

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Unseen Heroes: Pollinators and Our Food Supply

We often marvel at the bounty of fruits, vegetables, and nuts in our grocery stores, but rarely do we think about the laborious journey each item undertakes before it reaches our tables. Many of these foods owe their existence to the often-overlooked work of pollinators like bees, birds, and bats.

Bees are perhaps the most recognized pollinators. As they gather nectar for their hives, they transfer pollen from the male to the female parts of flowers. This act of pollination is crucial for the production of seeds, which in turn leads to the next generation of plants.

Though less common as pollinators, certain bird species play a role as well. The hummingbird, for example, sips nectar from flowers, and in doing so, facilitates the pollination process. Some plants have even evolved to attract specific birds, ensuring the continuation of both species.

Bats contribute to pollination primarily at night, feasting on nectar from flowers that bloom in the dark. Their role is particularly essential in the pollination of plants like agave and certain types of cacti, which are key ingredients in products like tequila and natural sweeteners.

The work of these pollinators is deeply embedded in a larger ecological network. Other animals depend on the fruits and seeds produced through pollination for sustenance. Moreover, pollinators themselves are part of the food chain, serving as prey for other creatures.

**Directions:** Write the main idea in your own words.

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Write one supporting detail for the main idea in each box below.

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## Answer Key

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The main idea of the passage is not just that pollinators are crucial for food production, but that they are part of a larger, interdependent ecological network that sustains various forms of life.

Write one supporting detail for the main idea in each box below. **Answers may vary.**

Bees are significant contributors to pollination, aiding in the production of seeds, which leads to new plant generations.

Birds like hummingbirds participate in pollination and have co-evolved relationships with specific plants, ensuring mutual survival.