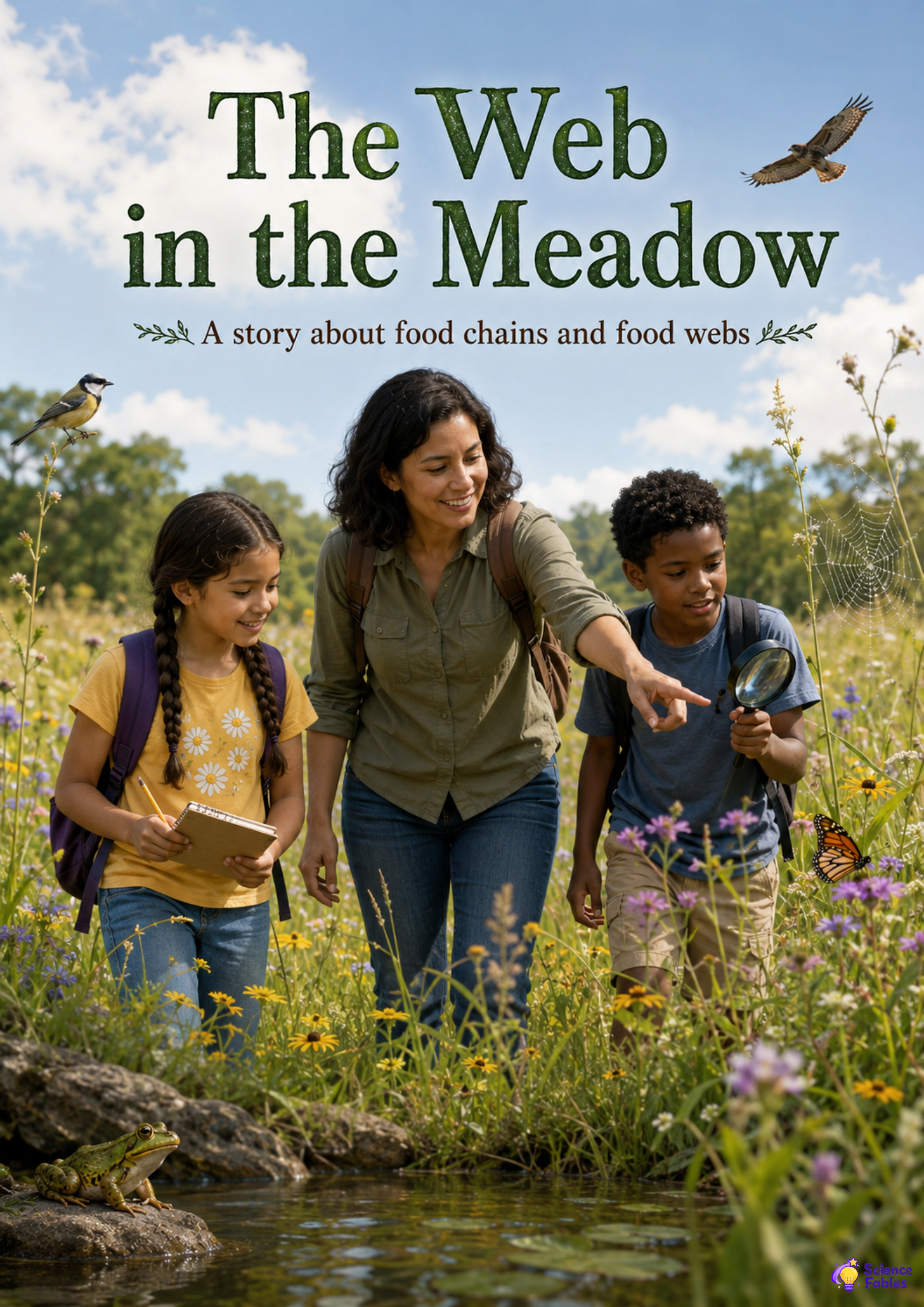
The Web in the Meadow

A story about food chains and food webs



Science Fables

At the top of the page, Nina wrote:

'A food chain is one path.
A food web is the whole story.'

As they walked back, the meadow no longer looked quiet and ordinary.

To Nina and Eli, it looked alive with connections everywhere.



Eli pointed at a grasshopper chewing on a blade of grass.

‘That grasshopper is eating lunch,’ he said.

‘And the grass made its own food from sunlight,’ Nina added.

‘Exactly,’ said Ms. Romero. ‘That is where many food chains begin—with plants.’

She drew in the dirt:
Grass → Grasshopper → Frog → Snake → Hawk

‘This is a food chain,’ she said. ‘It shows one path of energy moving from one living thing to another.’



Just then, Nina noticed a bird pecking near the ground.

‘But what if the bird eats the grasshopper too?’ Eli asked.

Ms. Romero smiled. ‘That is a great question.’

She added more lines to the drawing.

‘When many food chains connect, they make a food web,’ she explained.

Nina’s eyes widened. ‘So it’s not just one straight chain.’

‘Right,’ said Ms. Romero. ‘A food chain is one path. A food web shows many connected paths.’



Nina pointed to a flower. ‘Do flowers matter in the food web too?’

‘They do,’ said Ms. Romero. ‘Plants are called producers because they make their own food.’

‘Animals that eat plants or other animals are consumers,’ she continued.

‘And when living things die, decomposers like fungi and bacteria break them down and return nutrients to the soil.’

Eli nodded. ‘So everything is connected—even the tiny things.’



Eli looked around the meadow again. It no longer seemed simple.

It seemed like a giant puzzle of living things.

‘So a food chain is one path,’ he said slowly, ‘but a food web shows the whole neighborhood.’

Ms. Romero laughed. ‘That is a wonderful way to say it.’

On the way back to school, Nina drew the meadow in her notebook and added many arrows between the living things.



Nina and Eli followed Ms. Romero along a trail behind their school.

Soon they reached a sunny meadow full of tall grass, wildflowers, buzzing insects, and birdsong.

‘It looks so peaceful,’ Nina said.

Ms. Romero smiled. ‘It is peaceful, but it is also very busy. This meadow is full of living things depending on each other.’



Science Element



- A food chain shows one path of who eats whom.



- A food web shows many connected food chains.



- Plants are producers because they make their own food.



- Animals are consumers because they eat plants or other animals.



- Decomposers break down dead living things and return nutrients to the soil.



- All living things in an ecosystem are connected.

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