



**Topic Synopsis:**  
3<sup>rd</sup> SCH, Whaling in Japan

**Background**

Despite misconceptions, whaling in Japan has existed for many centuries; only recently, however, has it been frowned upon by many other countries who oppose the practice, giving Japan a bad reputation. For much of their history, the Japanese have obtained food, oils, and other materials from whales. Not only that, but whaling has aimed to provide the Japanese people with all that a whale has to offer. Some whaling villages even built shrines to worship whales as gods. A famous Japanese proverb says, "There's nothing to throw away from a whale except its voice." Japan also claims to whale for scientific research purposes; however, the international community sees these claims and other reasons for Japan's whaling practices as only a pretext for illicit commercial use of whale products on Japanese markets. These "whaling research programs" began in Japan in 1994, and when it announced that the program would expand in 2000, the international community was undoubtedly outraged, describing Japan's actions as a blatant defiance of international opinion. Despite the amount of opposition to its programs and actions, Japan continues to whale to this day. They claim that whale and whaling is part of their culture, with whaling in the roots of its history and whale meats as traditional food. Japan also says that its research in recent years has paved the way for long term, sustainable use of this "renewable marine food resource," so there is no harm in exploiting it. In essence, whaling is, according to Japan, an aspect of its culture, while to the rest of the world, it is an exploitative and harmful practice.



## **UN Involvement**

A major UN body concerned with environmental is the United Nations Environment Programme. It hosted the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, where the issue of whaling gained major public attention. Some delegates at the conference proposed a ten-year ban on commercial whaling. Another attempt of the UN at combating whalers all around the world is the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). It is the most comprehensive attempt at creating a unified body to protect and govern the rights of nations with respect to the world's oceans. The convention addresses issues from navigational rights to conservation of marine life, scientific exploration, and more. The UNEP is still devising plans to combat whaling.

## **Possible Solutions**

Many solutions have been proposed and many failed. Japan cries that whaling industry regulations violate and suppress its culture and traditions.

Some have proposed economic sanctions on Japan until they submit to international pressures and stop or reduce whaling. Others have proposed for bilateral negotiations; however, Japan is, in a sense, very prideful and sees opposition to whaling as "culturally arrogant." They use this to only strengthen the country's resolve to maintain whaling. Some have even gone so far as to suing nations that whale. What solutions can you come up with?

## **Questions to Consider**

Does your policy and proposed solution consider Japan's cultural aspect of the issue?

Does your country see long term consequences for the ecosystems in your policy and solution?



Mission Viejo High School Model United Nations

29<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

*"Through the Fire the Spirit is Forged"*

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What is your country's history in favor of or opposition to whaling and other issues of the sea?

<http://www.facts-about-japan.com/whaling-history.html>

[http://www.bc.edu/bc\\_org/avp/law/lwsch/journals/bcicl/25\\_2/07\\_TXT.htm](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/law/lwsch/journals/bcicl/25_2/07_TXT.htm)

<http://animal.discovery.com/tv/whale-wars/whaling/why-japanese-hunt-whales.html>

<http://environmentalethics.posterous.com/japanese-whaling-and-international-outrage>

[http://www.eoearth.org/article/United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea \(UNCLOS\),  
1982](http://www.eoearth.org/article/United_Nations_Convention_on_Law_of_the_Sea_(UNCLOS)_1982)