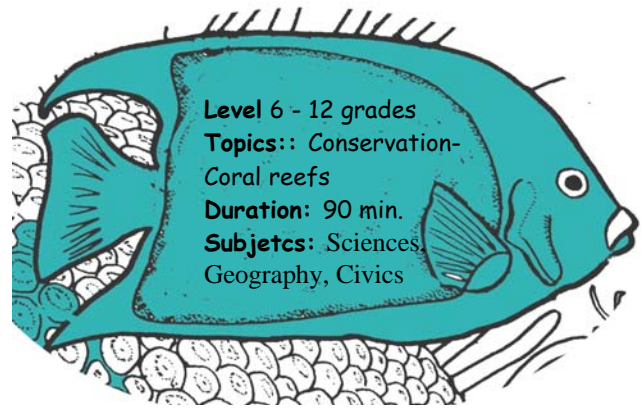


Defending the Corals

Objectives:

- Discuss the actual threats faced by coral reefs
- Write letters to conservation organizations
- asking for support in the protection of coral reefs



Learning Skills: Observation, analyzing, deduction, Exercizing rights of citizenship

Information Base:

Coral reefs are being destroyed at an alarming rate due to over fishing and their destructive methods, contamination, coastal development, erosion, sedimentation, boat anchors, divers, global warming and above all the population growth on the coasts.

1997 was declared the International Year of the Coral Reef and 1998, the International Year of the Oceans. These were great opportunities for promoting research and education about conservation of these marine environments.

The goal of the International Year of the Coral Reef was to learn about the health of coral reefs worldwide, to discover the principle causes of reef destruction, to increase the public awareness of the value of coral reefs and finally, the development of strategies that promote sustainable management of these ecosystems and help in their recovery.

Vocabulary: Coral reef

Materials: Detailed map of the world and Panama, note card, paper with envelopes, list of addresses for conservation organizations and national and international governmental organizations. Videos "The Coral Jungle" and "The Fragile Circle of Life".

Procedure:

1. After welcoming the students introduce the theme: Reefs are threatened.
Begin by asking if they know what a coral reef is. Try to complete a good description cooperatively. Go to the projection room and show them the videos "The Coral Jungle" and "The Fragile Circle of Life". Discuss what was seen in these documentaries.
2. Using the world map and show them the regions where coral reefs are found. Review how corals grow in the inter-tropical zone between the tropic of Cancer and Capricorn at 20 degrees North and South latitude respectively. Tropical oceans are those where currents cross the equator between the tropics.
3. In the tropics the coral reefs are found in the following regions:
 - 1-South central and Southeast Pacific
 - 2-Southeast Asia
 - 3-Northern Australia
 - 4-Central and West Indian Ocean
 - 5-Red Sea and Persian Gulf
 - 6-Carribeane including South Florida
4. In Panama the principle reefs are found in the northeastern zone of the Comarca Kuna Yala, northeast of Bocas del Toro, south in the island of Coiba in the Gulf of Chiriquí, and in Isla Iguana east of the peninsula of Azuero.
5. Unfold the map of Panama shawing the coral reef distribution.
6. Make a brief visit to the aquariums emphasizing the reefs, relationships, diversity, and frailty of the system.
7. Return to the classroom. Separate the students into groups of 4 or 5. Give them a note card; assign each group an area of Panama where there are coral reefs. According to what they know of geography, population levels, and economic activities do they think a problem or potential problem exists that can affect the coral reefs? Once the problem is identified (existent or potential) they must write a letter denouncing the bad management asking for measures to be taken and/or proposals for a solution, etc.
8. Later give them the addresses where they may send their letters.
9. To finalize, discuss the methods for calling attention to their search for solutions. Focus primarily on group effort and cooperation. This will allow their voices to be heard and will have a positive impact in the conservation of coral reefs.

Suggestion for the Docent:

Suggested Classroom Activities:

A visit to several coastal regions will help the students to better understand with this special and fragile natural environment.

Look for more information on the economic activities, geography, population and cultures of the different coastal zones where there are coral reefs, and the relationships these communities have with this environment.

Evaluation: The letters are the evaluation for this activity.

Reference:

Adapted from "Secret of the Ocean Realm", City of the Sea,
www.pbs.org/oceanrealm/intheschool1