

# LESSON: Lost on a Stormy Beach

**Story Reference:** *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Humane Heroes Volume I*, Story 9, "Beach Comber"

**Lesson Description:** Students learn about a young sea turtle who mysteriously arrived on a wintry beach in Canada. The dying turtle was not equipped to handle the frigid waters and nearly perished. Thanks to the onlookers who discovered the turtle and delivered him from the surf, an expert team of veterinarians and caregivers at the American Humane Conservation-certified Vancouver Aquarium were able to rehabilitate and save the sea turtle's life. They named him "Comber" after the beach where he was found. Comber was eventually flown back to his own warm habitat and released to live in the wild. In this lesson, students evaluate the importance of observation and coordination with local institutions, and they design their own animal observation tracker.

### ELA Alignment:

- Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

### Lesson Objectives:

- Identify animals that are native to the region and develop record-keeping and animal-observation questions.
- Identify local institutions that care for rescue animals.

### Vocabulary:

- Beachcombing
- Comber
- Hypothermia

### Materials:

- Beachcombing Graphic Organizer handout
- Notebook paper for taking notes

### Resource Links:

- Vancouver Aquarium – Ocean Pollution <https://www.youtube.com/user/VancouverAquarium/playlists>
- Shedd Aquarium – Helping Animals in Need <https://www.youtube.com/user/sheddaquariumchicago/playlists>

**Introduction:** Define beachcombing and discuss the value of observation (8 minutes)

- Invite students to share some things they might expect to see at the beach (e.g., sand, waves, rocks, tide pools, crabs, seagulls, shells, seaweed). They may need to visualize beach scenes from a movie or television show. Help students imagine how beaches might look in different locales and climates by asking the following questions:
  - *What are some colors you might see on a warm, sunny beach?* (Possible answers include yellows, blues, oranges, reds, and browns.)
  - *What are some colors you might see on a cold, wintry beach?* (Possible answers include grays, blues, or whites.)
- Ask students if they are familiar with the term “beachcombing.” Distribute the Beachcombing Graphic Organizer to assist them in arriving at a definition for the word. Alternatively, you can brainstorm about the term in a class discussion.
- Explain to students that beachcombers use keen observation and awareness skills to look for shells, driftwood, beach glass, or other interesting items washed up on the shore. Help the students connect the process of beachcombing to the broader themes of discovering nature, noticing details, and paying attention to wildlife.
- Point out to students that besides finding seashells, beachcombing could also help make them Humane Heroes. By using their skills of observation, the students could identify imperiled animals or sea life on a beach, call a local aquarium to notify experts in the field, and even volunteer on a clean-up operation. Discuss the observations a Humane Hero might make on the beach:
  - *What kind of sea life might we expect to see on the beach or in the waves?* (Possible answers include birds, crabs, clams, fish, sand dollars, sea lions, or other marine mammals.)
  - *What animals or objects would we not expect to see?* (Possible answers include trash, animals in distress, a beached turtle, whale, or sea lion.)
- Ask students to brainstorm about where the word beachcombing might have come from. They may make a connection to using a hair comb to sift through the sand in order to find shells.

**Read and Analyze:** Sentence-Phrase-Word (15 minutes)

- Introduce the story, “Beach Comber,” by telling students to imagine a beach in a cold northern climate during a winter storm. Prior to reading, tell the students to pay attention to how the stray sea turtle was rescued and rehabilitated.
- Hand each student a sheet of notebook paper and tell the students that as they read, they should take notes that summarize the story by identifying the most important idea(s) in the text.
- Ask students to pick out the sentence in the text that they find the most important. Tell them to write down three phrases from the text that most effectively support the main idea. Instruct the students to identify one word in the text that they feel is most essential to the overall meaning of the story. Encourage students to share their word with the class and explain why they chose it.

- Prompt further discussion with the following questions. Listen for answers that explain the importance of keen observation and awareness skills:
  - *Who first discovered Comber in the waves?*
  - *How might you describe the environment in which Comber was found?*
  - *What were two important observations about Comber when he was discovered?*
  - *How would you define the term “hypothermia” based on the information provided in the text?*
  - *What kinds of observations did the vets and caregivers make during Comber’s rehabilitation in order to determine when he was healthy again?*
  - *What was Comber’s ultimate fate?*
  - *What might have happened if he had not been discovered in the surf?*
  - *What are some qualities you observe in the vets and caregivers from Vancouver Aquarium in this story?*

**Guided Practice:** Develop an animal observation tracker (15 minutes)

- Conduct an informal class discussion about animals (common or rare) that might be seen on a discovery walk in the school area. Might there be birds? Squirrels? Pets? If there are no parks or natural areas close to the school, ask students to name some wild animals that might live in their state. Ask them to also think about animals that are rare in their area.
- Direct students to think about where (in their own environment) they might observe birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, or fish. It could be a backyard, window sill, school playground, town pond, or local park.
- Ask students to pretend that they are biologists whose mission is to record observations about any animals they might see. Tell the students that in order to complete this task, they will design an animal observation tracker. Explain to the students that they must first determine the types of information they should collect. Hand out notebook paper and ask the students to write down ideas about all the different types of information that would be useful to gather. Some possible data categories include the following:
  - Date, time, and location of the animal sighting
  - Description of the environment (e.g., forest, city park, zoo, beach, open field)
  - Description of the conditions (e.g., day/night, temperature, weather)
  - Description of the animal and its behavior (e.g., How old is the animal? What is it doing? What sounds is it making? What is it eating? Where is it going?)
  - Assessment of whether the animal appears to be healthy and normal or doing something out of the ordinary (e.g., a nocturnal animal seen during the day)
  - Possible explanations about the animal’s behavior
  - Degree to which the animal appears to be in danger or distress
  - Artistic rendering of the animal (e.g., a quick sketch with labeled physical characteristics)

**Closing:** Identify local animal care organizations (7 minutes)

- Help students identify local animal care organizations and pose the following question to students:
  - *What would have happened to Comber if the people who discovered him tried to rescue and rehabilitate him without the help of expert animal caregivers at the Vancouver Aquarium?*
  - *If a wild animal was discovered to be in danger, who would you call?*

# Humane HEROES Beachcombing Graphic Organizer

<p>Definition in your words</p>	<p>Facts/characteristics</p>
<p>Examples</p>	<p>Non-examples</p>

Word