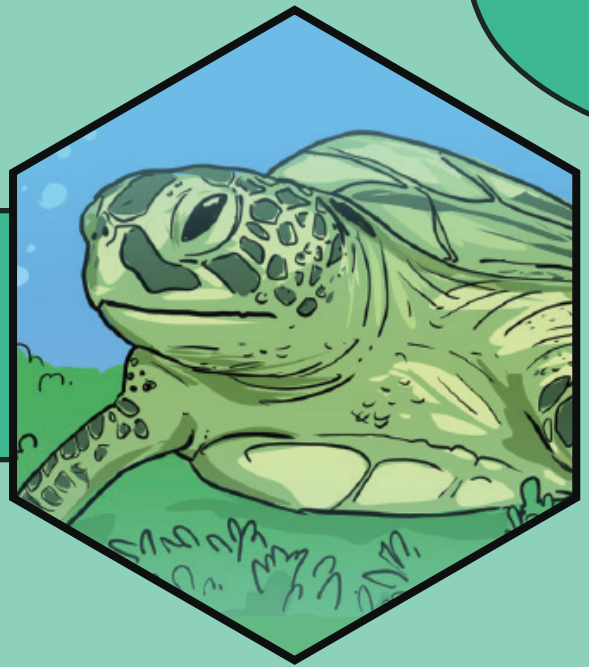


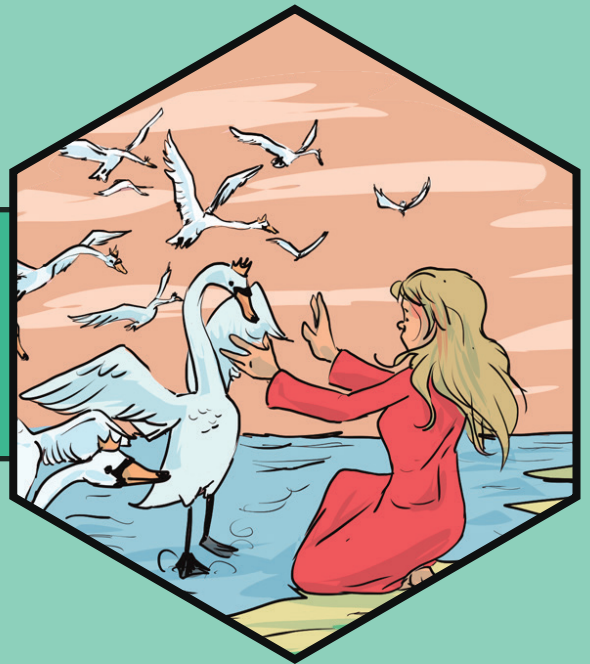
The Great Barrier Reef



What do we plant?



The Wild Swans



Reading Booklet

KS2 English reading booklet



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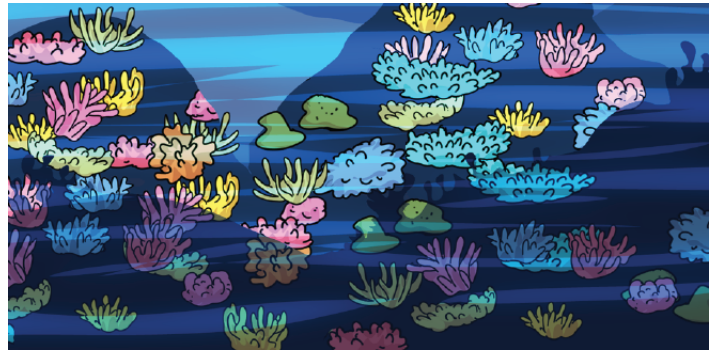
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THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

Non-chronological report

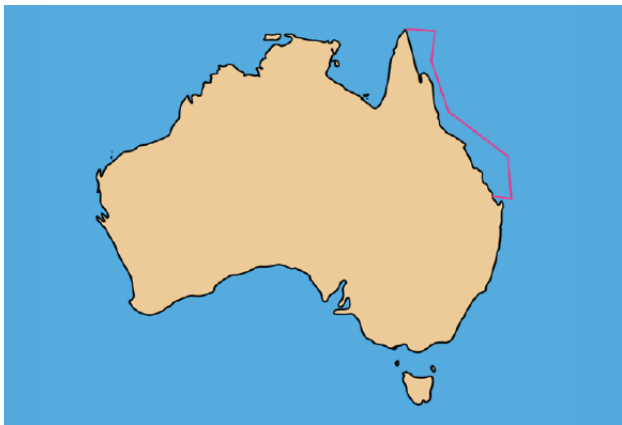
The Great Barrier Reef is the largest coral reef in the world, making it the only living thing that is clearly visible from outer space. It is one of the seven natural wonders of the world and it was classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1981.



The colours of the coral reef

Geography

The Great Barrier Reef is located off the east coast of Queensland in the Coral Sea. The reef is 2,300 kilometres long, starting at Gladstone and stretching all the way to Cape York (the northernmost point of Australia). Astonishingly, the reef is larger than Italy! There are over 900 tropical islands in the Great Barrier Reef, which are known for their sandy white beaches. Due to its location, it is sacred to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and it forms a significant aspect of their culture and spirituality.



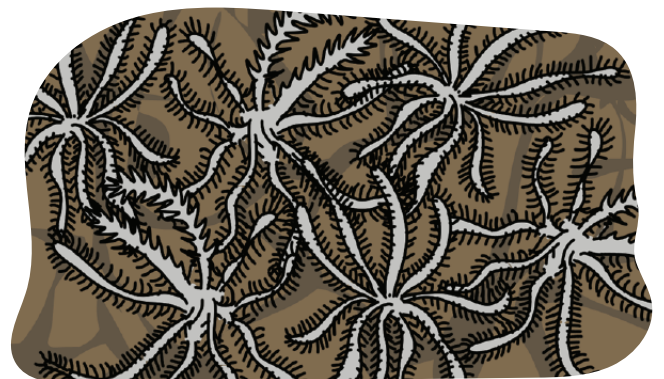
Map of the Great Barrier Reef

Ecology

The Great Barrier Reef contains over 3,000 individual reef systems and consists of over 600 species of coral. Coral is formed by tiny animals called polyps which are related to sea anemones and jellyfish. There are two types of coral, hard and soft, and these can come in all shapes, colours and sizes.

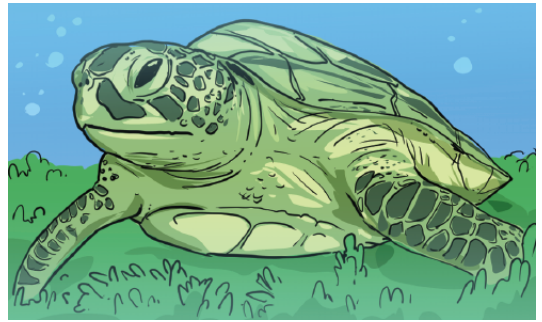


Left: soft coral



Right: hard coral

The Great Barrier Reef is home to a variety of sea life including some of the world's most vulnerable marine animals. There are more than 1,500 species of fish: the smallest fish is the stout infantfish, which is only 7 millimetres long, and the largest is the whale shark, which can grow up to 12 metres long! In addition, there are 134 species of sharks and rays living in the reef, as well as mammals. The dugong – a slow moving marine mammal related to the manatee – is



large green sea turtle

classified as vulnerable and is one of 30 species of mammals found in the Great Barrier Reef. The reef is also home to 6 out of 7 species of threatened marine turtles, including the large green sea turtle.

Did you know?

The Great Barrier Reef also accommodates some of the deadliest animals in the ocean, including the box jellyfish, blue-ringed octopus and the stonefish.

Threats

Climate change is the greatest threat to the existence of the Great Barrier Reef. Water temperatures continue to rise because of increased carbon dioxide and other gases in the atmosphere; subsequently, the coral suffers heat stress which causes it to release an algae revealing white skeletons. Over time, the coral slowly loses its colour. According to reports, in the space of just five years, shallow water reefs have reduced by 50% as a result of coral bleaching.

Severe weather events also pose a threat to the reefs. Climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of cyclones which cause major damage to the reef; between 2004 and 2018 there were 10 cyclones that caused significant damage to the Great Barrier Reef.

Poorer water quality, as a result of pollution, also threatens coral. In particular, the risk of crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks increases because of poor water quality and the overfishing of predators. Crown-of-thorns starfish are the world's second largest starfish (growing up to 1 metre) and they feed on nearly all corals, eating up to 90% of the living tissue during an outbreak.

Action

Individuals can take responsibility for improving and maintaining the health of the Great Barrier Reef. If the pollution levels and the rate of climate change were to drop, the reef could remain a safe habitat for the community of living things that call it home.

What do we plant?

What do we plant when we plant the tree?

We plant the ship, which will cross the sea.

We plant the mast to carry the sails;

We plant the planks to withstand the gales -

The keel, the keelson, the beam, the knee;

We plant the ship when we plant the tree.

What do we plant when we plant the tree?

We plant the houses for you and me.

We plant the rafters, the shingles, the floors,

We plant the studding, the lath, the doors,

The beams and siding, all parts that be;

We plant the house when we plant the tree.

What do we plant when we plant the tree?

A thousand things that we daily see;

We plant the spire that out-towers the crag,

We plant the staff for our country's flag,

We plant the shade, from the hot sun free;

We plant all these when we plant the tree.



The Wild Swans

Deep within a distant land of plenty, there lived a king who was blessed with eleven most excellent sons: princes of upstanding character. A single daughter, Eliza, cherished and beautiful in equal measure, completed the royal family. Sharp-minded and full of curiosity, the siblings worked hard at school, writing with diamond pencils upon slates of gold. It was a tranquil life where misfortune never had occasion to visit.

In the fullness of time, everything changed. The castle bells rang the glad tidings – the king was to be married! Alas, his bride was not of fair mind or spirit and treated the poor children with contempt. This became apparent on the wedding day itself when merriment and music resonated from barbican to battlement. Whilst the honoured guests feasted on celebration cake, iced and lavishly decorated, their wicked stepmother presented in its place, a plate of sand. “My darlings, do enjoy your special treat,” she cackled maliciously. Startled by the heartless act, the children were immediately aware that their presence was not welcome.

Less than a week passed when, without conscience, the queen callously dismissed Eliza from privilege and into a life of poverty with a peasant and his wife. The sons, however, were not so easy to discharge. As day followed day, she sowed seeds of mistrust in the naive king’s mind with falsehoods and fabrications until, inevitably, he relented.

“You are doomed to spend the rest of your days as great, ugly birds with no voice,” she hissed, flinging the window wide. “Leave now and never return!”

Possessing virtue that outweighed the evil curse, the boys did not transform as the wicked queen expected and instead took flight as dazzling white swans. As they disappeared towards the horizon, passing over the rooftop where, beneath, their sister lay asleep, their powerful wings drummed a rhythmic beat and their shrill cry declared that they would watch over her.

On the occasion of her fifteenth birthday, the king permitted his beloved Eliza, whose youthful loveliness now glowed most splendidly, to return to the palace. The queen’s loathing heightened, but she dared not commit her stepdaughter to the winged life endured by her brothers, for her husband prized her too highly. Instead, she crept one night into the maiden’s bathing room – a pearl-white chamber with sheer drapes swathed around a marble pool – and conjured a potion to rob Eliza of her prettiness and sour the king’s sentiments. Washing in the emerald-green water tangled Eliza’s smooth tresses into unruly knots, riddled her skin with vicious sores, drained her eyes of their sparkle and awkwardly twisted her smile. Her identity cruelly stolen, Eliza’s father refused to acknowledge her and commanded her to leave.

Broken-hearted and alone, Eliza desperately roamed the yawning depths of the forest, determined to find her brothers. The darkness intensified every sound – wilted leaves crunched; brittle twigs snapped – but it was a sharp cough that halted her. Someone... or something was nearby. Heart in her mouth... blood coursing violently... She turned to see a cloaked figure approaching.

“My dear, I do hope I didn’t startle you,” soothed the kindly woman. “I’ve been foraging – here, do have some berries?”
“How nice!” returned Eliza, selecting from the proffered basket. “I wonder, have eleven princes ridden past you today?”
“Eleven, you say? Why no, but I watched swans of that same number with crowns upon their heads swimming on a river close by. Allow me to direct you,” she offered.

Thanking the woman for her charity, Eliza traced the river until its gaping mouth sang to the sea. With no sign of the swans, she sank despondently to her knees. Drifting like silky jewels, eleven delicate feathers fluttered from above causing her to glance skywards. To her astonishment, eleven swans descended, each reaching the ground in human form. “My brothers!” she wept. “My heart is complete. But what has become of you?” Each recounted part of their wretched plight.

Later, beneath the night’s crystal encrusted blanket, a fairy sought Eliza in her slumber. “You can break the spell that binds your brothers,” she explained. “But you will need courage, patience and discretion, for uttering a single word will strike your brothers dead!”

On awakening, the dream remained so vivid that Eliza set about her task without question or delay. Ignoring the vicious stings, she picked nettles until her fingers burnt. With them, she platted flax which she knitted into coats. Completing each garment required time and plentiful crop; by the tenth Eliza had stripped the land bare so she ventured into a neighbouring kingdom. Scavenging its castle grounds, Eliza was set upon by braying guards who suspected her of witchcraft. Unable to justify her actions with spoken words, the duke of the castle, who saw righteousness within her, reluctantly put Eliza’s fate in the hands of his people. They declared that she be exiled to a faraway land the following morning.

Alone in a dank cell, Eliza screamed silently into the gloom; she had come so close to achieving her goal. A sudden clang of bolt hitting lock startled her. Without ceremony, the ten completed jackets and her unwoven flax were cast inside. “By the duke’s orders!” came the only explanation. Realising her fortune, Eliza toiled relentlessly through the night to complete the eleventh jacket.

At sunrise, Eliza was drawn through the cobbled streets upon a wooden cart. With the harbour in sight, eleven swans flocked around her to form a protective cage. Seizing her opportunity, Eliza tossed a coat over each. Her heart leapt as they returned, permanently this time, into handsome princes proclaiming their sister’s innocence. Their story melted the hearts of the subjects who embraced them with warmth and welcome. None more so than the duke himself who married dear Eliza, joyfully serving cake, not sand, to all who attended their wedding ahead of a life lived most happily.

