
JACK, THE SEAL AND THE SEA

Author: Gerald Aschenbrenner
English adaptation: Joanne Fink
Publisher: Silver Burdett

THEME:

It's up to each of us to keep the ocean clean and free from pollution.

PROGRAM SUMMARY:

Jack spends his days sailing the sea and taking in nets full of half-dead fish, ignoring the polluted condition of the water. Then he finds an ailing seal and receives a message from the sea itself about its sorry state.

The feature book inspires LeVar to learn more about the preservation of our water and oceans. He joins ecologists on a Discovery Voyage in the San Francisco Bay where he finds out about a variety of marine life and the health of the bay. Viewers will also get a first-hand look at the clean up effort after a disastrous oil spill in Alaska.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Before viewing the program, discuss the concept of "pollution." What different types of pollution are the students aware of? What causes pollution?

Initiate a discussion of the students' awareness of water pollution. Depending upon where you live, they might describe evidence of pollution they have witnessed in lakes, ponds, rivers, or the ocean. What different pollutants have they seen? Make a list of these on the board. What other evidence of water pollution have they seen (e.g., odor of the water, unusual coloration, dying fish, etc.)?

At the end of the story, Jack is no longer a fisherman. What happened to Jack to cause him to change his life? Discuss with students whether they think Jack can make a difference.

After watching the program, discuss why it is so important to care for the earth's oceans.

Review the signs of a healthy ocean, as mentioned in the program (e.g., the abundance of animal plankton, the "clean" mud, the presence of several representatives of the food chain, etc.)

Pose the question to the students: "Who's responsibility is it to care for the earth?"

CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Use the five ocean-related **Reading Rainbow** programs listed under "Related Programs" as "cornerstones" to a theme unit study of the ocean. View the programs as a whole class and make them available to small groups to revisit as needed during their research in the unit. (Segments of other programs might be helpful to students, such as the journey of the loggerhead turtles in *Chickens Aren't the Only Ones* and the look at varieties of waterfowl in *Run-away Duck*.) Enlist the aid of the media specialist in locating resources about the ocean in general and ocean plants and animals.

Before watching the program, start a list of animals that live in or near the ocean, depending upon it for their livelihood. When the list begins to get long, suggest breaking it up into animal group categories, such as mammals, fish, birds, reptiles, etc. Display the lists so that students can add to them often. Start a list of sea plants, as well, and display it along with the animal groups. Some of the items on the list might be left on the board until students know more about which category they should be placed in (e.g., a skate).

Organize the class into small cooperative groups and assign each group one of the categories from above as their research topic. Before students begin their research, brainstorm types of information they hope to learn about their topic, such as where it is found, physical characteristics, what it eats, threats to its survival, and the like. Invite the groups to locate interesting or unusual facts about their subject, as well. The group's task is to conduct research and think of a creative way to present their findings. Allow students to choose from art (e.g., dioramas, posters, murals, models, mobiles, etc.), writing (e.g., group-written books, poems, journals, newspapers, magazines, etc.), or drama (enactments, puppetry, etc.), or combinations of all three.

Because of the in-depth nature and time required of such a unit study, utilize opportunities to tie the work into other areas of the curriculum. For example, in social studies, locate areas that are the focus of the different research projects on maps, discuss careers associated with ocean study, examine different types of communities that are near oceans and how the lives of the people are affected by what happens to the ocean. In math, compare differences in sizes of ocean plants and animals, examine symmetry and patterns in nature of ocean life, explore concepts of distance and time as they relate to animal migrations, consider large numbers in terms of schools of fish and collections of other ocean animals. In language arts, utilize ocean vocabulary in word study lessons, work on skills of locating information and paraphrasing, reading for different purposes, and distinguishing fiction and nonfiction. Work with art and music teachers on ocean theme-related activities that use their particular expertise.

The food chain in the ocean is dependent upon a healthy habitat. As students locate more and more information through their research, work as a class to construct several different food chains. Have some of the food chains contain people as the final link and others with larger mammals at the end. Discuss ways in which the food chain actually has no end.

Jack, the Seal and the Sea might lead students to investigating oil spills further. Have them take on the role of reporters to find facts about the Exxon Valdez disaster and others. Books, magazine articles, and newspaper clippings will be useful sources of information. (Check the school library's vertical file on the topic.) After students have collected their facts, have them prepare a one-page newspaper of information about oil spills and their effects on the ocean and its plant and animal life.

To give students an idea of how oil reacts in water, place some water in a shallow pan and add a few drops of motor oil to it (crude oil, such as that which comes from a tanker, is different, but students will get the idea). Have them pass some objects through the water, such as paper, feathers, stones, etc., noticing how the oil sticks to the object.

RELATED THEMES:

habitats
ecology

RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:

Program #61 — Dive To The Coral Reefs
Program #56 — Humphrey, The Lost Whale: A True Story
Program #5 — Louis The Fish
Program #83 — Sam The Sea Cow
Program #88 — Seashore Surprises

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Gerald Aschenbrenner is the author of the original version of *Jack, the Seal and the Sea*, which was published in German.

Joanne Fink enjoys writing and has worked as a children's book editor for several publishing houses. She translated *Jack, the Seal and the Sea* from German to English.

BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:

STERLING: THE RESCUE OF A BABY HARBOR SEAL
by Sandra Verrill White and Michael Filisky (Crown)

WATER: WHAT IT IS, WHAT IT DOES
by Judith S. Seixas, illus. by Tom Huffman (Greenwillow)

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MARINE BIOLOGIST
by David Paige, photos by Roger Ruhlin (Troll Associates)

SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:

OIL SPILL!
by Melvin Berger, illus. by Paul Mirocha (HarperCollins)

SPILL! THE STORY OF THE EXXON VALDEZ
by Terry Carr (Franklin Watts)

A RIVER RAN WILD
by Lynne Cherry (Gulliver Green/Harcourt Brace)

SAVE OUR OCEANS AND COASTS
by Ron Hirschi (National Audubon Society/Delacorte Press)

WORLD WATER WATCH
by Michelle Koch (Greenwillow)

MY GRANDPA AND THE SEA
by Katherine Orr (Carolrhoda)

PRINCE WILLIAM
by Gloria Rand, illus. by Ted Rand (Henry Holt)

THE LOST LAKE
by Allen Say (Houghton Mifflin)

AN OCEAN WORLD
by Peter Sís (Greenwillow)

SEA OTTER RESCUE
by Roland Smith (Cobblehill/Dutton)

A DROP OF WATER
by Walter Wick (Scholastic)

