

## Unicorns of the Sea

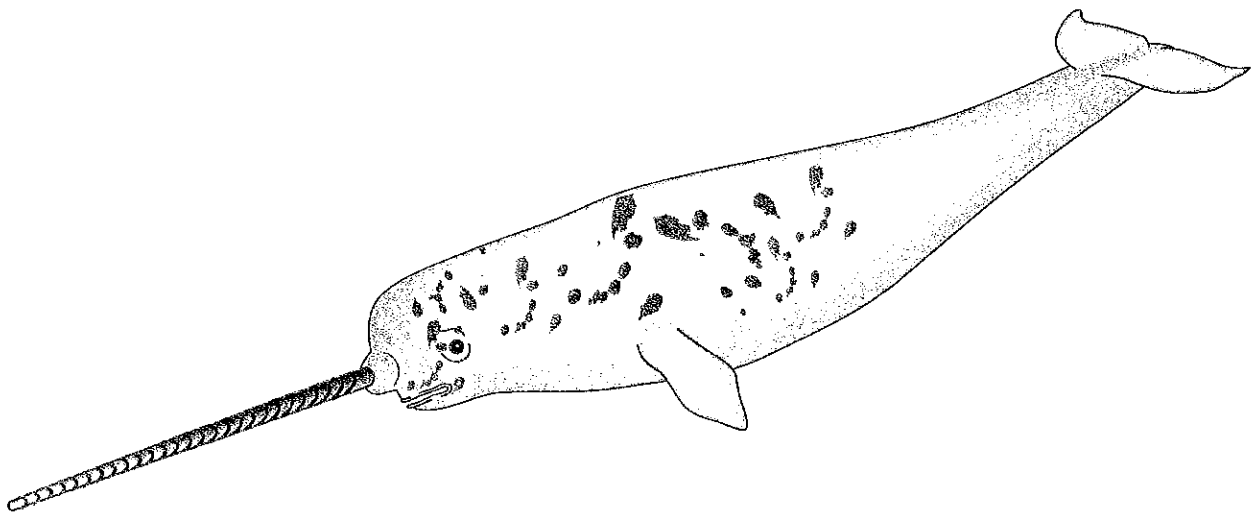
A unicorn is a mythical creature. This means it has never existed. But the narwhal, often called the unicorn of the sea, does exist. Imagine a whale with a unicorn-like horn on its face. Of the world's whales, the narwhal is the rarest.

Like other whales, a narwhal is a mammal. Mammals have hair on their bodies and produce milk to feed their young. These seldom-seen creatures live in the icy waters of the Arctic. Swimming mostly at the surface of the ocean, narwhals can dive quite deeply when they need to.

The narwhal's most unusual feature is a horn. But, it is not actually a horn. It is really a long spiral tooth. Mostly male narwhals grow this long tooth, which can reach lengths of 9 feet (2.7 m). The teeth of most animals have a hard exterior and a soft core. The narwhal's tooth is just the opposite. It has soft outside tissue and a hard inner core. This makes the long tooth flexible. The narwhal's tooth can bend without breaking.

Narwhals travel in groups. Like many other whales, they communicate by making clicking or squealing sounds to each other. Narwhals feed on shrimp, squid, and fish. Both orcas and polar bears hunt narwhals for food.

Unlike the unicorn of legend, the mysterious narwhal is a real creature. Threats to the narwhal's habitat from pollution and climate change are also real. Experts are studying ways to protect narwhals so that they are with us for a long time.



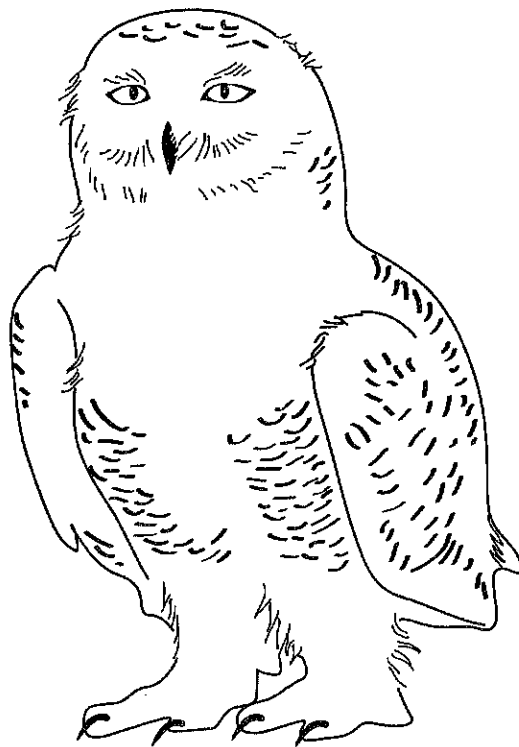
# The Top of the World

The Arctic Circle is the northernmost region of planet Earth. Imagine your head as the planet. If you place your palm on top of your head, you are covering the Arctic Circle. This chilly area is made up of the Arctic Ocean surrounded by frozen land. The average winter temperature is  $-40^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$ ). So, who lives in this icy land that sees little sunlight for half the year?

The Inuits are one group of people who call this frosty land their home. Many Inuits live in Greenland. This large island lies almost completely within the Arctic Circle. More than three-fourths of Greenland is covered by a thick sheet of ice. Living in such a harsh climate is not easy. Yet, for thousands of years, people have found ways to adapt and survive.

Arctic animals have found many ways to adapt to this challenging land as well. The arctic fox has a white coat in the winter that blends in with the snow. The fox's coat keeps it safe from polar bears. A walrus has a long ivory tusk. This tusk is a weapon against predators. Snowy owls have plumage, or feathers, that change with the seasons. Blending in with the landscape allows the owls to sneak up on their prey.

The white and frozen Arctic is like an icy crown at the top of the world. This vast, **forbidding** land is a challenge to all who call it home. Yet, both humans and animals survive and even thrive there.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Answer the questions.**

1. What was the author's purpose in writing "The Top of the World"?
  - A. to persuade readers to visit the Arctic
  - B. to give information about life in the Arctic
  - C. to explain how some animals have adapted to the Arctic
  - D. to describe what winter is like in the Arctic
  
2. What was the author's purpose in writing "Unicorns of the Sea"?
  - A. to tell what narwhals are like and where they live
  - B. to describe a narwhal's long tooth
  - C. to compare unicorns and narwhals
  - D. to give information about threats to narwhals
  
3. According to "The Top of the World," what do people and animals in the Arctic have in common?
  - A. Both have ways of blending in with the landscape.
  - B. Both migrate to warmer regions in the winter.
  - C. Both have adapted to the Arctic climate.
  - D. Both live in Greenland.

4. Write **true** or **false**.

\_\_\_\_\_ The Arctic region is made up of frozen land surrounded by water.

\_\_\_\_\_ Narwhals are able to communicate with each other.

5. What is an important difference between a narwhal's tooth and the teeth of most other animals?

---

---

6. What does the word **forbidding** mean as it is used in "The Top of the World"?

---

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Choose the correct answer.**

7. Think about the details in "The Top of the World" and "Unicorns of the Sea." Complete the chart to tell how these details lead you to a deeper understanding of the Arctic.

	<b>The Top of the World</b>	<b>Unicorns of the Sea</b>
1. What did I learn about the climate?		
2. What did I learn about Arctic life?		
3. What did I learn about threats to the Arctic?		

8. What else would you like to know about the Arctic? What are some questions that you feel were not answered by either passage?

---

---

---

---

---