

Active Reading

Section 3: The Diversity of Living Things

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

A **fungus** (plural, *fungi*) is an organism whose cells have nuclei and cell walls. A mushroom is the reproductive structure of a fungus. The rest of the fungus is an underground network of fibers. These fibers absorb food from decaying organisms in the soil.

Fungi get their food by releasing chemicals that help break down organic matter, and then absorbing the nutrients. The bodies of most fungi are a huge network of threads that grow through the soil, dead wood, or other material on which the fungi are feeding. Like bacteria, fungi play an important role in the environment by breaking down the bodies and body parts of dead organisms.

Some fungi cause diseases, such as athlete's foot. Other fungi add flavor to food. The fungus in blue cheese gives the cheese its strong flavor. And fungi called *yeasts* produce the gas that makes bread rise.

IDENTIFYING MAIN IDEAS

One reading skill is the ability to identify the main idea of a passage. The main idea is the main focus or key idea. Frequently, a main idea is accompanied by supporting information that offers detailed facts about main ideas.

In the space provided, write the letter of the term or phrase that best completes each statement or best answers each question.

- _____ 1. A fungus is an organism whose cells have
a. nuclei. c. chlorophyll.
b. cell walls. d. both (a) and (b).
- _____ 2. The reproductive structure of a fungus is (a)
a. network of fibers. c. mushroom.
b. fungi. d. chlorophyll.
- _____ 3. A fungus gets food from
a. chlorophyll. c. yeast.
b. its surroundings. d. None of the above

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- _____ 4. Most of a fungus's body is its
a. mushroom. c. exoskeleton.
b. miniature skeleton. d. underground network of fibers.
- _____ 5. A fungus's cells have
a. nuclei and cell walls. c. nuclei and chlorophyll.
b. cell walls and chlorophyll. d. None of the above

RECOGNIZING SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

One reading skill is the ability to recognize similarities and differences between two phrases, ideas, or things. This is sometimes known as comparing and contrasting.

Read the question and write the answer in the space provided.

6. Name two ways in which fungi are similar to bacteria.

RECOGNIZING CAUSE AND EFFECT

One reading skill is the ability to recognize cause and effect.

Read each question and write the answer in the space provided.

7. What important role do fungi play in the environment?

8. Name one undesirable disease that fungi are responsible for?

9. What beneficial effect do fungi have on blue cheese?

10. What effect do yeasts have on bread?
