



My Day as a Turtle Keeper

Created by the NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher Education Section

Essential Question:

What is it like to be a turtle keeper?

Lesson Overview:

Students will learn about how turtles are cared for at the aquarium by writing about it.

Learning Objectives:

Students will write a narrative describing how they would spend a day as a turtle keeper at the aquarium. Students will be able to:

- Introduce the narrator as a turtle keeper.
- Describe the steps they would take to care for the turtles.
- Write a logical conclusion to their narrative.

North Carolina Standards:

Second Grade:

Writing:

- **W.2.3** Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.

Third Grade:

Writing:

- **W.3.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
 - **W.3.3.a** Establish a situation and introduce a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
 - **W.3.3.b** Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations.
 - **W.3.3.c** Use temporal words and phrases to signal event order.
 - **W.3.3.d** Provide a sense of closure.
- **W.3.4** With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)
- **W.3.5** With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 3.)



North Carolina Aquariums Education Section

- **W.3.6** With guidance and support from adults, use technology to produce and publish writing (using keyboarding skills) as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

Fourth Grade:

Writing:

- **W.4.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
 - **W.4.3.a** Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
 - **W.4.3.b** Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
 - **W.4.3.c** Use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.
 - **W.4.3.d** Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
 - **W.4.3.e** Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.
- **W.4.4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)
- **W.4.5** With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 4.)
- **W.4.6** With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.

Fifth Grade:

Writing:

- **W.5.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
 - **W.5.3.a** Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
 - **W.5.3.b** Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
 - **W.5.3.c** Use a variety of transitional words, phrases, and clauses to manage the sequence of events.
 - **W.5.3.d** Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
 - **W.5.3.e** Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.



North Carolina Aquariums Education Section

- **W.5.4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)
- **W.5.5** With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 5.)
- **W.5.6** With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of two pages in a single sitting.

Time Frame:

Preparation: 5 minutes

Activity: three class periods

Materials:

- Computers with internet access
- Aquarium videos (<https://www.youtube.com/user/seaturtleexploration>)
- Narrative worksheet
- Paper
- Pencils

Supplemental Background Information for Teachers:

Caring for sea turtles at the Aquarium is a big responsibility. Since all sea turtles are protected, the Aquarium must have permits to keep them. The sea turtle keepers are responsible for caring for the turtles during their stay at the Aquarium. There are specific things that they must do every day to make sure the turtles stay healthy.

During a typical day, our staff begins by feeding the sea turtle hatchlings. In the mornings, the turtles eat gel food (you can learn more about gel food in our video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P4qOrRwS-IU>). Once the turtles have finished their breakfast, the staff begins cleaning their habitat. They siphon leftover food and waste out of the water in their holding tank and their exhibit tank. Next the staff cleans the water filters and life support systems. This is important to make sure the turtles have clean water. Every other week, the turtles get scrubbed to remove any algae from their shell. At 9:30 one turtle is taken to the sea turtle exhibit to be the day's sea turtle ambassador.

During the rest of the day, the turtle keepers have other responsibilities. They have other animals to care for and feed. If the amount of gel food is running low, the keepers will spend some time preparing it. Every other week, the turtle tanks get a major water change. This helps to keep the turtles healthy. At 4:30, the sea turtle on exhibit gets to go back to its



North Carolina Aquariums Education Section

holding tank. Then the turtles are fed. In the afternoon they get a mixture of fish, shrimp, crab, and clam. After eating, the turtles rest up for another day at the aquarium.

The staff at the aquarium gets a little help from the North Carolina State University veterinary school. Twice a month the vets come to the aquarium to check on the animals living there. The sea turtles get quarterly blood draws to make sure they are healthy. The vets also do a checkout exam before the aquarium is allowed to release the turtles back into the ocean. Once the vets clear the turtles, they are fitted with satellite tracking devices and released.

Preparation:

Print one narrative worksheet per student. Make sure you can access the videos of turtle care in the aquarium.

Procedure:

1. Watch the videos showing how we care for turtles at the North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher. If you don't want to watch them all at once, you can watch the videos over the unit and use this lesson as a culmination project.
2. Have the students discuss the videos. What does it take to care for a sea turtle? List the important steps on the board.
3. Ask questions to find out what the students would enjoy, or not enjoy, about caring for a sea turtle. Why?
4. Tell the students that they will be writing a narrative about a day in the life of a sea turtle keeper.
5. Review the important parts of a narrative. A good narrative tells a story, it is not simply a list of steps. Narratives work best when the dialogue focuses on the most important part of the story. You should show the audience, not tell them.
6. Give the students this writing prompt: you will write a story about a day in the life of a sea turtle keeper at an aquarium.
7. Pass out the narrative worksheets.
8. Have the students fill out the worksheet.
9. Once the students finish their worksheet, have them begin writing the first draft of their narrative.
10. Next the students will begin editing their papers. You can have your students watch a video to review the editing steps [here](#).
11. Have the students reread their paper and look for spelling errors first. Have them ask questions such as "are these spelled right?" or "do any words look funny?" Have them fix any spelling errors.
12. Next, the students should reread their paper and look for grammar and punctuation mistakes. They should ask questions such as "Are all the words capitalized where they



should be?” and “have I used the correct punctuation?” Fix any grammar and punctuation mistakes.

13. Then, the students should reread their paper a third time. This time they should check for complete sentences and whether everything makes sense.
14. Once the students have edited their mistakes, they should trade papers to edit one another's. Review proper editing techniques with the class.
15. Once the students have edited and returned the papers to the author, the students should type up their papers to create a final draft.

Extensions:

1. Have the students illustrate their stories.



Glossary for Narratives

Coherence: The arrangement of ideas in such a way that the reader can easily move from one point to another. When all ideas are arranged and connected, a piece of writing has coherence.

Context: The set of facts or circumstances surrounding an event or a situation in a piece of literature.

Elaboration: The words used to describe, persuade, explain, or in some way support the main idea; to be effective, details should be vivid, colorful, and appealing to the senses. Details can be descriptive, sensory, and/or reflective.

Focus: The concentration on a specific topic to give it emphasis or clarity.

Pacing: The rate of movement and action of the story. The story may take a long time to build to the climax or end abruptly.

Stereotype: A pattern or form that does not change. A character is “stereotyped” if she or he has no individuality and fits a mold.

Tone: The overall feeling or effect created by a writer’s attitude and use of words. This feeling may be serious, mock-serious, humorous, sarcastic, solemn, objective, etc.

Topic: The specific subject covered in a piece of writing.

Voice: The style and quality of the writing. Voice portrays the author’s personality or the personality of a chosen persona. A distinctive voice establishes personal expression and enhances the writing.



Narrative Worksheet

Write a story about a day in the life of a sea turtle keeper at an aquarium.

Possible Title: _____

What happened? _____

First

Next

Then

Last