Source: Excerpted from **Science and Children's Literature** by Mary Cerullo, published by Heinemann, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Used with permission.

9. MEALTIME FOR CORALS

Concept: This activity illustrates the feeding activity of a coral colony. Individual polyps, though connected, feed independently.

Procedure:

Cut X's in several places in an old bedsheet to create holes large enough for children's hands to fit through. Give each child a surgical glove to represent one coral polyp. Discuss how much bigger their polyps are than a real coral polyp (usually about the size of an eraser on the end of a pencil). Explain that coral polyps live symbiotically with plants, single-celled algae called zooxanthellae. Students may choose to put dots of gold or green marker on their gloves to represent the zooxanthellae.

Have students crouch beneath the sheet that is suspended between chairs or desks. You can't fit the whole class under one bedsheet, so you may take turns or use several sheets to do the feeding activity. When they reach up through the holes in the sheet, feed them goldfish crackers or bits of sandwiches, which they will have to pull back through the sheet to eat.

EXTENSION: CORAL WARS

Concept: Corals recognize their own kind. They don't attack their own species even if it's a different colony.

Procedure:

If you use several sheets, each one may represent a different kind of coral. Explain to students that sometimes coral colonies of different species attack each other when they grow too close together, stinging each other with their nematocysts and leaving behind white, scarred dead coral on the other colony.

If neighboring "colonies" abut each other, they may attack each other. However, you need to set strict rules of engagement, such as, only a light tap on your neighbor is permitted, so these coral colonies aren't damaged!

Tell students that different colonies of the *same* species, although they may look different depending on factors such as the amount of sunlight each receives, don't attack each other. Therefore, they need to determine if the neighboring colony is the same species they are.

Since all humans are the same species, why can't they get along??

Correlation to National Standards from McREL (http://www.mcrel.org):

Life Sciences

6. Understands relationships among organisms and their physical environment