



## TEACHER GUIDE: "Free (to dream)"

### Introduction:

"Free (to dream)" is a powerful film which depicts the tragic story of a young dolphin "rescued" from being caught by a fishing hook and separated from its mother only to end up in an aquarium. The film shows the plight of the dolphin as the aquarium chooses to keep the dolphin rather than release it. The story then goes on to show the dolphin, Goldy, dreaming of being reunited with family and leading the life that a dolphin is meant to live. Sadly, we realize that this was just a dream and Goldy is left to languish in the aquarium. This is a story that is repeated throughout the world as aquariums "rescue" dolphins and then keep them for the lucrative captive dolphin industry, exploiting them for profit. For example, you may want to read about the story of Morgan the Orca "rescued" and then kept in Loro Parque Aquarium in the Canary Islands as there has been a legal battle to try to get her released.

### Learning Goals:

To get students to think about and define what freedom is and what it means to them as well as how freedom relates to animals.

To use compare and contrast thinking to make their own decisions about dolphin captivity by thinking about the lives of dolphins in the ocean vs those living in aquariums.

To brainstorm and come up with solutions to ending dolphin captivity.

To think critically about how humans treat dolphins.

The idea is not to tell students that dolphin captivity is wrong or cruel but to let students watch the film, talk about it and come to their own conclusions.

## OPTIONS:

Before beginning, ask students what they know about dolphins. Hopefully they will mention that dolphins are intelligent, extremely social and playful and have even been known to protect humans from sharks. Ask students how humans treat dolphins. Hopefully, they will mention that while many people love and respect dolphins, there are those who exploit them. Dolphins are used to “entertain” humans, they are hunted in some areas of the world for both human consumption and used as shark bait in others. They are killed by indiscriminate fishing methods. Several countries have military programs that use dolphins due to their incredible sonar.

There are resources to teach about dolphins at:

<https://www.dolphinproject.com/resources/study-guides/>

1. Use the student handout to have students answer the questions either written or as a discussion.
2. As an example of how it might feel to be a captive dolphin, Tape off a square in the classroom or block off an area and ask a student volunteer(s) to be the “captive dolphin.” The student(s) must remain in that area throughout the lesson.  
At the end of the lesson, ask the student how she/he/they would feel if they were to spend the rest of the school day in this box, if they were to spend a week in the box... the rest of her/his/their lives in that box. What would be missed? Discuss if students agree/disagree that dolphins would have similar feelings. Alternatively, have students think about that and then write down or discuss their feelings.

### FOR OLDER STUDENTS:

Create a second box representing a sanctuary in the ocean where dolphins that truly cannot be released can live out their lives in their natural habitat with other dolphins. Discuss the differences between life in an aquarium and life in a sanctuary for dolphins. Some facilities will label themselves “sanctuaries” or “rescue centers”, how can you tell if the sanctuaries are legitimate?

- One huge indicator is that a sanctuary would not offer any PAID experiences with dolphins, such as “swim with the dolphins” or “dolphin trainer for a day”.
- A sanctuary would never have its dolphins perform for visitors or do tricks for visitors.
- A sanctuary tries to provide the most natural life for its dolphins, including allowing them to hunt and catch their own meals when possible.

Possible differences in feelings may include:

NOT having to perform and having the FREEDOM to do as they Please. Being in natural ocean water will benefit their skin and eyes. Having members of the same species together will allow them to play and socialize. Being able to eat when they want and not be dependant on humans.

3. Hopefully, students will come to the conclusion that the best way to help end dolphin captivity is to not buy a ticket to any facility that has captive dolphins. The captive dolphin industry is just like any other business relying on profits from ticket sales. If we eliminate the demand for captive dolphins, there will be no need to keep them in captivity. Every individual has the power to help captive dolphins. Spreading awareness is another way individuals can help.
4. Human caused dangers to dolphins include entanglement in discarded fishing nets, being caught in nets meant for other species (bycatch), polluted ocean water, capture for the captive industry as well as direct hunting. If you are located in Australia, you may want to have a discussion about the Shark Control program.
5. There is more information on the study guides page about the Taiji dolphin drive hunts, recommended for older students.

#### EXTENSIONS:

1. Organize a debate on dolphin captivity.
2. Students create a poster for dolphins.
3. Students create a video for dolphins.
4. Students write a story about the daily life and feelings of either a dolphin living in the ocean or in an aquarium.

