Name: Date: Score: / 6

Ecosystems and Food Webs: Comprehension

Nonfiction: Science · about 250 words

Read the passage. Then answer each question. Circle the best answer or write your answer on the lines.

Ecosystems and Food Webs

An ecosystem is a community of living things interacting with each other and with their environment, including water, soil, sunlight, and air. A pond, a forest, a desert, and even a rotting log can each be an ecosystem.

Every ecosystem depends on energy, and almost all of that energy comes from the sun. Plants, algae, and some bacteria are producers. They use sunlight to make their own food through photosynthesis. Animals cannot make their own food, so they are consumers. Herbivores, such as rabbits and grasshoppers, eat producers. Carnivores, like hawks and wolves, eat other animals. Omnivores, such as bears and raccoons, eat both plants and animals.

When living things die, decomposers go to work. Fungi, bacteria, and worms break down dead plants and animals. This returns nutrients to the soil, where producers can use them again.

A food chain shows one path of energy, such as grass to grasshopper to frog to snake to hawk. But in nature, most animals eat more than one kind of food. A food web shows many connected food chains, like a spider's web of who eats whom.

Because everything in a food web is connected, a change to one living thing can affect many others. For example, in Yellowstone National Park, wolves were brought back in 1995 after being gone for decades. The wolves hunted elk, which had been overeating young willow trees along rivers. As the willows grew back, beavers returned and built dams, creating new homes for fish and birds.

1. **Main idea:** What is this passage mostly about?

   A. how living things in an ecosystem are connected B. the history of Yellowstone C. why wolves howl D. how to grow a garden

2. **Detail:** What are producers?

   A. living things that make their own food using sunlight B. things that break down dead matter C. animals that eat other animals D. people who sell food

3. **Detail:** Which animal is an omnivore?

   A. a rabbit B. a hawk C. a grasshopper D. a raccoon

4. **Vocabulary:** Decomposers are living things that...

   A. make food from sunlight B. only eat plants C. hunt other animals D. break down dead plants and animals

5. **Detail:** How is a food web different from a food chain?

   A. They are the same. B. A food web shows many connected food chains. C. A food chain is bigger. D. A food web has only plants.

6. **Inference:** Explain how bringing wolves back to Yellowstone helped beavers.

ANSWER KEY

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Nonfiction: Science · about 250 words

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When living things die, decomposers go to work. Fungi, bacteria, and worms break down dead plants and animals. This returns nutrients to the soil, where producers can use them again.

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6. **Inference:** Explain how bringing wolves back to Yellowstone helped beavers.
   Wolves hunted elk, so the elk ate fewer willows; the willows grew back, and beavers used them and returned.