

Name: _____

Date: _____

Life Science

Period: _____

Section 2.4: *Fungi*

What is mold, anyway?

That fuzzy stuff growing on the bread is mold. There are thousands of different kinds of molds. The mold that grows on bread looks like white fuzz at first. If you watch the mold for a few more days, it will turn black.

Mold is part of a larger family called fungus. Mushrooms are one kind of fungus; yeasts are another, and so is mold.

Unlike plants, molds don't grow from seeds. They grow from tiny spores that float around in the air. When some of these spores fall onto a piece of damp food, they grow into mold. The tiny black dots that appear on bread after a while are the bread mold's spores. These spores will be released into the air so that more mold can grow.

Green plants are green because they contain a chemical compound called chlorophyll. Chlorophyll makes it possible for green plants to use sunlight, air and water to make food (sugars and starches).

Unlike green plants, molds have no chlorophyll and can't make their own food. The mold can't turn sun, air and water into food so it eats the bread! The mold feeds itself by producing chemicals that make the bread start to rot. As the bread rots, the mold grows.

Nature recycles! That's right, nature is one of the best recyclers around and mold is one of nature's helpers. Although it isn't much fun when our food gets moldy, it's a great help in nature. In a natural environment, rotting things return to the soil, providing nutrients for other plants. Mold is an important part of the circle of life.

After reading:

1. Name three groups of fungi: _____
2. How are molds different from plants?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
3. How does mold wind up on your bread? _____

4. How does mold play an important role in nature? _____
