

Unit 8: Amazing Narwhals

Narrator: Swimming in the icy water of the Arctic are some very strange creatures.

Narwhals are a kind of whale with one very special feature, their tusks.

A narwhal's tusk is actually one very long tooth. This tooth, which comes out of the narwhal's head, can grow to three meters in length. For many years, people sold narwhal tusks, telling buyers that they were unicorn horns.

Today, we know more about these amazing animals, though scientists are still not certain about the main purpose of their tusks. The tusk is very sensitive. So some scientists think the narwhals may use it find their way around.

Another idea is that narwhals might use their tusk when hunting food. In 2017, some researchers saw narwhals doing just this. The animals were seen hitting fish with their tusk and then eating them whole.

Both of these ideas are possible, but they don't tell the whole story. Most female narwhals do not have tusks. And they survive just fine without them. So it's likely the tusk is something that is most useful to males. Male narwhals have been seen using their tusks to fight. Scientists also believe that the tusk is used to attract females.

Researchers continue to study narwhals. And hope to learn more about this very special creature.