

Listen to the recording and fill in the gaps

Sea monsters

Question: What animal is **over 30 feet long**, has a big head, enormous eyes, **a mane like a lion**, a long neck, a body like a snake and lots of arms like an octopus?

But sailors have been telling stories about giant creatures of the sea **for hundreds of years**. The monsters that sailors and fishermen describe **are all slightly** different but it's often an animal like a giant snake, at least 30 feet long, with an enormous **head and neck**. It sometimes actually attacks the ship. Some of these sea monsters **turned out to be** big pieces of seaweed or wood, but other stories are not so easy to explain. So what can these monsters be?

They could be sharks

There is an unusual type of shark that is shaped like an eel. It has a frill around its neck, which could look like a lion's mane. But the biggest one ever caught **was only 25 feet long**. Another type of shark, the 'basking shark', **can grow to about 40** feet in length. In the 1970s a Japanese fishing boat caught an enormous dead 'monster' with a long neck. Scientists tested some small pieces of the animal and discovered **that it was a** basking shark. When these sharks die, parts of them rot very quickly, **which gives them** a very strange shape. But this doesn't explain stories about **living**, moving sea monsters.

They could be just very big snakes

The biggest snake in the world is the anaconda. One was found **in the 1940s** measuring 35 feet, but there are no photographs **to prove it**. South American Indians tell stories of even bigger ones. The problem with this theory is that the anaconda is native to South America and **can't survive in cold water**.

They could be giant squid

This is an interesting theory. Scientists **all accept that the** giant squid really exists but we **don't see them very often** because they live in deep, cold water. They can be up to 50 feet in length and have the biggest eyes in the animal kingdom – over one foot in diameter. (And there are reports of much bigger ones too.) They have a strong mouth like a bird's beak **that can cut through** steel cables, and five pairs of arms, or tentacles. One pair is longer and thinner and **is used to catch food**. People have seen giant squid attacking whales for **food**.

In the 1960s some Russian sailors reported watching **a fight** between a whale and a giant squid. Both animals died; the whale was found dead with the squid's arms **wrapped around its neck**, and the squid's head was found in the whale's stomach. There are also reports of giant squid attacking ships, maybe thinking that they were whales. So stories of giant sea snakes wrapped around ships **could actually be one or two arms** of a giant squid.

They could be giant octopuses

These creatures also exist – there **are varieties of** octopus **with bodies as big as** 23 feet around. **But there are** also stories **that there may be an** unknown variety **that** grows much, much bigger. An enormous animal was found dead and rotting **on a beach in Florida in the 1890s**. Parts **of it** seemed **to be** huge arms over 30 feet long. Scientists tested **a small part of the body** but couldn't agree whether it was a whale or an octopus. The giant octopus, has a strong mouth like the giant squid but only **has eight arms**. They live at the bottom of the sea and use **their** arms to move around **over the** rocks. This explains why we don't see **them** very often.

They could be ancient sea animals which have survived from the time of the dinosaurs.

We know that strange animals lived in the sea during pre-historic times, and many of them were very big indeed. They didn't look like fish and they had **to come up to the** surface of the water to breathe **air**.

Perhaps, when the dinosaurs **died out**, these sea creatures survived and **have lived in the** oceans ever since.

Is that possible?

Well, **maybe it is**. In 1938 a strange fish was caught in the Indian Ocean. Scientists eventually identified it as a coelacanth (pronounced 'seel-a-kanth'), which everyone **thought** had died out over 70 million years ago. And another type of coelacanth was found in the 1990s in **South East Asia**.

So, do any of these explanations convince you? Or do you think that deep down at the bottom of the sea, where **we have never** explored, there are strange creatures that are still completely **unknown to science**?

Listen again and answer the following questions (TRUE = T / FALSE = F / NOT GIVEN = NG)

1. T/F/NG? The common description of a sea monster given by fishermen is that of a giant snake	T
2. T/F/NG? These monsters can turn themselves into big pieces of wood	F
3. An eel is: a. a snakelike fish b. a birdlike creature c. a lion-like creature	
4. Which word defines “ <i>long coarse hair growing from the crest of the animal's neck</i> ”?	mane
5. T/F/NG? Basking sharks decompose very quickly and only fragments can be found	F
6. T/F/NG? the biggest anaconda was found in the 1940s	F
7. T/F/NG? The anaconda can't survive outside South America	NG
8. T/F/NG? Not all scientists agree that the giant squid really exists	F
9. T/F/NG Squids have eyes that can reach a maximum of 50 feet in diameter	F
10. T/F/NG Giant squids have 10 arms	T
11. T/F/NG Giant squids prefer to attack ships rather than whales	F
12. T/F/NG? A dead giant octopus was found in Florida in the 1890s	F
13. T/F/NG? A giant octopus has four pairs of arms	T
14. The word “ <i>eventually</i> ” means:	
a. after some time b. quite quickly c. by chance d. actually	

VOCABULARY

mane [meɪn] = long coarse hair that grows from the crest of the neck in such mammals as the lion and horse
- long thick human hair

Turn out: turn off (lights etc) – produce or process *she turned out 50 units per hour*
dismiss, discharge, or expel *the family had been turned out of their home*
prove to be, be eventually: *her work turned out badly – it turned out to be a good decision*
end up; result *it all turned out well*

turnout = people appearing together at a gathering (affluenza) - the quantity or amount produced

eel [i:l] = long, snakelike, scaleless marine or freshwater fish

frill [frɪl] = decorative edging to a piece of cloth, made of a strip of cloth gathered along one side and sewn on - (*often in plural*) something unnecessary added as decoration

ruff [rʌf] = A stiffly starched frilled or pleated circular collar of lace, muslin, or other fine fabric, worn by men and women in the 16th and 17th centuries - A distinctive collarlike projection around the neck, as of feathers on a bird or of fur on a mammal.

bask [bɑːsk] = to lie in pleasant warmth, esp that of the sun - to take great pleasure; revel.

busk [bʌsk] = play music in a public place and solicit money for it

accept [əksɛpt] = to take or receive (something offered) - receive with approval or favor

except [ɪksɛpt] = With the exclusion of; other than; but

squid [skwɪd] = calamari

wrap [ræp] = to fold or wind (paper, cloth, etc.) around (a person or thing) so as to cover

wrap up = fold paper around - put warm clothes on - *usually imperative* (Slang) to be silent

whale [weɪl] = large marine mammal - **have a whale of a time** = enjoy oneself very much

indeed [ɪndiːd] = in truth (often tends to intensify); certainly, yes, definitely, surely, truly, absolutely, undoubtedly.