

Return to the Sea

Story Reference: *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Humane Heroes Volume III*, Story 5, "Levi's Luck," and Story 9, "Saving JJ"

Lesson Description: Marine mammals found stranded on the beach are not likely to survive without human care and intervention. Sometimes a rehabilitation effort involves thousands of volunteer hours and intensive veterinary care. In two such instances, a distressed harbor porpoise and a baby gray whale were saved miraculously from the brink of death. Both animals were successfully rehabilitated by expert caregivers at local aquariums and then released back into the wild. In this lesson, students take a perspective on human responsibility in animal rescue and rehabilitation.

ELA Alignment:

- Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

Lesson Objectives:

- Take a perspective on human moral responsibility involved in animal rescue efforts.

Vocabulary:

- Endangered

Materials:

- Index cards

Resource Links:

- SeaWorld Endangered Species Profiles
<https://seaworld.org/en/animal-info/animal-infobooks/endangered-species/species-profiles>

Introduction: Identify endangered species (8 minutes)

- Share with students this quote by Dr. Robin Ganzert, President and CEO of American Humane,
 - *"In the face of what experts are calling a 'Sixth Mass Extinction,' with animal species disappearing so fast that two-thirds of all wild animals could be gone by the end of the decade, today's zoos, aquariums, and conservation centers have become modern day arks of hope for many species."*
- Ask students to reflect on this quote and think of some wildlife they know to be currently endangered. Divide students into two groups and have each group produce a list of endangered species. If possible, allow students to search online. The groups should limit their lists to a maximum of ten. Have each group share its responses with the class.
 - Some possible endangered species might be: Siberian tigers, Asian elephants, mountain gorillas, sea turtles, black rhinoceros, condors, orangutans, manatees, giant pandas, and African penguins.
- Next, ask students to consider the roles of zoos, aquariums, and conservation centers. Referring back to the quote, ask students to consider some ways these institutions might function as "arks of hope" for animals. Some possible explanations might be:
 - Educating people about unique and endangered animals
 - Housing and sustaining critically endangered animals
 - Providing rescue and rehabilitation of distressed animals
 - Funding conservation projects
- Explain to students that they will learn about two rescue stories in which the animals were rehabilitated and released back into the wild. One rescue effort was carried out by the Vancouver Aquarium, and the other by SeaWorld in San Diego. Ask students to contemplate why zoos and aquariums assume this responsibility. More generally, ask students to contemplate if human beings have a responsibility to save animals in distress? Why or why not?

Read and analyze: Circle of viewpoints (15 minutes)

- Maintain students in their two groups. Assign one group to read "Levi's Luck," and the other group to read "Saving JJ." Explain to students that they will be reading two different accounts of marine mammals who were both found stranded on the beach. As they read, tell students to take note of the perspectives of the rescue teams and volunteers who were instrumental in saving the lives of the animals. What were their thoughts, actions, and attitudes about the rescues? Students may also consider the perspective of the animals themselves.
 - What were the perspectives on chances for survival when the animals were first discovered?
 - How did those perspectives change?
- After completing the reading, tell each group to arrange itself in a circle. Each student in the circle should take on a viewpoint answering the following three questions:

- I am thinking of [name the rescue] from the point of view of...
 - I think... [describe the rescue from the point of view of a person or animal in the story] because... [explain your reasoning].
 - A question/concern I have from this viewpoint is...
- Then, lead a class discussion and ask students from each group to share some of the questions and concerns that were raised during the circle of viewpoints activity. Invite students to respond to the questions raised with possible answers. Some possible questions might be:
- What are some reasons these animals were stranded in the first place?
 - Why did the rescue teams spend so much time and refuse to give up?
 - Why did researchers attach tracking devices to the animals?

Guided practice: Share perspectives on human responsibility toward animals (15 minutes)

- Break students into groups of 3-5. Hand out index cards for students to reflect individually and then write their thoughts on the following questions:
 - *As human beings, what is our responsibility toward the care and protection of animals? Justify your answer.*
 - *What are some reasons that others might disagree?*
- Taking turns, tell students to share their perspective with the group for a set time (1-2 minutes). While one student is sharing, instruct the other members to listen attentively without comment or interruption, then pause for 20-30 seconds of silence to consider what was said.
- When all students have shared, tell the group to discuss their responses for 5-10 minutes, referencing the comments that were made with statements like: "I agree with ____ and I want to add...", "My idea is slightly different from ____'s...", "____ has a good point, and I wonder if..." The groups should identify points of agreement and disagreement.

Closing: I used to think... now I think (5 minutes)

- Go in order around the room and ask each student to answer the question: *Why should human beings rescue and rehabilitate animals in distress?* Students should frame their answers as, "I used to think... now I think." Some possible answers might be:
 - I used to think that it is not important to care for injured animals, but now I think it is the right thing to do because they can have a chance at a good life.
 - I used to think that humans were not responsible for animals' distress, but now I think that some animals are in distress because of humans' actions.
 - I used to think that it was pointless to understand how and why animals are injured or distressed, but now I realize it is important to learn about the causes of distress and how to prevent these causes. When we take care of animals who are in distress we might learn about the causes of distress and how they can be prevented.