Fisheries in Iceland: 'Whales are in our opinion a resource that should be exploited.'

US Scientist: 'They inspire awe in a way not matched by any other living thing.'

Maori whale watch worker in Kaikoura: 'It's like a brush with God really.'

Whale watcher: 'It's just beautiful.'

Discussion

- Do animals exist for human use and entertainment?
- How would it change our behaviour if we saw ourselves as stewards of the earth rather than as exploiters of the earth's natural resources?

Main Issues

This video supports work in many areas of the curriculum. This study guide identifies the following as a



DIRECTLY ABOVE AND BELOW: © JENNIFER PRERAU



starting point and suggests discussion points and activities for students.

- 1 Economic
- 2 Social and Cultural
- 3 Ecological
- 4 Legal
- 5 Ethical

1 ECONOMIC

Marketable products of whaling versus costs of operation

The video raises the question, are whales more valuable dead or alive?

Discussion

- What values are implicit in questions such as this?
- Most students know something about whales and have an opinion about them. Pool the class knowledge about whales, as one group or in smaller groups which then share what they know with the larger group.
- Divide the information into facts about whales, personal experience, and media experience. Check the facts against information available on websites. For example, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) at www.ifaw.org (in the Save Animals section) has a wealth of information about whales.²
- Report back on how accurate the 'facts' are and correct and update any misconceptions.
- What evidence do you get from this video about the economic issues involved in whaling?
- What do you find convincing about the evidence for whaling or conservation of whales?
- Norwegian whalers have difficulty finding buyers for their whale products. What products have humans used whales for in the past? What are the current products from whaling? How are they used?

Activities

- Make a list of the economic pros and cons of whaling for one of the

two remaining countries continuing to whale.

For an official Japanese government point of view see <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/fishery/whales/japan.html>

For a critical view of Japan's actions in preventing the creation of a South Pacific Whale Sanctuary, see <http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/s335612.htm> This short interview in a written transcript or in audio form, includes a quote from a Japanese official who describes minke whales as 'the cockroaches of the sea' and allegations that Japan corrupted the process of the International Whaling Commission by effectively buying the votes of small Caribbean states.

According to Greenpeace:

*"...whale blubber stored in Norway awaiting export to Japan is unfit for human consumption. The samples of whale blubber studied by independent scientists in Germany are contaminated with various halogenated-organic contaminants such as PCBs, DDT and brominated flame retardants."*³

Research carried out on behalf of IFAW of whale meat samples bought at Japanese and Korean retail markets has shown that whale samples con-



tained meat from endangered whales such as humpback, fin, sei, as well as sperm, gray and Bryde's whales, and northern and southern minke whales.

*"The hunting of humpback whales worldwide was banned in 1966. Humpback whale meat found in markets could not be from stockpiles of past legal whaling."*⁴ Research these problems with the whale meat industry, as well as other health issues related to whaling and whale products.

Sustainable benefits of whale-watching

Discussion

- What does the video tell you about the economic benefits of whale watching in Iceland, the USA, New Zealand and Japan?

Activities

One of the arguments against whaling is that whale watching employs many more people in a variety of jobs.

A report commissioned by IFAW and written by researcher Erich Hoyt, *Whale Watching 2001 'Worldwide Tourism Numbers, Expenditures and Expanding Socioeconomic Benefits'*, documents the explosive growth in the whale-watching industry.⁵

The report shows that, for example: "whale watching is now a US \$1 billion industry" and that "more than 492 communities in 87 nations and territories offer whale watching excursions and tours."

It also provides evidence that "Whale watching is growing at a faster rate than general world tourism. The number of people whale watching has increased by 12.1 percent each year since 1991. Direct expenditures on tickets for tours have increased from US \$77 million in 1991 to more than \$US300 million, an average annual increase of 21.4 percent."

- Research the level of employment associated with whaling in Japan and Norway.

- Compare this with the figures for whale-watching by researching the economics of whale-watching in Australia. Places you can investigate include Moreton Island, Hervey Bay and North Stradbroke Island in Queensland, Cape Leeuwin (WA) and Victor Harbour (SA), Port Stevens, Eden, Cape Solander (NSW) and Warnambool (VIC).

2 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL

The history of humans and whales

Discussion

Do you agree that whales are 'one of the most charismatic species on the planet'?

- What are some myths and legends about whales from around the world? Find and share a story, a poem or a song about whales or whaling at some time in the past. <http://www.story-lovers.com/listswhalestories.html> has links to whale stories from around the world.
- You can buy CDs of whale song and the scores from films such as *Whale Rider* from websites such as Amazon.com
- Ask students to consider the social and cultural impacts on Australia's rural communities of changes in climate and global trade.
- What lessons might Japanese and Australian rural communities be able to learn from and adapt from the experience of the US and New Zealand communities described in



ABOVE: INFORMATION IS GATHERED FROM A DEAD MINKE WHALE FOR SCIENTIFIC WHALING PURPOSES ONBOARD THE JAPANESE FACTORY SHIP NISSHIN MARU DURING A JAPANESE HUNT IN THE SOUTHERN OCEAN SANCTUARY. (PHOTO TAKEN BETWEEN NOV. '92 - APRIL '93)



BELOW RIGHT: THREE PEOPLE IN A SMALL BOAT FILM A GRAY WHALE SWIMMING OFF THE BAJA COAST IN MEXICO.



ABOVE: © MICK MCINTYRE

ABOVE: GUDMUNDUR HARALDSSON, CAPTAIN OF THE NJORDUR, ONE OF THREE BOATS CATCHING MINKE WHALE OFF ICELAND, HOLDING THE HEART OF THE FIRST MINKE CAUGHT. IT WAS A MALE WHALE, 5.20 METERS, AND THE CREW BUTCHERED IT ON DECK, AFTER A BIOLOGIST ONBOARD HAD TAKEN SAMPLES.



ABOVE: © JENNIFER PRERAU. RIGHT: A MAN FROM JAPAN, A MAN FROM ICELAND DRAG LARGE PIECES OF FIN WHALE FLESH KNOWN AS WHITE BACON. THE IMAGE WAS TAKEN IN HAVALFJORDUR.



the video?

Whale species are now mainly protected. There are many other species in the sea and on land whose existence is threatened by human activities or exploitation for one reason or another.

Activities

- Ask students to organise a radio interview plus talkback with one of the four main characters in this video. They need to choose someone to play this role, someone to play the interviewer and some callers to ask questions. They can submit this tape to another group.
- Brainstorm the elements for assessing a good presentation of this kind. Prepare a sheet to help them assess the tapes.
- Visit the photo gallery at <http://whales.greenpeace.org/photo.html>



and choose one photograph to describe. What do you like about this photograph? What caption would you give that describes your response?

- Research the cost of organising a trip to your nearest whale watching centre or to a whale watch centre in another state or country. You can check this on the many web sites related to whale watching centres in Australia or around the world. <http://www.physics.helsinki.fi/whale/#World> and <http://www.whaleguide.com/directory/index.htm> offer links to whale watching sites in the forty coun-



tries around the world with whale watch programs. They also have links to educational programs. http://www.upstarts.net.au/site/non_commercial/whales.html provides lots of useful information about whale watching in Australia.

- Choose an animal that interests you, in Australia or elsewhere in the world. Research its current status and threats to its survival. Write a brief report and present it orally. Include one recommendation for action that others can do to make a difference.
- Watch the recent movie from New Zealand/Aotearoa, *Whale Rider*, and /or read the book on which it is based.⁶

This video shows the positive effects of whale-watching on one Maori community.

- Research the role of whales in Maori culture. <http://www.native-voice.com/fullstory.cfm?ID=337> is the site of an interview of a Maori Elder, *Hone Taumaunu*, who was an adviser to the makers of *Whale Rider*. <http://www.whalewatch.co.nz/> has comments from the Maori community featured in the video.

Whale watching began in Japan in 1988 and has since spread to ten locations. This is changing public opinion but the government strongly promotes whaling as part of Japanese culture. One Japanese government argument is that whale meat is an important part of the Japanese diet:

“Cultural diversity exists among the different countries. Mutual ac-

knowledgment of distinct cultures is critically important. Many countries, including Japan, have a traditional food culture based upon consumption of marine products. Western anthropologists confirm that whales are one of the most important elements in Japanese food culture.⁷

A Japanese professor in the video says most people think they don't need it, but the government actively encourages it by offering it in school lunches. A Japanese woman says, 'We don't need it for survival, identity or cultural matters or anything really.'

Activities

- Visit <http://www.hsus2.org/whaling/norway.html> to see the arguments put forward by Norway in favour of whaling and the answers given by the Humane Society of the United States. Here is one example from this website that gives a statement and then argues against it.

“4. They say: Preservation of cultural heritage is sound environmental policy. While there are several cultures that have historically depended on the hunting and trading in whales and their products, these traditions began in eras when there were fewer people, fewer negative human impacts on the marine environment, and less efficient ways to hunt whales (thus limiting the scope of any hunt).

Cultures change as environments change. Some cultural practices are highly damaging to the environment and thus their preservation would most certainly be unsound environmental policy (the slash and burn method of farming in the rain forest, a cultural practice, is a case in point). In the modern era, the negative impacts of human activities on the marine environment increase with each passing year. The modern efficiency with which humans utilize marine resources has proven again and again to be unsustainable. Preserving whaling as a traditional activity by a few aboriginal peoples is one thing; allowing commercial whaling with factory ships to resume and expand is another.

JAPAN'S ARGUMENTS	ITALY'S REPLY	COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moratorium on whaling disrupted local marine ecosystem, • fish catches are down and local fishing communities suffer • tourism and other industries not successful • younger generations leaving communities • way of life disrupted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sympathetic to cultural impact • Communities also have a duty to prepare their future generations so they can adapt to adverse environmental effects caused by increasing human activities • Italian communities have similar experiences • They are happy to share how they have helped communities to change 	<p>Japan only started commercial whaling in international waters in 1935</p>

CHART 01

In modern societies, whales do not provide any necessary consumer products. Today, whales are killed for the luxury food market."

Greenpeace is very critical of the cultural arguments used in Norway by the government:

*"Brochures published by the Norwegian government claim that whale meat is sold in Norway where it is a traditional part of the Norwegian diet. The reality is that there is little market for the meat in Norway."*⁸

Japan's cultural argument in favour of whaling, and an interesting reply by Italy, is available on http://luna.pos.to/whale/iwc_chair02_11.html Some of their points are summarised in chart 01. Ask students to add comments after viewing.

Social effects of seeing whales in their natural surrounds

Activities

- Find someone who has been close to whales, either in your school or your community. Do they agree with those people in the film who suggest that seeing whales in their natural habitat is a life-changing experience? Report back.
- Watch the recent film *Whale Rider*. Report to the class on the film and its portrayal of the importance of whales to the Maori people.
- Watch the American film *Free Willy*. What values does this film

portray and encourage?

Social effects of killing and flensing whales

Discussion

- What evidence do we get from the Japanese harpoonist, about the hardships of a whaler's life at sea?
- For a more detailed personal account of what it was like to work on a whaling ship, see the testimony of John Burton, an English whaler, who has written his story for Greenpeace because he is now ashamed of his actions.⁹ Much of the whale meat they caught was used as crop fertiliser. His description of conditions on deck when they were cutting up the whales will help students to understand a comment in the video taken from a US newspaper from the last century. The article stated that a whale yielded '50 barrels of oil and 1000 barrels of smell'.

Centuries of whaling drastically reduced large species like the sperm whale and the blue whale, the largest creature that has ever lived on the planet. They were brought near to extinction in the last two centuries. For this reason, most conservationists are strongly opposed to whaling. There was not much public concern at the time about the plight of the whales, but hunting them became uneconomic and so whalers turned to hunting smaller whales like the minke and sei whale.

The distinguished Australian biologist Dr Tim Flannery, director of the South Australian Museum caused a controversy in 2003 when he asserted that hunting minke whales reduced the pressure on the food supply and allowed the southern right whales to recover. This argument is contentious but it reminds us that natural systems are complex and changing one practice can have various impacts.¹⁰

Professor Mike Archer, Director of the Australian Museum has argued that kangaroos should be farmed for meat because they do less damage than cattle. The Australian Wildlife Protection Council argues that the killing of kangaroos is cruel, wasteful and threatens the survival of Australia's national icon. They are particularly arguing against the use of kangaroo leather to make football boots.

Discussion

- What are the differences between whale catching for consumption by small groups of traditional hunters

3 ECOLOGICAL



ABOVE: © MICK MCINTYRE

BELOW: © MICK MCINTYRE

and hunting using modern technology?

*The world was appalled when the Canadians killed their harp seals. Australians brutally slaughter kangaroos and bash their joeys to death ...A million or more joeys die this way every year.*¹¹

- Should we buy, use or eat kangaroo products? How would you test the effect of hunting on kangaroo populations?¹²



4 LEGAL

While Norway catches whales in defiance of the current international ban, Japan says it is catching whales for research. Is Japan acting legally by doing this? Is it really science – or just a loophole in the law?

Discussion

- Is the scientific community colluding in fraudulent practice? One scientist from Iceland says in the film that the 'scientific modelling is flawed. This is a small country, being up against the pro-whaling industry is hard. They don't speak out loud at the university'.
- Try to find out what scientific advances have resulted from the Japanese catching whales for 'research purposes'. Do the results justify the practice?

Australian Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Dr David Kemp, has voiced his disquiet over the argument of "scientific whaling". In a statement in June 2003, he welcomed the growing opposition to scientific whaling, saying: "The newly released report of the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission supports Australia's position that so-called research, that involves killing hundreds of whales, does not have the support of the scientific community". He added: "The Scientific Committee report contains compelling criticisms of existing and proposed scientific whaling. This is proof that scientific whaling is nothing less than commercial whaling."¹³

Here is a critical comment from <http://www.peggy-oki.com/environmt/urgent.html>

Japan's planned whale catch for Summer 2003 is listed as follows: 150 minke, 50 Bryde, 50 sei, and 10 sperm whales. (3 out of 4 of these species are listed as Endangered.) This number, combined with the quota for the Arctic (sic) hunt, means 'In 2002 Japan will kill almost 800 whales.*

To increase supplies of meat even further, the Japanese government recently legalised the killing and sale of whales entangled in fishing nets. Predictably, this led to a five-fold increase in 'accidental by-catch' in just six months. It has even decided to import hundreds of tonnes of cheap whale meat from Norway (despite the ban on trade) in a cynical attempt to stimulate domestic demand. Meanwhile Norway has increased its self-allocated quota by 125 whales this year. (As reported by the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society)

* note this is the authors error: it should say Antarctic.

5 ETHICAL

Many people feel it is morally unacceptable to hunt and kill whales. However, most people who object to whaling see no ethical dilemma in eating meat produced by killing domesticated animals such as cows, sheep or chickens etc.

There are many cultures and religions which practise various forms of veg-

etarianism or not eating meat. There are people from all religions and walks of life who choose to be vegetarians for various reasons.

Discussion

- What are the pressures on people who speak out for unpopular causes? What are the rights and duties of citizens and intellectuals in democratic societies?
- How does Abbi in Iceland demonstrate being a responsible global citizen in a democratic society?
- Ask students to compare this ethical dilemma with the situation of refugees in Australia. How is this ethical dilemma and those who speak out for the rights of refugees different?

Activities

- Organise a class debate on the moral acceptability of killing animals for food.
- Find and interview a vegetarian to find out why the reasons behind their decision not to eat meat.
- Organise a 'best vegetarian recipes from around the world' lunch where everyone brings a small plate of their favourite vegetable dish.
- Write up the recipe, if there is one, and why you have chosen it.
- Choose any culture that interests you and find out a vegetable recipe. The New Internationalist website is a good place to begin. They also publish a cook book of vegetarian recipes from around the world.
- Organise a 'non-meat' day for one day a week for a set period of time and donate any money saved to an animal fund you would like to support.

Why did the film-maker make this film?

Kate Clere, the director says,

"I made this documentary to provide a rare insight into why people around the world care so passionately about whales- whether they are more

INTERVIEWEES	QUOTES	MOTIVATION	Your comments
Dr Carole Carlson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internationally renowned marine biologist • Works from Cape Cod, USA • More than 20 years study of humpback whales • Collected data on more than 1,000 individual whales. 	<i>They do not solely belong to one country.</i>		
Tomohisa Nagoaka <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 years at sea • famous harpoonist with Japanese whaling fleet • retired to run a whale watch company in Japan 	<i>In 16 years of whaling I caught 3970 whales.</i> <i>It was no fun, we worked for 100 days.</i> <i>I don't feel any nostalgia.</i>		
Asbjorn (Abbi) Bjorgvinsson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Left work as a civil engineer in Iceland's capital to become a whale champion. . • Appi set up a centre to alert Icelanders to whale watching and to educate positive coexistence. • Currently fighting the Icelandic government's 2003 decision to resume whaling 	<i>...as soon as you are into feelings and if you say are into this because of the whales you are dead.</i>		
Maurice Manawatu <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Maori from the <i>Ngai Tahu</i> group • Senior captain for whale watch fleet. • Tells of transformation of the community through the success of whale watching. 	<i>It's the whole mystery of the whale ...it's the gracefulness.</i> <i>It has given us mana¹⁴ , we can lift heads high.</i> <i>My world was drugs and alcohol, violence.</i> <i>It was a change of life for me when I started with whale watch.</i>		

ABOVE: CHART 02

valuable dead or alive. It contrasts the stories of four dynamic characters from Iceland, New Zealand (Aotearoa), Japan and the United States: a whale champion who alone challenges the Iceland government; a New Zealand Maori whose life has been transformed by whale watching; a celebrated whale harpoonist; and a renowned marine biologist. ... Our hope is to give viewers a rare opportunity to observe both sides of the story."

Discussion

- Have the film-makers succeeded in giving both sides of the whaling story?
- The director wants to give viewers insights into why people care so

passionately about whales. Consider the views of the four main interviewees. How are they similar and how are they different?

Activity

- Ask students to complete Chart 02, adding quotes that appeal to them. What do they think motivates each of these people to do what they do?

Taking responsibility for other species. What can one person do?

Whales are only one of many endangered species. Research other endangered species and their prod-

ucts. International tourists can make a difference, as can individuals by refusing to buy any products made from endangered animals. These include, for example, products made from ivory or medicine made from tigers, rhinoceros or bears¹⁵. Information on the exotic pet trade¹⁶ and how to be a responsible tourist¹⁷ can be found on the IFAW website.

In democratic countries, writing to governments is an effective way of protesting against actions that you do not agree with.¹⁸ Always write respectfully and with correct information.

Activities

- Write a letter to the Japanese

government or some other government on behalf of an endangered species. Find out the correct addressee and any protocol associated with writing to a government official. The following site offers some sample letters and the addresses of relevant officials in Japan and Iceland: <http://www.peggy-oki.com/environt/urgent.html>. Other examples can be found on the IFAW website (see footnote 18).

Study guide prepared by Patricia Kelly, a Brisbane-based academic and writer and Ian Lowe, Emeritus Professor in Science, Griffith University, Qld.

References

There are innumerable websites on every aspect of whaling. There is a selection in this guide to help you begin your research.

- J. Billingham, *The Spirit of the Whale Legend History Conservation*, Colin Baxter Photography, 2000. ISBN: 1841070661 This book looks at the history of whales, their complex, ever-changing relationship with humans, and how cultures have portrayed them through the ages. It also examines the conservation issues facing whales today. (www.virginbooks.com/go/Books_154043.html)
- This link takes you to the official

website of the intergovernmental body that manages whales and whaling, the International Whaling Commission, where you can find information on meetings and also download the *International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling*. <http://www.iwcoffice.org/Default.htm>

Endnotes

- 1 www.abc.net.au/wing
- 2 <http://www.ifaw.org>
- 3 <http://whales.greenpeace.org/whaling/trade.html>
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- 10 T. Flannery, Quarterly Essay 9, 2003, pp 43-45
- 11 Australian Wildlife Protection Council leaflet
- 12 www.geocities.com/aupc
- 13 <http://www.deh.gov.au/minister/env/2003/mr16jun03.html>
- 14 A Maori word meaning prestige.
- 15 <http://abc.net.au/rn/science/earth/stories/s1767.htm>
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