



Palaeontology Reading Comprehension

Palaeontology has come a long way since Mary Anning's time. We now know that there were animals who lived millions of years ago, the most fascinating of which are the dinosaurs!

Thanks to palaeontologists we understand more about dinosaurs, how they might have looked, what they ate and how they lived.

It is thought that the dinosaurs became extinct due to a falling asteroid. The impact of the asteroid was so huge that it changed the climate (weather) around the world.

This is supported by evidence of a thin layer of sedimentary rock around the world which contains the metal iridium. This metal is rarely found in the Earth's crust but is very common in asteroids.

The climate became colder and the dinosaurs were unable to survive.

Read through this reading comprehension and answer questions on the answer sheet.

Fossil Hunting Then and Now

Finding fossils was, and still is, a dangerous activity. Falling rocks, slippery and sometimes unstable surfaces mean that it is necessary to take precautions when finding fossils.

Mary Anning narrowly missed being killed by a landslide (where lots of rocks fall at once from the cliff). Unfortunately her dog Tray was buried underneath the rocks and died as a result.

Modern palaeontologists don't often go out searching for fossils like Mary Anning did. They search existing sites where fossils have been found. They take safety precautions, like wearing a hard hat and checking the times of tides, so they don't become isolated in remote locations.

New fossil sites are usually found by accident by people who are not palaeontologists at all!

Did You Know?

Not all dinosaurs are dead! The avian (flying) dinosaurs did not all die out. All the birds (including chickens) that are alive today are related to those dinosaurs! Even the dinosaurs that did not fly, like the T-Rex have similarities with modern birds, including hollow bones!





Palaeontology Reading Comprehension Question Sheet

Read the Palaeontology Reading Comprehension and then answer the following questions.

Q1: What are palaeontologists?

Q.2: What does the word 'extinct' mean?

Q.3: What evidence is there that climate change was caused by an asteroid?

Q.4: What are the similarities and differences between early palaeontologists like Mary Anning and modern palaeontologists?

Similarities	Differences

Q.5: Why has a 'Did You Know?' box been included?



Palaeontology Reading Comprehension Answer Sheet

General Year 3 and 4 Reading Objectives covered:

Understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by:

- checking that the text makes sense to them and explaining the meaning of words in context
- identifying main ideas drawn from more than 1 paragraph and summarising these
- identifying how language, structure, and presentation contribute to meaning
- drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence

Retrieve and record information from non-fiction

Q.1: What are palaeontologists? (retrieve and record information from non-fiction)

Palaeontologists are people who study fossils.

Q.2: What does the word 'extinct' mean? (explaining the meaning of words in context)

The word extinct means died out / no longer alive.

Q.3: What evidence is there that climate change was caused by an asteroid? (retrieve and record information from non-fiction)

There is a thin layer of rock which contains the metal iridium which is rare on earth but common in asteroids.

Q.4: What are the similarities and differences between early palaeontologists like Mary Anning and modern palaeontologists? (retrieve and record information from non-fiction)

At least one answer in each box.

Similarities	Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Study fossils• Work out what the fossils tell us about prehistoric animals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safety precautions taken• Finding new fossils / fossil sites• Modern palaeontologists have more information about prehistoric animals.

Q.5: Why has a 'Did You Know?' box been included? (identifying how language, structure, and presentation contribute to meaning)

The 'Did You Know?' box has been included (at least one of the following should be in the answer):

- to give extra information (about dinosaurs)
- to present an interesting fact
- to highlight unusual facts or ideas
- to present information you may not know