

Reefs at Risk



NOAA

Coral reefs are home to thousands of ocean plants and animals.

Hundreds of clownfish dart in and out of the gaps in coral reefs. The reefs are home to thousands of ocean plants and animals. Along with fish, those animals include crabs, turtles, and sea horses.

Those ocean creatures may have no place to live in the future. Many coral reefs around the world have been destroyed, and many more are being destroyed. Some scientists say more than half of the world's reefs may be gone by the year 2030.

What is causing coral reefs to disappear? Scientists say people are largely to blame. Ships and fishing nets often damage the reefs. Other threats include pollution, storms, and disease.

It's Alive!

Coral reefs may look like rocks, but they are actually living structures. They are made up of tiny sea animals. Those tiny creatures are called coral polyps.

The polyps build hard shells around themselves. When a polyp dies, it leaves behind its shell. Young polyps attach themselves to the old shells. Over many years, the polyps form a coral reef.

Saving the Reefs

Scientists are working hard to protect coral reefs. They are mapping and studying the reefs. Many protected areas are being widened. Fishing is not allowed in those areas. Solving the coral reef problem is a challenge, said one scientist. "It requires us to understand what's going on much better than we do."

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. What are coral reefs?

- A rocks
- B clownfish
- C ships
- D living structures

2. How does the author introduce the topic of coral reefs?

- A by describing their importance to ocean plants and animals
- B by warning that more than half of them may be destroyed by 2030
- C by quoting a scientist who explains why solving the coral reef problem is a challenge
- D by discussing the reasons that coral reefs are disappearing

3. Based on the passage, what would be best for clownfish?

- A for the destruction of coral reefs to stop
- B for coral reefs around the world to disappear
- C for fishers to get rid of sea horses
- D for coral reefs to look less like rocks

4. Read the following sentence from the passage: "Hundreds of clownfish dart in and out of the gaps in coral reefs."

In the sentence, what does the word "**dart**" most nearly mean?

- A fill up
- B move quickly
- C look at
- D are caught in

5. What is the passage "Reefs at Risk" mostly about?

- A why spending too much time around coral reefs is risky
- B coral reefs, how they are damaged, and how to protect them
- C the differences between coral reefs and other sea animals
- D a project to help make coral reefs grow on land

6. What are some animals that live in coral reefs?

7. Why might some people think that coral is not made up of living things?

8. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Lots of animals live in coral reefs, _____ fish, crabs, turtles, and sea horses.

- A** including
- B** and
- C** so
- D** after

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Scientists are working hard to protect coral reefs because many of them are being destroyed.

Who? scientists

What are scientists doing? _____

Why? _____

Directions: Read the vocabulary word and definition below to complete questions 10a, 10b, and 11.

Vocabulary Word: **pollution** (pol · lu · tion): pollution is when dirty or poisonous substances make the air, water, or land somewhere dirtier or less healthy.

10a. Read the sentences below and underline all forms of the word **pollution**.

1. It was dangerous to drink the water because of all of the pollution in the water.
2. Politicians passed laws to lower the amount of pollution factories could produce.
3. Pollution is dangerous for people and for animals.
4. After the factory started polluting the coral reef, animals died there.
5. "Don't eat that fish – it comes from polluted water," she warned.

10b. Which image better illustrates pollution?



11. If chemicals from a factory enter a river stream, is that pollution? Why or why not?
