



# Fungus Among Us

Class Outline

**Brief Synopsis:** What lurks inside the Chamber of Disgust? Only you will know after investigating the important role that decomposers play in the world. Participants will be amazed by the diversity of fungus as they search for and identify mushrooms, molds, crusts, and slime. They will witness decomposition in action and discover that pizza (and many other foods for that matter) just wouldn't be the same without fungus.

## Outcomes:

1. Students will describe why fungi are placed in their own Kingdom, separate from plants.
2. Students will use identification keys to categorize fungi by their structure.
3. Students will categorize local organisms to the role they play in food chains.
4. Students will understand how humans depend on fungus for many of our daily needs.

## Outline:

### I. Producers, Consumers, Decomposers (15 minutes)

All the energy on the earth originates from the sun. In order for that energy to be available for all living things, each organism has a role to play. Students will use their understanding of food chains to categorize organisms as producers, consumers, or the all important and often forgotten decomposers.

### II. What is a Fungus? (25 minutes)

Understanding why mushrooms are put into their own Kingdom, known as Fungi, will help students understand how the unique lifecycle of mushrooms contributes to the importance of decomposers in the food chain.

### III. Fungus Finders (1 hour and 40 minutes)

While exploring the forest, students will use identification keys to group fungi into categories by shape. The class may also make a stop at the Shiitake Mushroom Demonstration Site or the Chamber of Disgust (the grossest place at Eagle Bluff) to see fungus at work.

### IV. A Tribute to Fungus (15 minutes)

Class will conclude by illustrating the connection between humans and fungi. There are many things that we use every day that would not be possible without fungi and their friends (like yeast and bacteria). The class will then build a favorite American treat, pizza! Discussion will focus on how each part would not be possible without fungus before everyone gets a taste.

## Quick Facts

**Class Length:** 3 hours

**Ages:** Designed for 4th–7th grade

**Season offered:**

April through October

**Time outside:** 1 hour 40 minutes

**Hike length/physical activity:**

1 1/2 miles, steep hill to climb

**Pre-requisite/prior knowledge:**

No special skills required

**Minnesota Academic Standards:**

Science: 4.IV.B.1, 5. IV. F.1&3,  
7. IV. B. 5, 7. IV. F.2&5

Math: 4.V.B.1

Language Arts: 4.I.A.1, 4.I.B.1,  
4.III.A.1&2, 5.I.A.1, 5.I.B.1,  
5.III.A.1&2, 6.III.A.1&3,  
7.I.A.1, 7.I.B.1, 7.III.A.1,  
8.I.B.1&8, 8.III.A.1,2&7

Revised Jan 2005