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THE PLIGHT OF THE MANATEE

A Victim of Coastal Development



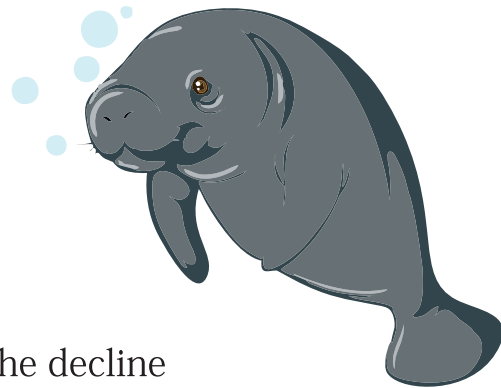
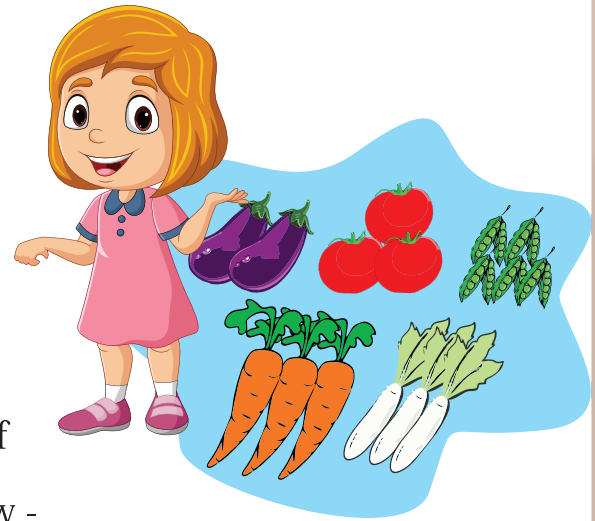
The Plight of the Manatee

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Tara enjoyed helping her mom put away the groceries. As she sorted through the colorful vegetables - purple eggplants, red tomatoes, orange carrots, white radishes, and green peas - she set aside a few to feed the stray cows outside. Seeing the gentle cows reminded Tara of another gentle creature - the manatee, or sea cow - and she dreamed of visiting Florida's coast to observe these majestic marine animals. However, Tara soon learned that manatees were facing a severe threat - the loss of their primary food source, seagrass.

As Tara delved deeper into the cause behind the decline of seagrass, she discovered that algal blooms, caused by the dumping of sewage and agricultural fertilizers into coastal waters, prevented essential sunlight from reaching the seagrass.

Hi!
I am Tara



In addition, severe weather patterns resulting from global warming were wiping out entire seagrass meadows.

Tara was amazed to learn that seagrass meadows not only served as the main food source for manatees and other sea creatures but also stored 10% of the oceans' carbon. She realized that everything in the ecosystem played a crucial role.



Tara concluded that the only way to protect the manatees' food source was to prevent algal blooms by preventing pollutants from reaching the coastal waters. Fortunately, she found hope in a report that mentioned Project Seagrass, an organization working to address this issue, and the efforts of local authorities in Chesapeake Bay, the largest estuary in the US, to restore seagrass meadows.

Despite the challenges faced by manatees and their habitat, Tara felt empowered to make a difference by taking small actions to protect the environment. Tara felt a sense of relief. Now she could continue dreaming...



New Words

1. **Sea grass-** marine plants that grow in shallow waters, providing habitat and food for many aquatic species.
2. **Photosynthesis-** process by which green plants and some other organisms use sunlight to synthesize foods with the help of chlorophyll.
3. **Ecosystem-** community of living organisms in conjunction with the nonliving components of their environment.

Find other new and interesting words for each other, and write their meanings in your notebooks.

Comprehension

1. What is the manatee's habitat?
2. How much can a manatee weigh?
3. What was perplexing Tara?
4. Why is sunlight essential for the seagrasses?
5. The sediments from agricultural fertilizers and sewage cause algal bloom. True/False?
6. No effort is being made to protect the seagrass meadows. True/False?

Take turns to make more questions like these above for each other and answer them.

Prompts

1. Name a few animals that eat grass on land.
2. Draw and color a picture of a manatee and its habitat, including seagrass, rocks, and other marine creatures.
3. **Manatee and Seagrass Research:** Research the manatees, their unique habitat in Florida, and their dependence on seagrass meadows. Investigate the threats they face, such as habitat destruction, algal blooms, and climate change.

Prepare a presentation to share with your class, highlighting the importance of manatees, their role in the ecosystem, and the challenges they face. Discuss potential solutions or conservation efforts that can help protect manatees and their habitats.

Watch the video on the Manatee using the QR code.



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