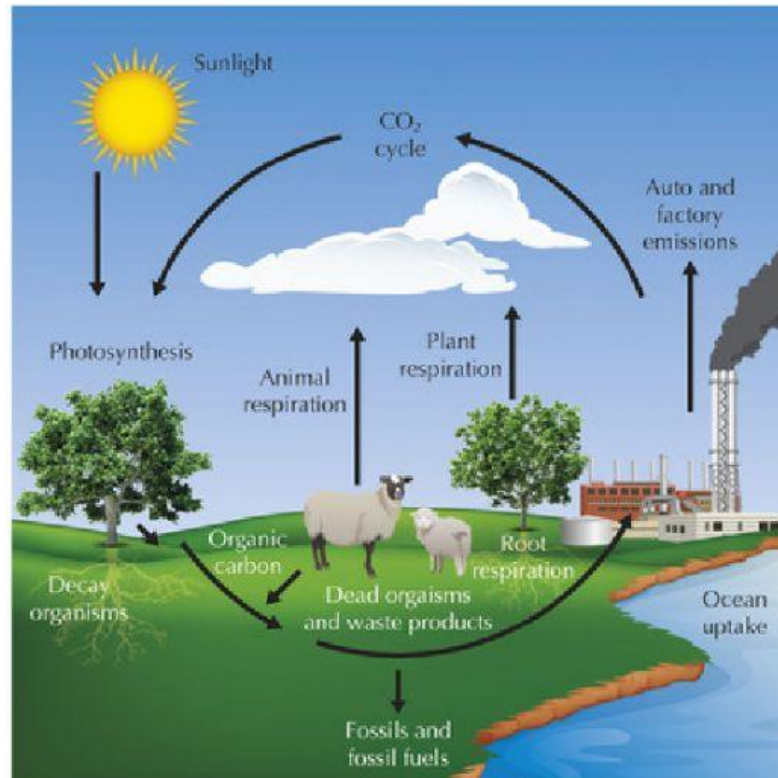


THE CARBON CYCLE



_____ is the fourth-most common element in the universe. It's the building block for all life on Earth—every single _____ in every _____ thing contains some carbon.

Carbon is common in non-living _____, too: in rocks and _____; dissolved in _____; inside the earth's _____; and in the air, as _____.

Earth's carbon is constantly _____ from one of these forms to another; that's the _____. It's like the water cycle, only a bit more complex.

_____ add carbon dioxide to the _____ when they _____.

And _____ soak up carbon dioxide during _____, _____ the carbon in their cells.

Plants, especially trees, are known as carbon _____ because they take more carbon out of the than they add to it. The _____ are carbon sinks, too. Thanks mostly to marine life (phytoplankton and algae), oceans soak up more carbon dioxide than they release.

When plants and animals _____, the carbon contained in their bodies enters the Earth's _____. The Earth's crust keeps carbon locked up for millions of years, eventually returning some of it to the atmosphere through _____.

Normally, the _____ keeps a pretty steady level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. _____, the cycle seems to have been thrown _____; more and more carbon dioxide is entering the atmosphere every year. It's probably because of _____. We create tons of carbon dioxide by _____.

And the _____ of rainforests in South America and Africa makes the problem worse in two ways: first, _____ the trees add carbon dioxide to the atmosphere, and second, once the trees are gone, they're not _____ any more carbon dioxide. Right—carbon dioxide is a major contributor to the _____. That's the _____ that the earth experiences because of certain gases in our atmosphere. Gases like carbon dioxide _____ in the atmosphere and keep the earth _____. Since the start of the Industrial Revolution about 200 years ago, the carbon in the earth's atmosphere has _____ by about _____!

Most scientists agree that this has warmed the earth up, and that the warming could have _____ effects on the environment. _____ and finding alternative _____ will help restore the balance, but we've got a long way to go.