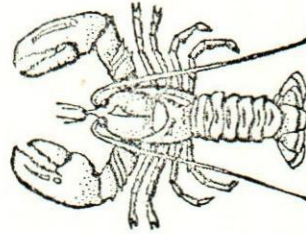


## A VISIT TO GREAT BAY

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### VOCABULARY

- MARSH
- POLLUTION
- BAY
- RUN-OFF

### OBJECTIVES

- To be able to describe how humans impact the estuary.

### MATERIALS

Story - A Visit To Great Bay

### PROCEDURE:

Read a visit to Great Bay aloud to the class. Have pairs of students make a list of ways humans impact the bay.

Each team should write a response to the story describing how humans can take action to protect the health of the bay.

Consider sending copies of these letters to local newspapers and politicians.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Is it possible for humans to live in harmony with the marsh?
- How are baby animals affected by the marsh?
- How does trash and plastic harm plants and animals that live in the marsh?

### SPIN-OFFS

1. Invite a coastal scientist, policy-maker, fisherman or environmentalist to speak with your class about coastal development issues. Encourage students to consider all sides of the issue.
2. Collect clippings about coastal issues from the newspaper and display on a bulletin board. How are the issues similar and how do they differ?

Activity adapted from Sound Ideas: Elementary Project Estuary by Gail Jones, PhD.  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

## A VISIT TO THE BAY

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I had the chance to visit my uncle last month at his home along the edge of the bay. Uncle Ed is getting old, but his eyes still sparkle with life. After I arrived at his home late in the afternoon, we walked down to the edge of the bay along the salt marsh. As we talked Ed's tone of voice became increasingly sad and a quiet settled around us.

All along the bay I saw housing developments and there were three large marinas filled with sailboats. The waves lapped up around the salt marsh grass just as always, but I could tell things had changed a lot since I was a child. There was trash lining the bay-a lot of plastic bottles and bags. The green crabs that used to dance around the edge of the marsh were gone.

Uncle Ed said he had retired this year. He just couldn't make a living as a fisherman anymore. The catches had dropped every year until it wasn't worth taking the boat out. I asked uncle Ed why there weren't many fish. He admitted that he wasn't sure if it was because there were too many people trying to earn a living fishing in the area or if the bay had become so polluted the fish couldn't survive.

I asked Uncle Ed if you could still walk out at low tide and find clams in the mud with an old rake. He told me the clam and oyster beds were closed. The government had put up signs to warn people not to eat shellfish. Apparently sewage from the marinas, housing developments and the towns upstream was seeping into the bay and was poisoning the shellfish. According to Uncle Ed, they had promised to clean up the water for the last three years, but it seemed to be getting worse. Unless things changed a lot, there was no hope of eating the few clams or oysters that still managed to survive in the bay.

One of my favorite childhood memories was of an early sunrise walk along the edge of the salt marsh seeing hundreds of horseshoe crabs digging holes in the mud to lay their eggs in the spring. Uncle Ed said he rarely saw a lot of horseshoe crabs anymore. He told me that he talked to a biologist from the estuary research laboratory who said that the polluted run-off from the land around the bay smothered the nests killing the horseshoe crab eggs.

As we stood there looking out over the bay, the silence was shattered by the sound of a jetskier who zipped by us, chewing up the small eel grass bed in front of us. I remembered the many fish that came into the bay each spring to lay their eggs around the eel grass. Now the eel grass beds were being destroyed by uncaring boaters. Without the eel grass beds, there will be even fewer fish in the future.



I became upset while standing there talking with Uncle Ed. I love the beautiful salt marshes and would someday like to bring my own children to the edge of the bay to fish, gather clams, and to watch the thousands of ducks and geese that stop along the marsh to feed. What could I do to help save the salt marsh?

