

# Super Manatee

## Materials

- crayons or markers
- manatee outline worksheet (either one per student or one enlarged copy to use in small groups)

## Objective

- To review manatee adaptations and environmental challenges

## Introduction

Florida manatees are one of the most *endangered* marine mammals in the United States. Because they lack an insulating blubber layer, manatees are highly susceptible to cold; it's not unusual for them to die during extremely cold weather. However, human activities pose a much greater threat to manatees:

- **Watercraft strikes.** Each year, many slow-swimming, dark-colored manatees are hit by boats and other watercraft resulting in serious injuries and even death.
- **Habitat destruction.** Much of the suitable manatee habitat in Florida — sea grass beds, salt marshes, and mangroves — has been destroyed or built upon for human use, leaving the manatees without a stable food supply.
- **Pollution & entanglement.** Manatees may eat trash or become entangled in fishing line or nets.

## Action

1. Define *endangered* and discuss challenges to manatee survival. Write these challenges on the board.
2. Individually or in small groups, have students brainstorm new and creative manatee *adaptations* to overcome these environmental challenges as a “Super Manatee.” Have students illustrate these adaptations on their manatee outlines. Examples include a rocket pack to swim faster and avoid boats, sweaters to keep warm, or a hard shell to protect from boat collisions.

3. Have each student or group present their “Super Manatee” to the class.

*Deeper depths: Even if you don't live in Florida, you can help protect manatees and their environment. Discuss with students ways they may impact manatees and simple things they can do to help.*

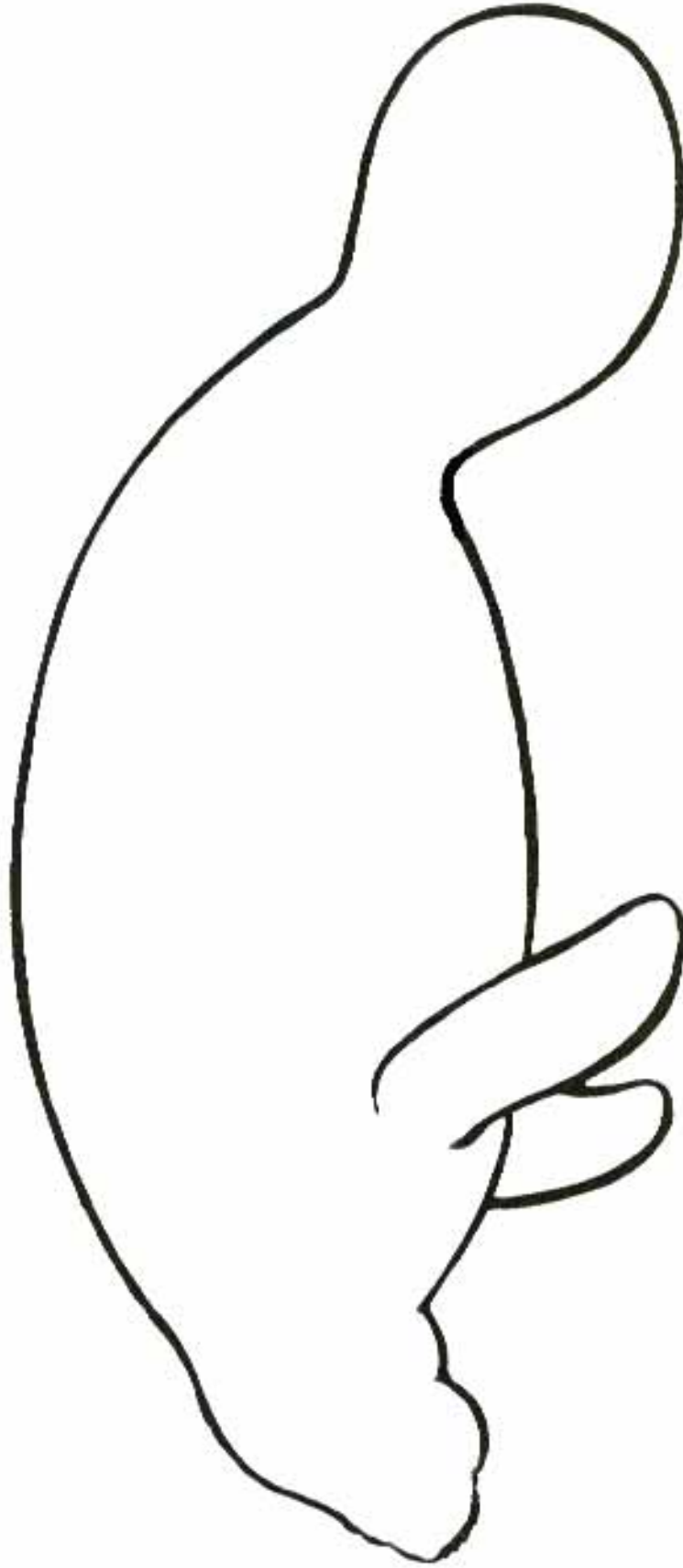
Because they are slow-swimming and dark colored, manatees are often hit by fast-moving boats.



# Super Manatee

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Manatees are endangered. Help your manatee survive by giving it “super” adaptations.



List three “super” adaptations your manatee has:

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How will these adaptations help your manatee survive?

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