

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 it can get covered over and, over millions of years, become a fossil.

Dinosaurs

- Fossils are really important to know what happened a long time ago.
- Without fossils we would not even know that dinosaurs existed!
- People who study fossils are called palaeontologists.
- Palaeontologists started studying fossils 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 a plant or animal dies, their body can sink into mud or be buried by sand. This usually happens at the bottom of the sea. When this happens it doesn't disappear. When it is underground, water and minerals leak into the bones and where bits of body used to be. This makes a hard shape. Next, the fossil gets squashed under more layers of sand, mud and other bits that make sedimentary rock. Finally, over many, many millions of years a fossil is created for someone to dig up one day.

Fossils Questions

1. How long have we known about dinosaurs? Tick **one**.

- ☐ 200 million years
- ☐ 200 thousand years
- ☐ 200 years
- ☐ 200 days

2. What is the name of a person who studies fossils?

3. What is the nickname of the best preserved Tyrannosaurus rex skeleton? Tick **one**.

- ☐ Sam
- ☐ Sue
- ☐ Sylvia
- ☐ Sandra

4. Fossils got their name from the old word **fossilis** which is an old word meaning... Tick **one**.

- ☐ fossils
- ☐ dug up
- ☐ buried
- ☐ old

5. Tick the boxes to say whether the sentences are true or false.

	True	False
Some people used to think ammonites were snakes turned into stone.		
Whitby is a town in South Yorkshire.		
Fossils can't be made under the sea.		
Fossils take millions of years to make.		

6. Why weren't fossilised animals or plants eaten by other animals?

7. The author used an exclamation mark at the end of the **Did You Know...?** section to make it sound surprising. Why is that sentence surprising?

Fossils Answers

1. How long have we known about dinosaurs? Tick one.

- ☐ 200 million years
- ☐ 200 thousand years
- ☒ **200 years**
- ☐ 200 days

2. What is the name of a person who studies fossils?

A person who studies fossils is called a palaeontologist.

3. What is the nickname of the best preserved Tyrannosaurus rex skeleton? Tick **one**.

- ☐ Sam
- ☒ **Sue**
- ☐ Sylvia
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4. Fossils got their name from the old word **fossilis** which is an old word meaning... Tick **one**.

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Some people used to think ammonites were snakes turned into stone.	✓	
Whitby is a town in South Yorkshire.		✓
Fossils can't be made under the sea.		✓
Fossils take millions of years to make.	✓	

6. Why weren't fossilised animals or plants eaten by other animals?

They were buried under mud or sand.

7. The author used an exclamation mark at the end of the **Did You Know...?** section to make it sound surprising. Why is that sentence surprising?

Accept any response that refers to this being a strange thing to believe, such as: 'It does not seem possible to turn snakes into stone. It could seem strange that people believed this.'