

'The most important talks no one has heard of': why the high seas treaty matters

Level 1: Elementary / Pre-Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Discuss the questions.

1. Have you been to the ocean? Did you see any marine animals?
2. Who do the world's oceans belong to?
3. Why are oceans essential for life on our planet?

2 Key words

a. Match each word to its definition and example sentence.

border

law

oxygen

protect

resources

1. A _____ is the official line separating two countries or regions.
The Arauca River forms the _____ between Colombia and Venezuela.
2. _____ is a system of rules within a country, region, or community dealing with people's behaviour and activities.
It is against the _____ to pass a school bus when its red lights are on.
3. _____ are things such as coal, trees, and oil that exist in nature and can be used by people.
Some companies just want to use many natural _____ to make money.
4. To _____ is to keep someone or something safe from harm, injury, damage, or loss.
We need to _____ this forest. The trees are more than a thousand years old.
5. _____ is a chemical element that is a colourless, odourless gas that all animals depend on to breathe. Its chemical symbol is O.
We all need _____ to stay alive.

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attract

benefit

conservation

illegal

survive

6. To _____ is to stay alive despite an injury, illness, war, etc.
It is easy for rats to find food and _____ in large cities.
7. _____ is the management of land and water in ways that prevent it from being damaged or destroyed.
They created a new park for animal and plant _____.
8. If something is _____, it is not allowed by the law.
It is _____ to make fires outside camping areas.
9. To _____ is to get help or an advantage from something.
Cleaner air will _____ everyone.
10. To _____ is to make something move near someone or something.
These flowers are beautiful, and they _____ bees and other insects.

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- 1 Almost two-thirds of the world's ocean is outside national borders. These are the "high seas", where a large part of the planet, hundreds of kilometres from land, is often a place of no law.
- 2 Because of this, people can use its natural resources unfairly. All countries can travel, fish (or overfish) and do research in the high seas. Only 1.2% of it is protected.
- 3 A healthy ocean makes half of the oxygen that we breathe. It also forms 95% of the planet's biosphere and takes the most carbon dioxide from the Earth's air.
- 4 Members from 193 countries began talks at the UN offices in New York to try to agree on a treaty to protect the high seas.
- 5 "Every second breath being taken comes from the ocean generating oxygen," said Liz Karan, a leader at the Pew Charitable Trusts. She says a healthy ocean is very important for human and other life on the planet.
- 6 Karan and others hope that countries will agree on laws to create a group of connected of high sea marine protected areas (MPAs) to help sea life survive in a changing climate.
- 7 The conference president, Rena Lee, said it is difficult for countries to agree about MPAs in areas that aren't controlled by any individual country, and how to get fair access to marine resources for all.
- 8 "What the science shows", Karan added, "is that we need to put conservation first if we are going to protect fisheries resources for future generations."
- 9 That means immediately taking action with illegal and too much fishing, the biggest dangers to the ocean.
- 10 Jessica Battle, an oceans expert for WWF says that large fishers want to make money from ocean resources that by law belong to everyone.
- 11 The Costa Rica Dome is one of the areas that would benefit from being protected. Its waters are full of food for marine animals and attract fish like tuna, dolphins, endangered blue whales and sea turtles. There is also the Emperor Seamount chain west of the Hawaiian islands towards Russia.
- 12 Doug McCauley, an associate professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, helped to suggest 10 protected areas. He said that it was one of the most important international talks that no one has ever heard of.

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Glossary

biosphere: the parts of the Earth's surface and atmosphere where plant and animal life can exist

carbon dioxide: a gas without colour or smell, produced when you breathe out or when substances containing carbon are burnt; The fact that the earth is getting hotter because of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is called the greenhouse effect.

treaty: an official written agreement between two or more countries; When national leaders negotiate a treaty, they discuss it before reaching agreement; and when they ratify a treaty, they give it their formal approval, usually by signing it or voting for it

marine: relating to the sea and creatures that live in it

endangered: an endangered type of animal or plant may soon become extinct

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3 Comprehension check

a. Choose the best way to complete each statement.

1. Almost two-thirds of the world's ocean lies outside ...
a. countries' borders. b. the high seas.
2. There are not enough ... to protect the high seas.
a. countries b. laws
3. 193 countries are trying to agree on how best to ... the high seas.
a. divide b. protect
4. The ocean gives the oxygen for every ... breath we take.
a. half b. second
5. High sea marine protected areas will help ... to survive.
a. fishing companies b. sea animals
6. One of the biggest problems in the ocean is too much ...
a. fishing. b. shipping.
7. The Costa Rica Dome is a place with a lot of marine ...
a. animals. b. islands.

4 Key language

a. Match the verbs and nouns to form phrases from the text.

- | | |
|---------------|------------------|
| 1. use | a. access |
| 2. do | b. action |
| 3. breathe | c. money |
| 4. protect | d. oxygen |
| 5. get / have | e. research |
| 6. take | f. resources |
| 7. make | g. the high seas |

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b. Now complete the questions with words from task a.

1. How much _____ do you breathe in a day?
2. How much money do all the fishing companies in the world _____ in a year?
3. What kinds of research do they _____ in the high seas?
4. Who is _____ action against overfishing?
5. How many countries _____ access to the ocean?
6. What do humans _____ ocean resources for the most?
7. Does an international treaty _____ the high seas?

c. Now match the questions from task b with their answers.

- a. Yes, they signed the treaty on 4 March, 2023.
- b. around 8,000 litres of air a day: 20% of that is oxygen
- c. Marine Stewardship Council, FishAct, Oceana, Natural Resources Defense Council
- d. 133, including four of the five largest in the world
- e. for food
- f. more than US\$250 billion in 2023
- g. search for new biological and genetic resources

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- "Fishing in the high seas should be illegal."
- "There should be more information about illegal fishing in the news."
- "Countries shouldn't get access to natural resources that are far away from them."

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6 In your own words

- Choose a sea animal. Research its life, habits, and habitat. What makes it difficult for this animal to survive?
- You are going to write a letter to humans from the perspective of this animal, asking them to protect the ocean and your species. Use the chart to plan your letter.

Section	Notes
Introduce yourself and say why you are writing.	<i>I am a ... My family ...</i>
Give reasons and facts.	<i>I am afraid of ... Recently ... Now ...</i>
Give a way to solve the problem.	<i>You / We can will help.</i>
Say how human actions will help.	<i>If you ..., you can help me and ...</i>

- Now write your letter using your notes.