1. What is a coral reef?

Requirements: a section of banana; sour candy straws; sugar sprinkles (same colour as sour candy straws); jam; a round cracker or biscuit; some crinkly crackers or crisps; a paper plate; a straw and toothpick (or similar) to make holes
Exploration team: individually or in pairs
Curriculum: Science; Art and Design
Time: 20 minutes

You are going to make an edible coral reef. Make a hole (*the mouth*) in the top half of the banana section with a straw. The bottom half has no hole (*the gut*). Make six holes with a toothpick around the mouth. Push 6 candy straws (*the tentacles*) into the holes around the mouth. Add sprinkles (*zooxanthellae* - microscopic marine algae that live inside the tissue of sea animals like corals) to the banana. Stick the banana on to a round cracker or biscuit (*the substrate* - the surface the coral polyp lives on) with jam. Add crinkly crackers or crisps around the base (*the calcium carbonate skeleton*).

Look at your coral. Answer this question: *Is a coral a plant or an animal? Why?*

Think about what you have already learnt about corals and read the table below. Then ask the question again: *Do you think a coral is a plant or an animal? Have you changed your mind?*

Plants	**Animals**
Use the sun's energy to make food	Cannot produce their own food from the sun and must eat other organisms to get food and energy
Have roots, stems and leaves	Do not have roots, stems and leaves
Do not move from one place to another	Can move to catch food
Have chlorophyll in their cells to capture light energy	Do not have chlorophyll in their cells
Their cells have walls	Their cells do not have walls and are more flexible and variable in shape

A coral is an animal. It eats other organisms by capturing them with its tentacles. It does not have plant parts. It cannot make food from the sun's energy without the help of zooxanthellae.