



Coral Reefs - Cities Under the Sea

Reading Worksheet — Level F | tahricteaches.com

Coral reefs are among the most **diverse** ecosystems on our planet, often called the rainforests of the sea. Although they cover less than one percent of the ocean floor, they **provide** a home for roughly twenty-five percent of all known marine species. These stunning underwater **structures** are found in warm, shallow **tropical** waters near the equator, where bright sunlight can easily reach the ocean bottom.

A coral reef is built by millions of tiny **creatures** called coral polyps over hundreds or thousands of years. Each polyp produces a hard outer skeleton made of calcium carbonate, a natural **chemical** compound found in seawater. As old polyps die, new ones grow on top and add new layers. This slow **process** creates the massive reef formations that divers explore today.

Coral polyps have a remarkable partnership with tiny plant-like organisms called algae that live inside their soft bodies. The algae **produce** food through sunlight and share this energy with the coral host. In return, the coral gives the algae a protected place to live. Coral depend on algae for up to ninety percent of their energy needs and also for their beautiful rainbow colors.

Unfortunately, coral reefs face serious threats from human activities. Rising ocean **temperature** caused by climate change forces the algae to leave, turning coral white in a dangerous process called bleaching. Pollution from factories and farms also poisons reef waters and blocks the sunlight that coral desperately needs to survive.

Scientists and **conservation** groups are now working hard to protect and restore damaged coral reefs. Some researchers grow young coral in underwater nurseries and transplant healthy pieces onto damaged areas. Governments have created marine parks where fishing is limited. Everyone can help by reducing pollution and learning about these precious underwater cities.

A. Vocabulary

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. diverse ____ | a. a substance made through chemistry |
| 2. provide ____ | b. the protection of nature and wildlife |
| 3. structures ____ | c. buildings or things that are built |
| 4. tropical ____ | d. to make or create something |
| 5. creatures ____ | e. how hot or cold something is |
| 6. chemical ____ | f. having many different kinds or types |
| 7. process ____ | g. to give or supply something needed |
| 8. produce ____ | h. relating to hot regions near the equator |
| 9. temperature ____ | i. living things, especially animals |
| 10. conservation ____ | j. a series of steps or actions |

B. True or False

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| 1. Coral reefs cover more than ten percent of the ocean floor. _____ | 2. Coral reefs are found in warm, shallow waters. _____ | 3. Coral polyps produce a hard outer skeleton. _____ |
| 4. Algae live inside coral polyps. _____ | 5. Coral depends on algae for energy. _____ | 6. Rising ocean temperature helps coral grow. _____ |
| 7. Bleaching turns coral white. _____ | 8. Pollution can block sunlight from reaching coral. _____ | 9. Some scientists grow coral in underwater nurseries. _____ |

C. Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: diverse, provide, structures, chemical, temperature

1. Coral reefs are among the most _____ ecosystems on Earth.
2. Reefs _____ a home for twenty-five percent of all marine species.
3. These stunning underwater _____ are found in warm waters.
4. Coral polyps produce a skeleton made of a natural _____.
5. Rising ocean _____ causes coral bleaching.



D. Comprehension Questions

1. What percentage of marine species depend on coral reefs?
2. How do coral polyps build a reef over time?
3. What is the relationship between coral and algae?
4. What causes coral bleaching?
5. How are scientists working to protect coral reefs?

E. Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think coral reefs are called the rainforests of the sea?
2. What would happen to ocean life if all coral reefs disappeared?
3. What can ordinary people do to help save coral reefs?

Answer Key

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A. Vocabulary: 1-f, 2-g, 3-c, 4-h, 5-i, 6-a, 7-j, 8-d, 9-e, 10-b

B. True/False: 1-F, 2-T, 3-T, 4-T, 5-T, 6-F, 7-T, 8-T, 9-T

C. Fill Blanks: 1-diverse, 2-provide, 3-structures, 4-chemical, 5-temperature

D. Comprehension:

1. About twenty-five percent
2. Each polyp produces a hard skeleton; new ones grow on top over hundreds of years
3. Algae produce food through sunlight and share energy with coral; coral gives algae a home
4. Rising ocean temperature forces algae to leave the coral
5. Growing coral in nurseries, transplanting healthy pieces, creating marine parks

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