Name _____ period _____

Write one important fact from each paragraph in this space.

Science Shorts -7

Food Chains

What is a food chain? A food chain explains how living things eat other living things in order to stay alive. All living things are linked to each other. They need other living things to survive. A food chain is like a ladder. Imagine you are standing in the middle of a ladder. You would eat the animals or plants that are below you on the ladder. The animals above you on the ladder would eat you!

The sun is needed in a food chain. It gives plants the energy to make food so they can grow. Then the animals that eat plants can get their energy to grow. There would not be a food chain at all without sunlight.

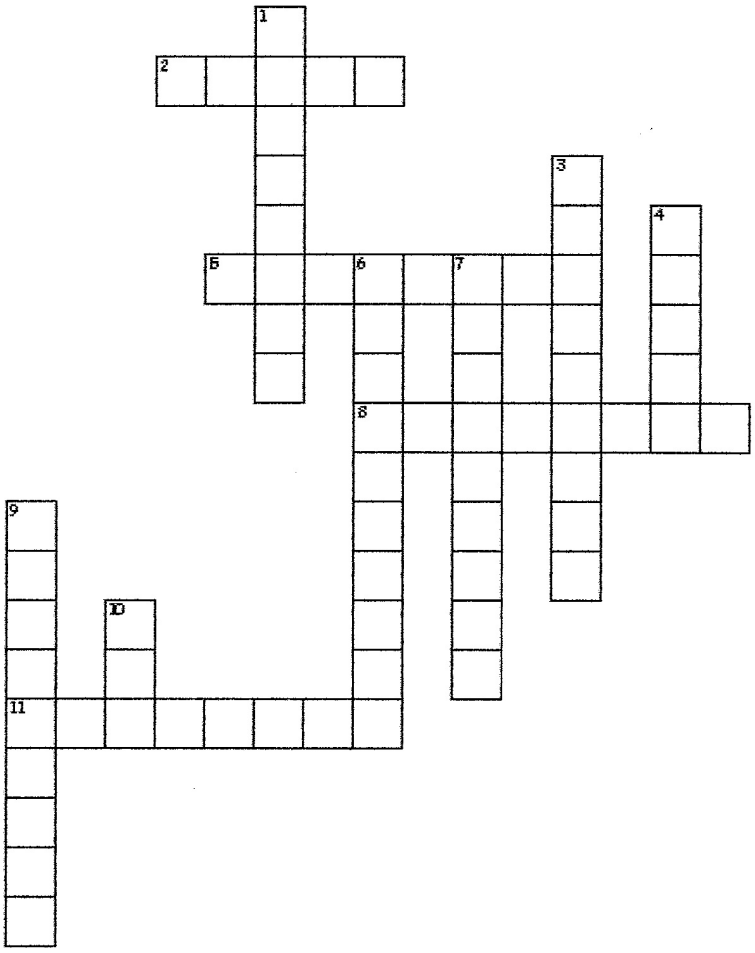
All food chains begin with a link called a producer. Producers make food from nonliving things. A green plant is an example of a producer. Have you ever watered a plant? If so, you have helped a plant make its own food! The plant takes in water and uses the sun's energy to combine it with carbon dioxide. This is how the plant makes its own food through the process of photosynthesis. This gives the plant nourishment. It is just like when you eat a healthy meal.

The next link in a food chain is called a consumer. A consumer is any living thing that needs a producer for food. There are many types of consumers. One type is called a herbivore. This is an animal that only eats plants. A plant gets nutrients from the food it makes. Then, an animal gets nourishment by eating the plant. The second type of consumer is called a carnivore. Animals that eat other animals are called carnivores. The third type of consumer is called an omnivore. Animals and people who eat both plants and animals are called omnivores.

The last link in a food chain is called a decomposer. Decomposers, like bacteria and fungi, are living things that eat dead plants and animals or help them decay. Decomposers are natural garbage collectors. They help to keep the earth clean and healthy. Can you imagine what the earth would look like if each plant and animal that died just laid on the ground forever? It would be very crowed and stinky world! You can see that even though most decomposers are small, they do a very big job.

Let's look at a food chain in action in the sea. At the bottom of the food chain, there are plants and plankton. Fish and animals like shrimp need to eat this plankton to live. Then, larger fish like tuna eat them. If the plankton disappeared, the shrimp would die because they did not have any food. Then the small fish would start to die and then the larger fish would eventually die. We need each part of the food chain to keep the balance of life the same.

Food Chains



Across
2. Type of producer
5. Where all food chains begin
8. Type of animal that eats plants and animals
11. Any living thing that needs a producer for food

Down
1. Type of decomposer
3. Type of animal that only eats plants
4. Something a plant needs to make food
6. Causes dead plants and animals to decay
7. Type of animal that only eats other animals
9. Explains how living things eat other living things to stay alive
10. Gives plants the energy to make food