

Overfishing

“One of the world’s largest trawl nets could encircle more than a dozen Boeing 747 jetliners at its opening.” —Joseph Springer



Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Do you enjoy eating seafood?
2. Do you think our oceans will still be full of fish 50 years from now?
3. What are the environmental dangers of overfishing?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| ___ 1. have a thing for | a) not capable of living or operating in this way in the future |
| ___ 2. appetizing | b) catching marine life faster than it can reproduce |
| ___ 3. overfishing | c) on the way to a destination |
| ___ 4. unsustainable | d) the intake or use of something |
| ___ 5. bycatch | e) a safe place without any disturbances |
| ___ 6. spoil | f) marine life that is caught accidentally and returned to the sea |
| ___ 7. en route | g) to have a liking for a thing, person, or subject |
| ___ 8. extinction | h) to become rotten |
| ___ 9. consumption | i) the complete loss of a species |
| ___ 10. sanctuary | j) looks good to eat |

Reading

OVERFISHING

The end of sushi?

1. What is your favorite type of sushi? Do you prefer tuna, salmon, or halibut? Maybe you don't **have a thing for** raw fish. Perhaps barbecued trout or grilled prawns sound more **appetizing**. Approximately one billion people rely on some form of seafood as their main source of protein. As the human population grows, fish populations steadily decline. Marine biologists warn that all types of fish could go extinct within a few decades if we continue **overfishing**.
2. An early example of overfishing took place in the 1800s. Humans began killing whales for lamp oil. As humans learned new ways to fish in the 20th century, demand for protein-rich food increased. Commercial fisheries began to take the place of local fishermen. Before long, consumers were able to choose from a wide variety of seafood from all over the world.
3. As fish populations decrease, commercial fishing fleets come up with new ways to find and catch fish. Today, commercial fishing companies use massive nets and hunt for fish in deeper parts of the oceans. Some large ocean fish, such as bluefin tuna, have declined by 90% in recent years. Birds, bears, and other animals that rely on fish for food are dying off too.
4. **Unsustainable** fishing methods are largely to blame for this environmental disaster. For every pound of fish that makes it to the grocery store or restaurant, approximately five pounds of **bycatch** gets thrown back overboard. This marine life that is caught unintentionally often dies before returning to the water. In addition to this wastage, approximately 20–45% of fish that is caught for food goes uneaten. Some fish **spoils en route**, while other fish is wasted at the restaurant or dinner table.
5. How can the average seafood lover help prevent a mass **extinction** of marine life? Fish farms may not be the answer. It takes about five kilograms of captured fish to feed one kilogram of farmed salmon. Environmentalists recommend other solutions such as reducing **consumption** and buying local seafood. People can also support fishing laws and marine **sanctuaries**. Teaching kids and youth about overfishing and the destruction of the food chain may be the most important thing to do. Should we take kids to aquariums to do this?

Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs, and write the answers in your notebook.

1. What early example of overfishing is mentioned?
2. What different types of seafood are mentioned in the reading?
3. What is a new method that commercial fishing fleets are using to fish?
4. Why aren't fish farms the answer to overfishing?
5. What is one simple thing humans can do to prevent a mass extinction of marine life?

Vocabulary Review

Which word from page 1 is described in each example?
The words in **bold** are hints.

#	Sentence	Word
1	We can't keep relying on oil. It will run out eventually.	
2	The fish will go bad if you leave it out too long.	
3	There are no more Japanese river dolphins in existence .	
4	The whales need a safe place to give birth.	
5	The decision to fly over the ocean was made during the flight .	
6	My daughter likes anything related to turtles.	
7	Those sushi rolls are just for display. They aren't meant for eating .	
8	The fishermen caught more than they were legally allowed.	
9	Those seafood tacos look really good!	
10	Dolphins often get caught in nets meant for tuna.	

Idioms & Expressions

Work with a partner or small group to guess the meanings of these idioms and expressions.

- | | |
|--|---|
| _____ 1. fishy (<i>adjective</i>) | a) to look for something in a messy pile or location |
| _____ 2. crabby (<i>adjective</i>) | b) to look or feel very awkward in an uncomfortable situation |
| _____ 3. fish around for (<i>verb</i>) | c) a very small person |
| _____ 4. fish for compliments (<i>verb</i>) | d) someone who lends money with a high interest rate |
| _____ 5. be like a fish out of water (<i>verb</i>) | e) there are many other single men or women to date |
| _____ 6. a shrimp (<i>noun</i>) | f) an expression of surprise or awe |
| _____ 7. a loan shark (<i>noun</i>) | g) to no longer be responsible for something |
| _____ 8. have a whale of a time (<i>verb</i>) | h) in a bad mood, grumpy |
| _____ 9. small fry (<i>noun</i>) | i) to have a great time |
| _____ 10. there are plenty of fish in the sea | j) an unimportant person or group in comparison to a famous one |
| _____ 11. Holy mackerel! (<i>interjection</i>) | k) to try to get others to say something about your talents or appearance |
| _____ 12. off the hook (<i>verb</i>) | l) not quite right, mysterious |

Grammar Review

ADVERBIALS OF TIME

In English, time can be expressed with adverbs and adverb phrases or clauses.* Adverbials of time can be placed in different positions in a sentence. Read the example sentences. Then try making up your own sentences using the adverbs, clauses, and phrases listed.

A. Past

- **long ago / many years ago**
Many years ago, sea otters were killed for their fur.
- **a few decades back**
Laws were put in place to protect this river a few decades back.
- **when *name* was young**
When your grandpa was young, he used to catch fish to feed our family.

B. Present

- **in this day and age**
Killing whales for oil is not acceptable in this day and age.
- **presently**
There are presently too many large marine mammals in captivity.
- **in recent years****
In recent years, environmentalists have been tracking the effects of ocean garbage on marine life.
- **these days / today*****
Today, much of our salmon comes from fish farms.

C. Future

- **in # years**
In 25 years, dolphins may be extinct.
- **# years from now**
Fifty years from now, there may be no fish in the ocean.

***Note:**

A clause contains a subject and a verb (e.g., *when I was young*). A phrase does not contain a subject and a verb (e.g., *these days*). An adverb stands alone (e.g., *presently*).

****Note:**

Use this with the present perfect to refer to something that started in the past and continues in the present.

*****Note:**

Sometimes "today" is used to mean "in the present time," in contrast to "in the past." It does not literally mean "only for today."

Discussion

1. Is overfishing one of the most important environmental concerns for this generation?
2. Besides overfishing, what other problems do our oceans and rivers presently face?
3. What is the best way to educate young people about environmental problems?
4. After talking about this issue, will you think differently the next time you eat, buy, or order seafood?

Critical Thinking

IN PAIRS OR SMALL GROUPS

Colorful sushi platters feature seafood from all over the world. Many sushi chefs believe it's only a matter of time until sushi is "a thing of the past." What solutions can your group come up with to prevent the mass extinction of marine life?

Listening

Fill in the blanks as you listen to the recording.

OVERFISHING

The end of sushi?

1. What is your favorite type of sushi? Do you prefer tuna, salmon, or halibut? Maybe you don't have a thing for raw fish. Perhaps barbecued trout or grilled prawns sound more appetizing. Approximately one billion people _____ some form of seafood as their main source of protein. As the human population grows, fish populations steadily decline. Marine biologists warn that all types of fish could _____ within a few decades if we continue overfishing.
2. An early example of overfishing took place in the 1800s. Humans began killing whales for lamp oil. As humans learned new ways to fish in the 20th century, _____ for protein-rich food increased. Commercial fisheries began to take the place of local fishermen. Before long, consumers were able to choose from a _____ of seafood from all over the world.
3. As fish populations decrease, commercial fishing fleets _____ new ways to find and catch fish. Today, commercial fishing companies use massive nets and hunt for fish in deeper parts of the oceans. Some large ocean fish, such as bluefin tuna, have declined by 90% in recent years. Birds, bears, and other animals that rely on fish for food are dying off too.
4. Unsustainable fishing methods are largely to blame for this environmental disaster. For every pound of fish that makes it to the grocery store or restaurant, approximately five pounds of bycatch gets thrown back _____. This marine life that is caught _____ often dies before returning to the water. In addition to this wastage, approximately 20-45% of fish that is caught for food goes uneaten. Some fish spoils en route, while other fish is wasted at the restaurant or _____ .
5. How can the average seafood lover help prevent a mass extinction of marine life? Fish farms may not be the answer. It takes about five kilograms of captured fish to feed one kilogram of farmed salmon. _____ recommend other solutions such as reducing consumption and buying local seafood. People can also support fishing laws and marine sanctuaries. Teaching kids and youth about overfishing and the _____ of the food chain may be the most important thing to do. Should we take kids to aquariums to do this?

Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

Students read about the environmental threats of overfishing. The lesson includes vocabulary review exercises, comprehension questions, discussion questions, and a review of adverbs of time.

TEACHING TIPS:

See *Discussion Starters Teaching Guide* (<https://esllibrary.com/courses/72/lessons/>) for a variety of ways to use the reading.

LEVEL: High Int – Adv

TIME: 1.5–2 hours

TAGS: discussion, environment, marine, marine life, fishing, sushi, ocean, environmental English

Pre-Reading

A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Have students work in small groups or as a class. Discuss the quote.

B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. g | 3. b | 5. f | 7. c | 9. d |
| 2. j | 4. a | 6. h | 8. i | 10. e |

Reading (and/or Listening)

Read individually, in small groups, or as a class. You can also play the listening as your students read along. A gap-fill version of the reading is available on page 7. Help your students with vocabulary and expressions that they are unfamiliar with. Discuss the meaning of the subtitle “It’s only a matter of time.”

(Note: 1 kg = 2.2 lb; 5 kg = 11 lb)

Comprehension

1. Killing whales for oil is the early example of overfishing that was mentioned.
2. The reading mentions whale, tuna, salmon, halibut, trout, and prawns in the reading.
3. Fishing fleets are using massive nets to hunt for fish in the deeper parts of the ocean.
4. Fish farms aren’t the answer to overfishing because the fish we eat require smaller fish to feed them. These fish have to be caught to feed the farmed fish. This disrupts the food chain.
5. To prevent a mass extinction of marine life, humans can purchase locally caught seafood (as opposed to eating at colorful sushi buffets that contain seafood from all over the world).

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Vocabulary Review

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| 1. unsustainable | 6. have a thing for |
| 2. spoil | 7. consumption |
| 3. extinction | 8. overfishing |
| 4. sanctuary | 9. appetizing |
| 5. en route | 10. bycatch |

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Favorite* and *Colorful*. Most other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: *Favourite* and *Colourful*. Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.

Idioms & Expressions

- | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. l | 3. a | 5. b | 7. d | 9. j | 11. f |
| 2. h | 4. k | 6. c | 8. i | 10. e | 12. g |

Grammar Review

Review the differences between an adverb and an adverb clause or phrase. Ask students to come up with their own example sentences using the words and expressions provided. Have them practice making sentences in the present, past, and future.

Discussion

Answers will vary.
Can be done individually or in small groups or pairs.

Critical Thinking

Answers will vary.
Can be done individually or in small groups or pairs.

Listening

1. rely on, go extinct
2. demand, wide variety
3. come up with
4. overboard, unintentionally, dinner table
5. environmentalists, destruction