



The Apo Island story

Lesson plan: the real story of Apo Island's community marine reserve, what the data showed, and what makes reserves succeed



Ages	12 to 18 (grades 7 to 12)
Time	60 minutes
Group	Up to 35 students
Where	Any classroom. No internet needed.
You need	The slides and one case study worksheet per student

What students learn

- How Apo Island's community created one of the world's best-known no-take marine reserves.
- What the long-term data showed, including honest limits such as the small contribution of spillover.
- The five NEOLI features of effective reserves, and how to evaluate a real reserve against them.
- Why community ownership, science, law and enforcement all mattered.

Before the lesson

1. Print one **Apo Island case study** worksheet per student.

The lesson

- 1 **From decline to sanctuary 10 minutes, slides 1 and 2.** Tell the story in order. Muro-ami was a destructive reef fishing method in which swimmers pounded the reef to drive fish into nets.
- 2 **Predict 7 minutes, slide 3.** Students sketch both graphs before seeing any results.
- 3 **The results and the twist 13 minutes, slides 4 and 5.** Reveal the tripling, then the spillover twist. Encourage students to change their minds with the evidence.
- 4 **Why did Apo work? 15 minutes, slides 6 to 8.** Discuss the six reasons, then students score Apo against NEOLI.
- 5 **Apo today 10 minutes, slides 9 and 10.** Link to MCP's role and discuss one or two questions.

Answers and what to listen for

NEOLI scoring, what to listen for: No-take yes, Enforced largely yes, Old yes (since 1982), Large no (the no-take area is tiny), Isolated arguably yes, as an island separated from the mainland by deep water. Most students land on four out of five, which matches the study's finding that four or five features work well. The debate about "Enforced" and "Isolated" is worth having.

Making it easier or harder

- **Younger groups:** focus on the timeline and the six reasons, and skip NEOLI.
- **Older groups:** discuss the difference between spillover of adult fish and export of eggs and larvae, and why the second is harder to measure.
- **Visit:** Apo Island is a short boat ride from the Negros coast. Snorkelling visits pay a fee that supports the protected area.

Curriculum links

- **Science:** populations, conservation, evaluating evidence.
- **Social studies (Araling Panlipunan):** local government, community action and national law.
- **Ocean Literacy Principle 6:** the ocean and humans are inextricably interconnected.

The teacher reading has the science behind every slide, with links to the sources.

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