

Save the Whales

"Save the whales!" That's what the bumper sticker on the Smiths' car read. It was an **abstract**¹ idea, of course. Jake liked having the sticker make a statement. He just never expected to get a chance to save a real whale, one right in his own neighborhood. It was a Saturday morning when the newspaper first reported the whale sightings. A **pod**² of the mammals were swimming close to shore. Everyone around the beach town rushed out to the shore to see them. They were expecting a beautiful show, better than a movie, but nothing they'd have to do anything about.

Then one whale swam toward them, right at the shoreline. It came in with the waves, and when the waves receded, it stayed. Its massive body rested on the sand. Suddenly, Jake and his family and all the others were no longer sightseers. They had to become rescuers. A few people ran toward the animal. They pushed and tried to force the whale back into the water, but it was no use. An animal rescue squad soon arrived in a truck with cranes and huge stretchers to help move the huge animal.

Jake and his family couldn't do much on the beach, so they went back to their house and made sandwiches and hot tea to bring to the rescuers. At least, Jake thought, they could help in some way.

Back at the beach, they offered the food to the rescuers and were happy to see that it was needed. It was getting dark. Some people lined up their cars to keep the headlights shining on the beach. The rescuers would not give up. As the tide came in, they heaved the whale into the surf. They cheered when it headed out to sea. It swam out about a mile and then disappeared for a moment under the sea. Then, in what looked like a leap of joy, it rose in an arc over the water—a sight that was their reward for helping.

¹ **abstract**: expressing a quality or idea without referring to an actual person or thing

² **pod**: a group of whales gathered together, like a "school" of fish or a "herd" of cattle