

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Attack of the Killer Algae

by Sandie Lee

What's green, leafy, lives under water, can grow up to 2.8 meters in height, and is considered a killer? *Caulerpa taxifolia*, or more commonly known as *killer algae*.



## What makes it so dangerous?

It's hardy enough to grow in any conditions from cold to warm water, on rock, sand, mud, and from depths of 3-100 meters. This fast growing, invasive species of algae quickly spreads, smothering out all the other species of algae and sea grass. Plus, it's highly toxic to many species of fish and sea life.

## How Does It Spread?

Algae were first discovered in the 18th century when scientists began to develop in cell cultures. In 1987, a biologist named Cecilio Torres discovered a bacterium with thousands of them on a single pin head.

Over time some of these bacteria cells formed into what we know today as algae.

Algae can be found in many places. You may have seen algae growing on the sides of an aquarium or in someone's outdoor pond or even a swimming pool. Mostly this slimy, green substance is harmless. In fact, it even provides food for a variety of fish and sea creatures.

To look at killer algae you'd probably think it was pretty, but lurking beneath those pretty leaf-like fronds, lays the making of a disaster.

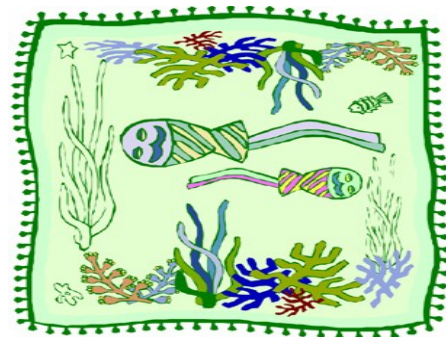


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It spread is by being carried and being transported kilometers from its original new area. The killer was first introduced into the Mediterranean Sea in 1987 and began to

spread and become a poisonous problem. It now covers 32,000 acres of the coast of France, Spain, Italy and Croatia. People here who depend on fishing for their livelihoods are in trouble as this killer algae takes over the sea floors.

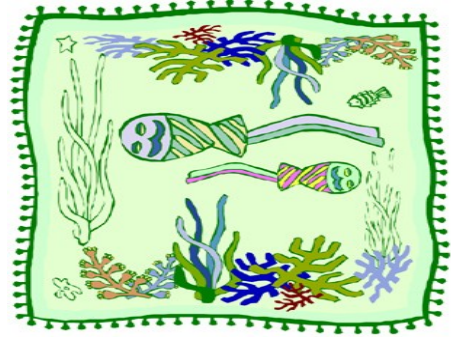


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1. Why is killer algae dangerous?
  - a. it smothers other species of algae
  - b. it smothers other species of sea grass
  - c. it is poisonous to fish and sea life
  - d. all of the above



2. Tell whether each statement is true or false.

\_\_\_\_\_ All algae is harmful to sea life.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



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\_\_\_\_\_ features.

3. What is one way that killer algae is spread?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Read the sentence below and define the underlined word. Use a dictionary if you need to.

It's hardy enough to grow in any conditions from cold to warm water, on rock, sand, mud, and from depths of 3-100 meters.

\_\_\_\_\_

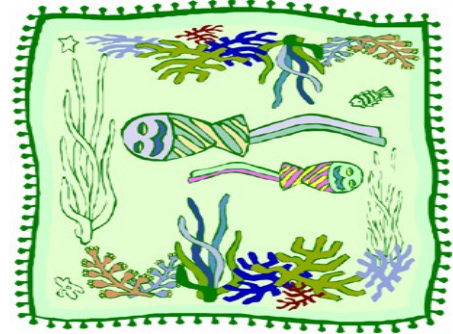
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## ANSWER KEY

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1. Why is killer algae dangerous? **d**
- a. it smothers other species of algae
  - b. it smothers other species of sea grass
  - c. it is poisonous to fish and sea life
  - d. **all of the above**



2. Tell whether each statement is true or false.

**false** All algae is harmful to sea life.

**true** Killer algae can grow over 2 meters in height

**false**

**true**



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3. What is one way that killer algae is spread?

**Killer algae is spread by attaching itself to sea anchors. It is dragged thousands of kilometers and released into a new area.**

4. Read the sentence below and define the underlined word. Use a dictionary if you need to.

It's hardy enough to grow in any conditions from cold to warm water, on rock, sand, mud, and from depths of 3-100 meters.

**Not very affected by hardship and difficult conditions; Adapted to survive in diverse conditions**