

Paper 2: Animal power

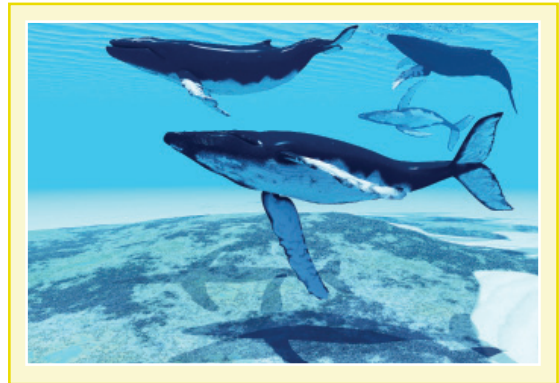
Behaviour

Whales are usually quite active in the water. Most whales *breach* out of the water and some slap their tails on the surface, perhaps to warn one another of local danger. They communicate through loud, singing sounds, sometimes audible miles away. Travel may be solitary or in pods during annual migration to breeding grounds.

Threats

The growth of the whaling industry over the last few centuries saw whales hunted for oil and food, leaving many species such as Blue Whales endangered. The negative depiction of the ferocious fictional whale, *Moby Dick*, encouraged human antipathy.

Modern reforms and changed public attitudes have ended the whaling industry in most countries, but nevertheless some countries still continue their annual whale hunts. Further threats come from beaching; contaminated and polluted waters; and reduced populations of krill due to climate change raising temperatures in the Antarctic Ocean. (Krill is a small crustacean, the main food source for some whale species.)

**Breaching**

Whales sometimes leap out of the water, slapping the water loudly when coming down. Breaching may be for play, to loosen skin parasites or for communication.

Echolocation

Whales use sound to help them navigate and find things, usually high-pitched clicks that bounce off objects. The returning echo lets them gauge proximity, shape, size and texture.

Beaching

Whales sometimes come on to land, and can die if they become beached. They can beach in large numbers. No one quite knows why, though it is thought that their hearing has become damaged or confused.

Blubber

Blubber is an ingenious layer of insulating fat. It keeps the whale's temperature stable, stores food energy, and helps it to stay afloat; it ranges from 5cm thick (grey whales) to 30cm thick (blue whales).