

When the Whale Came to My Town

by Jim Young



Photo by Dan Bernstein

- 1 There's one time I'll never forget—never, as long as I live. That's the time when the whale came to our town.
- 2 I live in Provincetown, Massachusetts, in the United States. Behind my house is the beach and beyond that is the Atlantic Ocean. Most days I walk along the
- 3 beach on my way to school, and on the way home I look to see if my father's fishing boat is in. My father goes out early every morning to fish for perch and mackerel, flounder and tuna. My grandfather fished for a living, too, and my great grandfather

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hunted whales. I want to fish like my father, but I never want to hunt for whales. Too many of them have been killed already.

4 The day the whale came was a chilly and windy one in the middle of winter. I was on my way to school and alone on the beach. The sky was full of dark clouds, and the tide was going out.

5 I saw a big grey creature—bigger than a bus. It was partly on the sand and partly in the water. I looked at it, and I recognized what it was. It was a whale, and it was alive. I could hear it breathe and could see an eye move.

6 I listened to the breathing sound and wondered why the whale was there. Was it lost, or had it chased something into the shallow water? I've heard people in our town say that when whales want to die they sometimes swim to shore. Was this whale dying?

7 I didn't go to school that day. First I went home to tell everybody about the whale, and then I stayed with the whale—all day.

8 The old fishermen were the first to come down to the beach to see it. Their dogs circled around the whale and barked while the men stood way back and talked.

9 In the afternoon the children came and I knew school was out. Some of them poked their fingers in the whale's side and then yelled and jumped back. The fishermen said they had better be careful or the whale would swallow

them up.

10 The next day the Coast Guard boat came. The sailors on the boat wanted to tow the whale out to sea; so they fastened a rope around its tail.

11 On the beach the people watched while the boat towed the whale backwards out to sea. Backwards is no way for a whale to go out to sea.

12 Then there was an enormous splash, and since the boat wasn't moving, I knew that the rope had broken. The whale was swimming back to shore again.

13 The next day doctors came to examine the whale. They listened to its heartbeat, took its temperature, and said it was very sick. But they didn't know why.

14 Three times that day the Coast Guard boat towed the whale out to sea. Once the rope broke, and twice the whale swam back to shore after the Coast Guard released it.

15 The whale was lying on the sand again. It was tired, and it didn't want to swim in the ocean anymore.

16 By late afternoon I was alone with it. The whale's skin was shining fiery reddish gold in the setting sun. I put my hand on its gold skin and patted it once. I could feel its big body shake under my hand. I patted it goodbye.

17 The whale died then. It died on the beach behind my house.

18 That was the third and the last day that the whale spent in town.

How Well Did You Read?

Write the letter of the phrase that completes each sentence best.

- 1 People in the town said that whales sometimes swim ashore when they
 - a want to dry off
 - b want to die
 - c can't find food
- 2 The storyteller said he never wanted to hunt whales because
 - a too many have been killed already
 - b it's too dangerous
 - c it's too hard a job
- 3 The sailors tied a rope to the whale because
 - a they didn't want it to get away
 - b they wanted to tow it out to sea
 - c they wanted it to pull their boat
- 4 In the late afternoon the storyteller was alone with the whale and patted it
 - a to make it purr
 - b to say goodbye
 - c to see what a whale felt like
- 5 From the way he tells the story, we can guess that the storyteller
 - a probably felt friendly towards the whale and sad about its death
 - b probably thought that the whale's death was a lot of fun to watch
 - c was probably looking forward to a meal of whale meat
- 6 Choose another title for the story. A good one would be
 - a Hunting the Whale
 - b A Fisherman's Catch
 - c The Tired Giant

Learn about Words

Vocabulary

- A** You can often tell the meaning of a word by reading the words around it.

Look at each number in parentheses. Find the paragraph in the story with the same number. Then find the word that fits the given meaning. Write the word.

- 1 cool or cold (4)
 - 2 jabbed (9)
 - 3 eat; gulp down (9)
 - 4 tied (10)
 - 5 beating of the heart; sound of the heart pumping (13)
 - 6 turned loose (14)
 - 7 like fire; bright red (16)
- B** A word may have more than one meaning. Its meaning depends on the way it is used. The word *band* is an example.
- The *band* will play a march.
The hat had a wide *band* around it.
- Look at each number in parentheses. Find the paragraph in the story with the same number. See how the word in **heavy type** below is used in the paragraph. Decide whether it has meaning **a** or **b**. Write **a** or **b**.
- 8 **perch** (3)
 - a kind of fish
 - b place for a bird to sit
 - 9 **circled** (8)
 - a drew a circle
 - b walked in a circle
 - 10 **out** (9)
 - a away from the home or office
 - b ended; over for the day

Word Study

C The words *am, are, is, was, were,* and *been* are forms of the verb *to be*. Write the correct form of *to be* for each sentence below.

- 11 Joe (*is, are*) in school now.
- 12 There (*were, was*) no other way out.
- 13 My friends (*am, are*) coming with me.
- 14 It's (*be, been*) a long day.
- 15 Please (*be, are*) in the office on time.
- 16 I (*am, is*) going to tell them now.
- 17 We (*were, was*) almost home when the rain started.
- 18 Sue (*is, are*) coming to the party, too.

D To make sensible sentences, words must be put together in a meaningful order. Read each group of words below. If the words make a sensible sentence in their present order, write *S*. If they make no sense because the order is jumbled, write *J*.

- 19 The ship sailed away.
- 20 Children park the went to.
- 21 Hand cut Jack his.
- 22 Mary took her brother to the store.
- 23 Do you like bananas?
- 24 Deserted rode through streets the she.
- 25 Carl pressed his shirt with the iron.
- 26 Windows children looked out of the.

E Sentences have patterns. Here are sentences in three different patterns:

1. **N-V:** John ran.
(Noun) (Verb)
2. **N-V-N:** Sarah has shoes.
(Noun) (Verb) (Noun)
3. **N-LV-N:** Susan is a doctor.
(Noun) (Linking Verb) (Noun)

Compare the sentences below with the examples. Decide which pattern is used in each sentence. (Remember that *am, are, is, was,* and *were* are linking verbs.) Write *N-V, N-V-N,* or *N-LV-N*.

- 27 Paul opened his eyes.
- 28 Sally nodded.
- 29 That girl is a dancer.
- 30 Miguel is the president.
- 31 The bell rang.
- 32 Rosa finished her dinner.
- 33 The ship quivered.