

Orcas on Stage



Introduction

Why are orcas called "killer whales"? When early Spanish explorers observed transient orcas hunting whales, they named them "whale killers." It is thought that this name was incorrectly translated into "killer whale." Although there is no record of an orca in the wild harming a human, many people were afraid of them. During the past forty years, scientists learned many things about orcas that have changed people's attitudes toward them. The Free Willy movies introduced Keiko (a.k.a. Willy) and the story of a captive orca set free by his human friends. After their appearance as wild orcas in the Free Willy movies, Granny and her family became famous throughout the world. Now hundreds of thousands of people go on whale-watching trips each year to see orcas in the wild.

Key Concepts

- ◆ Orcas are called "killer whales" because early explorers observed orcas hunting whales.
- ◆ In the past, people feared orcas although no orca in the wild has harmed a human.
- ◆ People changed their attitudes towards orcas after learning more about them.

For standards correlation please see our website.

National Science Education Standards

Life Science – Characteristics of Organisms.
Organisms and their Environments (K-4)

Characteristics and Changes in Populations.

Changes in Environments (K-4)

**National Council for Teachers of English/
International Reading Association Standards:**

1. Students use a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
12. Students adjust their use of spoken, written and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences for a variety of purposes.

Inquiry Questions

- ◆ Do you think use of the name "killer whale" has caused people to be afraid of orcas? Do you think orcas are afraid of people? Why or why not?
- ◆ Why do you think people changed their attitudes towards orcas after seeing them in the wild? Watching the Free Willy movies? Reading and learning about orcas?

Orcas on Stage (Continued pg 2)

Activity #1-Reader's Theater

In this activity, students adapt **Granny's Clan: A Tale of Wild Orcas** into a Reader's Theatre script

Procedure:

1. Identify two types of roles for the reader's theatre: *narrators* tell the story, *characters* are in the story. Most students will be narrators. One student will be Granny. All students will be chorus for sound effects.
2. Assign each narrator one sentence of the story to read.
3. Write out the script from Granny's Clan using this format:
Narrator 1: First sentence of story ("In cold dark waters . . .")
Granny: Second sentence ("Little One . . .")
Narrator 2: Third sentence ("Granny swims beneath . . .")
CHORUS: Sound effects (WHOOSH!)
4. Each student gets a copy of the entire script with their lines highlighted.
5. Students practice their lines using a clear, strong, expressive voice.
6. The entire group practices the script to improve timing and performance.
7. At the time of the reader's theatre performance, students sit in a semi-circle facing the audience and read their parts. Students can wear Orca Costumes (see Activity 4).

Activity #2 -Orca Puppet Show

In this activity, students create a puppet show performance of **Granny's Clan: A Tale of Wild Orcas**.

Materials Needed: cardboard, cereal box or larger box, blank index cards, poster board, poster paints, wooden dowel, fabric scraps, glue, wrapping paper, yarn, popsicle (craft) sticks, glue, photos, markers, colored pencils, copy of **Granny's Clan**

Preparation:

For Theatre

1. Cut off top of box. This will be bottom of theatre. Cut out rectangular opening on one side for stage. Cut out piece of cardboard and tape to back as stand.
2. Paint outside of theatre or cover with wrapping paper. Decorate sides and top of stage.
3. Cut out curtains and attach to wooden dowel. Hang from top of stage. Tie with yarn.
4. Design and decorate background scenes on poster board for stage. Attach craft sticks to hold up at back of stage behind puppets.

For Puppets

1. Draw each orca from the story on index cards or poster board. Color with markers or glue on felt shapes. Add 3D fins and tail. Glue orca puppet to craft sticks.
2. Draw salmon puppets and other animals that appear in the story. Cut out and attach to craft sticks.

Procedure:

1. Assign students to different roles: **narrators** read the story, **puppeteers** act out scenes with puppets and **stagehands** organize puppets and background panels for each scene.
2. Perform story with puppet actors. Puppeteers sit behind stage and hold up puppets to act out scenes. Change puppeteers and background scenes at each scene change.
3. After practice, students perform puppet play for class of younger students.

Orcas on Stage

(Continued pg 3)

Activity #3-Write a Movie

Procedure:

1. Watch a movie about orcas.

Free Willy movies: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0106965/>

The Whale – story of Luna (L-98) from Granny’s clan: <http://www.thewhalemovie.com/>

2. Write a movie review using the Movie Review worksheet. Share with class.

Activity #4 -Make an Orca Costume

Materials Needed: brown grocery bag per student, scissors, black construction paper, glue

Procedure:

1. Stand paper bag on open side. Cut large hole in closed end (for head opening).
2. Cut vertical line from top hole to bottom (for front opening).
3. Cut holes on each side (for arm openings).
4. On black construction paper, draw and cut out dorsal fin, tail flukes and 2 pectoral fins. Make tabs for each.
5. Fold tabs and attach dorsal fin to middle of back, tail flukes to bottom edge of back and pectoral fins on each side above armholes.



Granny's Clan: A Tale of Wild Orcas
Dr. Sally Hodson

MOVIE REVIEW

Name	Date
-------------	-------------

MOVIE TITLE _____

Movie Characters _____

Movie Story _____

Did you like it? Why or Why not? _____

What was your favorite part? _____

What was your least favorite part? _____

Did you like the ending? _____

Did you like the characters? _____

Did you like the story? _____

What did you learn about orcas? _____
