

# A DENTAL DILEMMA

Read the passage and answer the questions. Also, give the supporting quote from the text as evidence.

Often dubbed the unicorns of the sea, the narwhal whale is one of nature's most mysterious animals. They are found in the Arctic waters of the North Atlantic Ocean, off the coast of Canada, and sometimes as far as Greenland and Russia. These legendary animals have two teeth. In males, the more prominent tooth grows into a swordlike, spiral tusk up to 10 feet long. The ivory tusk tooth grows right through the narwhal's upper lip. Scientists are not certain of the tusk's purpose.

The whales have been seen using it to compete with one another, but the tusk is actually more than just a tooth. Until recently, no one has been sure why the animal has this tusk. A group of scientists from Harvard University's School of Dental Medicine made a discovery that has helped to better understand the tusk. They found that it has a very complex system with millions of nerves and sensors running through it. This allows the narwhal to detect things in its environment. Scientists believe the whales can use it to detect how much salt is in the water so it knows where it's safe to swim. Ocean animals require a certain amount of salt in the water for them to survive. Scientists also believe that the tusk can be used as a hunting tool. It can sense tiny particles in the water, which may be able to help the narwhal recognize what kinds of fish are swimming nearby.

Narwhals travel in groups and feed on fish, shrimp, and squid. They are often sighted swimming in groups of 15 to 20, but gatherings of hundreds—or even several thousands—of narwhals have been reported. Sometimes these groups become trapped by shifting pack ice and fall victim to polar bears, or walruses.

Not everything is understood about the narwhal yet, but dentists and other marine scientists continue to study its tusk in hopes that it will help us learn how to strengthen our own teeth.



Read the statements given below. Based on the above text, identify them as fact or inference.

1 Scientists are not certain of the purpose of narwhals' tusks.

1. Fact
2. Inference

2 The narwhals live in colder areas of the world.

1. Fact
2. Inference

3 The narwhals are social animals.

1. Fact
2. Inference

4 Scientists are working on finding the purpose of narwhals' tusks.

1. Fact
2. Inference

