

BLACKFISH

NEVER CAPTURE WHAT YOU CAN'T CONTROL.



EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>BLACKFISH</i> – WHY YOU SHOULD WATCH THIS FILM WITH YOUR STUDENTS	3
KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES	3
RECOMMENDED SUBJECT AREAS	3
KEY THEMES	3
RECOMMENDED AGE LEVEL	3
ABOUT THE GUIDE	3
ABOUT THE MOVIE	3
ABOUT THE DIRECTOR	4
MEDIA LITERACY: INTRODUCING STUDENTS TO <i>BLACKFISH</i>	4
MEDIA LITERACY ACTIVITY 1: PRIMING FOR MEDIA LITERACY	4-5
PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITY 1 – CLASSROOM TILIKUM	5
PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITY 2 – “DOCUMENTARIES” 4 CORNERS	5
PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITY 3 – THE KWL CHART	5
DURING VIEWING	6
POST-VIEWING ACTIVITY 1 – RETURN TO THE KWL CHART	6
POST-VIEWING ACTIVITY 2 – A RESPONSE TO A RESPONSE	6
ADDITIONAL CONTEXTS: ZOOS AND MARINE CENTRES	7
ACTIVITY 1 – PAST/PRESENT/FUTURE ZOO JIGSAW	7
ADDITIONAL CONTEXTS: ORCAS	8
CULMINATING ACTIVITY: MAKING A DIFFERENCE	8-9
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	10
APPENDIX A: MEDIA LITERACY AND <i>BLACKFISH</i>	11
APPENDIX B: <i>BLACKFISH</i> KWL CHART	12
APPENDIX C: CULMINATING ACTIVITY RESEARCH TEMPLATE	13
APPENDIX D: MAKING A DIFFERENCE PLANNING TEMPLATE	14
APPENDIX E: CULMINATING ACTIVITY MARKING RUBRIC	15

"When you look into their eyes, you know someone is home, somebody's looking back. You form a very personal relationship with your animal." – *John Jett, former SeaWorld trainer*

BLACKFISH – WHY YOU SHOULD WATCH THIS FILM WITH YOUR STUDENTS

Since its release in 2013, *Blackfish* has gained much attention from critics and the general public. This film should be essential viewing in classroom settings as well. It serves to raise awareness of important issues including capitalism, ecology, animal behaviour and conservation. It also provides critical reflections on how we spend our time and money on the entertainment industry. This film will inspire your students to think critically, be engaged and make changes in their own lives and consumption habits. Most importantly, your students will enjoy this film! It will encourage discussion and debate and promote a lively and collaborative learning environment.

KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Critical thinking skills
- Media literacy skills
- Heightened awareness of issues including animals in captivity, ecology, animal biology, endangered species, consumerism, sociology
- Opportunity for youth engagement
- Basic understanding of social constructivism

RECOMMENDED SUBJECT AREAS

Media Studies, English Language Arts, Ethics & Law, Environmental Studies, Sociology, Social Justice, Biology, Science, Science & Society

KEY THEMES

Environmental Science, Animal Biology, Genetics, Sociology, Science & Society, Consumerism & Capitalism, Environmental Justice, Popular Culture, Travel & Tourism

RECOMMENDED AGE LEVEL

Due to some graphic content, this film is recommended for students aged 13 and above. It is always recommended that you preview a film before showing it to a group of students.

ABOUT THE GUIDE

This guide is designed to accompany the film *Blackfish*. It uses the film as a starting point for integrating core concepts of media literacy, critical thinking and social advocacy skills in your classroom. The guide includes pre-, during and post-viewing discussion questions and activities. It provides contextual information about the documentary genre; orcas; zoos and marine centres. The guide is organized to support a unit of 8–10 lessons built around the film, but with supplemental resources it can easily be expanded. A final culminating activity has been included that focuses on developing a plan of action for student activism. Watching *Blackfish* could be divided into two or three classroom periods, with time given as needed before and after each viewing to discuss the film.

Blackfish makes an important statement about marine animal conservation, and forces viewers to consider their position on animal ethics. At the same time, the movie utilizes techniques that heighten the emotional response of viewers. Students should be encouraged to ask probing questions about what they see, and what they *don't* see, in the film. By asking these questions, students come through the movie as more media-literate viewers, able to separate intellect from emotion when evaluating their position on something they screen.

ABOUT THE MOVIE

"There is something absolutely amazing about working with an animal. You are a team and you build a relationship together, and you both understand the goal and you can help each other." – *Mark Simmons, former SeaWorld trainer*

In the summer of 2010, Dawn Brancheau, a renowned SeaWorld trainer, was killed by Tilikum, a 12,000-pound (5,400-kilogram) orca. After reading the article "The Killer in the Pool," written by Tim Zimmerman (outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/nature/The-Killer-in-the-Pool.html?page=all), director-producer Gabriela Cowperthwaite was inspired to begin chronicling Tilikum's story. Of her research process, Cowperthwaite states: "For two years we were bombarded with terrifying facts, autopsy reports, sobbing interviewees and unhappy animals – a place diametrically opposite to its carefully refined image. But as I moved forward, I knew that we had a chance to fix some things that had come unravelled along the way. And that all I had to do was tell the truth."

Blackfish compiles shocking footage and emotional interviews to explore the creature's extraordinary nature, the species' cruel treatment in captivity, the lives and losses of the trainers and the pressures brought to bear by the multibillion-dollar sea-park industry. This emotionally wrenching, tautly structured story challenges us to consider our relationship to nature, and reveals how little we humans have learned from these highly intelligent and enormously sentient fellow mammals.

(Excerpts taken from blackfishmovie.com.)

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Gabriela Cowperthwaite is a documentary filmmaker who for more than 12 years has directed, produced and written a variety of real-life stories. She has directed, written and produced for ESPN, National Geographic, Animal Planet, Discovery and History Channel, including History Channel's "Shootout!" series, for which she and a cameraman were embedded with 300 Marines at Twentynine Palms, and "Disaster Tech," a documentary series about the biggest natural disasters in world history.

In 2010 she co-directed *City Lax: An Urban Lacrosse Story*, for which Gabriela was immersed in the inner city for eight months, chronicling the lives of six youths and their families as they struggle through middle school in their gang-ridden neighbourhoods. Her most well-known work is **Blackfish**, which has been listed as one of the highest-grossing documentaries of all time.

(Excerpts taken from gabrielaowperthwaite.com.)

MEDIA LITERACY: INTRODUCING STUDENTS TO BLACKFISH

"Unapologetically designed both to inform and affect, Gabriela Cowperthwaite's delicately lacerating documentary **Blackfish** uses the tragic tale of a single whale and his human victims as the backbone of a hypercritical investigation into the marine-park giant SeaWorld Entertainment." – Jeannette Catsoulis, *The New York Times*, July 2013 (nytimes.com/2013/07/19/movies/blackfish-a-documentary-looks-critically-at-seaworld.html?_r=0)

An effective documentary does more than just open a window into the lives of its subjects. It informs viewers in such a way that the audience is engaged with, or drawn into, the material. The documentary must strike a balance between the information it imparts and its aesthetics in order to reinforce the film's message. Students can "read" a documentary film, just like they read printed texts, and as they analyze argumentative techniques, we should pay attention to the filmmaker's effectiveness in presenting her subject matter. You can find an NFB teacher's resource on documentary creation and interpretation here:

teachingdocumentary.com/resources

When watching **Blackfish**, students can begin by thinking about how the film's *message* uses an *approach* to achieve a *purpose*. Consider *Super Size Me*, the 2004 documentary by Morgan Spurlock about McDonald's:

- The message: McDonald's is not part of a healthy lifestyle
- The approach: Humorous, "first-person" narrative
- The purpose: Raising awareness for social welfare issues

While few might be surprised by the result of *Super Size Me*, another documentary released in 2009 called *Fat Hat* follows a high school teacher from Iowa who lost almost 40 pounds eating McDonald's for 90 days. (See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fat_Hat for more information.) He had his students plan out his meals for

him, and kept to a strict calorie limit. This is quite the contrary approach to *Super Size Me*, where Spurlock often ate as much as 5,000 super-calories in a day.

When identifying the message, approach and purpose of **Blackfish**, we can break it down as follows:

- The message: Tilikum's confinement contributed to his attacks
- The approach: Emotional, "interview" narrative
- The purpose: Highlighting the treatment of marine animals in captivity

MEDIA LITERACY ACTIVITY 1 – PRIMING FOR MEDIA LITERACY

TIME: ½ TO 1 PERIOD

LEARNING OUTCOME – Watching documentaries requires the same critical considerations as other forms of media. Applying basic Media Literacy techniques to the **Blackfish** trailer before watching the movie will prepare students to apply those techniques throughout the viewing.

INSTRUCTIONS – The basic techniques of Media Literacy can be broken down into four main "responsibilities." Make sure that students understand their obligations as critical viewers before they watch the movie. Begin by introducing the four concepts below:

- 1 Awareness:** Students use attentive viewing skills while watching the documentary
- 2 Analysis:** Students judge the content/message and effectiveness of the film's arguments
- 3 Reflection:** Students think how the film's message connects to what they already know
- 4 Action:** Students focus new inquiries based on gaps in their understanding

A great way to check for understanding of these viewing responsibilities is to ask a question like, "How could you show that you are using awareness while watching a movie?" Watch the **Blackfish** trailer (blackfishmovie.com/trailer) and have a discussion about it using the four concepts step by step. Starting questions for each concept include:

- 1 What techniques does the trailer use to draw you into the story?
- 2 What is the trailer's intended message/agenda? Who are the "good/bad" guys?
- 3 What background knowledge/opinions do students bring to the movie?
- 4 What critical skills should be emphasized while watching the movie?

For senior students, APPENDIX A provides a more extensive breakdown of Media Literacy skills, including 8 Key Concepts from the Association for Media Literacy (AMA) and questions that relate *Blackfish* to each concept.

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITY 1 – CLASSROOM TILIKUM

TIME: 1 PERIOD

LEARNING OUTCOME – By modelling Tilikum within the classroom, students will understand the size and scope of the animals discussed in the movie. Applying context and visualization can be an effective method to engage different learners who need to be able to see something to understand it.

INSTRUCTIONS – Tilikum is approximately 23 ft (7 m) long, his pectoral fins are each 6.5 ft (2 m) long, and he weighs almost 12,000 lbs (5,400 kg). Using tape, measure out Tilikum on the floor of the room. If additional time and space are available, have students build a scale frame model of Tilikum. Now, remind them that the “module” Tilikum was once kept in an enclosure measuring 20 ft x 30 ft (6 m x 9 m). What are the dimensions of your classroom? Students can discuss their responses to this activity in a group or as a journal activity.

Extension ideas: On average, a killer whale eats 500 lbs (227 kg) every day. If your school has a cafeteria, how much food is consumed in a day? Wild orca whales can travel up to 100 mi (160 km) in one day. On a map, chart how far Tilikum could travel from your school in one day.

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITY 2 – “DOCUMENTARIES” 4 CORNERS

(TIME: LESS THAN 1 PERIOD)

LEARNING OUTCOME – Four corners is an instructional strategy that allows students to focus their thinking on a topic and practise sharing their opinions with a smaller audience before sharing with the larger class. This activity also functions as assessment FOR learning, allowing teacher and students to understand (and see) the class position on documentaries as a media form.

INSTRUCTIONS – Divide the classroom into four sections: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Read/display one of the statements below and ask students to move to the appropriate section of the room. In pairs and then as a group, have students discuss their position. Ask a volunteer from each corner to share their thoughts with the class. Consider having the students write/present their personal opinions following the activity. Use this collected information to ensure that the student voice is represented during the *Blackfish* unit.

Some suggested statements include:

Documentary films should be realistic.

Documentary films should persuade the audience or make some political point.

Documentary film is the best film genre to push for social change.

Documentary filmmakers should not try to edit their films to make them more dramatic and entertaining.

Documentaries show reality.

Documentaries should show both sides of a story.

The Bachelor or *Survivor* can be considered documentaries.

Documentaries should aim to objectivity.

Documentaries should aim to revolutionize the way we think.

Editing is the most important element of making documentaries.

Source: teachingmedialiteracy.pbworks.com/w/page/19924124/DocumentaryFilm

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITY 3 – KWL CHART/CHAIN REACTION

LESS THAN 1 PERIOD

LEARNING OUTCOME – A KWL chart activates students' prior knowledge and helps to set classroom focus exploration. Awareness of student interests allows a teacher to direct learning appropriately. Introducing the element of sharing what students *know* and *want* to know, as a class, allows different perspectives to be included.

INSTRUCTIONS – Hand out the KWL chart (APPENDIX B) to the class. It includes sections for recording the ideas of the individual student and the class on what they know. Prior to viewing the film, give students 5–10 minutes to fill in the individual K & W sections of the handout, and inform them that they will share one comment from each section with the class. As each student presents his/her ideas, allow another student to answer/reflect on/respond to what they have heard before presenting their own comments. Encourage students to fill in the “My Class” section of the handout as new ideas and questions are introduced. These questions and answers can also be used to create a classroom Mind Map for the movie, and you can refer to these questions throughout the unit. For tech-accessible classrooms, consider software that will allow you to track this information more easily:

Free Mind: freemind.sourceforge.net/wiki/index.php/Main_Page

VUE (Visual Understanding Environment): vue.tufts.edu

DURING VIEWING

Ask students to watch *Blackfish*. It is important that they keep in mind two differences between reading and watching media. One, video adds multimedia elements (audio, video, text, editing, etc.) that allow the creators to both *tell* and *show* a story. In documentaries specifically, voice-over narration is used to frame the sound and images in the video, influencing a viewer's interpretation. Two, the continuous stream of messages presented in video media makes it harder to note, capture and remember specific details. This means that the *feelings* we get from watching often seem more important, or resonate with us more, than the *facts* presented. The following questions will help guide student viewing:

- 1 List the people interviewed by the director, Gabriela Cowperthwaite, in the film. What is their area of expertise? Does their testimony provide good *evidence* about the dangers of working with an orca whale, or is it mere *opinion*?
- 2 How are different voices in the film (i.e., narrator, SeaWorld employees, news reports) used to create meaning? How does each voice serve a different "purpose"?
- 3 Notice the visual techniques of the film: animated clips, news clips, "nature" footage, SeaWorld commercials. How do all these components add up to create the overall argument of the film?
- 4 As you watch the film, are there questions that remain unanswered or ideas that you would explore in more detail than the film does? Why might these directions not be pursued by the filmmakers?

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITY 1 – RETURN TO THE KWL CHART/CLASS DISCUSSION

LESS THAN 1 PERIOD

LEARNING OUTCOME – Returning to the KWL chart following the viewing of *Blackfish* will allow students to consider the impact of the movie. By sharing their learning in small groups, connections will be formed between students and new inquiries for discovery will begin.

INSTRUCTIONS – Ask students to return to their KWL charts. Allow them time to individually fill in the L section of the handout. In small groups, students can share their learning with others and see if they can assist with any unanswered questions other students may have in the W section of their handout. Have each group present their learning to the class, and allow these ideas to spark an open discussion about the movie. If needed, use the starter questions below:

- How has your opinion of the subject changed?
- Were you surprised by anything you saw? What was it?
- Why do you feel this movie was made?
- What was the most/least effective argument in the movie?

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITY 2 – A RESPONSE TO A RESPONSE...

1 TO 2 PERIODS

LEARNING OUTCOME – Making an informed decision requires students to consider multiple viewpoints. This activity offers students the opportunity to be critical of a dialogue *between* texts. By charting their response to the articles, students focus their understanding of the differing positions.

INSTRUCTIONS – When we watch a successful documentary, we feel a connection to the subject—an emotional response. *Blackfish* is a very powerful movie, and it's likely that students will feel upset about the treatment of animals at SeaWorld. However, it is important to remind students to maintain emotional distance, especially when watching a movie specifically structured to tug at our heartstrings.

SeaWorld chose not to participate in the filming of *Blackfish*. Following the movie's release, the company responded by highlighting some of the important progress SeaWorld has achieved regarding the rescue and rehabilitation of marine animals. This activity asks students to recognize that this is not a one-sided issue, and noting the nuances of the opposing arguments will help develop their critical thinking skills. Below are four articles related to the release of *Blackfish*. The first two are press releases from SeaWorld, and the next two are responses from Gabriela Cowperthwaite and the Oceanic Preservation Society.

Have students read one (or all) of the articles and indicate sections of the arguments that they agree AND disagree with. They should identify when an *emotional* or *intellectual* argument is being made. When gathering a summary of all four articles, students will be able to see how both sides make convincing cases to support their beliefs. SeaWorld has many advocates and supporters for the work they do, so does the support SeaWorld provides outweigh the implications for the animals in captivity?

SeaWorld statement and Q&A:

cnn.com/2013/10/21/us/seaworld-blackfish-qa

Michael Scarpuzzi (senior SeaWorld employee) response:

cnn.com/2013/10/23/opinion/seaworld-blackfish-controversy

Gabriela Cowperthwaite's response to SeaWorld:

indiewire.com/article/television/gabriela-cowperthwaite-interview-blackfish-cnn

Oceanic Preservation Society response:

opsociety.org/PressReleases/SeaWorldOpenLetterRebuttal-OPS.pdf

ADDITIONAL CONTEXTS: ZOOS AND MARINE CENTRES

For educators looking to expand classroom inquiry, this section provides background information about the history of zoos and marine wildlife centres. The earliest “zoo” uncovered by archaeologists is found at Hierakonpolis, Egypt, and dates to approximately 3500 BCE. Evidence suggests that the city’s rulers kept a wild menagerie of elephants, hippos and wildcats as pets. The first public aquarium opened quite a bit later (1853) at the London Zoo, and was known as the “Fish House.” See this London Zoo link for more information: zsl.org/zsl-london-zoo/exhibits/aquarium/the-history-of-the-aquarium,656,AR.html.

A recurring theme in *Blackfish* is the connection between the trainers and their animals, which is akin to a partnership. That relationship progresses over time and new, unforeseen challenges emerge, such as Dawn Brancheau’s death. A death in the family is difficult for both the trainers *and* the animals. For a similar, local Canadian story to share with your students, you can refer to the Toronto Zoo’s decision on the future of its elephant exhibit: torontolife.com/informer/features/2010/06/29/what-the-elephants-know/?page=all#tlb_multipage_anchor_2

ACTIVITY 1 – PAST/PRESENT/FUTURE ZOO JIGSAW

1 PERIOD

LEARNING OUTCOME – Jigsaw exercises promote team learning and team teaching skills. Becoming an expert on a topic promotes a student’s self-efficacy. When students can chart the evolution of zoos over time, they are able to place new events like the *Blackfish* story within the larger context.

INSTRUCTIONS – Below are columns of “classic,” “modern” and “future” zoos, each one having a significant place in the history of zoos. Divide the students into groups and have them research a zoo from each column. They should prepare a short summary of no more than 30 seconds on each of their selections. Then, the students create new groups that include an “expert” from each research team. In these groups, all students will have a chance to share with their classmates what they’ve learned about the zoo they each “represent.” Finally, have the students return to their original research team and discuss some of the new information that they discovered in their “expert” groups. What similarities or differences do the students see? What is the future of zoos? What will be the legacy? How do zoos fit within the framework of our own human development?

CLASSIC	MODERN	FUTURE
Noah’s Ark	Tiergarten Schönbrunn	Safari 7
Safari 7 safari7.org/en/about		
Hierakonpolis Zoo	Whipsnade Park Zoo	The Bat Tower
animalarchitecture.org/interview-with-joyce-hwang		
Tower of London	Snowdon Aviary (London Zoo)	Eden Falls
archdaily.com/42303/eden-falls-visiondivision		
Alexander the Great	Woodland Park Zoo – Seattle, WA	Oyster-Tecture
scapestudio.com/projects/oyster-tecture		

Close this activity by having a class discussion regarding pets and zoos, as this is a topic many students can speak about based on their own experiences. The domestication of animals has been one of the most important factors in the development of humanity. There is growing evidence that having a pet increases quality of life. At the same time, we may not be giving our domesticated pets the quality of life they deserve. What is the difference between keeping pets and maintaining zoos? Are the obligations the same?

ADDITIONAL CONTEXTS - ORCAS

Names have power. “Blackfish” is the English translation of a word Pacific Northwest indigenous peoples gave to killer whales, holding them in respectful regard while keeping a traditional safe distance. In Western cultures, killer whales were historically feared as dangerous, savage predators. Since the 1960s, the name “orca” has steadily grown in popularity to avoid the negative connotations of “killer,” and because, being part of the family Delphinidae, the species is more closely related to other dolphins than to whales.

The first written description of a killer whale was given *circa* 70 AD by Pliny the Elder, who wrote, “Orcas (the appearance of which no image can express, other than an enormous mass of savage flesh with teeth) are the enemy of [other whales]... they charge and pierce them like warships ramming.” In fact, the genus name *Orcinus* means “of the kingdom of the dead,” or “belonging to Orcus,” Orcus being the Roman god of the underworld. (Taken from *Killer Whales: The Natural History and Oenealogy of Orcinus Orca in British Columbia and Washington State, 2nd Ed.* / John K. B. Ford, Graeme M. Ellis, Kenneth C. Balcomb / UBC Press, 2000)

According to some authors, the name killer whale would be a mistranslation of the 18th-century Spanish name *asesina ballenas*, which means literally *whale killer*. Basque whalers would have given it such a name after observing pods of orcas hunting their own prey. One of the earliest modern uses of the term Blackfish can be found in the 1920 edition of the *Encyclopedia Americana*. For more information on this historical naming process, see en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Encyclopedia_Americana_%281920%29/Blackfish.

Should your classroom wish to explore the natural history of the orcas of British Columbia, including threats to their survival and possible solutions, Fisheries and Oceans Canada has created a detailed resource which can be found here: pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/education/documents/whale-epaulard/orca_bioaccumulation_overview_e.pdf. It includes lesson plans, links and additional valuable information.

Volunteer organizations across the world list orca and whale sightings in their area. For example, the Whale Museum, hotline.whalemuseum.org, and the Orca Network, orcanetwork.org/Main, trace the movement of the animals on the Pacific side of North America. Keep a map in the classroom and track the movement of the animals. By maintaining an ongoing relationship with the material, students learn that issues don't end at the end of a chapter in a textbook. The responsibility for this small action completed each day can be assigned on a rotating basis. Orca Tracker, a Google Earth feature, allows users to add content relating to orcas in the wild and captivity. You can find it here: maps.google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&t=h&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=101154382812226351290.00048a7f239e42c123a0f.

CULMINATING ACTIVITY: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

(This activity is adapted from material from Relief International, ri.org, and the Activism Institute, activisminstitute.org.)

Students want to make a difference, and they are often looking for ways to get involved. In this culminating activity, they will design a student activism project as a group. First, students will brainstorm and research a cause or issue that is relevant to their lives. They will analyze the information to determine their activism project's main message and develop a goal for their project. Possible ideas include: a school awareness campaign, a fundraising drive, or hands-on support for a local issue. Finally, the groups will present their findings and their action plan to the class.

By reflecting on issues that are important to them, students will begin to shape their personal activism profile and recognize what personal contributions they can make. They will find something they believe in, and think about what they could/should do to help the cause. Not every student will connect to **Blackfish**, or marine issues, so each group has the option to choose their own personal cause.

The activity is designed to be flexible for various grades. Teachers are encouraged to adapt the assignments and rubric template where necessary. For extension opportunities, allow students the opportunity to execute their plans inside or outside school hours. An excellent NFB documentary, *Hope Builders*, describes how an elementary school teacher in Quebec uses a new teaching method called “Action Research” to inspire his students to take up environmental challenges: nfb.ca/film/hope_builders/trailer/hope_builders_trailer.

The following section breaks down the four steps for this culminating activity: Extended Brainstorm (Thinking); Research (Knowledge); Creating an Action Plan (Application); and Presenting the Plan (Communication).

1 EXTENDED BRAINSTORM (THINKING)

When brainstorming, students should be reminded of the “DOVE” brainstorming technique:

- **Defer judgment:** All ideas can be good ideas, so keep every option open.
- **Original:** Don't just allow for unusual ideas, encourage them.
- **Vast number:** It takes our brains a while to get warmed up.
- **Expand:** “Piggyback” off of other people's ideas and use them to inspire your own.

Using chart paper, the groups begin by creating a list of causes they would like to support (e.g., education, women's rights, clean water, computer/Internet access). Try to keep the causes as general as possible. Next, have each group select *at least FIVE* causes and consider the following ideas:

- What specific aspects/topics of your cause could be highlighted (e.g., “clean water” could be Great Lakes conservation or access for drought-inflicted communities)?
- What contributions/actions could be taken to support this cause?
- What organizations are already supporting this cause?
- Can you “make a difference?” How? Why?

At the end of the brainstorming session, each group should choose one or two general causes to research in the next section of the assignment.

2 RESEARCH (KNOWLEDGE)

Once each group has selected the causes that are meaningful to them, they need to research the *What/Why/How*. What is the issue? Why is the issue important? How can student groups effect change? Beyond these three questions, each group should prepare **three** additional research questions that are specific to their cause. These questions should inform their research and reflect the critical thinking skills that they have developed during the unit.

Once the questions have been selected, each group should find **at least three** Web resources that will help their research. Once the research is complete, each group should create a pro/con list about the merits of each cause. **Appendix C** provides a sample template for this research. Based on the brainstorming and research, it is now the group's responsibility to select the cause they will support in their action plan.

3 CREATING AN ACTION PLAN OUTLINE (APPLICATION)

Now it's time for the most important step: turning ideas into action. While developing the action plan outline, students will develop a sense of accountability and self-efficacy as they realize that they can *make a difference* about an issue that's important to them. The two most important aspects of the action plan are the **goal** and the **message**. To determine if their **goal** is effective, each group should consider the following series of criteria:

- **Outcome-oriented:** What will be different once the goal or objective is achieved?
- **Attainable:** People will support you if what you're seeking is possible.
- **Measurable:** Anyone should be able to look at your goal and see if it was achieved.
- **Targeted:** Taking action on one specific issue clarifies what actions should be taken.

Once they have identified their **goals**, students will need to develop an effective message. A message is a concise and persuasive statement that communicates *four* main points:

- **What** do you want to achieve?
- **Why** do you want to achieve it?
- **How** do you propose to achieve it?
- What **Action** do you want the audience to take?

It might be useful to prepare the questions and criteria above for your students in templates that will facilitate the organization of their “action plan.”

4 PRESENTING THE PLAN (COMMUNICATION)

Now it's time to share each group's vision with the rest of the class. Having already crafted a message and goal, groups should find that the presentations are easier to prepare. Each presentation should be about 5–10 minutes and should include the following information. See Appendix D for a template prepared for your students' presentation preparation, including the questions below. See Appendix E for a marking rubric you can consult in order to evaluate your students' work.

- What is your group's goal and message?
- What other causes did you consider? Why did you choose this cause?
- What did you discover while doing your research?
- Why did you decide on this action plan?
- One or two visual/audio aids that add impact to the presentation (object, music, PowerPoint, video clip, famous speech)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ORCA AND DOLPHIN DOCUMENTARIES

keikotheuntoldstory.com

Chronicling Keiko, the star of *Free Willy*. Includes school curriculum support

thecovemovie.com

Includes opportunities for students to get involved

OCEAN EDUCATION

education.nationalgeographic.com/education/program/oceans-education/?ar_a=1

National Geographic "Oceans" resources

cgeducation.ca/resources/learning_centre/matrix.asp

Canadian Geographic resources

seaworld.org/en/Just-for-Teachers/Classroom-Resources

SeaWorld's online educational resources, including "Shamu TV"

GETTING INVOLVED - GENERAL

freethechildren.com/get-involved/we-school/resources-curriculum-and-lesson-plans

Downloadable resources from Free the Children for getting students involved in activism

rock-your-world.org

Students effecting change within their schools

GETTING INVOLVED - WATER

marinebio.org

Inspiring conservation and education through the wonders of the ocean

ec.gc.ca/eau-water/default.asp?lang=En&n=65EAA3F5-1

Environment Canada's water conservation website

GETTING INVOLVED - ORCAS

theorcaproject.wordpress.com

Raising awareness of orcas in captivity, orcalab.org. A small whale research station in British Columbia that studies the wild without interfering with lives or habitat

MEDIA LITERACY

aml.ca

The Association for Media Literacy, a Canadian organization interested in the impact of media on culture

edu.gov.on.ca/eng/studentsuccess/thinkliteracy/files/thinklitmedia.pdf

The Ontario student success guide for cross-curricular media literacy skills

APPENDIX A

MEDIA LITERACY AND BLACKFISH

1 All media are constructions. This is arguably the most important concept. Media does not simply reconstruct reality; instead, it is carefully curated and constructed to reflect the goals, intent and biases of the creators. Media Literacy works toward deconstructing these constructions (i.e., taking them apart to show how they are made).

*How do the conventions used in **Blackfish** help to convince us that it is representing reality?
Who is represented in **Blackfish**? Who is omitted?
How might the omissions be significant?*

2 Media constructs versions of reality. The media are responsible for the majority of the observations and experiences from which we build up our personal understandings of the world and how it works. Thus the media, to a great extent, give us our sense of reality.

*What mediums of communication are involved in the construction of **Blackfish**?
What are the biases of this media form?
How does **Blackfish** utilize these biases to support its agenda?*

3 Audiences negotiate meaning in media. No two people experience the “same” thing from interacting with media. Instead, each of us finds or “negotiates” meaning according to individual factors: personal needs and anxieties, the pleasures or troubles of the day, racial and sexual attitudes, family and cultural background, moral standpoint and so forth.

*Is **Blackfish** appealing? To whom? To whom might it NOT be appealing? Why?
Which elements are used to attract the audience (visuals, sound, word choice, style, etc.)?
What assumptions does **Blackfish** make about its audience?*

4 Media messages have commercial implications. Media is influenced by commercial considerations that impinge on content, technique and distribution. Most media production is a business, and so must make a profit. Questions of ownership and control are central: a relatively small number of individuals control what we watch, read and hear in the media.

*Who is positively/negatively affected economically by **Blackfish**? How?
How was the production of **Blackfish** paid for? If the funders DON'T make a profit, what DO they get from the audience's consumption of the movie?
If **Blackfish** contains NO commercial implications, why was it created?*

5 Media messages contain ideological and value messages. All media products are advertisements in some sense proclaiming values and ways of life. The mainstream media convey ideological messages about issues explicitly or implicitly. Audiences need to be able to recognize and assess these value messages.

*Whose values are or are not represented in **Blackfish**?
Does **Blackfish** misrepresent any values or assume the audience will agree with its value messages?
Are your values/beliefs represented? Are your friends' values represented?*

6 Media messages contain social and political implications. The media have great influence in politics and in forming social change. They give us an intimate sense of national issues and global concerns, so much so that we have become a “global village.” Because media messages are shared, discussed and sometimes emulated, they need to be explored within a sociopolitical context to assess how they influence—or are influenced by—consumers.

*What assumptions does the producer make about the audience (gender, race, class, interests)?
What is **Blackfish**'s political point of view?
How might **Blackfish** influence its audience's political point of view?*

7 Form and content are closely related in media messages. As Marshall McLuhan noted, each medium has its own grammar and codifies reality in its own particular way. Therefore, each medium influences—and is influenced by—the content of the messages. Different media will report the same event, but create different impressions.

*How do the documentary form and genre shape the content of **Blackfish**?
How does the content of **Blackfish** influence the characteristics of the documentary form?*

8 Each medium has a unique aesthetic form. Just as we notice the pleasing rhythms of certain pieces of poetry or prose, so we ought to be able to enjoy the pleasing forms and effects of different media. It is often easier to consider aesthetics in media forms or texts that are purposefully artistic or entertaining: music, movies, TV shows.

*What sets of codes and conventions combine to communicate the aesthetics of **Blackfish**?
What techniques make this a pleasurable/unpleasurable text?*

SOURCES

aml.ca/category/about-us/what-is-media-literacy

medialit.org/reading-room/canadas-key-concepts-media-literacy

APPENDIX B

BLACKFISH K-W-L CHART

NAME: _____

WHAT I KNOW	WHAT I WONDER/WANT TO KNOW
MYSELF:	MYSELF:
MY CLASS:	MY CLASS:

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED
MYSELF:
MY CLASS:

APPENDIX C

CULMINATING ACTIVITY RESEARCH TEMPLATE

CAUSE/ISSUE: _____ **GROUP MEMBERS:** _____

What is the issue?	Why is it important?	How can we effect change?
Research Question #1:	Research Question #2:	Research Question #3:
Resource #1 and Notes:	Resource #2 and Notes:	Resource #3 and Notes:

PROS	CONS

APPENDIX D

MAKING A DIFFERENCE PLANNING TEMPLATE

GROUP MEMBERS: _____

<p>What general cause/issue did your group select?</p>
<p>Why did you select this cause?</p>
<p>Are you working on a local, national or international level to benefit your cause? Why?</p>
<p>What method(s) will you use to benefit this cause (education, advocacy, fundraising)?</p>
<p>What are your skills and talents as a group?</p>
<p>How will your project combine your skills and talents as a group with these methods?</p>
<p>Who can be a mentor or resource for your efforts? How can they help?</p>
<p>What is your Action Plan Goal? (Outcome Oriented/Achievable/Measurable/Targeted)</p>
<p>What is your Action Plan Message? (What is your goal? Why do you want to achieve it? How do you propose to achieve it? What action do you want others to take?)</p>
<p>What is the first step in achieving your goal?</p>

APPENDIX E

CULMINATING ACTIVITY MARKING RUBRIC

GROUP MEMBERS: _____ CAUSE SELECTED: _____

ESSAY RUBRIC	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 1
KNOWLEDGE: Extended Brainstorm	multiple options considered thoroughly reflects learning from unit clearly evidence of critical thinking to select cause 10 9.5 9 8.5 8	multiple options considered briefly reflects learning from unit to some degree evidence of some critical thinking to select cause 7.8 7.4 7.1	few options considered reflects limited learning from unit evidence of minimal critical thinking to select cause 6.8 6.4 6.1	only one or two options considered does not reflect learning from unit cause selected without reflection 5.8 5.4 5.1
THINKING: Research Worksheet	research questions and pro/con list developed with consideration all resources are appropriate and authentic notes are thorough and thoughtful 10 9.5 9 8.5 8	research questions and pro/con list developed with some consideration most resources are appropriate notes are complete and mostly relevant 7.8 7.4 7.1	research questions and pro/con list developed with limited consideration range and scope of resources is limited notes are minimal or not relevant 6.8 6.4 6.1	research questions and pro/con list are undeveloped resources are not researched notes incomplete 5.8 5.4 5.1
APPLICATION: Planning Outline	ideas are well organized and interpreted thoroughly identifies how research and knowledge can be applied to project action plan message is crafted thoughtfully 10 9.5 9 8.5 8	ideas are somewhat organized and interpreted generally identifies how research and knowledge can be applied to project aspects of action plan crafted thoughtfully 7.8 7.4 7.1	ideas are unorganized and minimally interpreted limited application of research and knowledge to project action plan message is unclear 6.8 6.4 6.1	ideas are incomplete and not interpreted no evidence of application action plan message is ineffective 5.8 5.4 5.1
COMMUNICATION: Presentation	presentation is planned, collaborative and clearly communicated aids are relevant and support the presentation 10 9.5 9 8.5 8	presentation is somewhat planned and collaborated on aids somewhat support the presentation 7.8 7.4 7.1	presentation shows limited planning and collaboration aids do not support the presentation effectively 6.8 6.4 6.1	no planning or collaboration evident aids are inappropriate 5.8 5.4 5.1