



Mushrooms Are Our Cousins!

Reading Worksheet — Level C | tahricteaches.com

What is the closest relative of a mushroom — a plant or an animal? Most people say "a plant," because mushrooms grow in the ground like plants do. But scientists have a surprise for you: mushrooms are actually more closely related to *you* than they are to any plant!

Scientists can compare living things by looking at their **DNA**. DNA is like a recipe book inside every living thing. It tells cells how to grow and what to be. If two living things share more of the same DNA, they are more closely related to each other.

When scientists compared human DNA, mushroom DNA, and plant DNA, they found something amazing. Humans and mushrooms share more DNA together than mushrooms and plants do! Mushrooms belong to a group called **fungi** (say: fun-guy). Fungi and animals — including humans — split apart from each other much more recently than fungi and plants did.

Here is another surprise. Humans share about **29%** of their DNA with bananas! That might sound strange, but it shows that all living things on Earth are connected. We all started from the same tiny creatures billions of years ago. Scientist Neil deGrasse Tyson loves sharing these facts to help people feel how amazing life on Earth really is.



A. Vocabulary Matching

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|--------------|--|
| 1. DNA | a. a group of living things that includes mushrooms, mold, and yeast |
| 2. fungi | b. the slow change of living things over many generations |
| 3. related | c. connected through shared history or common ancestors |
| 4. ancestors | d. the molecule inside cells that carries instructions for living things |
| 5. evolution | e. family members from long ago who you are descended from |



B. True or False

1. T F Mushrooms are a type of plant.
2. T F DNA tells cells how to grow and what to be.
3. T F Fungi are more closely related to animals than to plants.
4. T F Humans share DNA with bananas.
5. T F All living things on Earth are completely different from each other.
6. T F Scientists can use DNA to compare living things.
7. T F Humans share 100% of their DNA with bananas.
8. T F Neil deGrasse Tyson likes to share amazing science facts.



C. Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: DNA fungi related ancestors banana

1. Mushrooms belong to a group of living things called _____.

2. Scientists compare living things by looking at their _____.

3. All living things are _____ to each other through evolution.

4. Humans share about 29% of their DNA with _____.

5. People from your family who lived long ago are called _____.

D. Comprehension Questions

1. Why do scientists say mushrooms are more closely related to humans than to plants?

2. What is DNA?

3. What does the fact that humans share DNA with bananas tell us?

E. Discussion Questions

1. Were you surprised to learn that mushrooms are closer to humans than to plants? What other animals or plants do you think might be distantly related to us?

2. Why do you think it is helpful for scientists to study DNA?



Answer Key

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A. Vocabulary

1-d, 2-a, 3-c, 4-e, 5-b

B. True or False

1-F, 2-T, 3-T, 4-T, 5-F, 6-T, 7-F, 8-T

C. Fill in the Blanks

1-fungi, 2-DNA, 3-related, 4-banana, 5-ancestors

D. Comprehension Questions

1. Because humans and mushrooms share more DNA than mushrooms and plants do — they split from a common ancestor more recently.
2. DNA is the molecule inside cells that carries instructions for how living things grow and function.
3. It shows that all life on Earth is connected and shares common ancestors — we all began from the same tiny organisms billions of years ago.