“Northern Humpback Whale” Lesson: Cole
Created by Art in Action

Art in Action is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization
dedicated to bringing art to children for over 30 years
Subject Background: The Whale

What can we learn about the whale?

- Whales live in the ocean like fish. However, they are not fish. They are warm-blooded mammals that feed their young with milk, as humans do. Whales breathe air through blowholes, but they must stay in the water to live. There are many kinds of whales.
- There are a total of 78 species of whale, encompassing blue whales, narwhals, belugas, humpback whales, and many more.
- Humpback behavior includes acrobatic leaping out of the water, slapping of fins and flukes on the water, and singing songs that include long sequences of squeaks, grunts, and other sounds.
- Blowholes are whales’ nostrils. They are holes on the top of the whales’ heads through which they breathe air.
- Dorsal fins are fins on the dorsal, or upper, side of the body. Tails are called flukes. Whales use flippers for swimming. They are flat forelimbs like arms.
- Whales eat tiny organisms called krill. The throat grooves allow the throat to expand to take in huge gulps of water, which is then forced through their short baleen to filter out tiny organisms.

What is an endangered animal?

- Endangered animals are those species that are in danger of becoming extinct or disappearing completely from the planet. Their reproductive rates are lower than their mortality rates over long periods of time, so their numbers are diminishing. The reasons for this are varied, but lately, very often involves a loss of habitat as people encroach on their living areas. Not all endangered animals become extinct. In fact, the bald eagle and alligator are making a comeback thanks to being protected.
- The list of endangered species includes but is not limited to African gorillas, Indian gharials, Asian elephants, blue whales, polar bears, Australian koala bears, rhinoceros, Chinese panda bear, and African lions.
- The Endangered Species Act (ESA) was passed in 1973 in order to protect those plant and animal species that are at risk of becoming extinct. Species that receive protection under the ESA are classified into two categories, “Endangered” or “Threatened,” depending on their status (how many are left in the wild) and how severely their survival is threatened. A species that is listened as Endangered is in danger of becoming extinct throughout a significant portion of its habitat range (the areas where it lives). Threatened species are those that are likely to become Endangered in the foreseeable future.
- There are many reasons whales are endangered. Whale hunting still happens in Japan, Norway, and Iceland. Pollution and trash in the ocean also threaten whale lives, especially when whales get trapped in trash bags or ingest plastic and other unnatural materials.
- We can take action to keep whales and our other sea friends from going extinct. We can all do our part by recycling, picking up litter, and keeping unsafe liquids and materials away from our beaches seas and oceans.
Art Discussion: Northern Humpback Whale

Why did the photographer take this picture?
The photographer, Cole, probably took hundreds of pictures to get one perfect picture of the whale. The photographer wants to draw attention to the animals that are endangered. Photographs can capture the exact details of an animal at the instant of its most impressive behavior. But not all photographs are as beautiful as this one. This photo shows a scene that most of us will never see up close. Do you think he was close to the animal? Did he get wet? Was he cold while trying to take the perfect picture? Photography can allow people everywhere to see animals or places they couldn’t otherwise see.

What makes this photograph a work of art?
The photographer has created a beautiful composition. The setting of the sky, water, and waves adds to the beauty of the whale. The flying foam echoes the barnacles on the whale’s underside, the white flippers repeat the lines of the horizon and the clouds, and the curving belly of the huge whale contrasts with layers of horizontal lines, adding energy and motion to the frozen picture.
Art Project: 3-D Whale

Materials:
- 2 large pieces of blue, grey, or white construction paper
- Scrap paper or newspaper to be crumpled up
- 2”x4” piece of blue paper
- Sharpie, drawing utensils
- Stapler

Activity instructions (45 mins):
Part 1: Drawing the Whale
1. Draw an outline of a whale on your blue, grey, or white construction paper. You can base your whale on drawings you find on the web!

2. Put a second paper underneath your outline. Cut around the outline you just drew.

3. Flip one whale over so their noses touch!

4. Add whichever details you’d like (such as eyes, baleen, throat grooves, blowholes or barnacles!) to both copies of the whale.

5. Put front and backside of the whale together, so the outline and details show on each side.
6. Staple around the outer edges of the whale, but leave a gap at the bottom for the newspaper stuffing.

Part 2: Stuffing the Whale

1. Crumple the newspaper or scrap paper into small balls and flatten. Crumble enough newspaper to fill the entire whale.

2. Staple the rest of the whale leaving a small opening near the mouth. Stuff the whale. When the whale is completely stuffed, staple to close the remaining opening.

Part 3: The Whale's Water Spout

1. Cut a triangle from the 2x4 blue paper.

2. Make 5 cuts from the wide end of the triangle toward the opposite point, stopping about 1" from the tip of the triangle.
3. Curl each strip, one at a time, around a pencil. Pull out the pencil so each paper strip will be curled. This is your water spout.

4. Insert the water spout at the top of the whale, between the two sides of the whale in a gap between the staples.

5. Insert a paint stirrer, tongue depressor, or any kind of stick between two staples at the bottom of the whale. Secure with staples of necessary. Enjoy your 3-D whale!

We hope you enjoy this special-edition seasonal lesson. We encourage you to visit our website, www.artinaction.org, and try a free, more in-depth sample lesson.