

In 1997 as part of the International Year of the Reef, Dr. Robert Ginsburg and his students at the University of Miami developed this "**Reef Story Play**" for elementary aged students. Originally, there was a set of 28 slides that accompanied the "play" part of the program to introduce the students to basic coral reef biology, issues such as pollution, and the importance of the reefs. We still have a set of the slides and the script that goes with them in our office. I usually use other slides that we have to give a good general coral reef presentation. I try to make the slide presentation short and get the kids acting quickly. The cardboard "characters" are fun for the kids to make and can be as simple or as complicated as you have the time and energy for. Ours are cut out cardboard, painted, and attached to flat wooden sticks (like paint stirring sticks).

Also, after using the original script with a group, I have often started to "ad lib" a script. I usually have to have the students "act" through this a couple of times because they like switching characters.

### **Reef Story Play**

Your students will, most likely, want to do this play a few times. Up to 14 characters can be assigned, according to the class size, so everyone in the class can have a turn. (14 are about the top limit that you will probably be able to control in this setting) If 14 are too much you can take the Full Moon/Spawning character and delete some of the other characters; the Sea Fan, Moray Eel, Butterflyfish & Parrotfish. As you assign reef characters, tell each student their reef name and introduce the character to the class (tell a little about each character). Then have the assigned characters stand to the side of the classroom, offstage. The classroom floor will be the stage, or seabed. The students will, under your direction, act out their characters. You will narrate the play.

### **Characters**

Polyp/Small Coral

Branching Coral

Massive Coral

Sea Fan

Sponge

Parrotfish

Butterflyfish

Sea Turtle

Cleaning Goby

Crab

Moray Eel

Shark

Storm

Full Moon/Spawning

### **Scene 1**

"A coral can grow from a single polyp..."

Enter Polyp/Small Coral, with Polyp side showing.

"This polyp has found a nice space on the sea floor to start growing, soon it will grow into a small coral"

Turn Polyp/Small Coral so that Small Coral side is showing.

“With time the it can grow and become a small reef...”

Enter Branching coral, & Massive coral, which line up next to the Small coral. The Branching Coral has his/her arms outstretched and the Massive Coral has his/her hands on their hips.

“The structure of our reef city is not just made from stony corals...”

Enter Sea Fan and Sponge, who take either end of the reef.

## Scene 2

“No proper reef is without fish and reef creatures...”

Enter Parrotfish, Butterflyfish, Sea Turtle, Cleaning Goby, Crab & Moray Eel.

These characters “swim” in front of the reef. Each Character can act out their role:

“The Parrotfish grazes for algae among the corals...”

“The Butterflyfish pecks the corals trying to eat polyps...”

“The Sea Turtle feeds on a sponge and sleeps under a branching coral...”

“The crab scuttles along the sea floor in front of the reef searching for food...”

(See below, scene 3)

“The Moray Eel slithers through the corals hunting prey...”

“The Cleaning Goby pays a visit to the other reef fish and “cleans” them..”

## Scene 3

“The reef is a home for the fish and can protect them when danger appears...”

Enter Shark, all reef fish, but one (You decide, the student not paying attention or annoying you) swim behind reef.

“The corals protect the fish from the hungry shark...”

Shark swims in front of shark, any reef fish not hiding behind reef are “eaten”, prop is put on sea floor where Crab can find it.

“The shark is no longer hungry and swims away...”

Exit Shark to offstage.

## Scene 4

“The reef can also protect the fish when a storm appears...”

Enter Storm, Reef Fish swim behind corals.

“The storm can make waves that batter the reef...”

Corals, Sea Fan, & Sponge shake and wave back and forth.

“But all returns to normal when the storm passes...”

Exit Storm, Reef Fish swim out from behind Corals.

### Scene 5

“One night a year, when there is a full moon, the corals Spawn and reproduce...”

Enter Full Moon, held above reef, it turns into Spawning, and travels next to reef, i.e.: empty floor space (You may want to act this character yourself).

“Tiny free swimming corals settle on the ocean floor and become polyps...”

Small Coral turns into Polyp and moves out to where Spawning settled.

“The reef story can start all over again...”

The End