

# THE WHALE IN MY SWIMMING POOL

A teacher's guide created by Marcie Colleen  
based upon the picture book  
written and illustrated by Joyce Wan



Published by  
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**Joyce Wan**  
**Author-Illustrator, *The Whale in My Swimming Pool***

Joyce Wan is inspired by Japanese pop culture, modern architecture, and things that make her smile. She is the author and illustrator of several board books, including *You Are My Cupcake* and *My Lucky Little Dragon*. *The Whale in My Swimming Pool* is her debut picture book. Joyce lives in New York City with her husband. Visit her at [www.wanart.com](http://www.wanart.com).

This guide was created by Marcie Colleen, a former teacher with a BA in English Education from Oswego State and a MA in Educational Theater from NYU. In addition to creating curriculum guides for children's books, Marcie can often be found writing picture books of her own at home in Brooklyn, NYC. Visit her at [www.thisismarciecolleen.com](http://www.thisismarciecolleen.com).

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## How to Use This Guide

This classroom guide for *The Whale in My Swimming Pool* is designed for students in kindergarten through second grade. It is assumed that teachers will adapt each activity to fit the needs and abilities of their own students.

It offers activities to help teachers integrate *The Whale in My Swimming Pool* into English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies curricula. Art and drama are used as a teaching tool throughout the guide.

All activities were created in conjunction with relevant content standards in ELA, math, science, social studies, art, and drama.

## Book Information



### **THE WHALE IN MY SWIMMING POOL**

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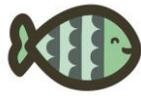
**ISBN-13: 978-0374300371**

One sunny day, a little boy heads outside for a swim, but his pool is already taken . . .

There's a big whale in the water and it's not budging!

The boy tries everything to get the whale to leave. Nothing seems to work. Not fetch. Not tag. Not even offering his allowance. What's a boy to do? Luckily, he comes up with the perfect solution: he decides to chill out on a spray of water over the whale's spout.

This colorful whale of a tale from the talented Joyce Wan is sure to inspire giggles from little guppies!



# Table of Contents



## **English Language Arts (ELA)**

Reading Comprehension	4
There's a What in your What?!	6
Writing Activities	
How Did the Whale Get There? ~ creating a prequel	
How Will the Bear Get Out? ~ creating a sequel	7
"Why <i>My</i> Pool?" Persuasive Essay	
Writing Narrative and Dialogue	8
Speaking and Listening Activities	9
Choral Reading	
Mime	
Drama	

## **Math** 10

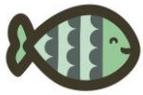
Word Problems	
Will a Whale Fit?: Learning Capacity and Volume	11
How BIG is a Blue Whale?	

## **Science** 13

Whales Research Project	
True Stories of Wayward Whales	14
How Do Animals Cool Off in the Summer?	15

## **Social Studies** 16

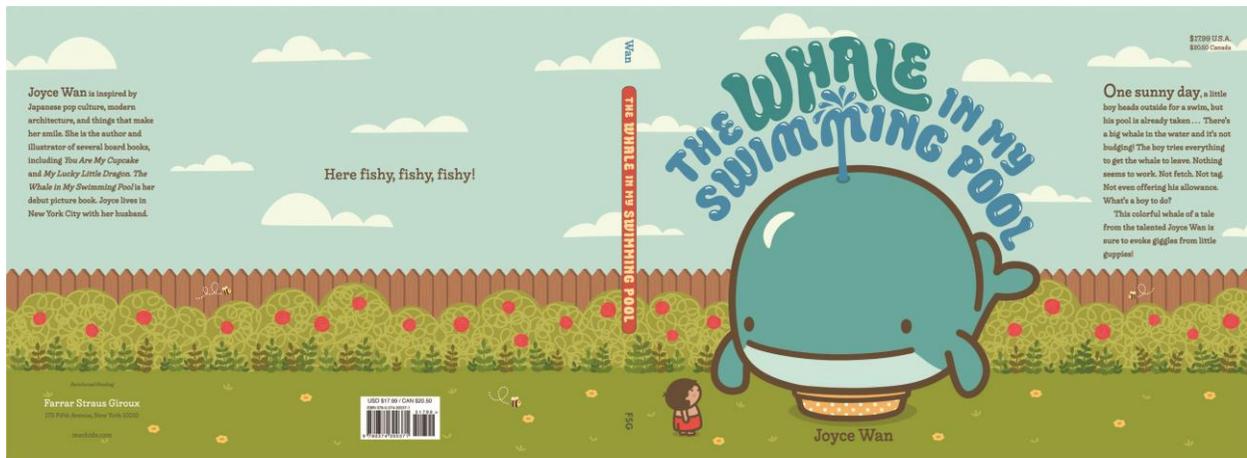
When Life Gives You Lemons (or a Whale!)	
Unusual Swimming Pools Around the World	17



# English Language Arts

## Reading Comprehension

Before reading *The Whale in My Swimming Pool*, help students identify the basic parts of a picture book: jacket, front cover, back cover, title page, spine, end papers, and jacket flap.



### The Front Cover~

- Describe the cover illustration.
  - Who are the characters?
  - Where do you think they are?
  - What are they doing?
- Mimic what the characters are doing.
  - How does it make you feel?
- Can you guess what the story might be about? What are some clues you can find in the cover illustration?
- Explain that Joyce's name is the only name on the cover because she is both the author and the illustrator of *The Whale in My Swimming Pool*. What does an author do? What does an illustrator do? What does it mean if there is an author-illustrator?

Now read or listen to the book.

Help students summarize in their own words what the book was about.

- What is the little boy excited to do at the beginning of the story?
- What surprise does he find?



- Who does the little boy tell, in hopes of getting help?
  - What is Mom’s reaction?
  - Why do you think Mom reacts this way?
- The little boy then tries several different ways to remove the whale from the pool. Chart his attempts below.

Attempt #	What the little boy tried
1	Close his eyes and count to ten
2	Push the whale
3	Reason with the whale “Why not the pool next door?”
4	
5	
6	
7	

- Just when the little boy is about to give up he thinks of an idea. What does he do?
  - Pretend to be the little boy in the inner tube. How does it make you feel?
- At the end of the story, what surprise does the little boy find in his bed?
- Can you come up with a list of possible ways to get the bear out of the bed?
  - If you were the little boy, what would you do?

As a class, read the poem *Bear in There* by Shel Silverstein (*A Light in the Attic*, 1981).

- Describe in your own words what the poem is about.



- How is this poem similar to *The Whale in My Swimming Pool*?
- How is it different?
- The child in *Bear in There* does not try to remove the bear, like the little boy in *The Whale in My Swimming Pool*. If you were the child in *Bear in There*, how would you try to remove the bear?
  - Rewrite *Bear in There* in the style of *The Whale in My Swimming Pool*, in which the child tries many attempts to remove the bear. Feel free to use many of the same attempts.

### There's a What in Your What?!

Using Wan's illustrations in *The Whale in My Swimming Pool* as inspiration, draw your own silly situation.

- A turtle in my toaster
- A walrus in my bathtub
- A sea lion in my dishwasher

One of the reasons why the illustrations for *The Whale in My Swimming Pool* are so funny is because of the absurdity of size.

Would it have been as funny if the story was *The Ladybug in My Swimming Pool*? Probably not. So think of something that is too large to be in a smaller space.

### Writing Activities

#### How Did the Whale Get There? ~ creating a prequel

Very few things are sillier than finding a large whale in a swimming pool. But some students may question, "How did the whale get there?"

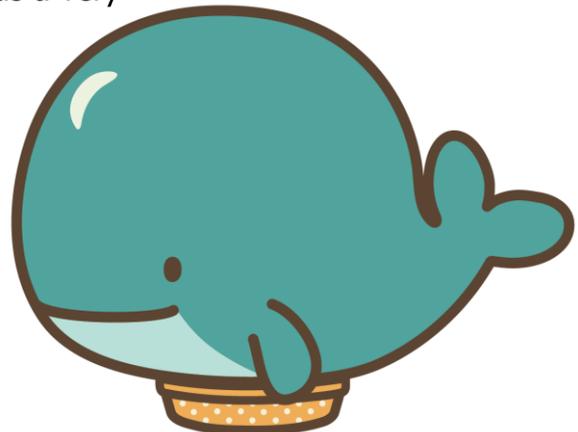
As a class, brainstorm some wacky possibilities as to how the whale came to be in the boy's backyard. What about the shark in the neighbor's pool? The crazier the better.

Explain what a prequel is and have students create their own prequel to *The Whale in My Swimming Pool*. *Optional Story Starter*: "It was a very hot summer day, especially for a whale."

OR

Create the story as a class and then have each individual student create their own illustrations.

Each story should include a beginning, a middle and an ending.



## How Will the Bear Get Out? ~ creating a sequel

Oh no! Now the little boy has a bear in his bed to contend with. How in the world will he ever get him out?

As a class, brainstorm some wacky possibilities as to how the little boy will get the bear out of the bed. The crazier the better.

Explain what a sequel is and have students create their own sequel of *The Whale in My Swimming Pool*.

*Optional Story Starter:* "It was naptime and a giant bear was snoring in his bed. The little boy knew what he had to do."

OR

Create the story as a class and then have each individual student create their own illustrations.

Each story should include a beginning, a middle and an ending.

## "Why My Pool?" Persuasive Essay

The little boy tries many different ways to persuade the whale to leave his pool. Ask your students if they know what "persuade" means. If not, can they make any guesses?

Discuss:

- What it means to persuade
- Times or situations in which you might want to persuade someone (i.e., persuade your parents to let you stay up late)

When you write to persuade, you are trying to convince the reader to agree with you. Your persuasive essay should: tell the reader what you believe; give the reader at least three reasons why you believe it; have a good concluding sentence.

Students should pretend they are the little boy and write a persuasive essay to the whale called "Why My Pool?" using the following TREE structure:



T = Topic sentences

The topic sentence tells the reader (or whale, in this case) what you think or believe.

Example: *Why my pool, Mr. Whale? I think you would be happier in the nice pool next door.*

R = Reasons

The reasons tell the reader (or whale, in this case) why you believe he would be happier next door. (*Remember, you are writing as if you are the little boy.*) Write at least 2 -3 sentences supporting 3 reasons. Use evidence directly from the text or illustrations, when possible.

E = Ending

Wrap it up with a conclusive sentence.

E = Examine

Look closely. Does your essay have all the necessary parts?

Share your essays with the class. Which is the most persuasive? Why do you think so?

## Writing Narrative and Dialogue

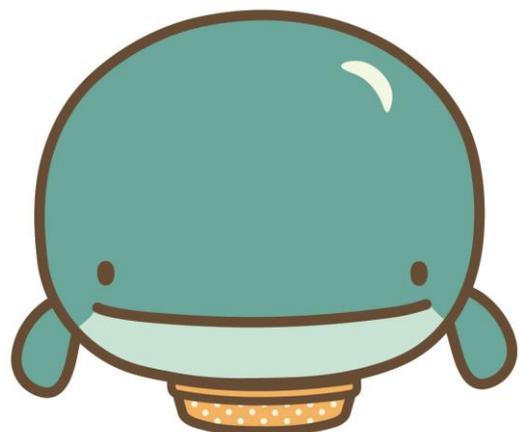
*The Whale in My Swimming Pool* is written completely in dialogue or speech. All of the text is things that the little boy (or Mom, at times) says. This provides a great springboard to discuss narrative and dialogue in a story.

Narrative ~ An account of the connected events. Often through a narrator who gives information on the feelings and actions of the story.

Speech/Dialogue ~ The written conversational exchange between two or more characters.

Rewrite *The Whale in My Swimming Pool* using the following:

- Add additional speech for the whale, in which he responds to and is in conversation with the little boy. Or, simply create captions and thought-bubbles for the whale in each spread.
- Write a version of the story using only narrative. For example, "One day a little boy raced outside to his pool. And there he found a whale." Continue through



the entire story like this, describing the action on each page without the use of speech.

- Combine the two versions into a new version of *The Whale in My Swimming Pool*, in which the whale speaks and a narrator carries the action of the story.

How do the new versions compare with the original version of *The Whale in My Swimming Pool*? Which do you prefer? Why?

## Speaking and Listening Activities

Picture books are written to be read aloud. Here are some other ways to bring *The Whale in My Swimming Pool* to life in your classroom and also have fun with speaking and listening skills!

### Choral Reading

- Turn *The Whale in My Swimming Pool* into a script. (\*see Writing Narrative and Dialogue in ELA section for ideas). Read the script out loud together. Emphasize memorization of the students' parts as well as good vocal expression.

### Mime

- While the teacher reads the book aloud, students can act out the events in the book. Emphasize body motion and facial expressions, as well as listening skills.

### Drama

- Brainstorm a list of things of possible ways to get the whale out of the pool. Without making noise, students act out something from the list in front of the class. Ask the rest of the class to guess which action they are acting out.
- Create a TV commercial to encourage people to read *The Whale in My Swimming Pool*.



## Word Problems

*For younger students, the use of pictures or props might be needed to figure out word problems.*

- 1) 5 little birds are playing on top of the whale. 1 flies away.  
How many birds are playing on top of the whale?

$$5 - 1 = ?$$



- 2) The little boy nudges the whale 4 times but he doesn't budge. The little boy then nudges the whale 3 more times. How many times does the little boy nudge the whale?

$$4 + 3 = ?$$

- 3) The little boy tries to play fetch with the whale. He gathers 6 sticks. He throws 1 stick. How many sticks does the little boy still have?

$$6 - 1 = ?$$



- 4) The whale makes water spout out of his blow hole 2 times. He then makes water spout out his blow hole 1 more time. How many times does the whale make water spout out of his blow hole?

$$2 + 1 = ?$$

- 5) The little boy has 9 ideas to get the whale out of his swimming pool. He tries 7 ideas, but the whale is still in his swimming pool. How many ideas does the little boy have left?

$$9 - 7 = ?$$

### **Will a Whale Fit?: Learning Capacity and Volume**

Will a whale fit in a swimming pool? Will a bear fit in your bed? This activity helps students learn capacity and volume.

For this activity you will need:

- Several different sized and shaped containers
- Dried beans

Students are to guess which containers will hold the most beans and which containers will hold the least beans. Have students put the containers in order according to their capacity. Once the class has agreed on the order, fill each container with beans, one at a time. Count how many beans are in each container. Were they right about the order?

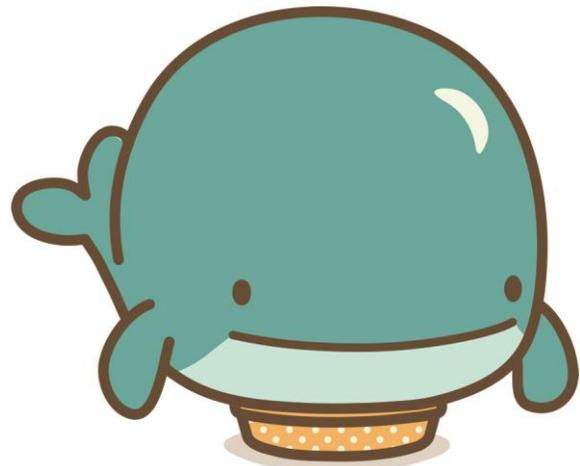
### **How BIG is a Blue Whale?**

Students can practice their predicting and measuring skills, while having fun learning the size of a blue whale.

You will need:

- 100 feet of rope, twine or string
- A large wall or hallway
- Package of paper plates
- Post-it notes
- Roll of adding machine/receipt tape

1. Unravel the twine all the way (for the full 100 feet) and mount on a wall with tape.
2. Once the students see how long a blue whale is, ask them to predict how many children it would take, stretched end-to-end, to fill the length of a blue whale.
3. Have students write down their predictions on a piece of paper.
4. Using strips of adding machine tape, measure each child's height and give each student their strip of paper.



5. Ask the students to write their name on their own strip of paper.
6. Tape the strips end to end on the wall along the twine. Have students count how many strips it takes to make up the length of the whale.
7. See which students came closest to predicting correctly.
8. Now ask students to predict how many paper plates or post-it notes would make up the size of the whale and repeat the activity.
9. As a culminating activity, have a discussion about size, using comparing and contrasting to help them understand the enormous size of a whale.
  - a. Ask the students if they think a blue whale would fit in their house or car.
  - b. Ask students what else they think might be as big as a blue whale.

#### Further Activity:

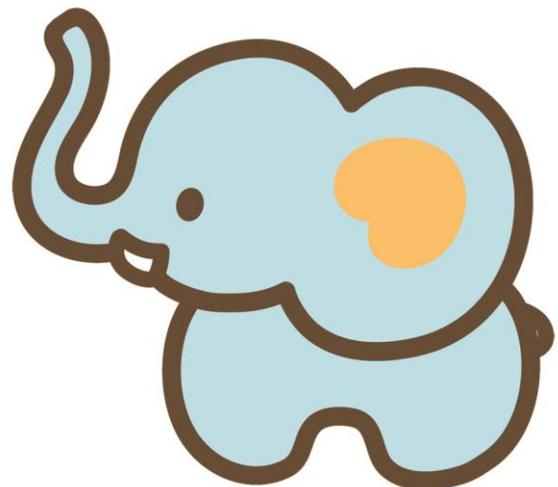
Using the National Geographic interactive graphic found at <http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/channel/content/kingdom-of-the-blue-whale-3302/blue-whale-facts/#/compare/length> for inspiration, students can determine the following comparisons for length and weight. Be sure to ask students to show their work.

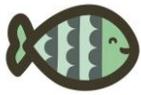
If a blue whale is 100 feet long,

- A humpback whale is 50 feet long. How many humpback whales equal the length of a blue whale?
- A triceratops is 30 feet long. How many triceratops equal the length of a blue whale?
- A great white shark is 20 feet long. How many great whites equal the length of a blue whale?

If a blue whale weighs 200 tons,

- A school bus weighs 13 tons. How many school busses equal the weight of a blue whale?
- An elephant weighs 5 tons. How many elephants equal the weight of a blue whale?
- A jumbo jet weighs 25 tons. How many jumbo jets equal the weight of a blue whale?





# Science

## Whales Research Project

In case a whale ever shows up in *your* swimming pool, perhaps you should do a little research.

Whales are divided into two categories: toothed whales and baleen whales.

- As a class, warm up your library and computer research skills and determine the differences between toothed and baleen whales. Use this time to model good research techniques for the library and the Internet.
- Create a master chart to record all of the information gathered about toothed and baleen whales.

Then in smaller groups of 2-3, students will research a specific species of whale.

- Blue whale
- Gray whale
- Bowhead whale
- Fin whale
- Humpback whale
- Minke whale
- Right whale
- Sperm whale
- Narwhal whale
- Pilot whale
- Beluga whale



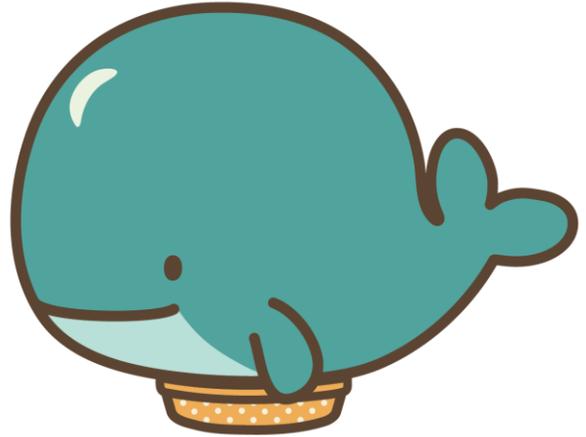
Information to be gathered must include:

- Type of whale: toothed or baleen
- What it eats
- Where it lives
- Size of the whale
- Draw a picture
- Write 3 words that describe your whale
- Interesting fact #1
- Interesting fact #2
- Interesting fact #3

Once all of the needed research is done, students must create a poster visual with all of the necessary information and present their findings to the class.

*Further activity:* Knowing what you know now about whales, how could the little boy in *The Whale in My Swimming Pool* best take care of his whale?

- What kind of whale do you think it is? Toothed or baleen?
- What do you think it eats?
- Where does the whale belong?
- How big do you estimate the whale to be?



### **True Stories of Wayward Whales**

Sometimes in the news we hear stories of whales stranded on a beach or in shallow water. Often these stories are met with efforts to get the animal back into the water, occasionally with some success.

But how do these whales become lost? Or what makes a live whale beach itself?

Most whales use their own form of sonar and are sensitive to the Earth's magnetic field – they use both of these to navigate and find their food.

Therefore, several things can affect these otherwise amazing skills.

- Navigation error – whales and dolphins sometimes get lost as they use the Earth's magnetic fields to navigate the seas. There are a number of things (that we don't yet fully understand) that may cause the animals to become confused, causing them to mis-read these magnetic lines and become lost.
- Noise pollution – human-made noise from drilling, dredging, shipping, offshore developments and seismic surveys can cause disorientation and distress.
- Naval sonar – the effects of sound waves from submarines used by the military (for detecting other submarines, ships etc) can disorientate whales and dolphins.
- Some species are very social animals and travel in family groups following a leader. If the group leader is sick and swims into shallow water, all the others may follow and become stranded together.

*(Information excerpted from the London Natural History Museum  
<http://nhm.ac.uk/kids-only/life/life-sea/whale-stranding/index.html>)*

Contact the local aquarium or marine biologist and arrange one of the following:

- A tour of the aquarium. Learn how rescued sea life are cared for and prepared for release.
- A Skype interview with an aquarium employee or marine biologist. Ask him/her about real-life sea rescue stories.
- Discuss the pros and cons of re-release after rescue or captivity.

An Internet search can also find stories of wayward whale and whale rescue to share with the class.

### **How do Animals Cool Off in the Summer?**

The little boy in *The Whale in My Swimming Pool* just wants to cool off and have some summer fun. But maybe the whale is trying to cool off from summer heat, too.

Just like people, animals get overheated, too.

As a class, list all of the ways that people cool off when it's hot outside.

Once everyone's ideas are listed, create a list of ways that animals stay cool in the heat.

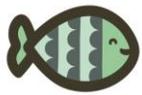


Visit the following two links for some very interesting facts:

- National Wildlife Federation—7 Ways Animals Beat the Heat  
[http://www.nwf.org/news-and-magazines/national-wildlife/animals/archives/2010/animals\\_beat\\_the\\_heat.aspx](http://www.nwf.org/news-and-magazines/national-wildlife/animals/archives/2010/animals_beat_the_heat.aspx)
- Smithsonian.com—From Panting to Pooping, 8 Weird Ways Animals Keep Cool  
<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/panting-pooping-8-weird-ways-animals-keep-cool-180952226/?no-ist>

Compare the lists for people and animals.

- Do people pant?
- Do animals sweat?
- How many similarities can you find?
- How many differences?



# Social Studies

## **When Life Gives You Lemons (or a Whale!)**

Things don't always go the way we want them to in life. Sometimes, in fact, life can be unfair—like finding a whale in your swimming pool when you *really* want to swim!

Lead students in a class discussion on the phrase, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade."

1. What do you think this saying means?

- Not getting upset when things don't go our way.
- Making the best of a difficult situation.
- Coming up with another idea.
- Thinking positively.



2. How does the little boy in *The Whale in My Swimming Pool* demonstrate "making lemonade"?

3. How would you demonstrate "making lemonade" if...

- You broke the wheel off your brother's new skateboard?
- Your friend asks you to play and you haven't finished your homework?
- You're playing a really fun game at your friend's house and it's time to go home?
- You promised your mom or dad you would clean your room but you just don't feel like it?
- It is time to go to bed and you just remembered that your book report is due tomorrow?
- You agreed to take care of your neighbor's dog while she is away, but now a friend has invited you to a sleep over?
- Your mom is not feeling well and could really use some extra help around the house?
- You forgot to bring your homework home from school, including the book you need to study for tomorrow's test?

4. What are some other situations where we can demonstrate "making lemonade"?

5. Design a poster encouraging "making lemonade" to hang around the school.

*Further Activity:* Did you know that whales are endangered? Do you know you can demonstrate “making lemonade” and help?

Check out the following links from Save the Whales

- 10 Ways You Can Help Marine Life Every Day  
[http://www.savethewhales.org/you\\_can\\_do.html](http://www.savethewhales.org/you_can_do.html)
- Adopt a Whale <http://www.savethewhales.org/adopt.html>

BONUS FUNDRAISER IDEA--Organize a lemonade stand to save the whales!

## **Unusual Swimming Pools Around the World**

Discuss, as a class, how many students have swimming pools or have been to a swimming pool.

- Describe the swimming pool.
- What do they like best about the swimming pool?
- What do they like least about the swimming pool?
- If they could add something to the swimming pool to make it super cool what would it be?

Assign a famous or unique pool for students to research. A list of 8 are below, but do not feel limited to those on the list.

- The Orthlieb, or Big Splash (Morocco)
- The Joule Hotel (Dallas, Texas)
- Ocean Dome (Miyazaki)
- The Wave Pool (Tokyo Summerland)
- The Library Hotel (Koh Samui)
- The Nemo diving pool (Belgium)
- The Crown Towers Hotel (Taipa Island Macau)

Possible sources for information:

- Nonfiction books
- Encyclopedias
- The Internet



Take notes and gather as much information as possible on the following 6 topics:

- History of when pool was built and who built it
- Information about where the pool is located
- Statistics
- What makes this pool unique
- Other fun facts

Once the information is gathered, work to create either an illustrated poster or booklet of the findings.

BONUS: Design your own swimming pool! Be as creative and wacky as you want!

