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Stacy Rodenbough ENGL 1010 October 1, 2012 Orca- Greek God of the Underworld There are very few animals that can compare to the top mammal of marine animals. The Orca or killer whale is the largest of the dolphin family; with the full name of *Orcinus Orca*; meaning Greek god of the underworld. They are whales with distinct black and white coloring and have teeth that can be up to 4 inches in length. Not only they one of the largest of the sea they are also the fastest of marine animals and can travel speeds of up to 35 miles per hour. Orcas live in their own families or pods. There are three different types of Orcas species documented to date; resident, transient and offshore pods. The resident pods are separated geographically speaking and have been documented living spring, summer, and fall near the Washington coastline and have been spotted as far south as the Central California coastline. They have been spotted in the Puget Sound, Vancouver Island, Strait of Juan de Fuca, and the Southern Georgia Strait. While little is known about their movements; genetic data does suggest that these whales do not usually mingle with those from the other species. The Southern Resident Pod is currently on the endangered species list and is protected by the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and a distinct species under the Endangered Species Act. There are 88 whales currently listed on the list for the resident whales that researchers have documented using the whales saddle patch's as a signature to name and number each whale. All whales have a distinct marking behind their upper dorsal fin that in reference to humans would be like their own finger print; no two are alike. The resident pod is usually led by an older and wiser female whale and they usually stay together in large pods. They swim and hunt together. The male whales on average can grow up to 24 feet in length and weigh between 7 to 10 tons.

They typically live up to 30 years but can live up to 50 to 60 years. The females on average grow up to 21 feet in length and weigh between 4 to 6 tons. They typically live up to 50 years but can live up to 80 to 90 years. These averages usually vary if they are in the wild or captivity. The pods grow to large numbers as the young never leave their mother's side; so there will be times when multiple generations will be swimming side by side. While resident whales prefer fish their counterpart the transient prefers marine mammals. The transient pods are not as reliable as their counterpart the resident in that they do not live in large pods and usually have a family of only ten whales or less. They do not rely on the mother figure to lead the group as the resident whales do. The transient pods diet is often geographically specific. They share their boundaries with both resident and the offshore whales. The offshore orca pods are typically smaller in size and they are less sexual dimorphism; both the male and female share the same features and appear less visually different. The resident pod and the transient pods have distinct differences between the male and female whales; not only is the male a larger mammal the male also has a top dorsal fin that can reach up to 5 to 6 feet out of the water while the female fin is not as profound. These different Orca species do share some common features as well; the orca is a highly sociable and curious mammal. They communicate with one another using clicks, whistles, and pulsed calls. Orcas prefer cool waters and rely on echolocation for navigation and discriminating between prey and other surrounding objects. Each species may have their own dialect as people do from different parts of the world. All three pod species also can share some of the same threats that are endangering their species all together. The Orca has no one to fear except for the human

being; there is not an animal in the ocean that they fear. The threats that come can be from contaminants in the water, to depletion of their prey, a ship collision or oil spills. Whales can be threatened by noise, industry and even military activities. There is also the possibility of being caught in a fisherman's line. In Northern Washington there are conservation efforts being led by the Seattle Aquarium to try and replenish the ocean with fish for their residents. They have created an Orca Learning Center in the Aquarium for people to sit and listen to what can be done to help promote the awareness of other efforts that need to be done. In conclusion, I feel that the conservation efforts that the city of Seattle has set forth are outstanding. I have visited many cities but I was so impressed by the composting and recycling efforts that they have set forth in every restaurant, gas station, and museum. This will help keep the oceans clear and the whales swimming for a long time to come. There are many things that have been inspiring to me; but nothing like watching something that large come from beneath the water, take a breath and make that unforgettable sound of swoosh on top of the water. If anyone ever has the opportunity to watch these creatures in their natural habitat they should not pass it up. Reference The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The NMFS, 2012. Web. 2 Oct. 2012.