



**Grades 6-8**  
**Corals Lesson Plan**

Objective: Students will learn about the importance of coral reefs in their role as “rain forests of the sea.”

Pre-assessment:

Ask students:

- Are corals plants or animals?
- Where are coral reefs found?
- How would you describe coral reefs?
- Why are coral reefs important?
- Can you name the biggest coral reef in the world?

Lesson:

- Review background information with students.
- Stress importance of reefs as habitat - major provider of food and shelter for tropical species of fish.
- Define biodiversity
- Discuss threats to coral reefs
  - Careless divers
  - Blowing up reefs with dynamite to catch fish
  - Global warming - causes coral bleaching
  - Sediment runoff from clear cutting forests - sediment covers up reefs, zooxanthellae are unable to photosynthesize

Project:

- Each student should choose a species of fish from one of the families of reef fish provided below.
- Students can make flash cards with a picture of their fish on one side, and the characteristics of that fish on the other (example: all parrotfishes have beaklike jaws that allow them to eat coral polyps and skeletons as well as scrape algae from dead reef surfaces)
- Have students create a wall mural of a coral reef.
- Students should draw a picture of their fish to be placed in the proper niche within the reef.

During Aquarium visit:

- Visit coral reef exhibit
  - Have students identify as many fish as possible from their previous research
  - Remaining fish can be categorized into their proper group according to like characteristics

Extension:

- Have students find/share interesting facts about the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.
- Create a crossword puzzle on corals from the vocabulary list provided.

### Common Families of Reef Fish

Angelfishes

Anthias

Butterflyfishes

Damselfishes

Gobies

Parrotfishes

Sturgeonfishes

Tangs

Triggerfishes

Wrasses