

What Is a Coral?



Read the passage. Then answer the questions in full sentences.

Name _____ Date _____

A coral can look like a plant, but it is made of animals. Most corals are hundreds to hundreds of thousands of tiny animals, called polyps, living together.

Each polyp has a stomach with only one opening, its mouth, and a circle of tentacles around it. Most polyps feed at night. Their tentacles have stinging cells, like those of their relative the jellyfish, to catch tiny animals for food.

Hard corals, also called stony corals, make a hard skeleton that protects their soft parts. The polyps cement themselves together with it, and these are the corals that build reefs. Soft corals make no hard skeleton and build no reefs. They can look like trees, bushes, fans or grasses.

Thousands of kinds of living things depend on coral reefs, and so do millions of people, for food, protection and jobs.

1. What are the tiny animals that make up a coral called?

2. When do most coral polyps feed?

3. Why do hard corals build reefs when soft corals do not?

4. Why do you think people want to protect coral reefs?

Answer key

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1. What are the tiny animals that make up a coral called?
Polyps.
2. When do most coral polyps feed?
At night.
3. Why do hard corals build reefs when soft corals do not?
Hard corals make a hard skeleton and cement themselves together with it; soft corals make no hard skeleton.
4. Why do you think people want to protect coral reefs?
Sample answer: thousands of kinds of living things depend on them, and millions of people need them for food, protection and jobs.