

ORCA! The story of Keiko

A unit for lower/upper Intermediate level ESL learners aged 10 and up

.... By Hetty Roessingh, December 2002

ORCA! The story of Keiko

The story of Keiko has captured the attention of the world, and held it firmly in its grip for over a decade. Since the release of the **Free Willy** movies beginning in 1993, little kids and big kids around the globe have been fascinated with both the Hollywood story and the real story of the whale's release to the wild. Because of its high motivational value and universal interest, it makes a wonderful introduction to the study of whales. ESL learners can use background knowledge they may already have to make gains in developing their English language proficiency through their engagement with the work in this thematic unit.

This unit is intended for lower - upper Intermediate level learners aged 10 and up. High school aged ESL students will find the material interesting just as younger learners of upper elementary age do. Teachers can make adjustments to the learning tasks, materials selection and assessment strategies, based on the age and proficiency level of their learners.

At lower Intermediate level, ESL learners still require modified/adapted text to support the acquisition of grammar structures and new vocabulary, and to begin to use the two key reading strategies of contextual guessing and morphological analysis. The introductory reading has been written to do this work. Further, this text is controlled for sentence length and vocabulary density ... key factors in text difficulty. The estimated reading grade equivalent (6) puts this reading at the comprehensible input +1 (CI+1) level for Intermediate level learners.

As students become involved in the story, and acquire both background knowledge and vocabulary within the theme structure, the reading demands become more rigorous. The readings toward the end of the theme are "authentic like" ... they have been rewritten from newspaper stories without consideration for the needs of the ESL learner, just as "real" newspaper stories are written for fluent users of the language rather than as raw data/input for learners in the process of acquiring ESL.

Throughout the unit, language/concepts/strategies are developed **in context**, and recycled through patterned tasks, scaffolded writing activities, for example. Teachers need to supplement the materials in this unit with materials they can assemble and acquire readily. These are listed below.

We hope you will enjoy working with this unit as much as we have enjoyed preparing it. Keiko's story has worked with scores of ESL learners of all ages to advance their English language proficiency.

Materials teachers need to assemble and acquire:

1. **Bulletin board display materials:** world map, pictures of killer whales
National Geographic: The whales called killer. August 1984, 220 – 237
Canadian Geographic: The great killer whale debate: Should captive orcas be set free?
Jan/Feb 1992, 20 –31
Equinox: Killer whales: The sea’s most sociable predators. March-April, 1982, 20 –39

You can pick up inexpensive posters, and make bulletin board displays from discarded calendars of whales that are readily available in local bookstores.

2. **Films:**

Free Willy, Warner Bros., 1993. 105 min. (available from various video shops)

Beautiful Killers, ABC Distribution Co. 1990, 50 min. (Phone: (202) 887-1731 / Cost: \$19.95 Fascinating footage and reporting on the latest research on whale behaviour.)

The Free Willy Story: Keiko’s Journey Home, Discovery Channel, 1997, 52 min.

Same producer as Beautiful Killers (Dennis Kane). Very accessible for ESL learners, wonderfully compelling story.

There are other documentary films about killers that may be useful. Check New Wilderness Series (Lorne Green, 1985) and Nature’s Kingdom (1985). The latter is particularly good.

3. **Websites:**

www.marinelandcanada.com This is the website of Marineland in Niagara Falls, where Keiko spent his first few years. They have a good website, which includes an educational manual. These pages can be located in this Orca! unit, along with worksheets to develop the language and concepts in the manual.

<http://www.zoology.ubc.ca/~ford> This is John Ford’s website at UBC. John has devoted his life to studying killer whales in the wild off the coast of British Columbia. Go to this website to listen to the whales!

4. **Books:** You can make a class reading box, or get further resource materials from books that are readily available.

Berger, M.. & Berger, G. (1999). Do whales have belly buttons? Questions and answers about whales and dolphins. Scholastic Books

Hoyt, E. (1990). Orca: The whale called killer. Camden House.

Hoyt, E. (1990). Seasons of the whale. Post Mills, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing Co. (Follows the migration route of the East coast whales. 80 pages, beautiful photos, hard cover and inexpensive!)

Hoyt, E. (1991). Meeting the whales. Camden House (children’s science series). (The author takes his readers on an exciting and information-packed tour of the ocean waters of the northern hemisphere.)

Story prediction task

Here are 10 words from the story you are about to read. They appear in the order they are listed. Write a sentence using each of the words you know. Try to make an impression of what the story will be about. Do you know the story?

Killer whale

Capture

Aquarium

Boring

Movie

Free

Wild

Hunt

Radio

Human

ORCA! The Story of Keiko



Photo courtesy of Cliff Sasyniuk

Early Life

Keiko was born in the cold waters off the coast of Iceland in 1977. Like all killer whale calves, Keiko lived with his mother together with other killer whales – called a pod. In this part of the world, there are plenty of salmon and other fish. Mothers nurse their young for about two years. The milk is rich in fat. Then the older whales teach the young how to hunt and kill for themselves. Whales also learn to “talk” to other members of their pod. They make clicking sounds that only the members of their pod use with each other. It seems like a carefree life for a young whale.

Then, one day when Keiko was about two years old he was captured and taken far away to an aquarium in Niagara Falls, Canada. Keiko was taught to perform tricks. But Keiko was shy and didn't fit in with the other whales. And, the aquarium was not big enough to hold Keiko as he grew and grew, larger and larger. The owner of the aquarium decided it was time to sell Keiko. In 1985, Keiko was sold for \$350,000 to the Reino Aventura aquarium in Mexico. A new part of Keiko's life was about to begin

Reino Aventura

Keiko continued to perform in the aquarium in Mexico for many years. The aquarium was safe but boring. It was small, and Keiko spent endless hours swimming around and around in circles. He lost weight. He chewed on the side of his swimming pool and damaged his teeth. His dorsal fin was bent over– a sign that he was out of shape. His skin was infected with cauliflower-like growths. Keiko was very unhealthy. Still, he was good tempered, easy to train and a great performer. In 1992, Keiko had his lucky break. Jenny Tugend and Richard Donner were looking for a whale that could perform in their movie, “Free Willy”. They gave Tim Desmond, an animal behaviour specialist, the job of finding and training a killer whale for their movie. Keiko was about to become a movie star. The film, “Free Willy” was a big hit in the summer of 1993. Two more films followed. But although Willy, the movie star was free, Keiko was not. He returned to his small aquarium home in Mexico. But yet again, luck was on Keiko's side. A new adventure was about to begin.

Millions of children around the world who saw the films, wondered what happened to the star, Keiko. They were upset to find out about Keiko's life in the aquarium. They wrote letters, they raised money. They told their parents about Keiko. Soon, many people all over the world were working together to find a way to release Keiko back to his family in Iceland. But ... it's not easy to put a wild animal back in the ocean after so many years in captivity. It's also very expensive. It would cost \$8,000,000 just to build a new, larger aquarium for Keiko in Oregon – a kind of halfway house – and move Keiko from Mexico. In January 1996, Keiko was flown cargo class in a Boeing 747. Sixteen hours later, Keiko arrived in his new aquarium home.

Half way back to the wild

There was much work to do to rehabilitate Keiko and get him ready to live in the wild again. Keiko would not have to perform and do tricks for human audiences any longer. Instead, he would have to learn the ways of the wild. Keiko's life had been easy in some ways and he had become lazy. Before, he had been fed dead fish. Now, he would have to learn to hunt fish for himself. Could Keiko grow from pampered whale to ruthless predator?

The aquarium in Oregon was a fabulous new home. It was five times larger than the aquarium in Mexico. The aquarium was filled with natural seawater, cooled to Icelandic temperatures. Keiko was fed live, restaurant quality fish. He began to put on weight. And he took lessons on how to catch fish for himself. His skin condition got better, and his teeth were looked after by the veterinarian, Dr. Lanny Cornell. For the first time in years, Keiko began to vocalize. In Mexico, Keiko had copied the sounds of passing police sirens, children chattering and the sounds of nearby water pumps. In Oregon, Keiko listened to the sounds of other killer whales played to him in his aquarium over the hydrophones. His caregivers had tape recorded the sounds of many pods of whales off the coast of Iceland. They believed that one of the pod's sounds might belong to Keiko's family. Would he remember? Would he recognize the sounds and imitate them? Each whale pod has its own language. An important part of putting Keiko back into the wild was to find his family and bring Keiko back to them.

But many people worried about Keiko. Keiko had always lived alone. He had no experience interacting with other whales. There were many questions about whether Keiko would survive in the wild again. Would he hunt for himself? Would he choose to spend his time in the company of whales? And most importantly, would his pod accept him back and welcome him into the whale family he left behind so long ago? His human caregivers and trainers were optimistic that all would go well. In September 1998, they decided he was almost ready to go. Keiko was one step closer to his return to the wild ... but not quite entirely...

Kletsvik, Iceland, September 1998

In September 1998, Keiko made the eight-hour trip to Iceland. The plan was to release Keiko close to the killer whale migration route, and close to where his pod was thought to be. A sea pen, the size of a football field had been prepared. Keiko would be free to go outside into the open ocean to interact with other whales. He could return to the safety of the pen and to be fed if he was hungry.

Immediately upon his release, Keiko began vocalizing. His trainers were ecstatic. They had high hopes that all the hard work of getting Keiko ready for his return to the wild would pay off. But day after day, week after week, month after month, Keiko returned to the sea pen, hungry and in search of human contact. His trainer, Robin Friday, began to think that Keiko would live his life out in an aquarium, with at best, a mate. Others were not quite ready to give up on Keiko's return to the wild.

In May 1999, Keiko's caregivers decided it was time for some tough love. They would punish Keiko by not allowing any human contact. No longer would they massage Keiko, play his favourite game – blue ball, offer eye contact, or talk to him. As a further indignity, his trainers fed him dead fish pumped into his enclosure through a pipe. Killer whales are intelligent and very social animals. This now became a game of who could outlast the other ... Keiko or his trainers?

Two years passed. By July 2001, it seemed clear that Keiko had failed to integrate with the whale pods just outside the sea pen. Keiko always chose to spend time with his human friends and trainers. By the end of the summer, the whales would be moving along their migration route as the weather turned colder and they would need to follow the food supply. His trainers decided they would try one last time, keeping Keiko in the sea pen for the winter. In the spring, they would give Keiko one last chance to return to the wild.

Summer 2002

The wait was worth it. In the summer of 2002, Keiko suddenly changed his behaviour. Keiko left the sea pen and spent his time with orca pods in the open ocean. He was swimming up to 160 kilometres a day with his wild family. The satellite tag and the radio equipment that is monitoring his movements, show that Keiko is following the pattern of his wild family. They feed in one area during the day, and then move on during the night. Keiko was choosing to spend all his time with the wild whale pods. His trainers were delighted and surprised. Keiko returned to the sea pen only once all summer. He appeared to be in good health. His trainers led him back to where the wild whales were gathering. Keiko moved away from the boat and followed the whales.

By late August, information from the satellite showed that Keiko had travelled more than 1400 kilometres from Iceland. He swam all the way to Norway. In Norway he returned to his old habit of befriending people.

On September 3, Arild Neshaug and his 12 year old daughter, Hanne decided to go out in their small rowboat. Suddenly, a killer whale approached their boat. At first, they were afraid. But, the whale seemed friendly and followed them to their dock. They touched him and petted his back. The whale seemed to enjoy being touched. Becoming braver, Hanne and her friends jumped into the water, and onto the whale's back. They swam around with him and fed him some fresh fish. The whale loved all the attention. The next morning, the whale was still by their dock. Sure enough, it was Keiko. Fernando Ugarte, who monitors the satellite equipment, confirmed that Keiko had travelled to Norway and was swimming around in Skaalvik Fjord. Although Keiko is in excellent shape, he still seems to want to be with people.

Eight-year-old Astrid heard the story about Keiko swimming around in the fjord close by. She thought up a great idea. She ran to the video shop down the street from her home and rented the movie, Free Willy. She listened to Willy's friend, Jessie, playing the tune on his harmonica that always brought Willy to the edge of the aquarium. Soon, she could play the tune herself on her harmonica. Astrid ran to the beach and began to play the tune. Out of nowhere, a killer whale

approached Astrid. She was thrilled! Indeed, it was Keiko, yet again coming to look for human company. His trainer, Colin Baird is not at all happy.

As news spread of Keiko's location, hordes of fans came to the fjord to see him. Hundreds of visitors arrive every day, anxious to pet him, swim with him and climb on his back. The veterinarian of the nearby town is pleading with tourists to leave Keiko alone. He is afraid Keiko will become overtired from all the attention. And he will become lazy once again if people throw fish to Keiko. All the hard work of preparing Keiko for his return to the wild will become undone in a short time. All this, just when Keiko seemed to have done so well in deciding he could be a wild whale after all.

Do you want to learn more about Keiko?

You can follow Keiko's story by going to <http://www.oceanfutures.com>

Orca! The story of Keiko is based on the following newspaper stories. The text has been prepared by Hetty Roessingh, University of Calgary, MEd TESL program, October, 2002.

Newspaper clippings:

Saving Keiko, Calgary Herald, July 20, 1993, A11
'Free Willy' gets whale of a welcome in new home, Calgary Herald, Jan. 8, 1996, A1-2.
Whale's fans flock to Willie's new home, Calgary Herald, Jan. 9, 1996, A2
'Willy' long way from being free, Calgary Herald, May 27, 1996
Killer's whale's freedom near, June 24, 1998
Free Willy whale's life threatened, Calgary Herald, July 31, 1998, A9
Keiko heading to freedom on flatbed truck, Sept. 10, 1998. A22
Whale returns to cheers of children, Calgary Herald, September 11, 1998, A16
Keiko goes soft having what of a time, Calgary Herald, May 31, 1999, A1-2
A freer Willy, Calgary Herald, March 4, 2000, A11
Willy may never be free, Calgary Herald, July 30, 2001, B10
Willy on verge of freedom at last, Calgary Herald, August 5, 2002, A3
Keiko running with the whales, Calgary Herald, August 20, 2002, A2
Keiko makes friends in Norway, Calgary Herald, September 3, 2002, A5
Fans warned away from Keiko, Calgary Herald, September 7, 2002, A13
Keiko to stay in Norway this winter, Calgary Herald, September 13, 2002, A5
Rehab efforts hampered by whale's friendly nature, September 28, 2002, A19

Reading for details: 5w's +h questions

The following questions are “right there” questions. They ask you for information that you can find “right in the print”.

1. Where was Keiko born?
2. How old was Keiko when he was captured?
3. How much did the aquarium owner in Mexico pay for Keiko in 1985?
4. Who trained Keiko for his role in the movie, “Free Willy”?
5. Why was Keiko chosen for the movie?
6. What did all the children do to help free Willy?
7. When did Keiko move from Mexico to Oregon?
8. What did Robin Friday think would happen to Keiko in the end?
9. How did Keiko’s caregivers punish him for not returning to the wild?
10. Who did Keiko befriend in Norway?

New vocabulary: getting meaning from context

The words highlighted in the sentences below may be new for you. Decide from the way the word is used in the sentence, what you think it means. Your teacher will help you through the first one to show you how to guess at meaning.

1. ...Keiko lived with his mother together with other killer whales – called a **pod**.
2. Mothers **nurse** their young for about two years. The milk is rich in fat.
3. The **aquarium** was not big enough to hold Keiko, as he grew and grew, larger and larger.
4. There was much work to do to **rehabilitate** Keiko and get him ready to live in the wild again.
5. Keiko would have to learn to hunt for himself ... to become a **predator**.
6. Keiko had always live alone. He had no experience **interacting** with other whales.
7. It was time for some **tough love**. Keiko's caregivers would not allow him any human contact.
8. Keiko failed to **integrate** with the whale pods outside the pen. He chose to spend time with his human friends and trainers.
9. The whales would be moving along their **migration route**, following their food supply.
10. The radio equipment that is **monitoring** his movements, show that Keiko is following the pattern of his wild family.
11. The whale seemed friendly and followed Hanne and her father to their **dock**.
12. **Hordes of fans** came to see Keiko. Hundreds of visitors arrive every day.
13. The **veterinarian** is afraid that Keiko will become overtired from all the attention.

Making inferences

To answer these questions, you need to think “beyond the print”. You need to use what you know about the story, and connect it with what you read.

1. In 1992, Keiko had **a lucky break**. Tell about Keiko’s good luck:
2. Keiko was lucky a second time. Tell what was lucky about having been a movie star.
3. Keiko would have to learn the **ways of the wild**. What does this mean?
4. When Keiko was moved to the aquarium in Oregon, he was fed live, restaurant quality fish, rather than dead fish. Give two reasons why the trainers might do this.
5. When Keiko refused to make his way into the wild, and he returned to the sea pen looking for comfort and company, his keepers **fed him dead fish** through a pipe. What did Keiko’s keepers hope he would understand from this?
6. Keiko’s dorsal fin was bent over during the many years he spent in Reino Aventura. His keepers think this means ...
7. Astrid was thrilled that Keiko approached her when she played her harmonica. Colin Baird is upset. Who is Colin Baird? Why would he be upset?
8. Millions of children wrote letters demanding Keiko’s release to the wild. Other children go to a lot of trouble to make contact with Keiko. This is **ironic**. Do you think that all the children want the best for Keiko? Explain what **irony** means.
9. Make a plan for Keiko’s future. Who will be his friends? Who will feed him? Where will he live?

CLOZE Activity: Keiko's New Home

Fill in the blank spaces below.

Keiko is the killer _____ that performed in the _____, Free Willy. He lived _____ in a small aquarium _____ Mexico. He was lonely, _____ and unhealthy. After the _____ was made, millions of _____ wrote letters demanding Keiko's _____. It's not that easy.

_____ has lived in an _____ for 20 years. He is _____, his dorsal fin is _____ over, his teeth are _____ from chewing on the _____ of his pool, and _____ has ugly growths like _____ around his flippers.

The _____ step is to move _____ to a new aquarium _____ Oregon. It is much bigger _____ he can exercise. The _____ is natural seawater and _____ cold – just like the _____ in Iceland, where Keiko _____ one day be released. _____ the new aquarium, Keiko _____ not have to perform, _____ he has to learn _____ hunt for food. He _____ gain weight and become a _____. He listens to the _____ of killer whales thought _____ come from his pod _____ Iceland. He must learn _____ become part of a _____ again.

Keiko will be _____ free off the coast _____ Iceland, where his pod _____. If he cannot be _____ to the wild, Keiko's _____ will look for a _____. Either way, Keiko is _____ better off than when _____ lived alone all those _____ in Mexico.

Scoring (out of a total of 43 blanks):
>23 = Independent Level
17-23 = Instructional Level
<17 = Frustration Level

Estimated GE: 5-6

CLOZE Activity: Keiko's New Home

Fill in the blank spaces below.

Keiko is the killer **(whale)** that performed in the **(movie)**, Free Willy. He lived **(alone)** in a small aquarium **(in)** Mexico. He was lonely, **(bored)** and unhealthy. After the **(movie)** was made, millions of **(children)** wrote letters demanding Keiko's **(freedom/release)**. It's not that easy.

(Keiko) has lived in an **(aquarium)** for 20 years. He is **(underweight)**, his dorsal fin is **(bent)** over, his teeth are **(bad/damaged)** from chewing on the **(sides)** of his pool, and **(he)** has ugly growths like **(cauliflowers)** around his flippers.

The **(first)** step is to move **(Keiko)** to a new aquarium **(in)** Oregon. It is much bigger **(so)** he can exercise. The **(water)** is natural seawater and **(it's)** cold – just like the **(water/ocean)** in Iceland, where Keiko **(will)** one day be released. **(In)** the new aquarium, Keiko **(does)** not have to perform, **(but)** he has to learn **(to)** hunt for food. He **(must)** gain weight and become a **(hunter/predator)**. He listens to the **(sounds)** of killer whales thought **(to)** come from his pod **(in)** Iceland. He must learn **(to)** become part of a **(family/pod)** again.

Keiko will be **(set)** free off the coast **(of)** Iceland, where his pod **(lives)**. If he cannot be **(returned/released)** to the wild, Keiko's **(keepers/caregivers/ trainers)** will look for a **(mate)**. Either way, Keiko is **(much)** better off than when **(he)** lived alone all those **(years)** in Mexico.

If using this exercise as a test, students must be at the Independent Level. To teach how to make inferences, use partner work, teacher modelling, and class instruction at the Instructional Level.

Scoring (out of a total of 43 blanks):
>23 = Independent Level
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RECYCLING KEY VOCABULARY

Make or do a puzzle. Here is some of the key vocabulary from the unit on ORCA! The students can make their own puzzles, writing their own clues, or ... the teacher can create one for the students.

Key word	Clue
Keiko	Willy
Orca	killer
Pod	family
Predator	hunter
Salmon	killer's favourite fish
Dorsal	fin on whale's back
Calf	baby whale
Perform	do tricks for an audience
Aquarium	place to go and see killers in captivity
Prey	killer whale: predator; fish: _____
Tank	aquarium
Veterinarian	animal doctor
Coast	killer whales live along the _____ where there is plenty to eat
Bored	nothing to do
Fluke	whale's tail fin
Intelligent	smart
School	pod: whales; _____: fish
Hunt	key to surviving in the wild
Expensive	a lot of money
Release	set free
Iceland	Keiko's Arctic home
Wild	natural habitat/ home
Befriend	make friends

VERB WORK:

Supply the correct past tense verb form in the sentences below.

1. Millions of children _____ (to write) letters demanding Keiko's release.
2. Hordes of people _____ (to come) to see Keiko in the Norwegian fjord.
3. Astrid _____ (to run) to the video shop to rent the movie, Free Willy.
4. Keiko's keepers _____ (to feed) him live fish to teach him how to hunt.
5. Keiko _____ (to swim) from Iceland to Norway.
6. In Norway, Keiko _____ (to meet) Hanne and Astrid.
7. It _____ (to cost) \$8 million to build Keiko's new home, and move him there.
8. Keiko _____ (to take) lessons on how to catch fish by himself.
9. Keiko's trainer _____ (to teach) him how to hunt fish.
10. Keiko _____ (to choose) to spend his time with humans, not with other whales.
11. In the summer of 2002, Keiko _____ (to spend) about 6 weeks in the open ocean with other whales.
12. When Keiko returned to the sea pen, his trainers _____ (to lead) him back to where the wild whales were gathering.

Learning more about killer whales

You can go to the Marineland Canada website at www.marinelandcanada.com to learn more about killer whales. The pages that follow come from their education manual, which are also posted on their website. Read about **Killer Whales** and answer these questions:

1. The killer whale is striking black and white. It does not need protective coloration. Explain:
2. The light grey, or sometimes white, area behind the dorsal fin is called:
3. The killer has _____ teeth, each about _____ inches, or _____ centimetres long.
4. Female killers may reach a length of _____ feet in length.
5. Killer whales are the only species of cetacean found in all oceans of the world. What do you think cetacean means?
6. Why do killer whales live close to the coast?
7. Locate and mark Puget Sound and Vancouver on the map. Also, find Robson Bight (north end of the Inside Passage, Vancouver Island).
8. The female killer is pregnant for _____ months.
9. Find the words in the text that mean pregnant: _____
10. What is another word for offspring? _____
11. A group, or family, of animals may be called:
_____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____

12. Describe how killers are able to hunt animals so much bigger than themselves.
13. Killers are very intelligent. How do you know?
14. Killers are big eaters! Find the words that tell you this: _____
15. What do killers in the wild like to eat?
16. In the wild, a killer will eat a dolphin. In the aquarium, they may live together. Explain:
17. What do the killer whales in Marineland get to eat?
18. Are killers dangerous to their trainers in the aquarium? _____
Explain your answer:
19. How did killer whales come to be called “**Killers**”?
20. How would you describe the killer whale?

'Free Willy' receives warm welcome in Oregon, his new home.



Photo courtesy of Cliff Sasyniuk

Keiko, the killer whale known as Free Willy, was welcomed by crowds of people as he arrived at his new home in Newport, Oregon. The ailing whale was being transported from his smaller tank in Mexico to the custom-made tank in Oregon, where the hard work of rehabilitating him for release to the wild now begins.

It's no small task to transport such a huge load. UPS arranged his delivery by C130 cargo plane equipped with a giant water-filled container. Throngs of admirers came to Reino Aventura in Mexico for a tearful, final farewell. Keiko will be missed.

In Newport, over 330 members of the news media were present as Keiko was carefully lowered into his new home, a 7.6 million-litre tank. To wild cheers, Keiko slapped his tail on the water and swam around in the pool. According to his veterinarian, Dr. Lanny Cornell, Keiko is in good health despite his 20 hour journey, "I was thrilled to see him swim off and start eating," he said.

Keiko's new tank is five times bigger than his aquarium in Mexico, and it is filled with natural seawater cooled to the temperature

of Icelandic waters – the site of his future release. He'll learn to eat live fish as part of the ultimate goal of returning him to the wild close to where he was captured long ago at the young age of just two.

At present, Keiko is about one ton underweight, likely the result of his smaller environs in Mexico. It is hoped he will reach a more normal weight in his new home. Other possible results of his cramped quarters in Mexico are a bent over dorsal fin and bad teeth from chewing on the sides of his pool.

He is also suffering from a skin ailment that causes cauliflower-like warts on his flippers and underbelly. However, doctors hope the cooler seawater will help heal this ailment. While Keiko's veterinarians and trainers in Mexico concede he has a skin condition, they insist that otherwise, he is in good health. Saddened at his departure, they fought back tears as they were interviewed about Keiko's move to Oregon.

Keiko's new keepers plan to rehabilitate him with the purpose of reintroducing him into the wild, much like Hollywood's Free Willy.

If they are not successful, perhaps a mate will be found for him.

Keiko's new home has a concrete beach, and an artificial reef. Keiko will be fed fresh, live fish, in effort to help him gain weight, and to teach him to become a predator. He will not have to perform again – his fans will have to settle for simply watching. They are delighted to have him in Oregon!

In 1979, Keiko was caught off the coast of Iceland and until 1982, he lived in an aquarium with other killers in Niagara Falls, Canada. He then was trained to perform but he was shy, and didn't seem to fit in with the other whales. In 1985 his owners decided to sell him to Reino Aventura, in Mexico for \$350,000.

The filmmakers, Warner Brothers, have donated \$2 million to the Free Willy Foundation. It has already cost \$8 million just to build Keiko's new aquarium and to move him from Mexico to Oregon. The on-going cost of preparing Keiko for release to the wild is estimated at \$500,000. Free Willy is certainly an expensive project that still needs large contributions in order to reach its goals.

By Hetty Roessingh, University of Calgary, MEd TESL instructor, October 2002.

Based on the story, "Free Willy" gets whale of a welcome in new home, Calgary Herald, January 8, 1996, A1-2.

'Free Willy' receives warm welcome in Oregon, his new home.**Pre-reading activity:**

Write down all the questions you can think of about Keiko's move from Mexico to Oregon. Try to write at least 12 questions.

Reading:

Time yourself to see how long it takes you to read the article. Do not read too fast. Be sure to read for understanding. There are about 540 words in the article. Record your score in words per minute:

Questions:

Try to answer the following questions *without looking back* at the article.

1. What is the **main idea** of this story?

2. Keiko is not healthy. List four indicators of his poor health:
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
 - 4)

3. List four important features of the new aquarium that should help Keiko get healthy:
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
 - 4)

4. Keiko's new keepers will work hard to prepare him for life in the wild. To live in the wild, Keiko must learn to _____.

5. Think of possible problems in getting Keiko ready to go back into the wild. List 3 below:
- 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)

6. If Keiko cannot be trained to return to the open ocean, what is the next best plan?

7. Details, details, details: (you may reread, **scanning** the article to find the answers)

- a. What has been the cost of moving Keiko and building the new tank so far?
- b. How much will it cost each year to prepare Keiko for his return to the wild?
- c. How old was Keiko when he was captured off the coast of Iceland?

8. Read closely and decide what the word **rehabilitate** means:

9. Take a highlighter pen and mark any other words you do not know. Reread the sentence in which you found the word. Try to decide the meaning of the new word from how it is used in the sentence. Do NOT look in your dictionary. List the new vocabulary below:

Scaffolded writing task

Use the framework provided to write about the ideal aquarium.

The Ideal Aquarium

When whales are kept in captivity it is important to think about ways to keep them healthy and active. It is also important to try to offer a setting like their natural, wild ocean home. Keiko's new aquarium in Oregon was built with many special features.

To begin, the aquarium is big. It is the size of _____. This allows Keiko to _____. It also allows Keiko to _____. A sign that Keiko is getting exercise and is more active and less bored is _____.

Second, the water in the aquarium is _____. This is important because _____. Warm water has caused _____. The skin problems _____.

Third, killers do not perform in the new aquariums. Instead, people come to see _____.

At feeding time _____. This makes the whale _____.

Ideally, whales do not live alone in the aquarium. In Keiko's case _____.

A veterinarian is on hand to _____. Together with the whale's keepers and trainers, the staff makes sure the aquarium is the best it can be for Keiko.

Will he make it back to the wild? For now, Willy remains in captivity

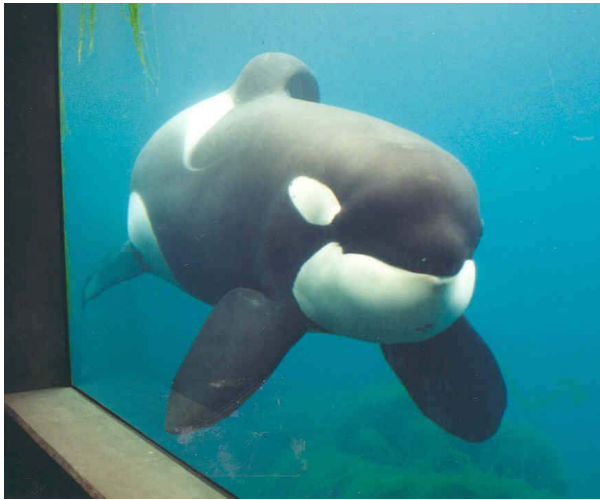


Photo courtesy of Cliff Sasyniuk

The debate about whether to release Keiko the whale rages on! A student and a few of her classmates raised over \$5,000 hoping to help Keiko move back into the wild. Although he would be sadly missed, they hope that he will have a better life at sea.

The 1993 movie “Free Willy” was based on the true story of Keiko, a 16-year-old whale, who worked in an amusement park in Mexico City. Keiko, like Willy, was unhappy and sick. He ruined his teeth, lost hundreds of kilos, developed a skin virus and weakened immunity, and had problems with his

digestion. All of his problems arose because of the stress of living in a small pool.

The debate still continues about whether or not Keiko would benefit from being released. Those who work in the marine parks believe Keiko would die in the wild as a result of his sickness and reduced ability to use his teeth. Animal rights supporters argue that Keiko still has his instincts and would thrive in his natural environment.

Until the directors of the Free Willy-Keiko Foundation make a decision, Keiko will continue to live in a 7 million liter pool in Newport. He was moved there on January 7 with the help of millions of dollars in donations from whale lovers across the world.

Since his arrival, the 3,600kg whale has become the top tourist attraction at the Oregon Coast Aquarium, increasing attendance 150%. Keiko has gained almost half of the weight he lost and 80% of his skin virus has disappeared.

But questions remain: Should we keep Keiko in captivity or release him into the wild? Where will he be the happiest and the healthiest?

Keiko to be released: Star of Free Willy will soon be free

Keiko, who was the star of the film Free Willy, is soon to be released into the wild. Before being released however, Keiko will live in an enclosure that was designed in Canada.

The enclosure is going to be the size of a football field. The materials to build the enclosure have been airlifted all the way from North America to Iceland, where Keiko is going to be moved from where he is now in Oregon.

It is in this enclosure that Keiko will learn how to take care of himself in the open water.

This enclosure is being funded by the thousands of school children across North America who donated money. The \$10,000,000 project was further funded by several wealthy families.



photo from www.oceanfuturesonline.com

The question is, will Keiko be able to learn the skills necessary to survive in the wild? According to biologist Nolan Harvey, Keiko seems to thrive on new challenges, and he will be fine.

The pen that is being built for Keiko is located close to pods of killer whales that gather in this location off the coast of Iceland to catch the plentiful fish that are close by.

Once Keiko is freed from the enclosure that is currently being built, this will end a long journey for him that started back in 1979, near Iceland where he was captured. From Iceland, Keiko moved to Niagara Falls in 1982. From Marine Land in Niagara Falls, Keiko moved to Mexico City. It was in Mexico that Keiko's problems became apparent to the world, as seen in the movie Free Will. Keiko appeared on the cover of Life magazine and because of this children soon began sending in their allowances to help free the killer whale. With this money, a large pool was built for Keiko in Oregon. It is here that Keiko has lived since 1996.

However, there is controversy surrounding Keiko's trip back to Iceland. For example, people have accused the Oregon Aquarium where he lies of stalling because the aquarium is now one of Oregon's premier tourist attractions. Furthermore, Keiko developed a skin condition last year which has been blamed on a lack of pool maintenance in Oregon.

But that controversy is in the past, and the aquarium now agrees with the move. Keiko will soon be free.

By Scott Douglas, University of Calgary, MEd TESL student, October 3, 2002.

Based on a newspaper story, [Keiko, star of free Willy: Killer whale's freedom near](#), [Calgary Herald](#), June 24, 1998, A13.

Keiko befriends Norwegian family

Keiko the killer whale has turned up again. Keiko is arguably the most famous whale in the world due to the fact he is a movie star. Keiko starred in the three Free Willy movies released in the 1990s, and a short animated series that appeared on television. He has spent the majority of his 25 years in captivity, but his keepers have been preparing to return him back to the wild off the coast of Iceland where he was first taken captive.

The most recent attempt to release Keiko occurred six weeks ago. He was released from his seapen in Iceland into the open ocean. After swimming 1400 kilometres, he has turned up northwest of Oslo in a Norwegian fjord. The troubling aspect of this event is that Keiko has been making friends with humans again – he is not with his own kind. Keiko has befriended Hanne, a young Norwegian girl. Her family has had the opportunity to pet Keiko. After they became comfortable with the killer whale, Hanne's father, Arild, says they were able to feed fish to the whale and even swim with

the whale. Arild says, "He followed us to our cabin dock. At first we were sceptical and then we tried petting his back. Finally, the children went swimming with him."

The irony is that Keiko has chosen to swim into the waters of a country that still hunts whales despite the global ban on whaling. Fortunately for Keiko, Norway only hunts minke whales.

Keiko is reportedly in good shape, however, he is still tame. So far, he clearly prefers the company of humans to that of his family in the wild.



Photo from oceanfuturesonline.com

© Tom Ordway

By Carla Johnson, University of Calgary, MEd TESL student, October 3, 2002.

Based on a newspaper story, [Keiko makes friends in Norway](#), *Calgary Herald*, September 3, 2002, A5.

Veterinarian pleads, “Give Keiko space”

Keiko, the star of the Free Willy movies is too popular for his own good. Fans of the killer whale have been swarming to the fjord in Norway where they hope to catch a glimpse of the whale. Keiko seems to enjoy all the attention.

In June, Keiko was given his freedom when he was released from his sea pen in Iceland. Last week, he was spotted 1400 kilometres away in the waters off the western coast of Norway. Crowds of people were drawn to the area to play, swim, touch and take pictures of the friendly orca. Some people even climbed on Keiko's back.

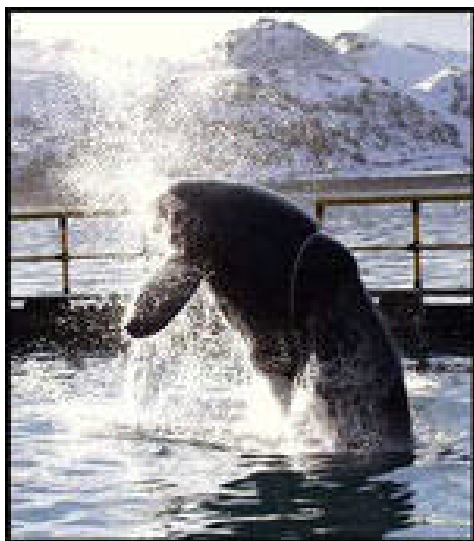


Photo from www.oceanfuturesonline.com

The 25-year-old Keiko was only a two-year-old calf when he was first captured and brought to live in an aquarium. He became famous after he performed in the series of Free Willy movies, and millions of children went on a letter writing campaign to secure his freedom.

Keiko's keepers and trainers are pleading with tourists and local curiosity seekers who have come to the fjord, to leave him alone. Keiko, though, seems to love the attention and the contact from his human fans.

Authorities also fear that Keiko will become overtired and distracted from this unwanted attention. Years of expert care, attention and hard work to prepare Keiko for life in the wild is wasted on Keiko's reluctance to join his whale family. The veterinarian wants people barred from the fjord to encourage Keiko to return to the wild.

Hundreds of fans come every day to the fjord. And the crowds are growing into the thousands. They are so taken by the friendly whale that they ignore the warnings to keep their distance. The veterinarian's ban will not allow people within 50 meters, nor are people permitted to offer Keiko food.

Keiko can't resist human company!



Photo taken from Ocean Futures Online
(www.oceanfutures.com) © Kim Barlowe

Another sighting of Keiko has been reported. Keiko, the renowned killer whale, was spotted in Norway again recently, this time by an 8 year old girl named Astrid. Keiko, who was released into the wild in Iceland earlier this summer, swam 1400 kilometres and started to approach boaters in Norway in September.

Astrid knew that Keiko had been spotted in a fjord not far from her home. She had followed the story of the famous whale, even though she was not even born when the first of the Free Willy films was made in 1992. She borrowed the movie, Free Willy, from the local video shop and taught herself the tune to the theme song on her harmonica. Then she went to her family's dock on the edge of the water, and played her harmonica. A whale came to the dock, and sure enough, it was Keiko.

Astrid was thrilled about her encounter with the whale but his trainer, Colin Baird, was none too pleased. The US has already spent \$20 million on the effort to release Keiko back to the wild where many believe

he belongs. Millions of children from around the world went on a letter writing campaign to secure Keiko's freedom a decade ago after the Free Willy movies hit the theatres. Ironically, though it was children who sought his release then, it is children who seek his attention today.

This latest event has drawn huge crowds of tourists and curiosity seekers from the local village to the fjord where Keiko has been spotted. Everyone seems to want a piece of Keiko, whether they feed him, swim with him, or even ride on his back. Norwegian authorities have imposed a ban on having any contact with Keiko. Baird and his team, clearly frustrated with all the attention focused on Keiko, are currently looking for a place where Keiko can spend the upcoming winter months in closer contact with other killer whales.

From the active voice to passive voice.

Rewrite the following sentences using the example as a model.

Example: The captain of the fishing boat captured Keiko.
 Keiko was captured by the captain of the fishing boat.

1. He sold Keiko to the Marineland aquarium in Canada.

2. The trainer taught Keiko to perform.

3. The owner of the aquarium sold Keiko for \$350,000.

4. Tim Desmond trained Keiko to perform in the movie, Free Willy.

5. The veterinarian fixed Keiko's teeth.

6. They moved Keiko from Mexico to Oregon.

7. The veterinarian placed a satellite tag on Keiko's dorsal fin.

8. The trainers led Keiko back to where the wild whales were gathering.

9. The trainers punished Keiko for not joining the other whales.

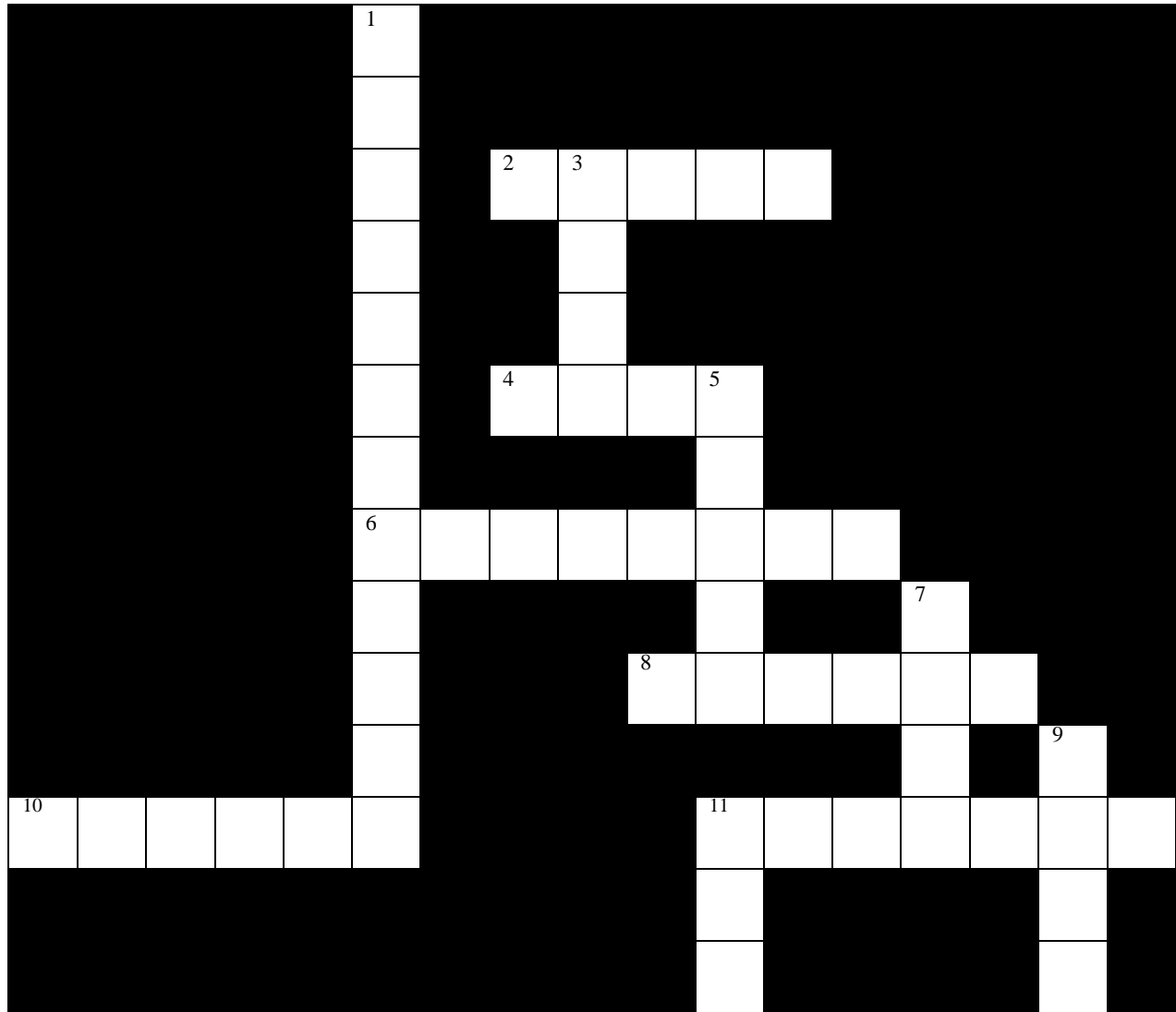
10. In Norway, Keiko befriended Hanne and her father.

11. The tourists saw Keiko swimming around in the fjord.

12. The satellite located Keiko 6 weeks later in Norway.

13. The tourists took many pictures of Keiko.

ORCA! The story of Keiko – Crossword Puzzle



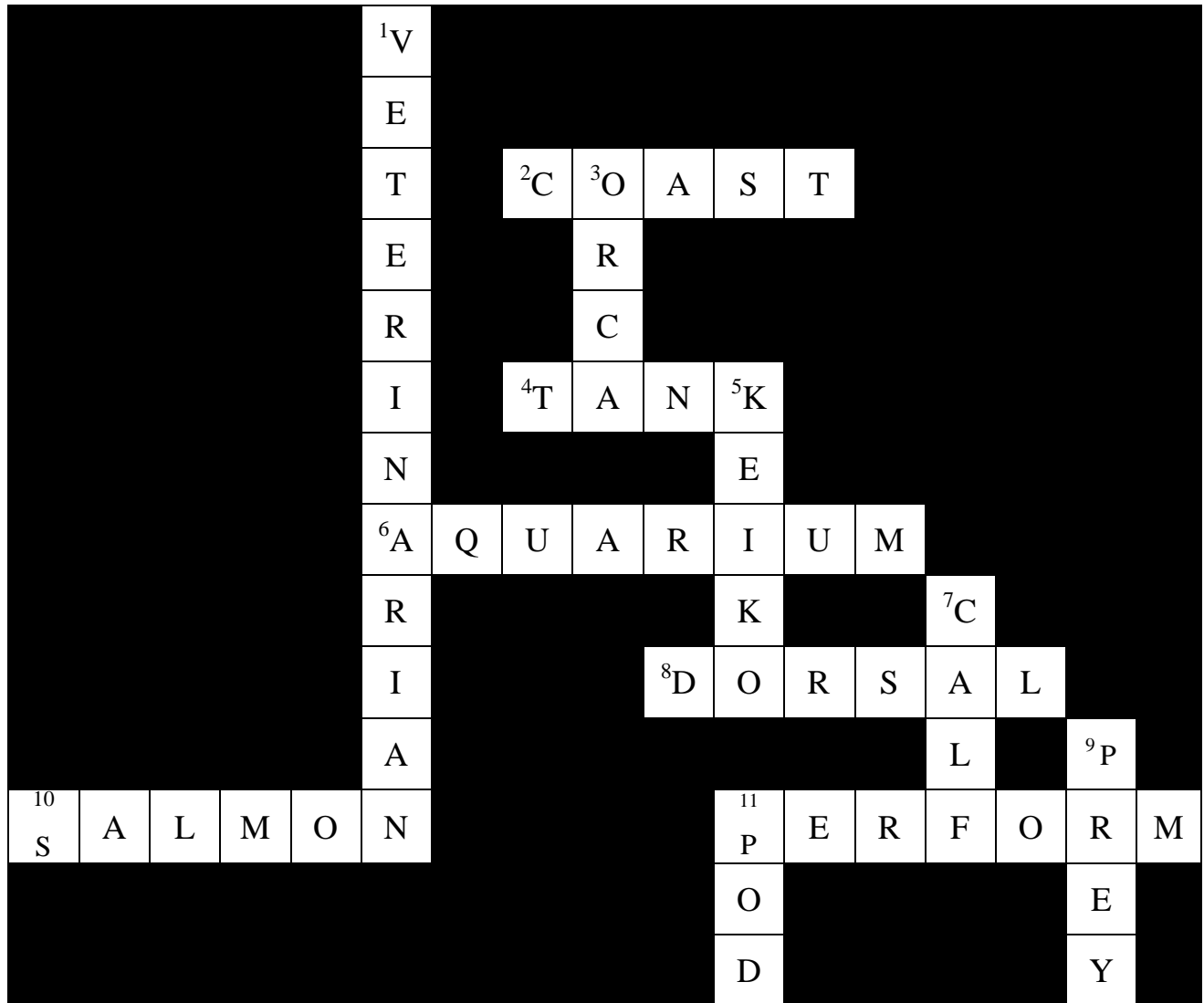
Across

2. killer whales live along the _____
where there is plenty to eat
4. aquarium
6. a place to go to see killers in captivity
8. fin on a whale's back
10. killer's favorite fish to eat
11. do tricks for an audience

Down

1. animal doctor
3. killer
5. Willy
7. baby whale
9. killer whale: fish :: predator: _____
11. family

ORCA! The story of Keiko – Crossword Puzzle SOLUTION



Across

- 2. killer whales live along the _____ where there is plenty to eat
- 4. aquarium
- 6. a place to go to see killers in captivity
- 8. fin on a whale's back
- 10. killer's favorite fish to eat
- 11. do tricks for an audience

Down

- 1. animal doctor
- 3. killer
- 5. Willy
- 7. baby whale
- 9. killer whale: fish :: predator: _____
- 11. family

ORCA! The story of Keiko – Word Search

M W M N C X V D P T U E D R N
Q U G M P M W N O J T T T O J
I D I H B P H U K A A U F T I
Z N N R A B G L T I K O M A T
F T T A A H S I J E Q R O D S
Q V U E L U L U S X N N N E I
N G I O R I Q R M O R O I R J
R I V N B A U A Q T W I T P Y
T E M A K N C D O C K T O L G
I C H W R M Z T M D C A R D L
M E V V E T E R I N A R I A N
R P E T A R G E T N I G N B I
X Q O Q B R R T C L G I G S T
W F P D U E K X M J C M D A I
T W F X V H Z O D A E E X A J

AQUARIUM

MIGRATION ROUTE

PREDATOR

DOCK

MONITORING

REHABILITATE

INTEGRATE

NURSE

TOUGH LOVE

INTERACTING

POD

VETERINARIAN

ORCA! The story of Keiko – Word Search – Solution

M	W	M	N	C	X	V	D	P	T	U	E	D	R	N
Q	U	G	M	P	M	W	N	O	J	T	T	T	O	J
I	D	I	H	B	P	H	U	K	A	A	U	F	T	I
Z	N	N	R	A	B	G	L	T	I	K	O	M	A	T
F	T	T	A	A	H	S	I	J	E	Q	R	O	D	S
Q	V	U	E	L	U	L	U	S	X	N	N	N	E	I
N	G	I	O	R	I	Q	R	M	O	R	O	I	R	J
R	I	V	N	B	A	U	A	Q	T	W	I	T	P	Y
T	E	M	A	K	N	C	D	O	C	K	T	O	L	G
I	C	H	W	R	M	Z	T	M	D	C	A	R	D	L
M	E	V	V	E	T	E	R	I	N	A	R	I	A	N
R	P	E	T	A	R	G	E	T	N	I	G	N	B	I
X	Q	O	Q	B	R	R	T	C	L	G	I	G	S	T
W	F	P	D	U	E	K	X	M	J	C	M	D	A	I
T	W	F	X	V	H	Z	O	D	A	E	E	X	A	J

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