



Whale Soup!

(Pre-visit)

Grade Level: 6th-8th

Purpose: Students will test their ability to catch prey by acting like baleen whales.
Warning! This could be very messy! Play outside!

Materials:

- Raisins
- Carbonated water or clear soda
- Clear plastic cups

Teacher Background Information:

Whales are marine mammals that can be split into one of two groups; odontocetes are toothed whales and mysticetes are baleen whales. Baleen whales do not have teeth. Instead they strain food from the water using strands of fingernail-like material called baleen. By opening their mouths, huge amounts of water are taken in and their food gets trapped in the baleen. Whale food includes small fish and plankton such as krill. The whales then partially close their mouths, push the water out over the baleen plates, and lick off the prey from the baleen with their tongues. Baleen whales represent some of the largest animals on Earth. In fact, the blue whale is the largest animal to have ever lived on Earth and yet it eats such tiny food (of which there is a plentiful supply)!

In this activity, the soda represents water in the ocean, while the raisins represent krill. Straining the raisins out of the soda while the raisins are in motion simulates how whales eat plankton.

Procedure: To eat like a whale, students must race against each other to eat their raisins.

- 1) Each student is to be given one cup filled half way with soda.).
- 2) Each student should also get about eight raisins. These represent krill.
- 3) Students, acting like the whales, must wait for the raisins to come to the surface before trying to capture them in their mouths. As they attempt to eat the raisin, soda will also flow into the mouth along with the raisins.
- 4) The soda must be squirted out of the mouth, keeping the raisin in and eating it.
- 5) The winner will have eaten all the raisins first!

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How can whales grow so large by eating such little food?
- 2) Decide if the following whales are toothed whales or baleen whales:
Dolphins, Humpback, Sperm, Blue
- 3) If whales are marine mammals, what characteristics do they share with humans?