**Animal activists find a pet problem with "Finding Dory"**

**Article of the Week (AoW) Directions**

1. Mark your confusion – either highlighting or underlining.

2. Mark up the text. Annotate the article with comments, questions, inferences, etc. You can use a variety of sentences, phrases, and symbols to show your thinking.

3. Write a developed paragraph response to one of the prompts below.

By Orlando Sentinel, adapted by Newsela staff 05.05.16

ORLANDO, Fla. -  Animal welfare activists and pet shop owners fear a wave of interest in tropical fish and the possible destruction of important species once Disney Pixar's new movie "Finding Dory" hits theaters.

The animated movie is a sequel to 2003's "Finding Nemo," which had prompted a surge of cute orange clownfish being caught in the wild and sold at pet stores. Many parents and children, inexperienced with saltwater aquariums, bought a little Nemo fish and watched it die. The new cartoon includes the return of absent-minded Dory, a Pacific blue tang voiced by Ellen DeGeneres. It is coming out in June.

## **Impact On Marine Pet Trade**

"I think we are facing the same problem, and it's even worse because the blue tang is really unsuitable for a home aquarium animal," said Teresa Telecky, director of wildlife at Humane Society International. "Blue tang live up to 50 years and get big, over a foot long, which would require a 180-gallon aquarium, the size of a couch."

Telecky said the Humane Society has asked to talk with Disney about the movie and its impact on the marine pet trade. Other groups such as the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) are urging families to buy plush-toy versions of Dory instead of the real thing. Disney did not answer specific questions about its plans. A spokeswoman did say in an email that Disney's conservation team is working with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums on a program to support tang conservation.

The company also said it is preparing educational materials "discouraging personal ownership of blue tangs." The Marine Aquarium Societies of North America reported that marine biologists have talked to Disney about the storyline, particularly about the idea that blue tang can be raised in captivity. Raising blue tang from eggs or larvae in a tank is not possible yet.

## **Rising Tide Program**

The baby fish die because they do not eat normal fish food that other tropical fish in tanks eat, said Matthew DiMaggio. He is an assistant professor at the University of Florida and a leading researcher on blue tang. "We knew this movie was going to come out, and we have been trying to raise them. But they are a challenge," DiMaggio said.

After "Finding Nemo," SeaWorld helped to launch a program called Rising Tide, which attempts to raise blue tang and other tropical fish in captivity. The program successfully raised the first yellow tang in Hawaii and has improved breeding for the clownfish. But so far, the blue tang died after 22 days in Florida laboratories at Ruskin and Fort Pierce.

In Orlando, aquarium supply store owner Marcye Sweeney vowed she will not sell any blue tang, also called Pacific palette surgeonfish.

## **Not As Easy As It Is Made Out To Be**

"Thousands of clownfish died after 'Finding Nemo,'" said Sweeney, owner at Sea in the City. "People will tell you that you can set up an aquarium immediately and raise these fish, but they are generally wrong. It's not that easy."

She said she tries to educate customers about the needs of the animals. "People will try to tell parents that they can put a small young tang in a small tank, but that's like having a greyhound living in a small apartment, or worse," Sweeney said.

Mike Bober is the CEO of the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council. He said sales reports showed only a moderate increase in clownfish sales after "Finding Nemo," contrary to many media reports and other accounts at the time. Bober said people interested in aquariums can research the right fish for them at MyRightFish.com.

Blue tang can be purchased online. Some online stores include a warning that large saltwater tanks are needed. One site advertised a small blue tang starting at $50, plus $30 for next-day air shipping from California.

## **Other Movies And Their Impact**

Telecky said many Disney movies that feature animals have an enormous impact on those species. After "101 Dalmatians," many people bought cute Dalmatian puppies, then abandoned them.

"Their latest movie, 'Zootopia,' has a cute fox in it, a fennec fox, which is native to Africa," Telecky said. "Sales of fennecs have taken off around the globe now."

In recent years, Disney has generally avoided animal welfare controversy, and the company consulted with renowned primatologist Jane Goodall when it opened Animal Kingdom in Orlando. Telecky said the Humane Society has reached out to Disney about public education for the Dory release, but formal talks have yet to take place.

Rene Umberger, executive director at Hawaii-based For the Fishes, said she and the Humane Society are organizing a publicity campaign. "Without a concerted effort, there is a very real chance that species of fish could be wiped out, meaning near extinction in the wild," Umberger said. "The other concern is, fishermen use cyanide to capture these fish, which can damage the reef. The fishermen already report that they must go farther and farther out from land to find the blue tang, and the movie hasn't even come out yet."

**Respond to one of the following prompts. Use a separate sheet of paper.**

1. Do you think the animal activists’ concerns are warranted? Why or why not?
2. Write a paragraph either for or against limiting the adoption of the blue tang.
3. Pick a passage from the article and respond to it.