

My Day as a Dolphin Trainer

Grade Level: Grade 4 & 5

Language Arts Skills: Creative Writing, Use of Technology

Florida Sunshine State Standards:

Grade 4: LA.4.4.1.1, LA.4.6.4.1, LA.4.6.4.2

Grade 5: LA.5.4.1.1, LA.5.6.4.1, LA.5.6.4.2

Description:

Students will write a creative story about what their day would be like if they worked as a dolphin trainer at CMA. As a means of presenting their story to the class, they will create a PowerPoint or other slideshow of the behaviors the dolphins would perform during their presentation. This activity may be done in conjunction with “Dolphin Decimals” or on its own.

Materials:

- “Why Train a Dolphin?” story
- “Trainer Checklist” handout
- “Multimedia Project– My Dolphin Presentation”
- “CMA Dolphin Presentation” video (available online)/ video player
- Dolphin behavior cutouts
- Chart paper or a white board
- Projector
- Computer access for students (For modifications for students without computer access, see “Modifications” below)
- Pencils/Pens
- Paper

Preparations:

Make enough copies of the “Trainer Checklist” and “My Dolphin Presentation” handouts to give to each student. Print and cut out the dolphin behavior cards and attach either tape (if using chart paper) or magnets (if using a white board) on the backside.

Procedures:

- 1) Ask the class about the dolphins they have seen at zoos or aquariums. Discuss some of the different tricks or behaviors that the dolphins perform during shows and have students offer some suggestions as to why these behaviors are taught to the animals.
- 2) Watch the “Dolphin Show” video (found online) with the class and have them write down their favorite things that the dolphins did during the presentation.
- 3) Read “Why Train a Dolphin?” aloud to the class. After the reading, have students raise their hands and explain why the dolphins may have done their favorite things from the video.
- 4) Create a chart like the one in figure 1 below.

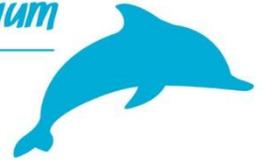
Figure 1:

High Energy/ Exercise	Husbandry/ Medical	Cognitive/ Learning

- 5) Have the students classify the different behaviors (from the “Dolphin Behavior” cutouts) into the appropriate category.
- 6) Pass out the “Trainer Checklist” to each student. Explain that they are going to use that checklist to write a creative story about what a day as a CMA dolphin trainer would be like. They can create as many characters as they want, as long as they incorporate the items on the checklist to make the story factual.

Homework: Multimedia Project – My Dolphin Presentation

Modifications: If a student is unable to gain computer access at home, they may do their multimedia presentation using dolphin behavior cut-outs and posterboard



Trainer Checklist

Every day, hundreds of guests watch the dolphin trainers at the Clearwater Marine Aquarium work with the Atlantic bottlenose dolphins. However, very few people see what happens behind-the-scenes. Dolphin trainers are responsible for preparing the food, keeping the exhibits clean, maintaining the health of the animals and so much more. The checklist below explains the some of the daily job duties of a dolphin trainer.

Food Preparation

- Organize the fish by pulling them from the freezer and sorting the different types
- Inspect each fish to make sure it is healthy. Fish with split bellies, missing scales, red eyes, or other physical flaws cannot be fed to the dolphins
- Weigh and separate each dolphin's daily diet. Make sure not to feed them too much or too little!
- Clean and disinfect all of the knives, cutting boards, scales, and buckets used to prepare the food
- Clean all countertops and surfaces to make sure no bacteria is left behind

Maintaining the Dolphin Pools

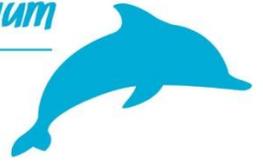
- Remove algae from the sides of the pools using scrub brushes
- Remove and clean all enrichment items and rafts
- Collect any used towels and do a load of laundry
- Set up any training tools needed for today's presentations, including target poles and enrichment items
- Fill foot baths with animal-safe disinfectants for trainers and volunteers to walk through – this prevents dirt and bacteria from getting tracked onto the dolphin platforms
- Scrub and rinse the dolphin platforms

Medical Procedures

- ___ Perform observations on each of the dolphins to check their breathing and behavior
- ___ Stuff food items with daily vitamins and supplements to maintain health of dolphins
- ___ Practice medical behaviors with dolphins, such as tube feeding, presenting parts of their bodies for examination, and others
- ___ Clean and disinfect any used tubes, syringes, or medical cups used during practice behaviors or food preparation

Training Duties

- ___ Work to teach the dolphins new behaviors using positive reinforcement, target poles, hand signals, and bridges (a bridge is a way to let the dolphins know when they've done the correct behavior – in the case of the dolphins, we use a whistle)
- ___ Practice and perfect learned behaviors
- ___ Perform a mixture of husbandry, cognitive, and high energy behaviors to ensure dolphins are healthy, enriched, and exercising
- ___ Educate the public about dolphins by explaining the stories of each of the resident animals, answering questions, and narrating the dolphin presentation
- ___ Work with other trainers to ensure each dolphin receives their correct amount of food as a primary reinforcement for “good” behaviors
- ___ Fill out paperwork concerning which behaviors were performed, how successfully each behavior was executed, the condition of each dolphin, and the amount of food consumed
- ___ Discuss with other trainers new and innovative ways to train, new behaviors that the dolphin could learn, and ways to improve animal interactions



My Day as a Dolphin Trainer

Name: _____

Due Date Part 1: _____

Due Date Part 2: _____

Part One

CONGRATULATIONS! After years of hard work in school and volunteering with numerous animal organizations, you have been hired as a dolphin trainer at the Clearwater Marine Aquarium. Each day, you work to maintain the health and well-being of the resident dolphins, while educating the public about marine life. Using at least 12 duties on the “Trainer Checklist”, write a creative short story about your first day. Include other characters, such as guests, dolphins, and fellow trainers, as well as a description of your first dolphin presentation. Make sure to discuss the types of behaviors you asked the dolphins to perform and why.

Part Two

Using the Clearwater Marine Aquarium website, create a PowerPoint presentation of your dolphin presentation. On each slide, include a picture of the behavior you chose, the name of the behavior, and what type of behavior it is (cognitive, high energy, or husbandry). Write a short narration (or use your description from your short story) and present your dolphin presentation to the class.



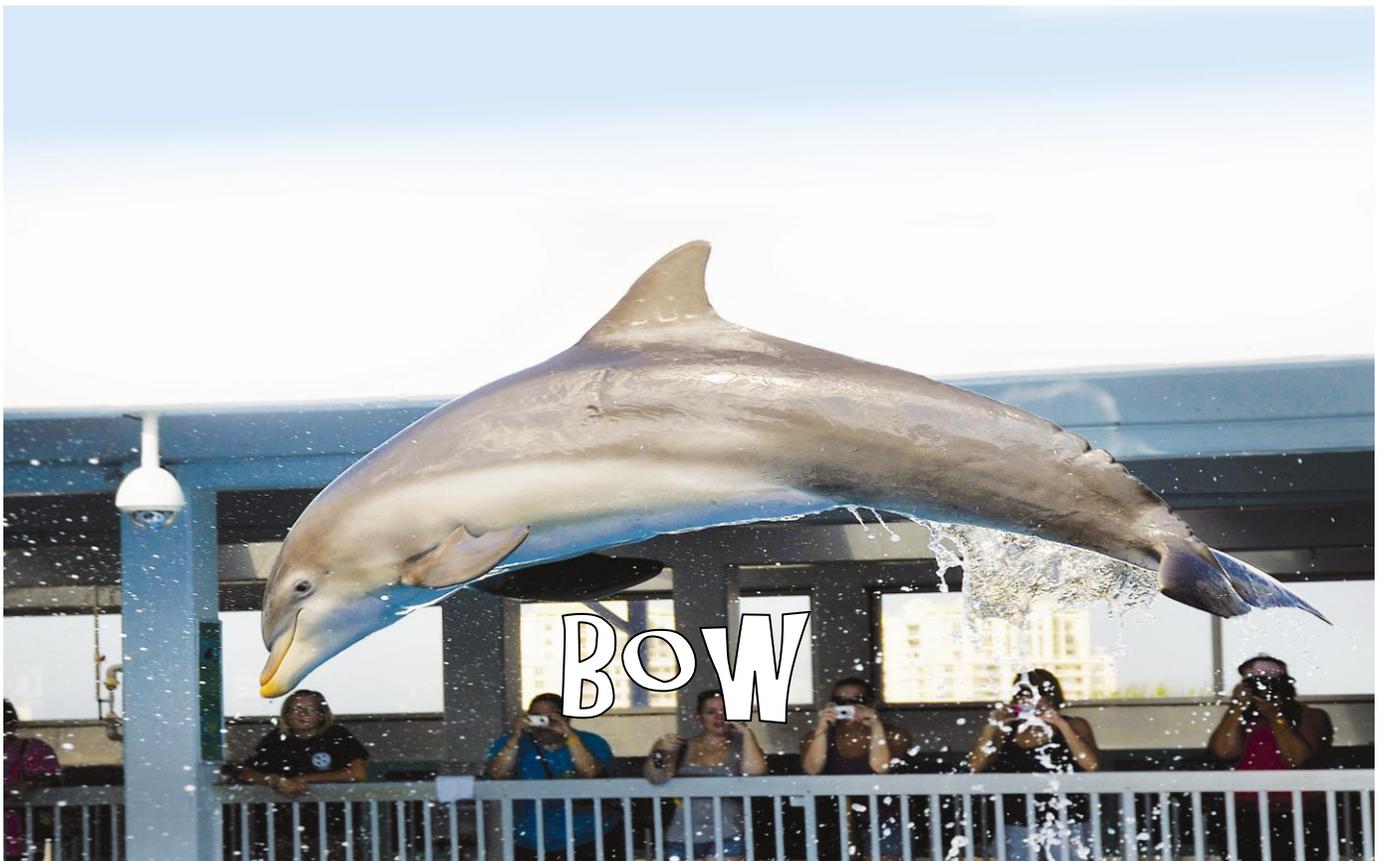
Beach



Beach With Stretcher



Blood Draw



BOW





Foot PUSH



Forward Tail Walk



HUG



HAND TARGET

Mimicry



Mouth Open





Painting



Pectoral Hold



PHYSICAL THERAPY



Retrieval





Somersault



Stretcher