

1.

THE BLUE WHALE — MAKING A BIG SPLASH

The most amazing fact about the blue whale is that it is the largest creature that has ever lived on Earth. This means that it is even bigger than any of the dinosaurs. By the time it becomes a teenager, it is about 30 metres long and weighs more than 30 elephants.



James Field (SGA illustrator's agents, Hadleigh, Suffolk IP7 5AP)

WHY BLUE?

The blue whale is named after its blue-grey skin, which may have white-grey spots. The underbelly may also have brown, yellow or grey specks.

BABY BLUE

Blue whale calves are born tail first, near the surface of warm, shallow waters. At this early stage they are about seven and a half metres long, and are able to swim just 30 minutes after birth. Blue whales live for 35 to 40 years, although it is thought that some survive until they are about 110 years old.

OPEN WIDE

This enormous creature feeds mainly on some of the smallest creatures in the ocean, called krill. Krill look like shrimps and are about the size of a small human finger. In the summer, the blue whale eats several million krill each day. In the winter, it travels to new feeding grounds in the search for krill.



Inside the blue whale's gigantic mouth, there are no teeth. Instead, hundreds of stringy plates hang down from the upper jaw. They act like a giant sieve, filtering krill and other small creatures from the water. After every mouthful, the whale licks the plates with its giant tongue, swallowing everything that's been trapped there. As the whale gulps in vast amounts of seawater, the loose throat skin expands like a huge balloon. Then, it closes its mouth and pushes out the water with its tongue.

RECORD BREAKERS

As well as being the largest, blue whales are the loudest animals on earth. They repeatedly make whistle-like sounds which can travel for many kilometres under water. The noise they make is much louder than an aeroplane, and so loud that it would be painful for humans to listen to, if they were too close by. These whale sounds are called songs, and may be used for locating large amounts of krill, and for communicating with other blue whales.

Information from The Big Blue Whale Book by L. M. King.

Many species of whale are endangered, which means that they could become extinct in the near future. Tim Stonely investigates the reasons.

Joe Deene

Editor

2.

These questions are on *The Blue Whale*

1.

a. Why is this paragraph in **bold** print?**THE BLUE WHALE—
MAYNARD GLASS**

The magnificent humpback blue whale holds the record of animals for its size and weight on Earth. The present of this whale is bigger than any of the dinosaurs. By the time it becomes a teenager, it is about 30 metres long and weighs more than 30 elephants.

COMPARISON

This enormous creature feeds mainly on some of the smallest creatures in the ocean called krill. Krill look like shrimps and are about the size of a small human finger. In the summer, the blue whale eats several million krill each day. In the winter, it travels to new feeding grounds in the search for krill.

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act like a giant sieve, filtering out and eating small creatures from the water. After every mouthful, the whale licks the plates with its giant tongue, swallowing everything that's been trapped there. As the whale gulps in vast amounts of seawater, the loose throat skin expands like a huge balloon. Then, it closes its mouth and pushes out the water with its tongue.

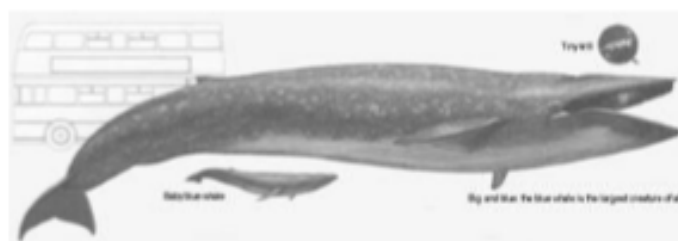
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WHY BLUE?

The blue whale is named after its blue-grey skin, which may have been a greyish blue. The word 'blue' may also mean 'grey'.

BIRTH BLUE

Blue whale calves are born at 10-12 metres long, 100-150 kg, and weigh about 10% of the mother's weight. They are born with a blue-grey skin, which may have been a greyish blue. The word 'blue' may also mean 'grey'.

FEEDING

As with all whales, the largest blue whales are the most voracious eaters. They consume vast quantities of food, which can be up to 100 tonnes a day. The word 'blue' may also mean 'grey'.

Blue whales are named after their blue-grey skin, which may have been a greyish blue. The word 'blue' may also mean 'grey'.

b. How does the bus help you to understand the information on these pages?

c. What are these subheadings for? Write **two** purposes.

5 marks

2. Use the information to fill in this table of facts about the blue whale.

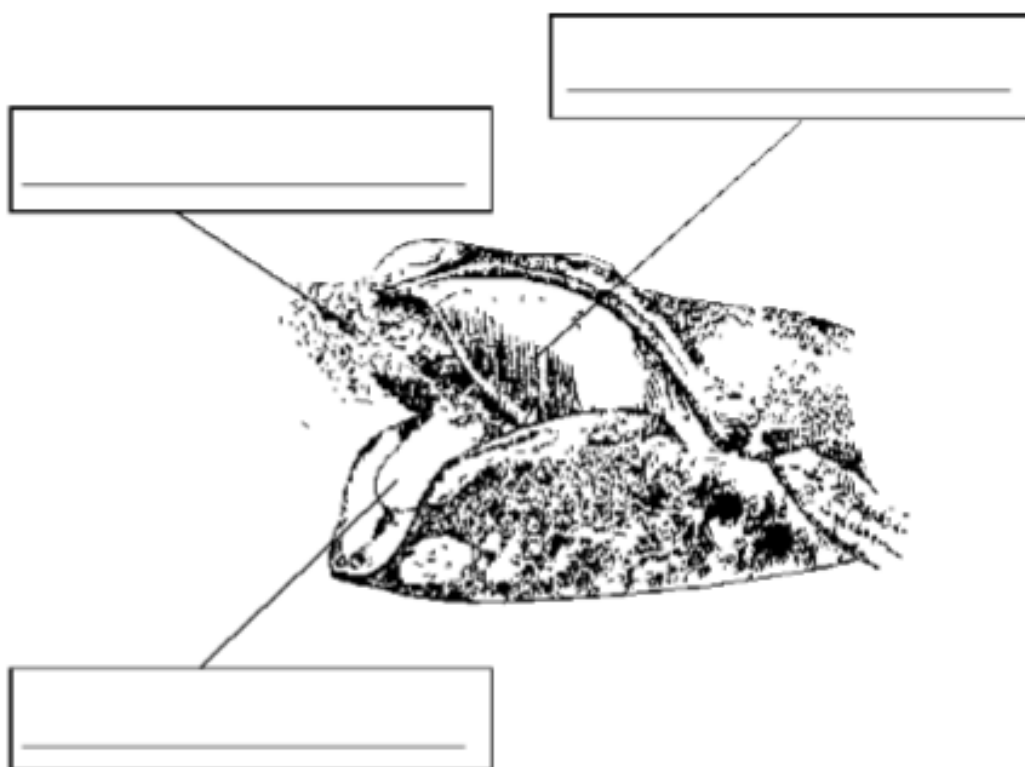
Two sections have been completed as examples.

colour	blue / grey
length at birth	
length as a teenager	
usual life span	35 – 40 years
main food	

3 marks

3. Look at the information in *Open Wide*.

Using this information, label what is shown in the diagram.



3 marks

4. The author compares the sound the blue whale makes to that of an aeroplane.

(a) How does this comparison help you to understand the information?

.....
.....

1 mark

(b) Find another comparison in the writing.

.....
.....

1 mark

3.

Dear Humans,



I am a blue whale and I live in the Pacific Ocean. I am writing this letter to ask for peace in the world's oceans on behalf of the creatures of the sea. For years we have lived among the tall sea plants that grow up from the sea bed. We have swum among the gentle waves as they lap against each rock.

You turn a peaceful sea into an angry sea. Now, the waves boil and swell in huge currents. As you dump piles of smelly oil into our clear water it becomes murky. Oil wraps itself cruelly in a coat around so many sea birds and fish. Oil sticks to their feathers and clings to their eyes and mouths.

It has poisoned them. It killed them. You killed them. You kill us whales too. You hunt us in big ships. You follow us. When you have us trapped between ships, you drop a net down. We are victims of you, just like the birds and fish are victims of oil. The sight of a net coming towards us fills us with alarm. Sheer panic overcomes us. We see no way out. The strong wires in the net press tightly against our bodies.

I have not experienced this myself. Luckily I am still alive and able to write this letter to you. Many of my friends, however, and family, have not been so fortunate. It is as much for them as for anyone else that I am asking you to stop doing this. You are driving us to extinction. Please, give us peace.

Yours beseechingly,

Blue Whale

From *Letters of Peace*, collected by the Royal Mail and reproduced with permission

4. These questions are on *Dear Humans*

1. At the beginning of the letter, what reason does the writer give for writing?

.....

1 mark

2. Here is a summary of the ideas in the letter.

Draw lines to match the paragraphs to the main ideas.

Draw one line to each box.

One has been done for you.

first paragraph	how humans have affected ocean life
second paragraph	the blue whale's request
third paragraph	the reason for writing
fourth paragraph	how whales feel about human activity

2 marks

3. (a) What impression of the sea does the first paragraph of the letter give you?

.....

.....

1 mark

- (b) In what ways is the second paragraph different?

.....

.....

2 marks

4. Both *Whales in Danger* and *Dear Humans* try to make you care about the dangers to whales.

Which do you think is more effective?

Explain your answer as fully as you can, referring to both texts.

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.....

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3 marks

