

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Debunking Dolphin Myths: Separating Fact from Fiction

### Open-Ended Response Answer Key

1. The fact that dolphins are mammals influences their behavior and biology in several ways. Unlike fish, dolphins are warm-blooded, give birth to live young, and nurse their babies with milk. They breathe air using lungs and must surface regularly to breathe, unlike fish that use gills to extract oxygen from water. This need to surface impacts their behavior, such as their swimming patterns and social interactions. Being mammals, dolphins also have more complex brains compared to most fish, contributing to their high levels of intelligence and social behaviors.
2. Interpreting the shape of a dolphin's mouth as a sign of their emotional state is a misconception because their "smile" is simply an anatomical feature and does not reflect their emotions. Dolphins can exhibit a range of emotions and behaviors, including joy, playfulness, aggression, and stress. Understanding that the mouth shape is not an indicator of emotion helps us recognize the complexity of dolphin behavior and avoid anthropomorphizing them based on their appearance.
3. Dolphins might exhibit aggressive behavior in the wild for several reasons, including competition for mates during mating season, competition for food, and territorial disputes. Male dolphins, in particular, can be aggressive towards each other and even towards humans if they feel threatened or provoked. This challenges the perception of dolphins as harmless and gentle creatures, highlighting the need to understand and respect their natural behaviors and social dynamics.
4. Dolphins in captivity face several challenges that can affect their overall well-being, including stress, boredom, and health issues. The artificial environments of marine parks and aquariums often disrupt their natural behaviors and social structures, leading to psychological and physical problems. Captive dolphins may not have enough space to swim and exercise, and the lack of natural stimuli can lead to abnormal behaviors. Recognizing these challenges underscores the importance of promoting dolphin welfare and conservation efforts in their natural habitats.

