Name: _____ Date: _____

Mushrooms and the Hidden Web

Circle group

A mushroom looks like a small plant, but it is not a plant. It is a fungus. Fungi are not plants and not animals. A fungus cannot make food from sunlight. It must get food from other things.

The mushroom you see is just a small part of the fungus. Most of it is hidden in the soil or in a rotting log. There it is a web of thin white threads called mycelium. The threads take in food from the soil or the log.

When the time is right, the web grows a mushroom. The mushroom makes spores. Spores are tiny specks, a little like seeds. Many mushrooms have thin folds called gills under the cap. The spores fall from the gills. The wind carries them away. Some land in a good spot and grow a new web.

Fungi help forests. Many of them break down dead leaves and wood. This puts nutrients back into the soil. Other fungi touch tree roots and help the trees get water. Never eat a wild mushroom. Some are poisonous.

Questions

1. Why are mushrooms not plants?

_____

_____

2. What is mycelium?

_____

_____

3. What do mushrooms make so new fungi can grow?

_____

_____

4. How do fungi help a forest?

_____

_____

5. Why is the mushroom only a small part of the fungus?

_____

_____

6. Why should you never eat a wild mushroom?

_____

_____

Words to know

fungi: living things such as mushrooms and molds that are not plants or animals
mycelium: the hidden web of threads that makes up most of a fungus
spores: tiny specks that fungi use to spread and start new growth
nutrients: substances that living things need to grow and stay healthy
poisonous: able to make a person or animal sick if eaten

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Mushrooms and the Hidden Web

Triangle group

A mushroom may look like a small plant, but it is not one. Mushrooms belong to a group called fungi. Fungi are neither plants nor animals. They cannot make food from sunlight the way green plants do, so they must get food from other things.

The part you see above ground is only a small piece of the fungus. Most of it is hidden in the soil or inside a rotting log. There it grows as a web of thin white threads called mycelium. The threads spread through the material and take in the food around them.

When the time is right, the web pushes up a mushroom. Its job is to make spores, which are tiny specks that work a bit like seeds. Many mushrooms have thin folds called gills under the cap, and the spores drop from them. Wind carries the spores away, and some may land in a good spot and start a new web.

Fungi are important to forests. Many of them break down dead leaves and wood, which returns nutrients to the soil. Other fungi attach to tree roots and help the trees take in water and minerals. Never eat a wild mushroom, because some are poisonous and only an expert can tell them apart.

Questions

1. Why are mushrooms not plants?

_____

_____

2. What is mycelium?

_____

_____

3. What do mushrooms make so that new fungi can grow?

_____

_____

4. How do fungi help a forest?

_____

_____

5. Why does the writer say the mushroom is only a small piece of the fungus?

_____

_____

6. Why should you never eat a wild mushroom?

_____

_____

Words to know

fungi: living things such as mushrooms and molds that are not plants or animals
mycelium: the hidden web of threads that makes up most of a fungus
spores: tiny specks that fungi use to spread and start new growth
nutrients: substances that living things need to grow and stay healthy
poisonous: able to make a person or animal sick if eaten

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Mushrooms and the Hidden Web

Square group

At first glance a mushroom resembles a small plant, but it is not one. Mushrooms belong to a separate kingdom of living things called fungi, which are neither plants nor animals. Because fungi cannot manufacture food from sunlight the way green plants do, they must absorb nourishment from other materials.

The portion you see above ground is only a tiny fraction of the organism. Most of the fungus remains concealed in the soil or inside a decaying log, where it grows as a sprawling web of thin white threads called mycelium. These threads spread through the material and take in whatever food they find there.

When conditions are right, the web pushes up a mushroom, whose purpose is to produce spores, the microscopic specks that work somewhat like seeds. Many mushrooms have thin folds called gills beneath the cap, and the spores drift down from them. Wind scatters the spores far and wide, and the few that settle in a favorable spot may begin a brand new web.

Fungi are essential to forests. Many of them break down dead leaves and wood, returning nutrients to the soil, while others attach to tree roots and help the trees absorb water and minerals. Nobody should ever eat a wild mushroom, because several kinds are poisonous and only an expert can reliably tell them apart.

Questions

1. Why are mushrooms not classified as plants?

_____

_____

2. What is mycelium?

_____

_____

3. What do mushrooms produce so that new fungi can start?

_____

_____

4. In what ways do fungi benefit a forest?

_____

_____

5. Why does the writer call the mushroom only a tiny fraction of the organism?

_____

_____

6. Why should nobody eat a wild mushroom?

_____

_____

Words to know

fungi: living things such as mushrooms and molds that are not plants or animals
mycelium: the hidden web of threads that makes up most of a fungus
spores: tiny specks that fungi use to spread and start new growth
nutrients: substances that living things need to grow and stay healthy
poisonous: able to make a person or animal sick if eaten

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: Mushrooms and the Hidden Web

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: Mushrooms and the Hidden Web

Easier · 177 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 1.8

1. They are fungi, and they cannot make food from sunlight.
2. A web of thin white threads hidden in soil or logs.
3. Spores.
4. They break down dead leaves and wood, and some help tree roots get water.
5. Most of the fungus is the web of threads hidden under the ground or in the log.
6. Some are poisonous, and it is hard to tell which ones.

Triangle: Mushrooms and the Hidden Web

This passage · 210 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 4.3

1. They are fungi, and they cannot make food from sunlight.
2. A web of thin white threads that grows hidden in soil or logs.
3. Spores.
4. They break down dead leaves and wood, and some help tree roots take in water and minerals.
5. Most of the fungus is the hidden web of threads under the ground or inside the log.
6. Some are poisonous, and it is hard to tell which ones without being an expert.

Square: Mushrooms and the Hidden Web

Harder · 222 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 8.7

1. They are fungi, which cannot make food from sunlight.
2. A sprawling web of thin white threads hidden in soil or a decaying log.
3. Spores, which are microscopic specks like seeds.
4. They break down dead leaves and wood, and some help tree roots absorb water and minerals.
5. Most of the fungus is the hidden web of threads under the ground or inside the log.
6. Several kinds are poisonous, and only an expert can reliably tell them apart.