

Listening Text

Water

Over 4 billion years ago, life started in water. The first living things were miniscule, made up of only one cell each. Over many, many millennia, these living things became bigger and more complex, slowly becoming more like the animals and plants we know today.

The first animals to leave the waters belong to the group called amphibians. You've probably come across modern amphibians, like frogs, salamanders or newts. Amphibians were originally fish, but fish with especially strong fins that allowed them to pull themselves out of the water and move on land. Unlike ordinary fish, amphibians evolved the ability to breathe air. However, like fish, most amphibians still have to go back into the water to lay their eggs. From then on, different kinds of animals continued to evolve, on land as well as in water, into the millions of amazing animals which surround us today.

Without water, earth would be lifeless. All life on our planet depends on water, from tough desert cacti to sticky snails, to humans. None of us could survive without it. Water makes up the majority of all living organisms. Did you know that the human body is around 60 percent water? Our brains are 70 percent water and our lungs nearly 90 percent! Water plays an essential part in digesting food. It helps maintain our muscles, it helps carry oxygen and nutrients to our cells, it cools us down and it helps our bodies get rid of waste. No wonder we need water to keep us going! Just like humans and other animals, plants rely on water to transport nutrients to their cells. Plants also use water to produce their energy from the sun and to generate the oxygen we breathe.

Let's think a little more about how we humans use water in our everyday lives. Obviously, we need to drink, but without water, we would have no food either. For example, all the crops farmers grow – like wheat, rice or fruit and vegetables – need water. The animals we keep to produce meat, eggs or milk, all need to drink water and eat plants. Just think, the one potato you ate last night for dinner took 25 litres of water to grow. And for those of you who are hamburger fans, did you know that your favourite food “drank” 2,400 litres of water while being produced? Surprisingly, it takes 1,000 times more water to feed the human population than it does to satisfy its thirst!

Water's role in our everyday lives goes further than just drinking and producing food. To start with, we use it for cooking and sanitation. In reality, water plays an unseen role in almost every aspect of our lives. Your favourite cotton T-shirt couldn't have been made without water: first the cotton plants needed water to grow, and then a lot more water was used to process the raw cotton into threads that could be woven together. Even to dye your t-shirt different colours, water needs to be used. Similarly, a lot of water goes into the manufacture of your phone, computer, TV and so on.

Adapted from: <https://www.fao.org/3/i3225e/i3225e.pdf>