

Unit Description

Songs of the Sea, Above and Below

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Sea shanties are a part of our musical and nautical history. Shanties were easy to sing, provided a strong beat for sailors to work in unison, and entertained sailors who sailed the seas for up to four years at a time. Additionally, shanties provide an historical record of sea life in the 18th and 19th centuries. This unit is written for third through fifth grade elementary students to learn about sea shanties, their uses, and their form; to learn some basic information about whales and whale songs; and to create a modern shanty using a standard shanty tune. Included in the paper is information about how and why Americans sought and killed whales, and speculation on why some whales sing.