

# 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 soon have no place to live. A recent study shows that many coral reefs around the world 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 fishermen 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, the word **dart** most nearly means

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

5. The passage "Reefs at Risk" is 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?

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

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8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. 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.

Today, some scientists say more than half of the world's reefs may be gone by 2030.

Who? \_\_\_\_\_

(do) What? \_\_\_\_\_

When? today

**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?

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## Teacher Guide and Answers

**Passage Reading Level:** Lexile 780

**Passage Text Structure:** Descriptive – the writer explains, defines, or illustrates a concept or topic

**Passage Summary:** Coral reefs are home to thousands of ocean plants and animals. Coral reefs around the world are being destroyed, but scientists are working hard to protect them.

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

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5. The passage "Reefs at Risk" is 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?

**Suggested answer:** Some animals that live in coral reefs are fish, crabs, turtles, and sea horses. [paragraph 1]

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

**Suggested answer:** Some people may not realize that coral is made up of living things because it looks like rocks. [paragraph 4]

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word or phrase that best completes the sentence.

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

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- C so
- D after

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

Today, some scientists say more than half of the world's reefs may be gone by 2030.

Who? **some scientists**

(do) What? **say more than half of the world's reefs may be gone by 2030**

When? today

**To the Teacher:** ReadWorks recommends that you teach this vocabulary word to the whole class out loud using the four steps listed below.

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

**Step 1:** Introduce the word

- a. Teacher writes the word on the board and divides it into syllables: (pol · lu · tion)
- b. Teacher says: "This word is pollution. What is the word?" [All students reply together out loud: "pollution."]

**Step 2:** Provide a child-friendly definition

- a. Teacher says: "Pollution is when dirty or poisonous substances make the air, water, or land somewhere dirtier or less healthy."
- b. Teacher says: "In the passage, it is explained that one of the threats to coral reefs is pollution."

- c. Teacher says: "What is the word?" [All students reply together out loud: "pollution."]

**Step 3:** Practice the word

Teacher provides examples and additional opportunities to repeat the word. Read the first sentence out loud to your students. Begin reading it again and when you come to the vocabulary word, prompt students to say the vocabulary word out loud. Then, finish reading the sentence out loud to your students.

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

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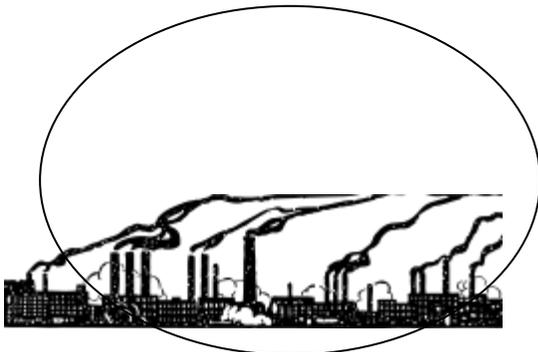
**10a.** Read the sentences below and underline all forms of the word **pollution**.

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**Step 4:** Check for student understanding

**To the Teacher:** This step can be completed as a whole class activity or as an independent practice.

**10b.** Which image better illustrates pollution?



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

**Suggested answer:** Probably yes, because these chemicals may be harmful to the plants and animals around and in the river.

*Suggested Additional Vocabulary:* structure, challenge