

# WE ARE THE SEA

This resource has been produced for About Us as part of UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK.

This interdisciplinary resource brings together creative writing, literature and science: teachers can use it in the classroom to explore literary techniques in scientific contexts, and to explore the creativity behind scientific themes. Older students can use the resource in their own time to further their reading and generate ideas for poems of their own.

## CURRICULUM LINKS

### England:

English: Writing & Reading Composition  
Science: Working Scientifically, Living Things & Their Habitats (Y4–6)

Key Stages: KS1, KS2

### Northern Ireland:

Language & Literacy: Writing & Reading  
The World Around Us: Interdependence, Place  
Key Stages: Foundation, KS1, KS2

### Scotland:

Languages: Literacy & English – Writing & Reading  
Sciences: Planet Earth  
Levels: First Level, Second Level

### Wales:

Languages, Literacy & Communication: Literature  
Science & Technology: Being Curious, The World Around Us  
Progression Steps: PS2, PS3

## AGES 5–11

### Topics

- whales
- humans and the sea
- sea life
- echolocation
- identity and diversity
- sustainability and our future

### Literary features

- point of view
- comic voice

This resource looks at Isaac Graf’s poem ‘The New Guy’, it was an award-winning poem in a previous Poetry Society competition for young people aged 11–17. In the poem, Graf explores the relationship between humans and marine life by imagining the submarine as a strange new aquatic creature.

The resource contains discussion and writing prompts for young people to engage with the text and create their own poem in response.

## GETTING STARTED

The poem you are about to read is all about how whales might react to the arrival of a strange new creature – a submarine. It encourages us to think about the relationship between man-made objects and animals that live under the sea.



## KEY INFORMATION

**Whales belong to a group of sea creatures called cetaceans. There are around 90 species of cetaceans, including whales, dolphins, and porpoises.**

Like humans, whales are mammals – not fish. Even though they live in the sea, just like us they need air to survive, so they have to come to the surface to breathe. Whales also give birth to live young (instead of laying eggs) and the mother whale produces milk for feeding her babies.



Because it's dark in the ocean, some whales use their ears to 'see'. This is one example of how animals have adapted to use their environment to their advantage. These whales send out a sound and listen for the echoes. The strength of the echo helps them judge what is around them and how far away things are. This is called echolocation. Imagine standing in a cave and clapping your hands – could you tell how wide the cave is judging by the echo?

## MORE ABOUT ECHOLOCATION (FOR OLDER PUPILS)

Echolocation works because soundwaves bounce off surfaces. The [speed of sound](#) in water is 1.5 km s<sup>-1</sup> – four and a half times faster than in air, so whales can get this information much more accurately and quickly than we could! If soundwaves didn't reflect off surfaces, what would happen? Can you make any comparisons with light waves and how we see?

Whales are also famous for making musical sounds, known as 'whale song'. Some environmentalists are concerned that the ambient noise made by ships and sonar are disrupting whales' communication and ability to navigate.

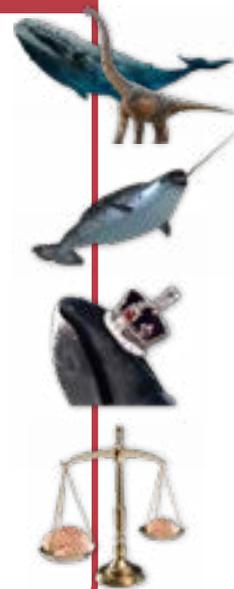
### DID YOU KNOW?

**Blue whales** are the largest creature ever to have lived on Earth. They can be more than 30 metres long – much bigger than any dinosaur.

There is a type of whale called a **narwhal**, which has a long spiralled tusk coming out of its head – like a unicorn under the sea!

**Bowhead whales** can live over 200 years. That means there could be whales alive today who were born before Queen Victoria came to the throne.

**Sperm whales** have the largest brain of any creature on Earth. Their brains can be as heavy as 9kg, the weight of a small dog.



Lots of the information collected here came from the Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC), a charity dedicated to protecting whales and dolphins. You can find out more facts about these animals on their [Kidzone](#), or teachers can access their free [resources](#) for the classroom.

# NOW LET'S THINK ABOUT THIS TOPIC IN THE FORM OF A POEM...

Here is 'The New Guy', by Isaac Graf

## THE NEW GUY

All the whales wonder  
at the new guy  
in the sea.  
Metal,  
finless,  
with his one stalk eye.

The new guy's not  
real social,  
he cruises by himself.  
And rumour has it,  
he's controlled  
by little people  
from somewhere else.

**Read the poem on your own and spend a few minutes thinking about it. Then read it aloud to a friend, your class, a pet, or even yourself. When you're reading it aloud, decide whether you should read it in a funny or a serious way. Why have you made this choice?**

- What is this poem about?
  - Who is the 'new guy' in the poem? What does he look like? Draw a picture of him.
  - Is the new guy an animal?
  - Which details in the poem give us a clue about the new guy's identity, even though he is not named? Think about physical description.
  - Whose point of view is represented in the poem? Through whose eyes do we see the new guy?
  - How might the poem be different if it was written from the new guy's own point of view?
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- Do you find the poem funny? Why? Is there anything surprising about the poem?
  - How would you describe the tone of the poem? Is it formal and serious, or relaxed? Can you explain how the poet has created that tone?
  - What effect do you think human activity has on sea life? Is there anything we should be doing to change it?
  - Can you imagine a conversation between the whales and the new guy? What might they say to each other? If you are working with a partner, you could even act it out.



## WRITING YOUR OWN POEM

To warm up your creative muscles, first rewrite this poem from the new guy's point of view. What does he think about the whales? What do the little people controlling him think? Try to think about how the new guy would interact with the whales and other sea creatures. You could start your poem with 'The new guy wonders at...'

Now write your own poem from the point of view of another sea creature. For example, an octopus, a fish, a shark, or a crab. What other signs of humans might the creature see under the sea, such as floating plastic, fishing nets, or a buoy? How might they react?



### EXPLORE MORE...

If you liked these activities and want to explore more under the sea poetry, check out this [resource](#) The Poetry Society produced for National Poetry Day 2021 on teenager Theodora Shillito's poem 'The Story of Squiddly Diddly'.

## NEXT STEPS

For more poetry opportunities, check out Young Poets Network, The Poetry Society's free online platform for poets worldwide up to the age of 25. You'll find features, challenges and competitions to inspire your own writing, as well as new writing from young poets, and advice from the rising and established stars of the poetry scene. [youngpoetsnetwork.org.uk](http://youngpoetsnetwork.org.uk)

### About this project

About Us is one of ten commissions for UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK. The project explores the infinite ways we are connected to the universe, the natural world and one another. A major live show toured the UK in spring 2022.

59 Productions is an award-winning design studio and production company who created the breath-taking video design for the London 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony. Stemettes is an award-winning social enterprise working to bring young women and non-binary young people into Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) careers. The Poetry Society is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and is one of the UK's most dynamic arts organisations, championing poetry for all ages.