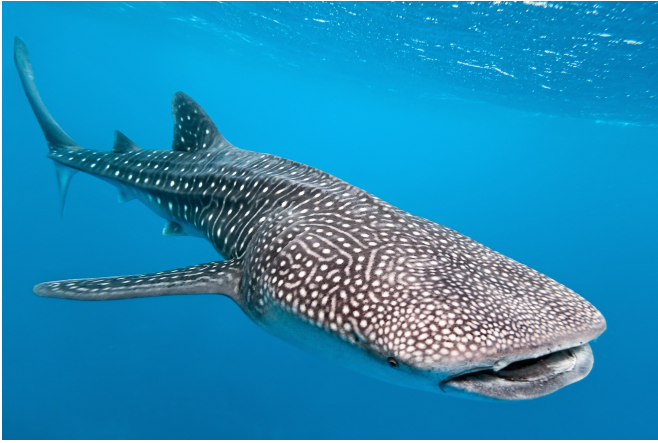


Name: _____

The World's Largest Fish

By Guy Belleranti



Did you know the largest fish in the world is a gentle shark with teeth so small it cannot use them to eat? This fish is the whale shark.

An adult whale shark averages 25 feet in length. Some reach 40 feet or more. That's as big as a full-sized school bus and twice as big as a great white shark!

How can a shark grow so large if it doesn't use its teeth to eat? It filter feeds! This means it strains food from the water through a kind of filter in its mouth. Another giant filter-feeder is the blue whale, but the whale shark filter feeds slightly differently than the blue whale.

A blue whale filters food through brush-like plates called baleen. The whale shark doesn't have baleen, but it does have gills. The whale shark's gills are extra special. They have bristly sections called gill rakers.

As the whale shark swims through the ocean, it sucks water, tiny plants, and microscopic animals called plankton into its five-foot wide mouth. When the shark closes its mouth, the water passes over its gills and back into the sea. However, the gill rakers catch and filter out the plankton. The shark swallows this plankton. The shark's huge mouth also catches and swallows other small animals, including fish, shrimp, and squid.

The whale shark's gills do more than catch plankton. Like the gills of other fish, whale shark gills absorb dissolved oxygen from the water. This oxygen passes into the gills' blood vessels. The heart then pumps this oxygen-rich blood to other parts of the body.

Another cool thing about the whale shark is the spots on its body. Each whale shark has a unique spot pattern. Scientists studying whale sharks have used this to help tell one whale shark from another.

Did you know? Some people go diving with whale sharks because of their gentle nature. Would YOU go diving with a whale shark?

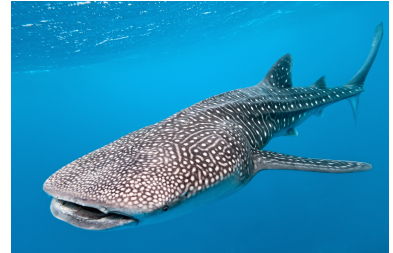
Name: _____

The World's Largest Fish

By Guy Belleranti

1. Based on the information you learned about whale sharks in the article, which two groups does a whale shark belong to?

- a. fish and invertebrate
- b. fish and vertebrate
- c. mammal and invertebrate
- d. mammal and vertebrate



2. According to the article, a whale shark is a filter feeder just like which other large ocean animal? _____
3. How does a whale shark's gills help it with filter feeding?

4. The four animals in the box are mentioned in the article.
On the lines below, rewrite the animal names in order from smallest to largest.

great white shark

whale shark

plankton

shrimp

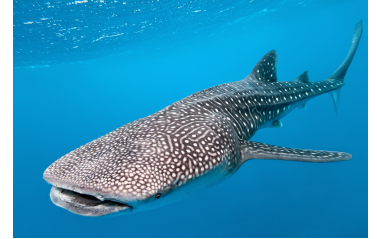
5. Based on your understanding of what you read in the article, what do all the following traits have in common?

- human fingerprints
- leopard spots
- whale shark markings

Name: _____

The World's Largest Fish

By Guy Belleranti



Match each vocabulary word from the reading passage with the correct definition.

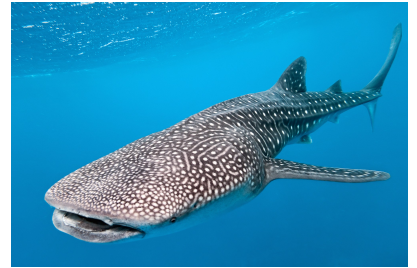
- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| _____ 1. gentle | a. take in or soak up something |
| _____ 2. filter | b. microscopic organisms that float in the sea, which many larger animals depend on for food |
| _____ 3. unique | c. tubes in the body that carry blood to the organs and tissues |
| _____ 4. plankton | d. fully grown; mature |
| _____ 5. bristly | e. distinctive; special |
| _____ 6. absorb | f. causes food to move down the throat |
| _____ 7. oxygen | g. mild-mannered, kind, or tender |
| _____ 8. blood vessels | h. having a rough and prickly texture |
| _____ 9. swallows | i. a chemical element humans and animals need to breathe in order to survive |
| _____ 10. adult | j. strain out unwanted material |

Name: _____

The World's Largest Fish

By Guy Belleranti

In the article, "The World's Largest Fish," you learned that whale sharks have a surprisingly gentle nature, despite their huge size and their classification as a shark.



Pretend you've won an exclusive snorkeling trip, where you and a friend are able to swim with whale sharks. On the lines below, describe what you think this experience would be like. Include how you would feel, what you would do, and who you would take with you.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

ANSWER KEY

The World's Largest Fish

By Guy Belleranti



1. Based on the information you learned about whale sharks in the article, which two groups does a whale shark belong to? **b**

- a. fish and invertebrate
- b. fish and vertebrate**
- c. mammal and invertebrate
- d. mammal and vertebrate

2. According to the article, a whale shark is a filter feeder just like which other large ocean animal? **blue whale**

3. How does a whale shark's gills help it with filter feeding?

Water passes over the whale shark's gills, but its gill rakers strain out plankton and other small animals, which the whale shark then swallows.

4. The four animals in the box are mentioned in the article.
On the lines below, rewrite the animal names in order from smallest to largest.

great white shark

whale shark

plankton

shrimp

plankton

shrimp

great white shark

whale shark

5. Based on your understanding of what you read in the article, what do all the following traits have in common?

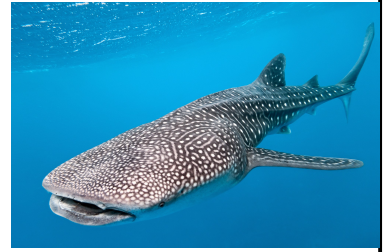
- human fingerprints
- leopard spots
- whale shark markings

They are all unique; no two humans, leopards, or whale sharks have these same traits.

ANSWER KEY

The World's Largest Fish

By Guy Belleranti



Match each vocabulary word from the reading passage with the correct definition.

g 1. gentle

a. take in or soak up something

j 2. filter

b. microscopic organisms that float in the sea, which many larger animals depend on for food

e 3. unique

c. tubes in the body that carry blood to the organs and tissues

b 4. plankton

d. fully grown; mature

h 5. bristly

e. distinctive; special

a 6. absorb

f. causes food to move down the throat

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g. mild-mannered, kind, or tender

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h. having a rough and prickly texture

f 9. swallows

i. a chemical element humans and animals need to breathe in order to survive

d 10. adult

j. strain out unwanted material