



BRITISH MYCOLOGICAL SOCIETY FUNGAL EDUCATION &amp; OUTREACH

# HOW THE MUSHROOM GOT ITS SPOTS



PRIMARY RESOURCE

## INTRODUCTION

### NATIONAL CURRICULUM AREAS COVERED:

**Year 1:** Seasonal Changes; **Year 2:** Living things and their habitats.

This resource gives a fantastic visual representation of how fungi such as the fly agaric get spots on their mushroom caps. This could form part of an explanation of the life cycle of the fly agaric (whose Latin name is *Amanita muscaria*). This fungus helps trees such as pine and birch to grow. Fungus threads live in partnership with the roots of trees, swapping water and minerals for sugars. This fungus makes several compounds in its fruit body (in this case called a mushroom) that are poisonous; one of them is an insecticide. In Victorian times the cap of this fungus was soaked in milk and left to stand on the kitchen shelf. Flies were attracted to the milky insecticidal liquid and were subsequently killed. This is where its common name 'fly agaric' comes from.

**SPORES:** are like the seeds of a flowering plant. Spores are produced by the fungus fruit body and released to new areas.

**MYCELIUM:** is the name given to the main body of a filamentous fungus. Mycelium is made up of fine threads called hyphae.

**GILLS:** are the long papery plate-like structures often seen under the cap of a mushroom.



Here is an image of the underside of a mushroom cap, showing the pattern of gills beneath. Fungus spores are released from the gills of the mushroom.





# HOW THE MUSHROOM GOT ITS SPOTS

## MATERIALS NEEDED PER CHILD

A RED BALLOON

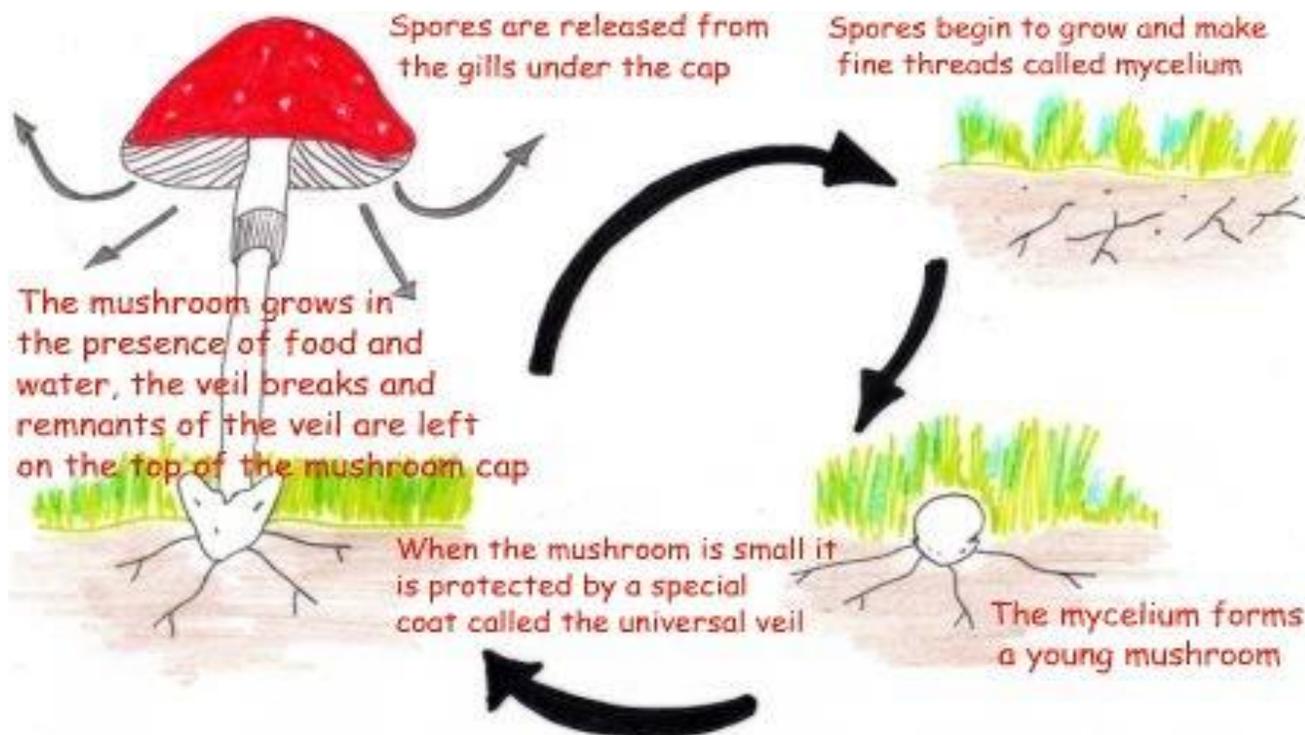
2 PIECES OF WHITE TISSUE PAPER

WATER SPRAYER

PLASTIC BALLOON HOLDER & STICK

PLASTICINE





## METHOD

1. Blow up a red balloon very slightly to represent a baby Fly Agaric mushroom.
2. Cover with tissue paper, holding the tissue paper in place with your thumb and forefinger (this is the universal veil).
3. Spray the tissue paper with water (this represents rain in the woodland or forest).
4. With water and food the mushroom can grow. Blow up the balloon. As the mushroom grows, the remnants of the universal veil (broken tissue paper) are left behind on the mushroom cap (inflated balloon).
5. Tie the balloon and clip it onto a balloon stick. Place the sticks in a plasticine block until home time.