

Reading Comprehension (Term I)

Form 9

The Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef consists of more than 3,400 individual reefs and 700 islands stretching a distance of 2,300 km from Torres Strait to Lady Elliot Island. With the continental shelf not far below the ocean's surface, and washed by the warm waters of the South Pacific Ocean, the perfect environment was created for the world's largest system of coral reefs. The conditions and water temperature are ideal for colonies of **tiny** coral polyps. They create this unique **marine** environment where the most colourful of the sea's life forms live so close to the surface that most can be easily observed.

Beneath the **turquoise** tropical waters there is a world of activity as millions of tiny animals live out their lives building the reef. Corals are among the most beautiful of marine organisms. When they colonise a site, they develop the colours and complex structures for which the reef is **renowned**. *Corals* are simple, primitive organisms that have lived in tropical seas for about 500 million years. While the size, shape and colour of coral formations **vary immensely**, they are all the work of one type of **creature**. Just as beautiful as the coral of the reef are the plants and animals that live there. About 1,500 species of fish are known to live in the reef region, and a half of them may be seen on a single reef.

The islands of the reef are of two main types: 'low islands' and 'continental islands'. *Low islands* are the coral **cays** formed by the **accumulation** of sand and coral parts. Examples are Green Island and Heron Island. *Continental islands* are the **remnants** of the mainland that have been cut off by the changes in the sea level, and some lie quite close to the coast and rise from the water. Most have coral reefs around and are thickly vegetated. The shorelines of some continental islands have white sandy beaches and others are bordered by **mangroves**. The islands of the Whitsunday Group are among these continental islands.

The waters of the Great Barrier Reef were declared the Marine Park in 1975, helping to maintain and conserve a unique and particularly beautiful natural wonder. The Marine Park Authority limits human activity on the reef and **allocates** areas for a specific range of activities. This careful management of one of the wonders of the world will **ensure** it will be here for future generations to enjoy.

I. Match the words and phrases (1–8) with their definitions (a–h).

1. Tiny	a) <i>very much, extremely;</i>
2. Coral	b) <i>to be different from each other in size, shape etc.;</i>
3. Renowned	c) <i>a living thing, real or imaginary, that can move around;</i>
4. Immensely	d) <i>to give something officially to somebody or something for a particular purpose;</i>
5. To vary	e) <i>a tropical tree that grows in mud or near the rivers and has roots that are above the ground;</i>
6. A creature	f) <i>a hard substance that is red, pink or white in colour, and that forms on the bottom of the sea from the bones of very small creatures;</i>
7. A mangrove	g) <i>very small in size;</i>
8. To allocate	h) <i>famous and respected.</i>

II. Read and say if the statements are true or false.

1. The Great Barrier Reef consists of more than 3,400 individual reefs and 700 islands stretching a distance of 2,300 km.
2. Corals are among the most colourful of marine organisms.
3. Corals are simple, primitive organisms that have lived in tropical seas for about 2 million years.
4. Just as beautiful as the coral of the reef are the plants and animals that live there.
5. About 100 species of fish are known to live in the reef region, and a half of them may be seen on a single reef.
6. The islands of the reef are of two main types: 'low islands' and 'continental islands'.

III. Choose the correct item to complete the sentences.

1. With the continental shelf not far below the ocean's surface, and washed by the warm waters of the South Pacific Ocean, the perfect environment was created for
 - a) the sea life forms
 - b) the plants and animals that live there
 - c) the world's largest system of coral reefs
2. Beneath the turquoise tropical waters there is a world of activity as live out their lives building the reef.
 - a) thousands of sea fish
 - b) millions of tiny animals
 - c) hundreds of jellyfish
3. When corals colonise a site, they develop for which the reef is renowned.
 - a) the colours and complex structures
 - b) the colourful islands
 - c) the stone structures
4. Just as beautiful as the coral of the reef are
 - a) the stones and shells that can be found there
 - b) the plants and animals that live there
 - c) the trees and flowers that grow there
5. Low islands are the coral cays formed by the accumulation of
 - a) sand and coral parts
 - b) stones and fish bones
 - c) sand and shells
6. Continental islands are that have been cut off by the changes in the sea level.
 - a) the small islands
 - b) the remnants of the mainland
 - c) the coral cays

IV. Write a short summary of the text.