



Name _____ Date _____

THE OCEAN FOOD CHAIN

Seafood is the term used to describe the food that humans eat, but what does the seafood eat? Just like all animal groups, ocean creatures follow a food chain. The food chain in the ocean begins with tiny floating plants. These plants are known as phytoplankton. These plants float around in the ocean water near the surface. You can't see these plants with the naked eye because they are so small.

Next in the ocean food chain is zooplankton. Zooplankton are very small animals. They are microscopic as well. Small fish, which travel in groups, eat the zooplankton. These fish swim together and eat zooplankton as they go.

Larger fish then eat these smaller fish. The tuna fish is an example of these larger fish. The tuna will eat the fish that swim in schools, or shoals. Humans then eat these larger fish. By eating seafood, you are actually part of the ocean food chain.

Humans aren't the only ones that eat these larger fish. Sharks and sea lions along with other sea creatures eat these fish. The killer whale is the top predator in the sea. It is the top predator because it is not eaten by anything. The baleen whale bypasses the food chain by feeding on the zooplankton directly. The scavengers of the sea also play a role in eating the leftovers and parts of fish and animals left on the sea floor. Crustaceans are examples of scavengers.

STORY QUESTIONS

1. In the last paragraph, what does the word *scavengers* mean?
 - a. meat eating
 - b. foragers
 - c. plant eating
 - d. predators
2. What is the main idea of the third paragraph?
 - a. to describe the tuna fish
 - b. to explain that larger fish eat the small fish in the food chain
 - c. to describe the fish that are at the top of the food chain
 - d. to explain the order of the ocean food chain
3. Based on information in the passage, how do baleen whales bypass the food chain?
 - a. They hunt in groups.
 - b. They eat the zooplankton directly.
 - c. They smaller than most whales
 - d. They are the top predator of the ocean.