

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

Ms. Randall Marine Science

Why Are the Oceans Important?

The oceans are more important than you may think. Without the oceans, there would probably be no life on Earth. The ocean and atmosphere work together to support all living things.

Living things must breathe oxygen. This oxygen comes from green plants. Green plants that grow on land supply some oxygen to the air but only a small amount. Most of the oxygen in the air-about 90%-comes from microscopic sea plants and algae called **phytoplankton** (fite-uh-PLANK-tun). Phytoplankton floats near the surface of the ocean. Phytoplankton also supplies oxygen to ocean water. Sea animals, as well as sea plants, use this oxygen.

There is another way in which the oceans and the atmosphere work together. Water evaporates from the oceans to form clouds. The clouds move over land. The moisture leaves the clouds in the form of rain or snow. Then, the plants and animals get the water they need. And, in some places, people depend upon ocean water to drink. But first, salts and other minerals in the water are removed at big plants.

The oceans are important in other ways too.

The oceans give us food. Fish and shellfish are two important foods we get from the seas. Millions of people in Asia and the Pacific islands also eat seaweed. Seaweed is one kind of algae.

The oceans give us oil and gas. Large deposits of oil have been found in the ground along the continental shelf. And usually, where there is oil, there is also natural gas.

The oceans give us minerals. Ocean water contains every known mineral. The most common one is, of course, common table salt. This is also called sodium chloride. It is taken from the ocean to be used in many ways. Other minerals that are taken from the sea are manganese and bromine. Still other minerals dissolved in the ocean are not used. It costs too much to take them out. But scientists are looking for ways to make mining the ocean floor less costly

True/False-How much do you know?

___1. Killer Whales often play with their food before eating it.

___2. A whale shark eats whales.

___3. A barnacle has a penis that extends to three times its body length.

___4. Dolphins and porpoises are the same animal.

___5. A fire coral is named for its fire engine red color.

___6. Sea cucumbers such as the “donkey dung” and “green snot” cucumbers are actually a delicacy.

___7. A hermit crab will “mug” a snail to take its shell for protection.

___8. The man of war jellyfish is the most poisonous jellyfish known to man.

___9. There really are giant squids.