

Name: _____

Date: _____

Coral Reefs: Cities Under the Sea

Grades 5-6

Nonfiction

- 1 A coral reef may look like a garden of colorful rocks, but it is actually built by animals. Each coral is a colony of tiny creatures called polyps, and each polyp is soft-bodied and only a few millimeters across in many species.
- 2 Reef-building polyps take minerals from seawater to build hard skeletons of limestone. Over thousands of years, layer upon layer of these skeletons forms a reef.
- 3 Most reef-building corals share their bodies with microscopic algae. The algae use sunlight to make food, and they share much of it with the coral. In return, the coral gives the algae a safe home. This partnership also gives many corals their bright colors.
- 4 Coral reefs cover a very small part of the ocean floor, yet they are home to roughly a quarter of all known ocean species, from clownfish to sea turtles. The largest reef system on Earth, the Great Barrier Reef, stretches along the coast of northeastern Australia.
- 5 Reefs are sensitive to change. When the water becomes too warm, corals can push out their algae and turn white, which is called coral bleaching. Without the algae, the coral can starve if the water does not cool down.
- 6 Scientists, divers and communities are working to protect reefs by reducing pollution, limiting harmful fishing, and even growing young corals to replant damaged areas.

Draw something you learned from this text.

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Questions: Coral Reefs: Cities Under the Sea

Read the passage again if you need to. Circle the best answer.

1. What are coral polyps?

- ☐ a Rocks
- ☐ c Plants

- ☐ b Tiny animals
- ☐ d Fish eggs

2. What do the algae give the coral?

- ☐ a A hard shell
- ☐ c Cold water

- ☐ b Food made from sunlight
- ☐ d Sand

3. What is coral bleaching?

- ☐ a Cleaning a reef
- ☐ c A kind of fish

- ☐ b Corals turning white after losing their algae in warm water
- ☐ d Coral growing faster

4. Which word best describes the relationship between coral and algae?

- ☐ a Harmful
- ☐ c Unrelated

- ☐ b Helpful to both
- ☐ d Competitive

5. Why is warming water a serious threat to coral reefs? Use two details from the passage.

Reading Comprehension: Answer Key

Coral Reefs: Cities Under the Sea

1. b) Tiny animals
2. b) Food made from sunlight
3. b) Corals turning white after losing their algae in warm water
4. b) Helpful to both
5. Sample answer: Warm water makes corals push out their algae and turn white. Without the algae, which give them food, the corals can starve.