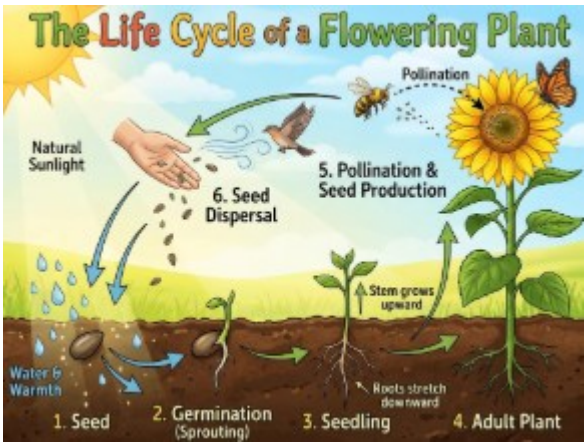
Name:_____

Life Cycles: How Plants and Animals Grow

Patterns in How Living Things Grow

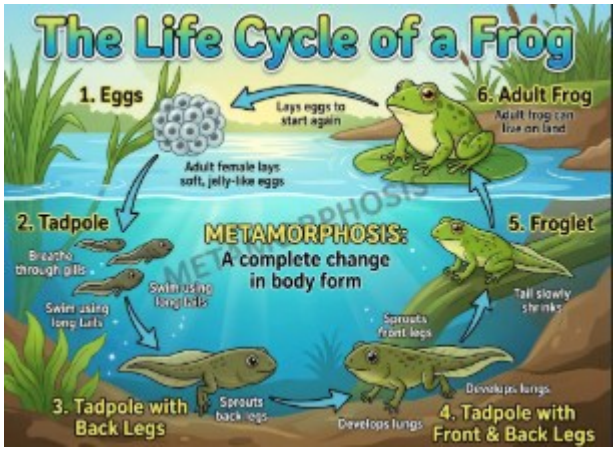
Every living creature on Earth goes through a series of changes during its life. These changes are called a life cycle. Although living things can look very different from one another, their life cycles follow a similar pattern. Most organisms begin life, grow into adults, reproduce to create new offspring, and eventually die. This pattern repeats generation after generation, allowing life on Earth to continue.

The Life Cycle of a Flowering Plant



Plants have a unique life cycle that starts underground. A flowering plant, such as a sunflower, begins its life as a tiny seed. When the seed receives water, warmth, and air from the soil, it sprouts, or germinates. A small stem grows upward toward the sunlight while roots stretch downward into the dirt to gather nutrients. As the sprout grows bigger, it becomes a seedling with green leaves. Over time, the seedling matures into an adult plant. The adult sunflower produces bright flowers. Inside the flowers, pollination takes place, which forms new seeds. When these seeds fall to the ground or are carried away by wind and animals, the plant life cycle starts all over again.

The Life Cycle of a Frog



Animals also go through patterned stages of growth, but many animals change shape as they grow. An amphibian, like a frog, undergoes a process called metamorphosis, which means a complete change in body form. A frog's life cycle begins when an adult female lays soft, jelly-like eggs in water. Soon, tiny tadpoles hatch from the eggs. Tadpoles live entirely in water, breathe through gills, and swim using long tails. As the tadpole grows, it undergoes dramatic changes: it sprouts back legs, then front legs, and develops lungs to breathe air. Its tail slowly shrinks until it becomes a young froglet and finally an adult frog. The adult frog can leave the water to live on land, where it will eventually lay eggs to start the cycle again.

© www.theteachersguide.com

Name:_____

Comparing Plant and Animal Life Cycles

When you compare a sunflower and a frog, their growth stages look very different. Sunflowers grow from seeds in soil, while frogs hatch from eggs in water. A plant stays in one place and makes its own food using sunlight, whereas a frog swims, hops, and hunts for insects.

Despite these differences, both life cycles share important pattern similarities. Both organisms start as a small beginning stage (seed or egg). Both pass through a middle growth stage (seedling or tadpole) before becoming fully formed adults. Finally, both adult plants and adult animals reproduce to create new living things of the same kind. Observing these stages helps scientists understand how life cycles form a predictable pattern across nature.

1. What is the main idea of the section "Patterns in How Living Things Grow"?

A. Sunflowers need sunlight and water to grow into adult plants.

B. All living things go through a repeating pattern of stages in their life cycles.

C. Frogs lay their eggs in water so that tadpoles can swim.

D. Animals change their body shapes more than plants do.

2. Which **two** details from the section "The Life Cycle of a Flowering Plant" best support the main idea that a seedling grows into a mature plant that produces new life?

A. "Plants have a unique life cycle that starts underground."

B. "Over time, the seedling matures into an adult plant."

C. "When the seed receives water, warmth, and air from the soil, it sprouts..."

D. "Inside the flowers, pollination takes place, which forms new seeds."

E. "A small stem grows upward toward the sunlight..."

© www.theteachersguide.com