

Island of the Blue Dolphins, Chapter 12
What Can You Do with a Whale Bone?

Grade Level

Upper Elementary: Third Grade through Fifth Grade

Subject

Literacy and Language Arts, Science, Social Studies

Common Core Standards

4.SL.1, 4.RL.1

Next Generation Science Standards

4-LS1-1

Background Information

In chapter 12, Karana uncovers whale rib bones from the beach to create the fence for her shelter. This fence is the first, and perhaps the most important, part of her shelter because it protects Karana and her food supply from the wild dogs and foxes on the island. This research activity is designed to help students learn more about whales. Students will also make a scale drawing to compare a whalebone fence to a human figure.

Ron Morgan's article "[An Account of the Discovery of a Whale-Bone House on San Nicolas Island](#)" is a great resource to learn more about the Lone Woman's shelter and to find photos to show your students after they complete the activity below.

Guided Research Task: This strategy provides students with research questions that can be answered by reading a provided set of sources.

Materials

- Copy of activity sheet for each student (provided)
- Research materials for each student, including links provided below if Internet access is available:
 - [Channel Islands National Park](#)
 - [American Cetacean Society](#)
- Photos of whales in article linked to above or chapter summary images from chapters [12](#) and [29](#)
- Class set of *Island of the Blue Dolphins*

Procedure

1. Give each student a copy of the activity sheet.
2. Give students time to complete each step of the activity.
3. Follow up with a discussion about what students learned.
4. To lengthen this activity: Ask students to choose one whale species for an independent research project.

Enrichment Activities

Reading and research prompt: Reread Chapter 12, and make a list of all the types of plants and animals that Karana mentions. Choose three animals and/or plants that interest you and do some research to find:

1. A photograph of each
2. The scientific name for the species
3. One additional fact about the species
4. Something you'd still like to know about the species (Note: Students can research answers on their own or the class can research these together)

Great resources on the *Island of the Blue Dolphins* website are:

- [Interactive Maps](#)
- [Island animals](#)
- [Island plants](#)

Name _____

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What Can You Do with a Whale Bone?

Part One:

Use the space below to write a short list of questions that you have about whales. For example: How big is the largest whale? What do whales need to survive?

Part Two:

Use the website(s) and/or research materials provided by your teacher to answer the questions below. Did the information you found in answering these questions answer any of the questions you listed above?

1. What species of whales live or travel through the Pacific Ocean near San Nicolas Island or Southern California?

2. Chose one species of whale that travels near San Nicolas Island. What is the average size for the adult male and adult female of this species?

3. Does this whale species migrate? If so, what is known about its migration?

4. What does this species eat? How does it feed? Does it have teeth or baleen?

5. Share another cool fact about this whale species.

Part Three:

Draw a fence made from whale rib bones. The website photos your teacher shares from chapters 12 and 29 will be helpful. Try to make your drawing as accurate as possible. For scale, include a picture of Karana standing next to her fence. Stick figures are okay! We don't know exactly how tall she was, so assume that she was about five feet tall.