

# LESSON: Saving Our Undersea Forests

**Story Reference:** *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Humane Heroes Volume I*, Story 12, "Our Undersea Rainforests"

**Lesson Description:** Students learn why coral reefs are important to sea life and how the reefs are being endangered by boats, pollution, and climate change. Efforts to regrow coral reefs are underway around the world thanks to concerned individuals and organizations that care about ocean conservation. In this lesson, students identify important aspects of animal habitats (e.g., coral reefs) and collaborate as a class to determine ways to promote coral reef conservation.

### ELA Alignment:

- Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.

### Lesson Objectives:

- Identify local and regional habitats.
- Identify and generate solutions to possible threats to habitats.

### Vocabulary:

- Habitat
- Conservation

### Materials:

- Three sheets of chart paper or poster paper
- Colored markers
- Index cards for exit slips (one per student)
- Top 10 Tips handout

### Resource Links:

- SeaWorld Cares—Top 10 Tips: <https://seaworldcares.com/en/conservation/top-10-tips/>
- Rising Tide Conservation: <https://www.risingtideconservation.org>

**Introduction:** Elicit definitions of the concept of “home” (10 minutes)

- Set up the chart activity before class by placing one large sheet of poster paper on each of three tables. Write one of the following prompts about the concept of “home” at the top of each sheet:
  - *Home is a place where . . .*
  - *Something special about the place where I live is . . .*
  - *People need homes because . . .*
- Organize students into three groups and assign each group to a table. Distribute colored markers to each group (enough so that each student has a marker). When responding to their prompt, guide students to think about the concept of a home rather than the dwelling place itself (e.g., house, apartment, trailer). Allow two minutes for the groups to write down answers to their first prompt before rotating them to the next table.
- Encourage students to respond to, comment on, and add to the other groups’ answers as they move to different tables. The students may use the sheet of paper to ask for more details, pose a question, make a connection, or add a new idea.
- After the groups have finished rotating through each of the three tables, instruct them to return to their starting point and read what their classmates added to their original chart answers. Ask students to share how their concept of home may have evolved in the process of the chart exercise.
- Tell students that today’s lesson will be about animal habitats. Ask students to think how the concept of habitat might be similar to the concept of home.

**Read and Analyze:** Fact-finding mission about habitats and conservation (15 minutes)

- Prior to reading “Our Undersea Rainforests,” tell students that they will be learning about a coral reef and how it serves as a habitat for fish and other sea animals. Instruct students to go on a fact-finding mission to learn about why habitats matter and how animals are affected when their habitat is endangered or destroyed. Tell them to be prepared to support their answers and discussion points with evidence from the story.
- Lead a discussion on the following topics after students have finished reading the story:
  - From the text, ask students to name five aspects of a habitat that an animal might need in order to survive. Write their answers on the board. Examples could include the following:
    - Food source
    - Clean, unpolluted water
    - Shelter from the elements
    - Places to hide from predators
    - Places to raise their young
  - Ask students to name five facts about coral reefs that they learned from the text. Students can consider the following questions as they find their facts:
    - How are coral reefs made?
    - Where are they found?
    - Who lives in them?

- Why are the reefs sick?
- How are people like Nick Ireland from SeaWorld trying to save them?
- Ask students to contribute a definition of the term “conservation.” One possible answer to share with the class could be: *To preserve, protect, or restore the natural environment and the living things in it.*

**Guided Practice:** Growing coral discussion (15 minutes)

- Write this quote by Dr. Robin Ganzert, President and CEO of American Humane, on the board or on a piece of poster paper: *“People won’t protect what they don’t love. And they can’t love what they don’t know.”*
- Give students a moment to read the quote and think about how it applies to the conservation of endangered coral reefs. Ask students to think about ways that people could learn more about coral reefs so that they then are more interested in reef conservation.
- Share (or hand out) these Top 10 Tips on conserving marine mammals and their habitats: <https://seaworldcares.com/en/conservation/top-10-tips/>.
- Tell students that they are going to participate in a class discussion that will help promote coral reef conservation. Their collaboration will start out small and grow like a coral reef.
- Set up the first pieces of “coral” by organizing students into pairs. Each pair will brainstorm ideas about saving coral reefs. They will then decide together on a single idea that they would like to share with classmates. The pair will then join another pair, expanding their coral reef to four people. The two pairs will then share their agreed-upon idea with each other and combine their thoughts into one group idea. Two of the groups of four students will then join together to form a coral group of eight. The larger group will discuss their group ideas and again combine their thoughts into one cohesive idea. Continue until the whole class has formed one large piece of coral reef.
- Provide these questions as prompts for students to discuss:
  - *What do you think humans need to know about the coral reefs that are dying all over the world?*
  - *What are some things people can change that would help protect coral reefs?*
  - *How can individuals learn more about coral reefs and promote conversations about reef conservation?*
- Debrief the activity with questions about how the class coral reef grew in strength as more people were involved. Ask students to reflect on the phrase “strength in numbers” and how it relates to the expansion and strengthening of the coral reef.

**Closing:** Fishy headlines (5 minutes)

- Give each student an index card and ask students to write a news headline in the form of a short sentence or catchy phrase that summarizes something they learned about habitats or conservation.
- Prompt students to pretend to write the headline from the point of view of a fish or sea creature who lives in the reef.

# Top 10 Tips for Conserving Marine Animals and Their Habitats

from <https://seaworldcares.com/en/conservation/top-10-tips/>

From the food we eat to the air we breathe, nearly all life on this planet depends on our ocean. That means conserving and caring for the sea and the animals living in it begins at home—even if home is miles away from the ocean. Just start somewhere. From using less water at home to knowing more about the fish you eat to keeping trash out of our waterways—which all lead to the ocean—little actions can make a big difference.

Check out our Top 10 Tips for conserving marine animals and their habitats. Together we can make a world of difference for our blue planet:

1. **Be blue aware.** Be aware of what you put into the water, and never flush medications or put harmful chemicals down the drain.
2. **Pitch in, not out.** All waterways lead to the ocean, which is why keeping our lakes, rivers, and streams clean is a great way we can all protect marine life.
3. **Know what you're eating.** Is that seafood sustainable? Find out at [msc.org](http://msc.org).
4. **Choose to reuse.** Plastic bags look a lot like jellyfish to a hungry sea turtle. Use reusable bags, and always recycle plastic.
5. **Don't rock the boat-ways.** Boat collisions with manatees and other marine mammals can be prevented if you take it slow in marked areas.
6. **Hold the line.** Recycle or safely discard fishing line. Never throw it overboard since entanglement is one of the most common human-related animal injuries we see.
7. **Learn about marine animals.** While you can't touch marine mammals in the wild, you can spend some time at your local zoo or aquarium. It's easier to care about animals once you've felt a personal connection to them.
8. **Take a deep breath.** The ocean supplies oxygen for half of all the air you breathe—even if you don't live near a coast. Use this fact as a fun way to help teach kids about the importance of the ocean.
9. **Celebrate our blue planet.** Throw an ocean party, host an ocean art event in the classroom, make some sea-themed jewelry, or find your own fun in celebrating our blue planet.
10. **Pledge to do your part, and just start somewhere to help conserve and care for our blue planet.** Together we can make a world of difference.