



Taiji and Captivity

Lesson Plan

Summary

Thank you for using our materials to educate your students! Please see below for additional information that can serve as a guide for conducting presentations in your classroom setting. You're welcome to delete any slides you feel inappropriate for your classroom, or revise the information as you see fit. You can download the file to your computer to view or edit.

Tip: This presentation is helpful for classrooms who have watched *The Cove*, or who will watch it as part of this course.

Presentation Slides

Cover Slide: Dolphin Project is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting wild dolphins from capture and hunting, and educates the public about the problems associated with marine mammal captivity. Places like SeaWorld are designed to be entertaining family outings, but the fact is that many of the animals (such as orcas and dolphins) have trouble living in tanks that are much smaller than the oceans they're used to.

Slides 2 & 3: Encourages students to understand why we should care about dolphins as a species. You may wish to have a prior session with your classroom, such as our "About Dolphins" PowerPoint, so that students have a baseline of understanding.

Dolphins are highly intelligent mammals, who live in complex social groupings. They are considered one of the most intelligent species, with brains larger than humans!

(Feel free to add any of your own facts here as well!)

Tip: Mention that part of environmental protection is respect for ALL species. Even though we are talking about dolphins specifically here, wildlife conservation is important to maintain biodiversity and species preservation across all ecosystems.

Slide 4: Information about the dolphin drive hunts. If the class has seen The Cove you can refer to that. The process is called a drive hunt, because the fleet of boats drive the target into an area, as opposed to throwing nets or using fishing lines.

Slide 5: This is a map of Taiji, to provide a sense of the area. The yellow star at top marks the cove where the dolphins are pushed in. You'll see in the bay right above is a beach park that is marked on Google maps as a summer recreation spot (most Japanese people are not aware that there is dolphin killing that takes place during the winter there). The red star marks the harbor where the boats are stationed. They'll exit through the small opening that goes out to the bay, along the coast line at the bottom right of the image, and go out to sea.

Slide 6: This is a video of the Taiji fishing harbor from above as the boats leave to hunt (if you click play the video should begin). The dolphin hunting fleet contains 12 boats, called banger boats, which go out to sea each morning at sunrise. We call them banger boats, because each boat has a large metal pole with a bell attached to the bottom which is below the water. Each boat driver has a large hammer that they use to hit the pole, which vibrates down to the bell and creates a loud underwater noise. Because dolphins have such sensitive hearing and sonar, the noise is incredibly loud and unsettling to them, which is what makes it so easy for the boats to herd the dolphins.

The boats leave the harbor and will fan out across the open water. They often go up to around 8-10 miles from shore, and will be spread out along the horizon across up to 10 or 12 miles. They will look for pods, and then radio one another to come join them if they find one. (Sometimes they get tips from other fishermen if they see a pod.)

Slide 7: Close up image of the banger boat. Point out the pole that goes from the seated driver diagonally down into the water.

Slide 8: Audio of banger boats. Press the play button, and it will have an audio clip of the sound the banger poles make. Note to your students that it is much louder when amplified under water.

Slide 9: The boats join up to surround the pod of dolphins in a U shape, and they will use the banger poles to create a “sound net” that pushes the dolphins in whatever direction they want to go. (The dolphins are the white water in the foreground.)

Often we see the smoke from the boat motors turn black, far off in the distance, which is how a drive is spotted. The boats rev their engines and go fast, and the dolphins are forced to swim very hard to try and escape them. The dolphins have never heard that kind of noise, and are usually very panicked.

Slide 10: This image shows the dolphins swimmingly furiously to get away from the sound. At this point they are near the shore, so they have been swimming very fast for several miles already. Because they have been chased by the boats, they are breathing hard (remember that they are mammals like us). Like humans who are running and panting, they have to breathe more often to catch their breath, so they have to come to the surface more often during a drive.

Slide 11: This aerial image shows the killing cove (marked by a yellow arrow) Once the pod is pushed into the mouth of that cove, 3 layers of nets are put up across the mouth of the inlet so they cannot escape.

Because wild dolphins have never seen a net before, and they sonar to detect what's underwater, they do not recognize that they could jump over the net. Instead, we have seen that they swim directly into the net trying to push through, which can cause entanglement and drowning. A few panicked dolphins have thrashed so much they get over a net, but there are two more blocking their way.

The white box on the other side of the street is the police box, a small station that was built after The Cove was released. There is a very strong police presence, and we are monitored closely to make sure we do not try to release the dolphins or intervene.

Slide 12: This video shows how some dolphins are captured with nets when chosen for captivity. As you see, it is a violent and intense process.

Dolphin trainers choose which dolphins will be sold for captivity. When a pod is captured in the cove, the hunters will often call the trainers to come and choose some dolphins if they think there are good candidates for captivity. (The hunters know what “orders” have been placed by different aquariums and what people want to buy.) They are usually looking for young female dolphins, who are easier to train [you can insert a comment about how boys are stubborn], and who don't have scars or marks on them. The trainers as a group will wrestle a dolphin to capture it and hold it still for evaluation. For wild dolphins who have never encountered a human before, this is incredibly stressful. Note: this process is how wild dolphins will be captured to enter the captive world. It is terrifying and traumatic, and the primary reason is for human entertainment. It is a high cost on the animal's part for our short-term enjoyment.

Slide 13: This section focuses on what happens after capture. It is important to realize that as awful as the hunts are, the life in captivity becomes a permanent condition. The transition from wild to captive dolphin is rough, and some dolphins do not survive-- whether from stress, or refusing to eat, or illness because of captive conditions, we see a number of dolphins die shortly after capture. Even those who do survive are put into small pens where they cannot swim freely, and forced to learn tricks in order to be fed.

Wild dolphins eat live fish, which provides both their nutrition as well as hydration (dolphins don't drink water). Once captive, they are fed frozen dead fish, which they are not used to. Only upon reaching the point of severe hunger will dolphins begin to eat the frozen fish, and then that is all they will eat for the rest of their lives. Because frozen fish does not have as much water content, it is common for captive dolphins to be hydrated through tubes put down their throat into their stomachs.

Slide 14: This dolphin in Taiji is on the thinner side, and eager for food. The ribs can clearly be seen on the dolphin. Dolphins are trained using food as positive reinforcement, so they are often kept hungry so that they will be eager to learn. Some wild captured dolphins have trouble adjusting to eating frozen fish, and may also reject the food.

Slide 15: Captive dolphins must learn to undergo many types of medical treatment, including having their blood drawn, being tubed for hydration or medication, or receiving shots or other medication. It is not necessarily painful, but it may be slightly uncomfortable and is unnatural. It is only necessary because they are now captive.

Slide 16: Taiji is actively engaged in selling dolphins to aquariums both in Japan and to other countries. The dolphin will be put in a sling, then hoisted with a crane out of the water and into a tub inside a wooden crate. Because dolphins are meant to live in water (and float), transporting dolphins out of water puts stress on their internal organs where the weight of their own body can cause harm.

Slide 17: This image shows one of the open sided trucks used to transport the dolphins. The dolphins may be driven in the backs of these trucks to facilities, or brought to an airport where the crate is loaded onto a plane and sent to an aquarium outside the country. Again this is a very stressful process, and not all dolphins will survive the trauma of transportation. It is important to note again that this entire process exists to bring wild dolphins into the entertainment industry. If people did not want to see captive dolphins, none of this would be happening.

Slide 18: A few facts about captivity. Feel free to elaborate on any points. You may wish to use our Captivity presentation in your class as well.

Slide 19: This video contains a PSA about capture and captivity. If you hover over the microphone, you'll see the play button appear. This gives the students the opportunity to absorb everything they've just learned.

Slide 20: Summary-- how to get involved. Hopefully by this point your students are impassioned and ready to take action! If they are old enough, they can follow us on social media, or visit our



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website to learn more information. You may want to think of other ideas as well, such as having a pledge poster not to support captivity, holding a bake sale fundraiser, or volunteer activity such as a park cleanup.