

Text Structure and Language Features: Example 2

Text Structure - Information Report

General statement - identifies and classifies the subject

Description - includes appearance, habits, food, behaviour, mating

THE WALRUS

The walrus is a sea mammal. It is in the order pinnipedian and comes from the family of Odobenidae. Its scientific name comes from the Greek word Odobenidus rosmarus meaning 'tooth walker'.

The walrus is the largest sea-lion and has a thick and clumsy body. It has grey or brown skin and a thick layer of blubber, which is fat. A male walrus is called a bull, a female is called a cow and a baby is a calf. It has two ivory tusks and its feet are flattened into flippers. It has big whiskers on its upper lip. The male walrus can weigh up to 1200 kilograms and the female walrus can weigh up to 800 kilograms. An adult male may grow as long as 3.6m and the female can grow as long as 2.5m.

Walruses live in Arctic seas of North America, Europe and Asia. They migrate in the spring and autumn following food and the pack ice which recedes at that time.

Walruses mainly eat bottom dwelling invertebrates like clams, snails, crabs and shrimp but first they use their big whiskers to feel around for the food. Then they blow the food loose so they can get to it. They need it to move or they can't get it because of their big tusks. Walruses don't stay in the water all the time and spend much of the time resting on ice flows. They use their tusks, which grow to about 60cm long in the female and 120cm long in the male, to pull themselves out of the water and 'walk' onto the ice. The male also use their tusks to fight with other males in order to earn the right to mate.

The walrus mates in February and March but the foetus doesn't begin to grow until later in June. Calves weigh about 38 - 63 kg. When they are babies they have a lot of hair but when they grow up the hair falls out and they only have a little around the upper lip.

Language Features

Use of timeless present, typical of much scientific writing, e.g. Walruses live in the Arctic. They migrate in the spring.

Use of word chains to build topic information, e.g. tusks, flippers, whiskers

Use of relating verbs, e.g. The walrus is a sea mammal. The walrus has two ivory tusks.

Use of action verbs, e.g. fight, pull, stay

Use of general nouns, e.g. walruses, the walrus

Use of technical language, e.g. pinnipedian, Obodenidae, odognus

Use of detailed noun groups, e.g. thick and clumsy body

Use of complex and compound sentences

Use of topic sentences to organise bundles of information, e.g. Walruses live in the Arctic seas.

Repeated naming of the subject as beginning focus of the clause, e.g. the walrus, walruses

Some useful websites for additional information are:

www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/toothwalkers/

www.seaworld.org/infobooks/Walrus/home.html

www.marinemammalcentre.org/index.asp

www.pbs.org/Krats/world/oceans/walrus