



Third Grade
MSTEP Homework Packet # 5

Sent home on _____

Return by _____

Student's Name

Name _____ Date _____

Read the articles “School News” and “We Were Here!” before answering Numbers 25 through 30.

School News

Science Section

Mrs. Torres’s Science Class Finds Fossils

by: Amy Chang, Grade 3

Mrs. Torres is teaching about fossils, which are the remains of plants and animals that once lived. Mrs. Torres wanted to take her class to look for them. In December, the class went to Hogtown Creek, a nearby creek bed where Mrs. Torres knew many fossils had been found. The students started to explore the creek bed, spreading dirt and peering at rocks. They found many interesting things.

Jim Angelo was the first to find something. He showed his discovery to Mrs. Torres. She brought all of the students together to see what Jim found. It looked like part of a sand dollar embedded in a rock. Mrs. Torres said it had lived at the bottom of the sea hundreds, maybe thousands, of years ago. The stone may become Florida’s state fossil. All of the students were excited about that.

Pilar Mendez was the next student to find a unique fossil. She found a stone with a line of tiny footprints fossilized across it. From the looks of the footprints, Mrs. Torres’s class concluded that they were made by a very small bird. We all wondered where that little bird was going when it made those tracks so long ago.

Jessica Carlile found what appeared to be an odd-shaped stone. When she examined it more closely, though, she realized it was an actual shark’s tooth—a very dirty one! Mrs. Torres washed it off. Jessica’s brother Billy also found a shark’s tooth. Mrs. Torres took the findings back to school.

It was a great day at Hogtown Creek. Students searched for fossils, which are very hard to find. It takes time to look for something so old and hidden. The fossils have all been cleaned. Now they all reside in Mrs. Torres’s classroom. Her class welcomes everyone to come in and see them!

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We Were Here!

A Guide to Fossils

Fossils are the remains of once-living animals and plants. Because of fossils, we know that dinosaurs and woolly mammoths once roamed the earth. Maybe they even wandered in your own backyard! Fossils of sea creatures on mountains tell us that oceans once covered these mountains. Fossils of tropical plants near the North and South Poles are evidence that these cold lands once had warmer climates. Studying fossils can tell us what life was like on earth long ago and how it has changed.

When most plants and animals die, they do not become fossils. Instead, they simply decay, or rot, and become part of the earth. Lucky for us, though, some turn into fossils. Others leave behind clues that say, “We were here!”

Fossils do not form overnight. It can take thousands of years for fossils to form. There are many ways that a plant or animal’s remains can be preserved, or kept unchanged.

A common type of fossil is a stone fossil. A stone fossil forms when a plant or an animal’s remains turn to stone over time. How does this happen? In wet places, after an organism dies, it is buried in mud. This often happens in a lake, river, or sea bed. Over thousands of years, layers of mud build up. The mud turns into rock. Water and minerals seep into the bones. Eventually, the bones are replaced with minerals and turn to stone. A stone fossil is formed!

When a tree or a piece of wood is replaced by minerals over time, it, too, can become a fossil. This type of fossil is called petrified wood.

Not all fossils turn into stone. Sometimes, feathers, animal tissue, and even plant seeds are preserved. In deserts and other dry places, bones, teeth, or claws may be preserved exactly as they are. Another way living things can become fossils is when they are trapped and preserved in frozen ground, tree sap, or even tar. Here are some fascinating examples:

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- In 1901, the body of an ancient mammoth was discovered in Siberia. It was buried in the frozen ground. It had been there, unchanged, for ages!
- Sometimes leaves and insects can get stuck in tree sap. Over time, the sap hardens and turns into amber. Amber is fossilized tree sap. The amber preserves the organism inside.
- In some places around the world, the fossils of many large animals have been found in sticky tar pits. Once upon a time, these animals got stuck in the tar pits and died. The tar, or natural asphalt, preserved the animals' bones in a nearly perfect state.

Other fossils show us about animals' activities on earth. They show us how animals in the past lived and moved. These fossils include:

- ✓ *Tracks.* Tracks are animal footprints. Tracks can reveal much about the size and movements of animals.
- ✓ *Trails and burrows.* Trails are paths left by animals as they move across the earth. Burrows are holes or tunnels dug into the earth. Trails and burrows can tell us where animals lived and how they traveled.
- ✓ *Nests.* Some animals have left behind nests they built. The nests can contain clues about how the animals lived and cared for their young.
- ✓ *Tooth marks.* Animals can also leave behind tooth marks on objects they have chewed on. Tooth marks can tell us about an animal's eating habits.

Fossils are tiny slivers of a great puzzle. They help scientists piece together the earth's history. Next time you come across a fossil in a museum or in the woods, ask yourself some questions. What can it tell me about the organism it belonged to? What can it tell me about the earth's history?

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Now answer Numbers 25 through 30. Base your answers on the articles "School News" and "We Were Here!"

25 According to the article "School News," who was the FIRST student to find a fossil?

- Ⓐ Billy
- Ⓑ Jessica
- Ⓒ Jim
- Ⓓ Pilar

26 Read this sentence from the article "School News."

The students started to explore the creek bed, spreading dirt and peering at rocks.

What does the word *peering* mean in the sentence above?

- Ⓕ learning about
- Ⓖ looking closely
- Ⓗ throwing objects
- Ⓘ trying to break apart

27 Read this sentence from the article "We Were Here!"

In wet places, after an organism dies, it is buried in mud.

What does the word *organism* mean in the sentence above?

- Ⓐ a type of fossil
- Ⓑ a plant or animal
- Ⓒ a wet environment
- Ⓓ a very large reptile

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- 28 What is the author's MAIN purpose in writing the article "We Were Here!"?
- F to convince readers to look for and study fossils
 - G to explain different types of fossils and how they form
 - H to tell about where different fossils can be found on earth
 - I to give interesting facts about dinosaur and mammoth fossils
- 29 What information is included in BOTH articles?
- A what a fossilized shark's tooth looks like
 - B what happens after most plants and animals die
 - C what tracks can show about the animal that made them
 - D how an animal can be preserved inside an amber fossil
- 30 Which idea is included in the first paragraph of BOTH articles?
- F a definition of what fossils are
 - G how a group went about searching for fossils
 - H what scientists can learn from studying fossils
 - I what interesting fossils might be found in a creek bed

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Writing to Inform

Writing to Inform

Read the prompt and plan your response.

Most people have a person in their life who they admire, or look up to.

Think about someone in your life who you admire.

Now write to explain why you admire, or look up to, this person.

Planning Page

Use this space to make your notes before you begin writing.
The writing on this page will NOT be scored.

Name _____ Date _____

Writing to Inform

Begin writing your response here. The writing on this page and the next page WILL be scored.

Name _____ Date _____

Writing to Inform

Ruled area for writing with multiple horizontal lines.

