



Read the passage. Pay close attention to the words in bold print.

A **compost pile** is a pile of plant matter that used to be alive and growing. In the compost pile, dead plants and plant parts break down. This process is called **rot**, or **decay**. Another word for **rot** or **decay** is **decompose**.

Leaves, potato peels, apple cores, and grass clippings are examples of plant matter that decomposes in a compost pile. The rich soil that is left when the plant matter breaks down is called **humus**. Humus is black, fluffy soil full of **nutrients**, or food, that plants need to grow.

Living things called **decomposers** help break down, or decompose, the plant matter to produce humus. Many kinds of decomposers can break down compost.

**Earthworms** eat compost. The compost moves through their bodies and comes out as waste. The worm waste is called **castings**. Castings help plants grow. Like earthworms, red worms and **nematodes** eat compost. Nematodes are tiny worms found in soil. The castings made by nematodes and red worms also help plants grow.

Other decomposers are snails, slugs, **bacteria**, and **fungi**. Bacteria are the smallest living organisms. Fungi are plants with no leaves, flowers, or green color. Bacteria and fungi break down the dead plants in the compost pile.

A compost pile is also a big **food web**, where everything is food for something else. **Springtails** are tiny gray insects with no wings. They jump around in compost piles, eating fungi. **Beetles** are insects with hard front wings. They eat springtails. Nothing in the food web gets wasted.

## Tip

**Text structures and features** help organize and present information. **Bold print** is a text feature that helps you scan text to find important information quickly.

Use information from the passage to complete each sentence.

- 1 Plants need ■ to grow.
- 2 A group of living things called ■ help break down plant matter.
- 3 Decomposers who produce castings are called ■.
- 4 The smallest living organisms are called ■.
- 5 The word ■ means *to rot*.
- 6 Plants called ■ have no leaves or flowers, and they are not green.
- 7 Worm waste is called ■.
- 8 Jumping insects called ■ eat fungi.
- 9 Red worms and tiny ■ make castings, just like earthworms.
- 10 A ■ eats springtails.
- 11 Compost piles make rich, black soil called ■ that is great for plants.
- 12 In a ■, everything is food for something else.

Tip

You can usually find the **definition** or explanation of words in **bold print** right before or after the **bold print**.



A	B	C	D	E	F
beetle	castings	springtails	food web	humus	decompose
bacteria	nutrients	fungi	decomposers	worms	nematodes
G	H	I	J	K	L

**Objective:** Use text structures (description) and features (bold print) to locate and comprehend information presented visually in informational text.

