

Negative aspects of the whaling industry history essay



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Whales have been hunted since the beginning of human history, providing a wide variety of products over the centuries. Originally, natives worldwide took advantage of dead whales that had washed up on shore, setting the precedent for the demand of the animals. (Carwardine) By 1850, there were more than 700 whaling ships afloat. (Yanak) As technology continued to advance, so did the industry. Greed and ignorance soon took over, and the overexploitation of the cetaceans emerged. Many species were so overhunted that they were on the brink of extinction. This initiated the establishment of the International Whaling Commission [IWC] in 1946, who later ratified the 1986 moratorium. The moratorium banned commercial whaling so that the stocks of populations might recover. This seemed to be good news for the whales, for many countries ceased their hunting escapades. However, certain countries, Japan and Norway in particular, continue excessively. Norway objected to the moratorium, so under IWC rules, it remains entitled to hunt. Japan took a rather different approach, escaping through the loophole of “ scientific research.” (Carwardine) Although the numbers of hunters decreased, the act of whaling itself should not continue, for its true side holds many sinister characteristics. Whaling kills in a cruel manner, depletes recovering populations, and after the process of manufacturing, results in a waste. Indeed, whaling exists as a negative practice.

The methods of killing the whales persist as the foremost negative aspect. “ The cruelty behind whaling has become obscured in recent years by abstract arguments over population statistics. The fact is that, whether it is one whale or a thousand, whaling is simply wrong on cruelty grounds alone.” Peter

Davis, director general for the World Society for the Protection of Animals, holds a great amount of truth in his statement. (Attenborough) Many may view the act of whaling as a type of fishing, and therefore, hold no sympathy for the whales. In truth, whales fall under the classification of mammalia, likewise to cats, dogs, and humans. In addition, whales could be considered as the most mysterious of creatures. They have long captivated man with their unique qualities – such as their enormous size, majestic presence, gentle nature, and celestial whale songs. Also, they exist as one of the oldest animals on earth. The bowhead whale, for example, usually lives up to be around 200 years old, living in Thomas Jefferson's time. (Whales in Crisis)

These creatures possess so many elegant and distinguishing features, yet they face the most inhumane murder out of any other animal killed for food. Japan continuously sends large fleets of ships out for the hunt – whale sighting vessels, harpoon vessels, factory ships, resupply vessels, and refueling vessels. (Whale Wars) The boats contain whaling sonar systems, and once a whale comes into sight, they chase it down. The principle technique for killing happens to be a harpoon tipped with a 30-gram explosive penthrite grenade. (Toothman, How Japanese Kill) Dr. Harry D. Lillie spent several months as a physician onboard a whaling factory ship. With regards to the explosive harpoon he stated, “ The gunners themselves admit that if whales could scream the industry would stop, for nobody would be able to stand it”. Due to the moving target factor of the chase, accuracy cannot easily be achieved. Thus, the harpoon usually strikes the largest area of the whale, the body. This inflicts terrible, but not instantaneously fatal injuries, causing the whale to suffer tremendously in the time that elapses

afterwards. Some harpoons have even been known to completely pass through the body of a smaller 25 ft. minke whale and fail to kill it. The death supposedly results from the organs being shattered by iron fragments, but it has been found that as many as 50% do not die from the initial shooting. The suffering time of the cetaceans can range from several minutes to over an hour, as shown in scientific data compiled from Japanese and Norwegian whale hunts. (A Nasty Business) Jeremy Sutton-Hibbert, a photographer for Greenpeace, recalls a gruesome scene from a Japanese whaling ship: “ It’s so sickening to watch the thrashing go on for so long. Aqua-green seawater is mixed with blood, turning it a pinkish color. It’s all there, all at once.” (Sutton-Hibbert)

The whale thrashes in pain as the harpoon string pulls it in closer to the ship. Then secondary shots become the next option. These shots can include either a second harpoon, or caliber rifles containing . 357 ammunition. (Toothman, How Japanese Kill) Japanese whalers in the Antarctic frequently use electrocution as a means of dispatching a harpooned whale. A paper presented in 1980 to the IWC by Yoshihiko Hayashi illustrates the cruelty of the process: “ When drawn toward the bow, each of the 42 minke whales was observed to have had movements in one way or another. Among them, 16 whales were considered evidently conscious. In other words, they showed violent movements, trying to escape. Also, when lying still, these whales blinked their eyes.” It was later confirmed that remaining 26 were partially conscious as well, for they exhibited voluntary breathing. Therefore, even the most advanced methods cannot render the whale insensitive to pain prior to slaughter. This does not meet the humane regulations for the

slaughter of livestock, which requires that the animal be unconscious before being killed. Thus, whaling kills in an inherently cruel and inhumane manner.

(A Nasty Business) Buddhist temples have been constructed in respect for these whales, the “ Angels of the sea and sky.” (Robbins)

After each individual whale suffers a horrible death, the numbers add up to the next step in this sinister sequence of whaling. An unidentified expert in 1924 wrote, “ As all the world knows, the immense expenditure of time, effort, and money was futile, for the information that should have guided the whaling industry was constantly disregarded, and now the populations of whales are severely reduced.” Around that time in the early 1900’s was when the negative effects of the industry were beginning to get noticed.

Conversely, the excessive amount of whaling continued and even increased long after. In the nine year period of 1956-1965, it was recorded that 403, 490 baleen whales and 228, 328 sperm whales were killed. The popularity of each whale species changed with time depending on the market value, techniques, and availability of whales themselves. As one species became scarcer, the whalers just simply moved on to the next. Eventually, the populations became so depleted that many species were facing extinction. This brought about the beginning of protection and the 1970’s “ Save the Whales” campaign. Subsequently, the IWC was established in 1982.

However, the protection they provided was not honored. In the 1985-86 whaling season, more than 22, 00 whales were killed. An official effect took place in 1986, when the moratorium on commercial whaling was ratified. As stated previously, however, Japan and Norway still continue.

More than 2 million whales were killed in the IWC's first 30 years. There remains many populations of cetaceans today that have never fully recovered, such as the blue, bowhead, and fin whales. The northern right whale endures as the most endangered, reduced to only about 300.

(Cardwardine) It initially received its name because it was the “right” whale to hunt, for it swims relatively slow and floats to the surface when killed. The population today stands so depleted that biologists have given each individual a name. Seven out of eight great whale species remain on the endangered list today. In 1993, the Soviet Union stunned the world with the disclosure that it killed as many as 20 times the number of endangered species than it had reported throughout the 60's and 70's. (Broder) Japan made its own shocking addition as well. Although it insists that it mostly hunts the abundant minke whales, it has recently been discovered that in 2006 they took 10 endangered fin whales. (Doi and Johnson) Furthermore, untold numbers of several different species continue to be lost by “pirate whalers,” who avoid international regulations all together by registering their boats under non-IWC members. (Carwardine) Given the centuries of exercised whaling and these recently discovered statistics, whale populations have definitely not recovered enough to sustain further hunting. They face numerous inherent threats already, such as pollution, habitat destruction, over-fishing of prey, and deadly military sonar. (AWI) A perfect demonstration of the ignorance of the industry would be the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary, established in 1994 by IWC members. The reason for this was its credibility as a critically important feeding ground for seven species of great whales and 80% of whales worldwide. Sadly, Japan continues to hunt

within the protected area. Despite the facts, this practice refuses to cease, for the number of whales taken in 2009 totaled up to about 1, 700. (Broder)

Whaling further endures as an evil process through the aftermath of manufacturing. In retrospect, whales have provided an astonishing range of products throughout history. Natives originally would strip a beached whale's carcass bare for subsistence items like food, clothing, and tools. In colonial times, the harvested whale oil, used for candles and lamps, was considered the "liquid gold" of the time. Also, baleen plates were used for fishing rods, umbrella ribs, and even to stiffen ladies corsets. In recent years, whale products have been used in the manufacturing of more frivolous items, such as cosmetics and pet food. (Carwardine) Japan's prime product though would be the whale meat.

The claim of "scientific research" remains highly controversial, for little research proves to be undertaken. "The argument of scientific research is one the Japanese have difficulty making with a straight face," proclaims Greg Westone, the U. S. director of the international fund for animal welfare. "You can't find one meaningful peer reviewed academic paper out there." (Doi and Johnson) They kill for research, but the resulting meat, termed a mere "by-product," gets processed commercially. In other words, more meat ends up in restaurants than in labs. (Max) Research shows that sales of whale meat, blubber, and other products have incurred financial losses over the past 20 years. In 2001, scientific permits issued the hunting of 500-600 whales; 70 metric tons of the resulting meat was left unsold. (Toothman, Sustainable Levels) By the end of 2008, the unsold stockpile had risen to 40, 000 metric tons. The meat that does sell reimburses production costs <https://assignbuster.com/negative-aspects-of-the-whaling-industry-history-essay/>

somewhat, but with low market demand, the whole operation relies heavily on subsidies. (Sack)

On the shelves of a super Walmart in Japan, there lies what was found to be endangered whale meat. Ironically, Japanese officials recommend that pregnant woman and children avoid eating it. (Walmart Whale Meat) As one of the ocean's top predators, whales accumulate heavy levels of mercury in their bodies, which can be harmful to humans if ingested. (AWI) Not only does whaling prove to be a waste of life, it also proves to be a waste of a resource. Research suggests that killing more whales will only hurt the growing whale-watching industry. A spokeswoman for the World Wildlife Fund states, " Norway and Japan are hurting tourism, a potential growth in both countries, in order to spend millions of dollars obtaining whale meat, the sale of which makes no profit. How much longer and they going to waste their taxpayers money?" (Norway)

Over the past centuries, countless of millions of whales have been slaughtered. Although this industry originated for subsistence purposes, greed and ignorance took over. The whales became so overexploited, that as the populations declined, the industry itself was threatened to extinction. Protection arrived almost too late, and still faces many obstacles today. Overall, whaling exists as a negative practice. It kills in a cruel manner, depletes recovering populations, and in the end, results in a waste. The question of whether the whales will ever prevail over the hunters remains unsure. Japan and Norway declare their dedication to continue the sinister practice. At every annual IWC meeting, the members propose and counter-propose, threat and counter-threat; they even make behind-the-scenes <https://assignbuster.com/negative-aspects-of-the-whaling-industry-history-essay/>

deals. (Carwardine) Only time will tell the results. Meanwhile, whales continue to be hunted.