

Student Comprehension Worksheet

Directions: Read the online *Science News* article "[Baleen whales eat \(and poop\) a lot more than we realized.](#)" which details scientists' efforts to accurately estimate how much certain whale species eat and what that means for ecosystems, and answer the questions below. A version of the article, "Whales eat more than we thought," appears in the December 4, 2021 issue of *Science News*.

- 1. What did researchers recently discover about the diets — and bathroom habits — of baleen whales?**
- 2. How do these habits shape ocean ecosystems? What does the discovery indicate about whales' roles in ocean ecosystems?**
- 3. How much does a blue whale eat in a day and how much energy does that translate to? What analogy do scientists use to describe their estimate and why might they use an analogy?**
- 4. What three questions did scientists need to answer in order to estimate whale food intake?**
- 5. How did scientists go about answering those questions? What technologies and techniques did scientists use?**
- 6. How do the scientists' methods compare with methods used in previous research?**
- 7. What happened to the world's populations of giant whales over the last century?**
- 8. What impact did scientists expect the decline of whale populations to have on krill, tiny crustaceans that are a source of food for whales?**

9. What actually happened to krill populations? How does the recent discovery help explain what happened?

10. How might the rebounding of whale populations to levels observed in the early 1900s affect the Southern Ocean's ecosystem?