



Food Chains

Now you know something about squirrels and oak trees. Each has something to offer the other. The tree may produce thousands of acorns each year, but only a few will actually sprout and become **saplings**. Of those **saplings**, only a couple will survive and grow into **mighty** oaks, spreading their roots and changing with the seasons.

The rest of the acorns will be eaten by one creature or another. Deer eat them sometimes and so do various birds that **wander** through the forest, such as turkeys and woodpeckers. The acorns that aren't eaten will get covered by leaves, soaked by rain, and frozen by snow. If they aren't eaten by worms or other underground things, some of them will sprout into **saplings**.

In the forest ecosystem, living things depend on one another. Many living things depend on trees for shelter and food. You can almost certainly find bugs on any tree. Woodpeckers can find them too!

If you dig down into the soil or scrape away some tree bark, you will discover all sorts of other critters in the forest ecosystem, such as worms, beetles, and ants.

You might not see all those insects and other little critters when you look around the forest, but they are there! You can find them under leaves, rocks, and fallen trees. Mostly, their world is underground and out of sight, unless you are willing to get dirty digging for them!

What are all those bugs doing there? They are doing what all living things do: surviving. To survive, living things need food. The **nutrients** in food provide energy for the body. Without energy, the body stops. It's that simple!

What else are bugs and other living things doing besides eating? They are doing whatever it is they need to do in order to produce young. Plants make seeds. Mammals, such as squirrels and deer, give birth to live babies. Bugs and birds lay eggs.

Spiders make egg sacs like the one in this image. When the sac opens, hundreds of tiny baby spiders will run out. Most of them will be eaten by other bugs. Those that survive will grow to be hunters like their parents.

Name: _____

Food Chains

1. What happens to the acorns that aren't eaten by the animals in the forest?

Page _____

2. Create a food chain in which you are the apex predator.

Read the following statements, write *true* or *false*, and write the page number that has the answer.

	True or False	Page Number
A worm is an apex predator.		
There are no hidden creatures in the forest ecosystem.		
Small animals are eaten by slightly larger animals.		
All food chains include plants.		
When a spider's egg sac opens, two tiny spiders emerge.		