

WHAT IS A FOSSIL



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. WHAT IS A FOSSIL
2. MAKE YOUR OWN FOSSIL

YOU WILL NEED:

- AIR DRYING CLAY
- ROLLING PIN
- NATURAL FORMS

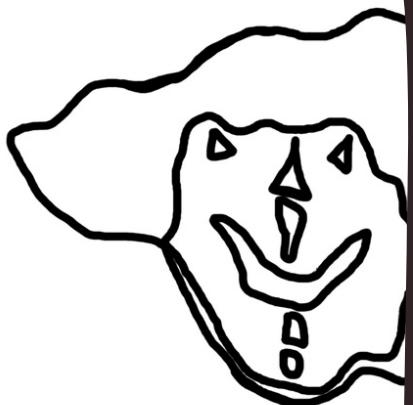


TRACE
TRACKS AND TRAILS

MOLD
IMPRESSION

BODY
ACTUAL SHELL OR BONE

RESIN
TRAPPED IN TREE SAP



FOSSILS ARE THE REMAINS OR TRACES OF ONCE LIVING ORGANISMS (ANIMALS OR PLANTS), NATURALLY PRESERVED IN ROCK.

THIS CAN BE FOOTPRINTS, SKELETONS AND EVEN FOSSILISED POO WHICH IS CALLED A COPROLITE.

ONE EXAMPLE OF THIS PROCESS IS WHEN AN ANIMAL DIES AND IS BURIED RAPIDLY IN A SEDIMENT, PRESERVING ALL OR PART OF ITS BODY. THE SOFT PARTS OF AN ANIMAL USUALLY DECAY QUICKLY AFTER IT DIES, LEAVING ONLY THE SHELL OR SKELETON AS FOSSILS.

MARINE ANIMAL FOSSILS ARE THE MOST COMMON BECAUSE MOST SEDIMENTS ARE LAID DOWN ON THE SEA FLOOR. FOR EXAMPLE MOLLUSCS HAVE A HARD SHELL THAT IS OFTEN PRESERVED ENTIRELY. OR SOMETIMES THE SHELL HAS BEEN DISSOLVED BY GROUNDWATER LEAVING ONLY AN IMPRESSION OR MOULD OF THE SHELL.

IN SOME FOSSILS THE SHELL HAS BEEN REPLACED BY A MINERAL SUCH AS PYRITE (IRON SULPHIDE, OR 'FOOL'S GOLD').

PLANT FOSSILS ARE USUALLY A CARBONISED IMPRESSION, FROM THE CRUSHED REMAINS OF A PLANT.



ACTIVITY

ROLL OUT A PIECE OF AIR DRYING CLAY INTO A SMALL TILE. PICK A NATURAL FORM, LIKE A SHELL, LEAF, SEED (THIS IS WHERE YOU CAN GET CREATIVE) AND USING YOUR HANDS OR THE ROLLING PIN IF NEEDED, USE YOUR OBJECT TO MAKE AN IMPRESSION OR A TRACE FOSSIL INTO THE CLAY. REPEAT UNTIL YOU ARE HAPPY WITH YOUR DESIGN. YOU MAY WANT TO TRY THIS MORE THAN ONCE, WITH DIFFERNT OBJECTS, AND PERHAPS EVEN USE MAN-MADE OBJECTS, TO MAKE A FOSSIL OF HUMAN ACTIVITY!



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