

Name _____

Protists Unveiled: Exploring Their Natural Abodes

Open-Ended Response Answer Key

1. Protists contribute to nutrient cycling in aquatic environments by decomposing organic matter, releasing nutrients for other organisms to use, and producing oxygen through photosynthesis.
2. Protists are considered foundational organisms in food webs because they occupy key positions as primary producers or primary consumers, providing energy and nutrients for higher trophic levels.
3. One symbiotic relationship between protists and plants is the partnership between certain algae and fungi to form lichens, where the algae provide photosynthetic products to the fungi, and the fungi provide a protective environment for the algae.
4. Protists adapt to extreme environments through mechanisms such as forming cysts or spores to withstand unfavorable conditions, evolving specialized structures for nutrient acquisition, and developing metabolic pathways for energy production in low-oxygen environments.

