

Raising Big Blue Writing Prompts



Raising Big Blue is a documentary about the blue whale skeleton in the museum atrium. It follows the team who planned and executed this exhibit installation. This film plays multiple times on most days at the museum. Check our website for show times that will work with your field trip. You may be able to find it online at watch.discoverychannel.ca.

After your class has viewed *Raising Big Blue*, you may wish to have them do a reflective writing piece that ties into the themes of the film. This can help them connect with what they watched and obtain a deeper level of comprehension. If you have a younger class, you will have to explain the concept of a theme to them first. You may wish to have the class brainstorm all of the themes that they felt the documentary captures. Examples may include teamwork, dedication, perseverance, optimism, and taking risks.

Overcoming barriers is a major component to the documentary. You may also wish to have students reflect on all of the problems that the team encountered and the solutions that they found. Provided is a list to help if your students are having trouble:

Problem	Solution
The ground was too frozen when they initially inspected the skeleton.	They waited until spring to dig up the bones.
The whale's blubber was still intact.	They patiently removed as much of it as they could.
The whale was missing one of its flippers.	They put out a notice in the town to see if anyone knew anything about it.
The bones were very heavy with oil.	They put the bones in a bath of enzymes that would eat the oil.
After three months in the bath, the enzymes were not eating the oil fast enough.	They called in microbiologist specialists, who advised them to increase the temperature.
The hot temperatures in the enzyme bath caused the bones to turn soft.	They had a palaeontologist help them make a replica of the bones that were too soft.
The skull was too large to fit into the museum entrance as planned.	They remained patient and tilted the skull several times as it moved through the door.

Having a discussion about the themes, problems, solutions, and any other aspects of the documentary that you choose is an important first step in the writing process. This will help refresh your student's memories if it has been a few days since they visited the museum and help them develop ideas for their writing piece.

The following are examples of writing prompts to help your students reflect on the documentary. The language should be adjusted to meet the needs of your students. You may choose to assign one prompt to the whole class or provide them with a choice of several:

How was _____ demonstrated in the film? (Choose a theme).

Why was it important that the team took risks and remained optimistic? What do you think would have happened if they did not?

The team seemed to be facing problem after problem. Have you ever experienced several set backs? How did it make you feel? What did you have to do to overcome them?

Has there ever been a time in your life when you demonstrated _____? Describe how this helped you. (Choose a theme).

Displaying a blue whale skeleton was a lifelong dream for marine biologist Dr. Andrew Trites. What are some of your dreams for the future? Are there any big tasks that you would like to achieve?

For every problem that the team encountered, they found a solution that worked. Describe some of the problems or barriers that you are currently facing. What are some possible solutions?