Another Peter Pan
by Claudette J. Young

Floating around our oceans is a small menace that can return itself to its infancy. Turritopsis nutricula (Turri-top-sis nu-trick-u-la) is a hydrozoan jellyfish and the only known jellyfish that can deliberately go back to its polyp stage repeatedly. This ability also makes it a potential menace worldwide.

Turritopsis nutricula begins life as a polyp (a tiny seed of life) that attaches itself to a piece of coral or rock. It grows there until it reaches maturity when it grows delicate but deadly tentacles.

These clear-bodied examples of floating poison are the only known immortal animal on the planet. During adulthood an unknown event triggers a regeneration response in the jellyfish. Unlike other animals, like salamanders that regenerate a specific part of their bodies, Turritopsis nutricula returns itself to its polyp stage of development, reattaches to a piece of coral, etc. and starts life again. Generations of their offspring remain to grow, too. Unless killed by a predator, they keep living their lives over and over. Experts believe this repeat performance can happen indefinitely.

Researchers know that the mechanism for the rejuvenation process is genetic, but the ultimate trigger for that process still stumps the experts. The increasing numbers of the jellyfish species alarm the world’s fishing industry. Researchers and environmentalists are as alarmed as fishermen.

These jellies have few predators, which have dwindling numbers. The nerve-toxin carried in their tentacles works on most fish. These ordinary Caribbean jellyfish now live in ocean waters from the Artic to the Southern Ocean and also tolerate fresh water.

Experts and fishermen fear that the world’s oceans might become this jelly’s Never Never Land. A population explosion could reduce the ocean’s fish population to dangerously low numbers. Only time and research will provide the end to this tale.
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1. What is unusual about the turritopsis nutricula jellyfish?
   a. They are able to make lots of polyps.
   b. They are able to kill coral by attaching themselves to it.
   c. When they grow old, they are able to turn themselves back into baby polyps.
   d. They are impossible to kill.

2. Which sentence accurately describes the population of the turritopsis nutricula.
   a. It is shrinking quickly.
   b. It is confined to the waters of the Caribbean.
   c. It is shrinking in saltwater habitats, but expanding in freshwater habitats.
   d. It is growing rapidly and expanding into new areas.

3. Which statement accurately describes the turritopsis nutricula.
   a. The turritopsis nutricula becomes poisonous after it grows tentacles.
   b. The turritopsis nutricula is poisonous as a polyp and kills fish that eat it.
   c. The turritopsis nutricula have a neuro-toxin that works on all fish.
   d. The turritopsis nutricula is endangered because it is being poisoned by fish.

4. Why are fishermen concerned about the turritopsis nutricula jellyfish?

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_____________________________________________________________________________

5. Why did the author title this article, “Another Peter Pan”?

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
Another Peter Pan

Vocabulary

The words below are scrambled vocabulary words from the article. Unscramble each word and write it on the line. Look back in the article to be sure you spelled each word correctly.

1. **p u t**
   **m s s**
   **_________________________**
   **Clue:** confuses

2. **n n i c**
   **a y f**
   **_________________________**
   **Clue:** beginning stage of life; baby stage

3. **t a o**
   **_________________________**
   **Clue:** able to live forever

4. **n m c a**
   **_________________________**
   **Clue:** something that is troublesome or a threat

5. **i e d f n**
   **e t i n i**
   **_________________________**
   **Clue:** repeatedly or continuously, for an unknown amount of time

6. **g w n n i**
   **d d l i i**
   **_________________________**
   **Clue:** decreasing, shrinking, or dropping

7. **a m t i**
   **y r u t**
   **_________________________**
   **Clue:** stage of life when a living thing is no longer growing; adult stage
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2. Which sentence accurately describes the population of the turritopsis nutricula?
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   d. The turritopsis nutricula is endangered because it is being poisoned by fish.

4. Why are fishermen concerned about the turritopsis nutricula jellyfish?
   Its poison is killing many fish in the ocean.

5. Why did the author title this article, “Another Peter Pan”?
   Peter Pan is a fairy tale character who lives in Never, Never Land and never has to grow up. This jellyfish is similar because it can return to its infancy stage and “grow up” repeatedly throughout its life.
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1. put
   ms ss
   stumps
   Clue: confuses

2. n n i c
   a y f
   infancy
   Clue: beginning stage of life; baby stage

3. t c
   o
   Clue: a

4. n m c
   menace
   Clue: something that is troublesome or a threat

5. i e d f n
   e t i n i
   indefinite
   Clue: repeatedly or continuously, for an unknown amount of time

6. g w n n i
   d d l i i
   dwindling
   Clue: decreasing, shrinking, or dropping

7. a m t i
   y r u t
   maturity
   Clue: stage of life when a living thing is no longer growing; adult stage