



Lesson 14: Why have right whales been hunted?

Objective: Students will learn about historical whaling activity, which decimated the population of North Atlantic right whales.

You will need:

- Copies of *North Atlantic Right Whales—the “right whale” to hunt* and *The Last North Atlantic Right Whale Hunt* for each student (pages 14-4 and 14-5)
- Copies of *The Great Right Whale Hunt* (instructions; page 14-3) for each student
- Optional: Copies of grading rubric (page 14-2) for students
- Writing paper
- Pens or pencils
- (Optional) Computers with internet access

Common Core Standards: CSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1; CSS.ELA-Literacy. RI.4.3; CSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.4.4a; CSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.1; CSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2; CSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3; CSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.4; CSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.6; CSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.1; CSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.2; CSS.ELA-Literacy. L.4.3

Sunshine State Standards: SC.4.L.17.2; SC.4.L.17.4

Strategy:

1. Give students copies of the two right whale hunting articles. Have them read both articles.
2. Give students copies of The Great Right Whale Hunt instructions.
3. Explain that they are to write a journal/diary entry pretending to be either a whaler from the 1500's OR one of the fishermen in 1935 that killed the right whale calf. (You might want to share the grading rubric so students can see what you will be looking for in their writing). Remind students that they should be writing in the first person, in the role of the character they have chosen.
4. Point out that there are several suggested questions for them to answer in their writing. They should include factual information from the article(s) in their journal entry, but they are free to make up other details to add to their story.
5. Optional: Have students type up their journal entry on the computer and have them search for images on the internet to use to illustrate their story.
6. Optional: Have students read their journal entry aloud to either the entire class, or in small groups.

References:

- Rubric based on rubrics developed by Tonja Root, EdD, Valdosta State University, Valdosta, GA and <http://www.mrskalin.com/writing/revisedrubric.pdf>.
- Resources used in compiling articles:
<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/10/right-whales/chadwick-text>
http://news.bbc.co.uk/earth/hi/earth_news/newsid_8518000/8518597.stm
http://www.neaq.org/conservation_and_research/projects/endangered_species_habitats/right_whale_research/right_whale_background/last_whale_hunt.php



Rubric for Simulated Journal Entry for Fourth Graders

Name of student _____

	3	2	1	0
No. of Sentences	At least 12	At least 8	At least 5	No attempt
Conformed to journal type	Conforms to simulated journal throughout, using first person.	Usually conforms to simulated journal. Sometimes uses third or second person, changing to a learning log.	Author rarely conforms to simulated journal. Often uses third or second person, changing to a learning log.	No attempt
Stayed on topic	Always stayed on topic, writing about the one event.	Usually stayed on topic, but sometimes wrote about multiple events.	Rarely stayed on topic. Wrote about multiple events that were unrelated.	No attempt
Maintained character	Always wrote as the character. Gave only factual information that the character would know.	Sometimes wrote as the character. Sometimes gave factual information that the character would not know.	Seldom wrote as the character. Usually gave factual information that the character would not know.	No attempt
Utilized information from assigned readings	Included at least 3 pieces of information gleaned from assigned readings.	Included 2 pieces of information gleaned from assigned readings.	Included 1 piece of information gleaned from assigned readings.	Did not include any information from the assigned readings.
Word choice and sentence structure	Vivid language. Varied, correct sentences.	Interesting words and vocabulary, simple sentence structure	Uses simple words and simple sentence structure.	Limited word choice, weak sentence structure.
Grammar, usage and spelling	Excellent use of mechanics, capitals, spelling.	Use of correct mechanics, capitals and spelling usually demonstrated.	Some use of correct mechanics, capitals and spelling, but with errors.	Errors impede communication
Total points	3 x ____ = ____ pts	2 x ____ = ____ pts	1 x ____ = ____ pts	0 x ____ = ____ pts.

Total points for Simulated Journal Entry = _____



The Great Right Whale Hunt

Instructions:

1. Read **North Atlantic Right Whales—the “right whale” to hunt** and **The Last North Atlantic Right Whale Hunt**.
2. Write a short story using information from the articles. You should pretend that you are one of the following people:
 - a. A whaler in the 1500’s

OR

 - b. One of the fishermen who killed the baby right whale in 1935
3. Your story should be like a diary entry (describing one entire day). You can make up some of the details, but should also include factual information from the article(s) in your story. You can also include facts that you know about right whales in your story.
4. Here are some questions to try and answer in your story:
 - a. Who are you? How old are you? Where do you live?
 - b. What did you do that day? Include what you saw, smelled, felt etc.
 - c. How did you feel about the things you did that day?
 - d. Why were you doing what you did?
 - e. Who else was with you?
5. (Optional). Type your diary entry in a word processing program on the computer. Find pictures from the internet to add to your story.



North Atlantic Right Whales—the “right whale” to hunt

North Atlantic right whales were hunted at least 1000 years ago off Spain and France. At that time, the whales were found throughout the North Atlantic Ocean. In the 1500's and 1600's, there were not many right whales left in the eastern Atlantic. Whalers then moved to areas off Newfoundland and Labrador to hunt for bowhead and right whales. In the early days, people hunted whales from small boats, using harpoons. A harpoon is a long spear with a rope or chain attached to it. The whalers would throw the harpoon into the whale. This would allow them to pull the boat alongside the whale and they could then kill the whale.



Whale Fishery -- Attacking a Right Whale, New England approx. 1860



A whale oil lamp. Source: Wikimedia commons

Why did people hunt right whales? Right whales are slow-moving, they like to stay close to shore and hang out near the ocean's surface. They have thick blubber, which makes them float when they are killed. Blubber is one of the things that whalers wanted from the whales. They would turn the blubber into oil that could be used in lamps. Apparently right whale oil did not smell very good!



In addition to blubber, people wanted the baleen from the whales' mouths. They used baleen for many things that we make from plastic or metal today. Umbrella ribs, horsewhips and stiffeners for ladies' clothes were all made from baleen. Baleen is sometimes called "whalebone." People would also eat right whale meat.



Umbrellas and sticks made with baleen ('whalebone') and other items made from whale jawbone. Photo credit: Hull City Council

The Last North Atlantic Right Whale Hunt

In January of 1935, a female right whale and her calf were swimming along the Florida coast. They were spotted by a group of fishermen from the shore. The men got a small boat into the water and chased the whales. They managed to harpoon the calf and shot both the mother and the calf with a rifle. The hunt lasted for more than six hours, during which time the mother stayed by the calf's side. Eventually, the one or two-month-old calf died and the mother swam away. The calf was the last right whale hunted in U.S. waters. Right whales became protected later that year.