



Whale Sharks • Lesson Plan

Whale Sharks in the Galapagos Islands

Grade Level: Middle School (6th-8th grade)

Video: www.blueworldtv.com/webisodes/watch/whale-sharks-galapagos

Duration: 3-4 class periods

National Science Standards:

- ☐ NGSS: MS-LS2-4 (Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics)
- ☐ NGSS: MS-ESS3-3 (Earth and Human Activity)
- ☐ NGSS: MS-ESS3-4 (Earth and Human Activity)
- ☐ NGSS: MS-LS2-5 (Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics)
- ☐

Learning Objectives:

1. Students will understand the ecological importance of the Galapagos Islands.
2. Students will learn about the unique marine life, especially whale sharks, in the Galapagos Islands.
3. Students will explore the behavior of whale sharks and their potential role in the ecosystem.
4. Students will be introduced to the concept of marine conservation.

Materials:

1. Computer with internet access and projector.
2. Paper, pens, and drawing materials.
3. Access to library or online resources for further research.

Procedures:

Day 1: Introduction to the Galapagos Islands and Marine Life

1. **Engagement (15 minutes):** Begin by showing the video to the class. After viewing, ask students what they found interesting or surprising about the video.
2. **Discussion (15 minutes):** Discuss the video's focus on the Galapagos Islands and the marine life there. Highlight the diversity of marine species, including whale sharks, hammerhead sharks, and sea turtles.
3. **Introduction to the Galapagos (20 minutes):** Provide a brief overview of the Galapagos Islands, their location, and their significance in terms of biodiversity. Explain that the Galapagos are home to many endemic species found nowhere else in the world.

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Day 2: Exploring Marine Life in the Galapagos

- 4. Reading Activity (30 minutes):** Assign students a reading from a reliable source about the marine life of the Galapagos Islands. Encourage them to take notes on unique species and their behaviors.
- 5. Group Discussion (15 minutes):** In small groups, have students discuss and share the most interesting facts they learned from their readings. Emphasize the importance of the Galapagos as a unique ecosystem.

Day 3: Whale Sharks and Their Behavior

- 6. Video Analysis (20 minutes):** Revisit the video and discuss the behavior of whale sharks in the Galapagos. Ask students to identify key characteristics and behaviors of whale sharks from the video.
- 7. Class Activity - Whale Shark Anatomy (30 minutes):** Provide students with a basic diagram of a whale shark. Have them label the main body parts and discuss their functions. Emphasize that whale sharks are filter feeders.
- 8. Behavioral Analysis (20 minutes):** Discuss the video's observation of the whale shark's behavior and potential role as a "cleaning station." Encourage students to speculate on why the whale shark might exhibit this behavior.

Day 4: Conservation and Marine Ecosystems

- 9. Discussion on Conservation (20 minutes):** Explore the concept of marine conservation, emphasizing the importance of protecting unique ecosystems like the Galapagos. Discuss human impacts and conservation efforts.
- 10. Creative Activity (30 minutes):** Ask students to create a poster or artwork that promotes the conservation of the Galapagos Islands and its marine life. Encourage them to include key facts and messages about preserving this ecosystem.
- 11. Class Presentation (15 minutes):** Have students present their posters or artwork to the class. Discuss the importance of raising awareness and taking action to protect our natural world.

Homework and Follow-up: Assign students a research project where they choose one animal or aspect of the Galapagos Islands' marine life to explore in depth. This project can include a short report, a presentation, or a creative piece, and should emphasize the importance of conservation.

Assessment: Assess students based on their participation in discussions, engagement in group activities, comprehension of whale shark behavior, and the quality of their conservation poster or artwork.