

Grey Whale – Crossing the World’s Oceans by Camilla de la Bédoyère

Where	Between the Arctic and Mexico	
When	Spring and autumn	
Why	For food and calving	
How	Swimming	

Grey whales make one of the world’s longest migrations, from cold polar waters to warm tropical seas.

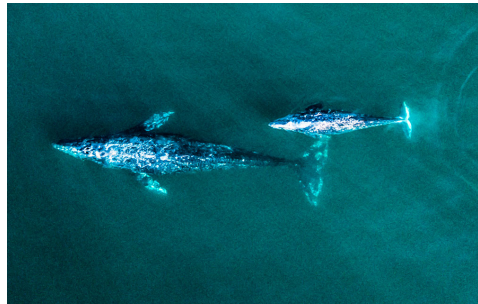
A WHALE CAN EAT UP TO 70 TONNES OF AMPHIPODS IN THE SUMMER.

At the start of winter, grey whales leave the icy Arctic seas. It takes one of these whales just 55 days to swim 8,000 km to a Mexican lagoon to give birth. While there, the mother hardly feeds, but her newborn grows strong on its mother’s milk – building up stamina for the return journey.

IN ONE YEAR, A GREY WHALE CAN MIGRATE UP TO 20,000 KM.

Summer

Like many other animals, grey whales spend the summer in the cold waters of the Arctic, where there is plenty of food for them. They feed mostly on amphipods – tiny sea creatures that they filter out of the water using baleen (special sieve-like plates) in their mouths.



Predators

Orcas (killer whales) follow grey whales to Mexico. Orca mothers show their young how to hunt the vulnerable newborn grey whales, separating them from their mothers before launching an attack.

Grey whale timeline

February–June	July–October	November–January
The whales leave their southern home for the journey north. Calves stay with their mothers and feed on milk as they swim. Most reach the Arctic waters by June.	It is summer and some whales have reached as far north as the Bering and Chukchi seas. The Arctic waters are full of food, so the whales eat and put on lots of fat, increasing their body weight by up to one-third.	The Arctic seas begin to freeze, so food is reduced. The whales depart on the journey south, swimming close to the shore for two months without stopping. When they arrive, the pregnant females give birth in the warm lagoons.

Name:	Class:	Date:
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1 Look at the table at the start of the extract.
Find and copy two reasons why the whales migrate.

2b

 1 mark

2 **Find and copy one** word that means the same as *baby whales*.

2a

 1 mark

3 Look at the grey whale timeline.
 Why do grey whales leave the Arctic in the winter?

2b

 1 mark

4 Why is it particularly important that pregnant females eat well when they are in the Arctic?

2d

 1 mark

5 Which words are missing from the sentences below?
 Use information from the text to help you.

Grey whales eat _____.

Young whales are eaten by _____.

2b

 1 mark

6 Why do you think the author uses a table to show the where/when/why/how of the whales' migration?
 Choose **one**.

to draw attention to the information

to give the reader a rest

to summarise important information

to surprise the reader so they read on

2f

 1 mark