

FRESHWATER MUSSELS

Worksheet



Mussels are mollusks that live in freshwater ecosystems like rivers, lakes, and wetlands. They burrow in the substrate (sand, gravel, mud) in their ecosystem. Mussels have a foot that allows them to move around on the bottom of the river. They eat microscopic organisms called plankton and bacteria. They eat by sucking their food through a siphon or by water passing over their gills and collecting food particles. Mussels are an essential component to freshwater ecosystems. They filter out bacteria, algae, and other small particles from the water to improve water quality.

Use context clues in the paragraph above to answer the questions. Circle the correct answer.

Freshwater mussels are:

Animals or Plants

Vertebrate or Invertebrate

Watch this video about Freshwater Mussels and answer the questions below.

<https://youtu.be/UqSXB4W9BFo>

1. What is the relationship between freshwater fish and freshwater mussels?

2. Why are mussels essential to freshwater ecosystems?

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Whether it's purposeful or accidental, invasive species can be introduced to an ecosystem and cause harm to its native species. In many parts of the US, an invasive mussel was released, Zebra mussels. While they are extremely efficient filter feeders, they can still negatively affect the native species in that area. They eat other mussel's main food sources and they can attach themselves to native mussels, making it impossible for them to move and get their own food.

Texas Parks and Wildlife talking about the dangers of having an invasive species like Zebra mussels in a body of water: <https://youtu.be/E4Y5ILzKgHg>

Use what you've learned about freshwater mussels to create an argument as to why people living in the James River Watershed should care about freshwater mussels. Your answer should be about a paragraph long.