Never blow up a whale on a beach.

Level 3

A close up of smoke

Description automatically generated

In November 1970, officials in Oregon, USA decided to blow up a rotting whale carcass. The whole thing went horribly wrong. Why do we bring this up? Well, this story can teach us 3 things about life.

The story begins when a 45-foot sperm whale washed up on the beach in Florence, Oregon on the 9th of November 1970.

There was some debate amongst locals about what to do with it.

* Although unpleasant, they could leave it to decompose.
* They could try and chop it up and bury it (again, not pleasant)
* They could blow it up with dynamite and hope that seagulls ate all the small chunks.

It was decided that leaving the whale to decompose would be too unpleasant in the short term. No one wants the smell of rotting sperm whale when they’re eating their Christmas dinner.

They chose option 3. They would blow up the whale.

George Thornton, was the engineer in charge of the explosion. By his own admission, he wasn’t sure how much dynamite would be needed to completely obliterate one of the world’s largest mammals, so he opted for half a tonne.

An ex-member of the military advised George and the other officials that this was way too much, and just a few sticks of dynamite would be enough. They ignored his advice.

On the 12th of November, in front of a crowd of excited spectators they exploded the whale.

Very quickly, the short-sightedness of the plan became evident. The huge amount of dynamite sent massive chunks of blubber flying through the chilly air, and it rained down around the terrified onlookers.

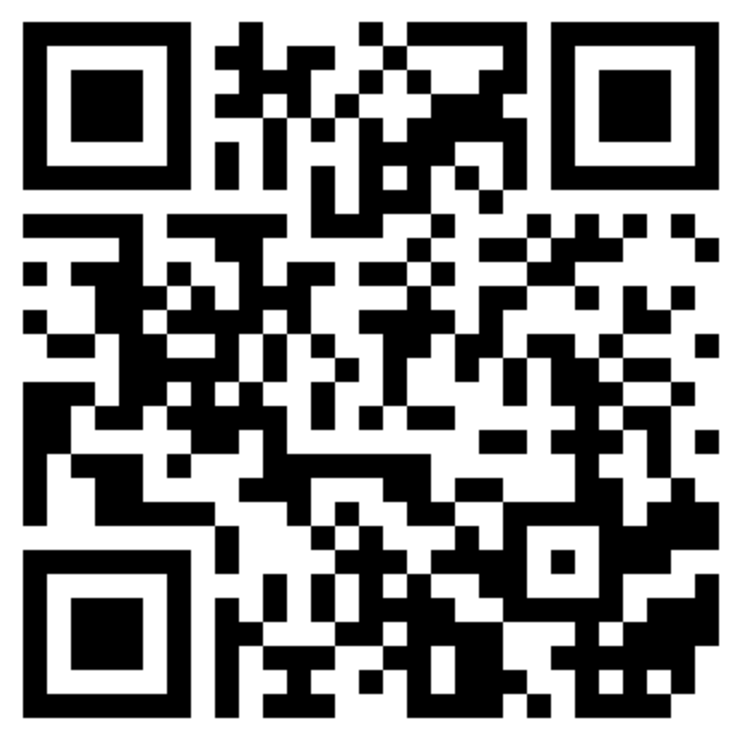
The overwhelming smell sent people running for their homes as rotting whale plopped down around them. The situation was dangerous - a car was even crushed by a large lump of blubber a quarter of a mile away.

To cap everything off, the main bit of the whale stayed exactly where it had been. The problem hadn’t gone away, only now there were thousands of bits of problem spread for miles around.

So why do we tell you this story? Well, as far as we can see, there are three life lessons here:

1. Don’t ignore the advice that experts give you.
2. Sometimes, it’s better to just sit at home and do nothing than go outside and do something ridiculous.
3. When you ignore expert advice and act like an idiot, you cover everyone else with decaying whale blubber.

Watch a news report here:



Exercises  
Answer the following questions about the story.

1. In what state did the story take place

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1. In what year did the story take place?

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1. What type of Whale was it?

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1. How many feet long was he Whale?

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1. What were the 3 options they had?

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3 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Which option did they go for?

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1. What was the name of the engineer in charge of the explosion?

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1. How much explosives did they use?

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1. On what date did they explode the Whale?

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1. What happened when they exploded the Whale?

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Write your own opinion on this story, what would you have done?

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In your dictionary look up the following words:

Carcass

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Decompose

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Admission

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Obliterate

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Spectators

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Decaying

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