

# Reef Rescue



The hit movie *Finding Nemo* follows a clownfish that is scooped up from the Great Barrier Reef.

In real life, clownfish are among the thousands of colorful sea creatures that call the Great Barrier Reef home.

Stretching 1,250 miles along Australia's northeastern coast, the Great Barrier Reef is the longest coral reef in the world. A **coral reef** is a living underwater structure.

Leigh Haeger

Australia is often called "the land down under." That's because it lies in the Southern Hemisphere.

But these days, the Great Barrier Reef has found itself in trouble. Overfishing, pollution, and high temperatures are harming its health. That's why the

government in Australia is trying to help rescue the reef.

## Underwater Garden

While coral may look like a plant, it is actually made up of tiny sea animals. Those sea animals are called **coral polyps**.

As polyps die, they leave hard shells behind. Other polyps grow on top of the shells. Over thousands of years, they form a coral reef in warm water that is not very deep.

In many ways, the Great Barrier Reef resembles an underwater garden. Coral can be hard or soft. It forms in different colors and in strange shapes. Some coral looks like hardened brains. Other coral looks like fans and lettuces. The reef bursts with schools of tropical fish, darting among gaps in the coral.

The reef supplies food and shelter to creatures living in and around the coral. Turtles, sharks, sea horses, and crabs are among its many inhabitants.

## Helping Humans

While the reef is important to ocean life, it helps humans, too. People rely on the reef for both food and jobs. It also provides medicine used to treat disease. Each year, the Great Barrier Reef contributes about \$975 million to the economy through tourism and fishing.

## Stressed Out

Is it surprising, then, that the Great Barrier Reef is under too much stress? Fishing nets and ships break off sections and damage the reef. Air and water pollution are also doing harm. At the same time, warmer sea temperatures have caused **coral bleaching** on half of the reef. The high temperatures cause the coral to turn white, often killing it.

## Reef Rescue

In an effort to help save the reef, the government has limited fishing to two-thirds of it. That plan increases the number of "green zones." Those are areas that are off-limits to fishermen and boats. However, tourists and researchers can still visit them. Many fishermen are upset about the plan because they rely on the reef for jobs.

The Australian government says that its plan will help keep the reef safe from some threats. "It is very important that we give the reef proper protection for the future," said one government official. "The reef is Australia's greatest natural [treasure]."

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Which of the following is *not* a creature that lives in the Great Barrier Reef?

- A coral polyps
- B turtles
- C sea horses
- D whales

2. Which section describes the problem in this passage?

- A "Underwater Garden"
- B "Helping Humans"
- C "Stressed Out"
- D "Reef Rescue"

3. The author states: "The reef bursts with schools of tropical fish, darting among gaps in the coral."

What image does the author most likely want the reader to visualize?

- A many fish quickly moving through the coral
- B fish moving toward the center, or target, of the coral
- C fish exploding when they come into contact with gaps in the coral
- D structured, orderly groups of young fish without a clear path

4. The author writes, "Each year, the Great Barrier Reef contributes about \$975 million to the economy through tourism and fishing."

What does he mean that the Reef **contributes** money to the economy?

- A pays the economy
- B makes money for the economy
- C owes the economy
- D costs the economy

5. What is this passage mostly about?

- A the causes of reef problems and possible solutions
- B coral bleaching, which causes the reef to turn white
- C overfishing and higher temperatures
- D the history of tourism to the Great Barrier Reef

6. Refer to the section "Underwater Garden" to write a sentence for Step 2 below.

**How Coral Polyps Form a Reef**

Step 1: Polyps die.

Step 2:

Step 3: Other polyps grow on top of shells.

Step 4: Over thousand of years, they form a coral reef in warm water.

7. In what ways is a coral reef similar to a garden, as suggested in the section "Underwater Garden"?

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8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

The warmer temperatures cause the coral to turn white \_\_\_\_\_ the process is called coral bleaching.

- A so
- B for example
- C next
- D in conclusion

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

Many fishermen are upset about the government plan to limit fishing to two-thirds of the Great Barrier Reef because they rely on the reef for jobs.

Who? many fisherman

(are) What? \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

10. **Vocabulary Word:** inhabitant (*noun*): occupant or resident.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Teacher Guide &amp; Answers

**Passage Reading Level:** Lexile 830

**Featured Text Structure:** Problem/Solution – the writer poses a problem and suggests possible solutions

**Passage Summary:** In “Reef Rescue,” the author describes Australia’s Great Barrier Reef and explains the current problem of reef damage. Reef damage causes concern because the reef is important to Australia’s wildlife and economy; therefore, the government is taking action to preserve the reef.

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- D **whales**

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- B “Helping Humans”
- C **“Stressed Out”**
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Step 3: Other polyps grow on top of shells.
Step 4: Over thousand of years, they form a coral reef in warm water.

**Suggested answer:** "Step 2: Polyps leave their hard shells behind."

7. In what ways is a coral reef similar to a garden, as suggested in the section "Underwater Garden"?

**Suggested answer:** A coral reef is similar to a garden in many ways. First, it is similar because it is living, not nonliving. Next, there are different colors and shapes, much like a garden. Third, some of the coral look like "fans and lettuces," similar to some plant species found in gardens (such as lettuce itself!). Lastly, the reef supplies food and shelter to creatures living in and around it. Gardens can serve a similar function for creatures like small animals and insects.

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Many fishermen are upset about the government plan to limit fishing to two-thirds of the Great Barrier Reef because they rely on the reef for jobs.

Who? many fisherman

(are) What? **are upset about the plan to limit fishing to two-thirds of the Great Barrier Reef**

Why? **because they rely on the reef for jobs**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** inhabitant (*noun*): occupant or resident.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.