Note to Librarians, Teachers, and Parents:

**Blastoff! Readers** are carefully developed by literacy experts and combine standards-based content with developmentally appropriate text.

**Level 1** provides the most support through repetition of high-frequency words, light text, predictable sentence patterns, and strong visual support.

**Level 2** offers early readers a bit more challenge through varied simple sentences, increased text load, and less repetition of high-frequency words.

**Level 3** advances early-fluent readers toward fluency through increased text and concept load, less reliance on visuals, longer sentences, and more literary language.

**Level 4** builds reading stamina by providing more text per page, increased use of punctuation, greater variation in sentence patterns, and increasingly challenging vocabulary.

**Level 5** encourages children to move from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” by providing even more text, varied writing styles, and less familiar topics.

Whichever book is right for your reader, Blastoff! Readers are the perfect books to build confidence and encourage a love of reading that will last a lifetime!
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The Coral Reef Biome

Coral reefs are among the world’s most colorful biomes! Many beautiful plants and animals live there.
Tube-shaped animals called **coral polyps** build up reefs over time. They grow hard **skeletons** and attach to those of dead corals.
Most coral reefs lie in the warm **tropics**. There are three main types of tropical reefs.
Fringing reefs stretch along shores. **Barrier** reefs are farther out. Ring-shaped **atolls** rise from sunken islands.
Tropical coral reefs have a warm **climate**. The sun shines through the clear, shallow salt water.
Water temperatures usually stay between 65 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit (18 and 29 degrees Celsius).
Too much wind and rain can move rocks and mud into shallow reefs. The clear water becomes cloudy.
Then less sunlight reaches reef plants. This can affect the whole coral reef food chain.
Tiny **algae** grow all over warm coral reefs. The algae live inside of coral polyps. The animals and algae trade gases they need to live.
Larger algae called seaweeds color coral reefs. Red seaweeds grow in deeper water than green ones. Their color helps them capture more sunlight.
Meadows of sea grass often form around coral reefs. They provide animals with food to eat and nurseries for babies.
Near some reefs, **mangroves** grow. These trees have special **roots**. They are able to separate water from salt.
Coral reefs are full of strange creatures. Colorful bodies let many blend in with the reefs. This helps them hunt or hide.
Flat animals move through tight spaces. Pointed ones protect themselves or poke their food. Other animals have suction cups to stay put!
Many reef animals need one another to survive. Some offer safe places to live. Others share their food.
Some fish and shrimp are cleaners. They remove dead skin and parasites from larger animals!
The Great Barrier Reef

**Location:** Coral Sea of the Pacific Ocean; off the coast of northeastern Australia

**Size:** 134,364 square miles (348,000 square kilometers); largest coral reef in the world

**Water temperature:** 75 °F to 85 °F (24 °C to 29 °C)
Other important plants: red and green seaweeds, sea grasses, mangroves

Other important animals: sea anemones, jellyfish, octopuses, sponges, starfish, cuttlefish, crabs, giant clams, whale sharks, bottlenose dolphins
Glossary

algae—plants and plantlike living things; seaweeds and most other kinds of algae grow in water.

atolls—ring-shaped coral reefs

barrier—a wall that blocks; barrier reefs separate shore from open ocean.

biomes—nature communities defined by their climate, land features, and living things

climate—the specific weather conditions for an area

coral polyps—the living ocean animals that build coral reefs

food chain—a system of who eats what in a biome

fringing—bordering; fringing reefs touch shore.

mangroves—tropical trees that grow in shallow salt water

parasites—living things that survive on or in other living things; parasites offer nothing for the food and protection they receive.

roots—the parts of a plant that keep it in place and take in water

skeletons—the frames of living things

tropics—a hot region near the equator
To Learn More

AT THE LIBRARY


ON THE WEB
Learning more about coral reefs is as easy as 1, 2, 3.


2. Enter “coral reefs” into the search box.

3. Click the “Surf” button and you will see a list of related web sites.

With factsurfer.com, finding more information is just a click away.
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