

**Activity****4****IRA/NCTE****Standard 2**

**Directions:** Read the two newspaper articles below, then answer the questions.

### Navy Sonar May Be Responsible for Beached Whales

*March 16*— In the past two days, at least 16 whales have beached themselves on the shores of three islands in the Bahamas. Concerned bystanders were able to push some of the 12-foot to 15-foot whales back into the water, but seven of the whales have died.

Although the cause has not been determined, some scientists think that tests being conducted by the U.S. Navy in the area might be the cause of the whale's strange behavior. The ships were using sonar to detect submarines. Whales are highly sensitive to sound, and very loud noises created by the sonar tests could have disoriented the whales and even caused ear damage. Scientists said they will investigate to find the cause of the strange behavior. They plan to conduct necropsies on some of the whales to determine the cause of their deaths.

### Report Released on Dead Whales

*June 14*— Marine biologists reported today that the seven whales who died last March in the Bahamas probably were disoriented by a "distant explosion or an intense acoustic event." The loud noise caused bleeding and damage to the tissues around the whales' inner ears, disorienting them and causing them to swim ashore.

Biologist Darlene Ketten of the National Marine Fisheries Service said that there might be a link between the death of the whales and the sound generated by Navy sonar tests, but she cannot say for sure. One possibility is that the loud noise was caused by an underwater landslide in the area.

According to the report, except for damage to their ears, the whales were healthy and free from disease. Whatever the cause, a Navy spokesperson said, "We hope to build upon what we will learn . . . to ensure that it does not happen again anywhere in the world."

### Multiple Choice

1. What newsworthy event was the reporter writing about in these two articles?
  - a. Seven whales died mysteriously.
  - b. The Navy was conducting sonar testing.
  - c. Research shows that whales are sensitive to sound.
  - d. Scientists are performing tests on dead whales.
2. Most readers might infer from the first article that
  - a. the whales died of natural causes.
  - b. Navy sonar tests were probably responsible for the whales' deaths.
  - c. these whales are on the endangered species list.
  - d. the Navy is not responsible for the death of the whales.
3. In the last sentence of the first article, what does the word *necropsies* mean?
  - a. written reports provided to government agencies
  - b. medical examinations to determine cause of death
  - c. X rays of vital organs
  - d. underwater studies conducted on marine animals and plants



**Activity 4** (continued)

**Short  
Answer**

- 4. Which of the following statements is NOT presented as a fact in either article?
  - a. Navy sonar tests caused the death of the whales.
  - b. Seven whales died in the Bahamas.
  - c. Whales are sensitive to sound.
  - d. Some of the whales examined had damage to their inner ears.

- 5. Do you think the Navy tests were responsible for the whales' deaths? Use information from the two articles to support your opinion.

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- 6. What might be different about these two articles if the reporter was writing them for a team of marine biologists?

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