Year 6 reading comprehension: How a Fossil Forms

English · Reading comprehension
Level: Hard

Student: _____ Date: _____

Instructions
- Read the text first. There are 3 questions. Read each one carefully.
- Circle the best answer. Look back at the text to find the words that tell you.
- A grown-up can read the text aloud — that's fine.
- The answers are at the end. Check them together when you have finished.

Questions

Read this, then answer questions 1–3.



How a Fossil Forms

A fossil is the preserved remains, or traces, of a living thing that died long ago. To become a fossil, the animal or plant must first be buried quickly, usually by mud or sand in a lake, river or sea, before it is eaten or rots away. Soft parts such as skin and muscle almost always decay, so it is mainly hard parts like bones, teeth and shells that are left. As more mud and sand pile up, the layers above press down on the buried remains. Water carrying dissolved minerals then seeps through the layers and slowly fills the tiny spaces in the bone or shell. Sometimes the original material dissolves completely, and minerals take its place to form a stone copy. Over millions of years, the sediment around the remains hardens into rock. Finally, wind, rain or movements of the Earth may wear away the rock above, and a fossil hunter may find the fossil at the surface. Fossils are rare, because only a tiny fraction of the animals that ever lived became fossils. Some of the oldest fossils in Australia are the stromatolites of the Pilbara in Western Australia, which are about 3.5 billion years old, while the dinosaur fossils of Queensland are about 100 million years old.

1. A hiker finds a fossil shell lying at the foot of a cliff. What is the best guess?

Circle one answer.

○ **A** The shell was never buried.

○ **B** The cliff is made of Pilbara stromatolites.

○ **C** The animal died only a few years ago.

○ **D** Rock that once covered the fossil has probably worn away.

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2. Why are fossils mostly made from bones, teeth and shells?

Circle one answer.

○ **A** Minerals fill the tiny spaces.

○ **B** Hard parts are always buried faster than soft parts.

○ **C** Mud and sand pile up on top of the remains.

○ **D** Soft parts almost always decay.

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3. About how many times as old as the Queensland dinosaur fossils are the Pilbara stromatolites?

Circle one answer.

○ **A** about 35 times as old

○ **B** about 3400 times as old

○ **C** about 3.5 times as old

○ **D** about 350 times as old

Answer key

Year 6 reading comprehension: How a Fossil Forms · Sheet 600001

1. D — Rock that once covered the fossil has probably worn away.

The text says: “Finally, wind, rain or movements of the Earth may wear away the rock above, and a fossil hunter may find the fossil at the surface.” Wind, rain or movements of the Earth may wear away the rock above, and a fossil is then found at the surface. So: The rock covering it has probably worn away.

2. D — Soft parts almost always decay.

The text says: “Soft parts such as skin and muscle almost always decay, so it is mainly hard parts like bones, teeth and shells that are left.” The words because and so point to the reason.

3. A — about 35 times as old

The text says: “Some of the oldest fossils in Australia are the stromatolites of the Pilbara in Western Australia, which are about 3.5 billion years old, while the dinosaur fossils of Queensland are about 100 million years old.” 3.5 billion is 3500 million, and 3500 ÷ 100 = 35. So the stromatolites are about 35 times as old.