

Fossils

Fossils are shapes of dead animals and plants that lived millions of years ago made in rock. Usually when something dies it is eaten or decays and disappears. However, when an animal or plant dies and gets covered over, it can stay there and over time, become a fossil.

Dinosaurs

Fossils are really important in understanding what has happened a long time ago. Without them we would not even know that dinosaurs existed! People who study fossils are called palaeontologists and these are the people who have found out what we now know about dinosaurs. However, this only started 200 years ago, so we've only known about dinosaurs for 200 years!



Did You Know...?

- 'Sue' is the nickname given to the most complete and best preserved Tyrannosaurus Rex specimen ever found.
- The word 'fossil' comes from an old word 'fossilis', meaning 'dug up'.
- Fossils are only found in sedimentary rock.
- The fossils in the pictures are called ammonites. It is the town symbol for Whitby in North Yorkshire. Whitby is good for fossil hunting and long ago, people thought that the ammonites were snakes turned to stone by St. Hilda!

How a Fossil is Made

When some plants or animals die, their body sinks into mud or is buried by sand. This often happens at the bottom of the sea and stops it from rotting or being eaten by other animals. Whilst it is underground, water and minerals seep into the bones and where the bones and body used to be, to make a hard shape. This is squashed under more layers of sand, mud and eventually rock over many, many millions of years.

Fossils Questions

1. Which one is closest in meaning to the word **decay**. Tick **one**.

- ☐ fossil
- ☐ rot
- ☐ disappear
- ☐ die

2. Use the text to fill in the blanks:

Fossils are made when a dead animal or plant gets _____.

3. Explain in your own words why we have only known about dinosaurs for 200 years.

4. What does the Latin word '**fossilis**' mean?

5. What is the name of the place that is good for fossil hunting? Tick **one**.

- ☐ St Hilda
- ☐ Whitby
- ☐ Ammonites
- ☐ Sedimentary

6. What is the name of the spiral shaped fossil pictured in the text? Tick **one**.

- ☐ immonites
- ☐ ammonites
- ☐ Sue
- ☐ minerals

7. Why aren't there any fossils of cats that lived twenty years ago?

8. Number the boxes to show the order in which fossils are created. The first one has been done for you.

- ☐ It is squashed under more layers of sand and mud.
- ☐ Minerals and water seep into the bones and where the bones used to be.
- ☐ The layers of sand and mud turn into rock, and create a fossil.
- ☐ Their body sinks into the mud or sand.
- ☒ 1 A plant or animal dies.

Fossils Answers

1. Which one is closest in meaning to the word **decay**. Tick **one**.

- ☐ fossil
- ☒ **rot**
- ☐ disappear
- ☐ die

2. Use the text to fill in the blanks:

Fossils are made when a dead animal or plant gets **covered over**.

3. Explain in your own words why we have only known about dinosaurs for 200 years.

Accept responses that refer to the link between fossils being discovered and dinosaurs, such as: 'We have only known about dinosaurs for 200 years because dinosaurs lived so long ago that fossils are the only evidence of them that has survived this long. So when fossils of dinosaurs were discovered, no one before that had known that they had existed.'

4. What does the Latin word '**fossilis**' mean?

The Latin word 'fossilis' means 'dug up.'

5. What is the name of the place that is good for fossil hunting? Tick **one**.

- ☐ St Hilda
- ☒ **Whitby**
- ☐ Ammonites
- ☐ Sedimentary

6. What is the name of the spiral shaped fossil pictured in the text? Tick **one**.

- ☐ immonites
- ☒ **ammonites**
- ☐ Sue
- ☐ minerals

7. Why aren't there any fossils of cats that lived twenty years ago?

Accept any response that refers to fossils taking a long time to form, such as: 'There are no fossils of cats from twenty years ago because fossils take millions of years to make. Twenty years isn't long enough to make a fossil.'

8. Number the boxes to show the order in which fossils are created. The first one has been done for you.

- ☐ 4 It is squashed under more layers of sand and mud.
- ☐ 3 Minerals and water seep into the bones and where the bones used to be.
- ☐ 5 The layers of sand and mud turn into rock, and create a fossil.
- ☐ 2 Their body sinks into the mud or sand.
- ☐ 1 A plant or animal dies.