

Name: _____

Date: _____

Finding a fossil is fun, and so is making one. Read the directions on how to do it and then answer the questions that follow.

Activity: Make Your Own Fossil

Finding a real fossil is terrific! Fossils are rocks that contain the imprint of bones, shells, or leaves that existed thousands—maybe even millions—of years ago. You may not find a real fossil very often—or ever. But you can make your own fossil. Here are directions for making your own fossil.

You will need:

- 1 small bag of plaster of Paris (ask at a hardware store)
- Water
- 1 empty coffee can
- 1 old aluminum pie or cake pan
- Something to stir with (like a paint-stirring stick)
- Some small objects to press into your fossil (shells, leaves, stones, buttons, bottle caps, even your hand will do)
- A piece of picture-hanging wire (if you want to hang your fossil on the wall)
- A cup

How to do it:

1. Spread newspapers on the floor or table where you are going to work. (This can get messy!)
2. Collect your "fossil objects."
3. Pour a cup of plaster of Paris into the coffee can.
4. Stir in enough water until it looks like thick pancake batter, following the directions on the box.
5. Pour the plaster of Paris mixture into the aluminum pan.
6. Place your fossil objects on the plaster and press down firmly.
7. If you want to hang your fossil on the wall when it's dry, twist a piece of wire into a loop and stick it into the top of the mold.
8. Wait 5 minutes, then carefully remove the objects.
9. Let the plaster dry, remove it from the pan, and **YOU HAVE MADE A FOSSIL!!**

If you can't get plaster of Paris, you can also make a fossil with clay.

1. The word *imprint* from the first paragraph means

- A. shape.
- B. pieces.
- C. color.
- D. stones.

2. What word in the story means the same as *take out*?

- A. twist
 - B. hang
 - C. place
 - D. remove
-

3. Which would NOT be good to use to make a fossil?

- A. a chicken feather
 - B. dead leaf
 - C. a piece of paper
 - D. fish bones
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4. Someone might read this story to

- A. find a project for science class.
 - B. learn how to make plaster of Paris.
 - C. discover where to look for fossils.
 - D. find out how fossils form in nature.
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5. When making a fossil, the coffee can is used to

- A. wash the pie pan.
 - B. pour the water.
 - C. hold the fossil objects you collect.
 - D. mix the plaster of Paris.
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6. What should you do FIRST when you make your own fossil?

- A. pour the plaster of Paris mixture into the pan
 - B. put a loop of wire into the plaster of Paris
 - C. press objects into the plaster of Paris
 - D. spread newspapers on the floor
-

7. What can you use in place of plaster of Paris to make a fossil?

- A. flour
 - B. glue
 - C. clay
 - D. sugar
-

8. You must remove the "fossil objects" 5 minutes after you put them in place. If you do not do so, what will happen?

- A. They will not leave an imprint.
 - B. The plaster of Paris will not get hard.
 - C. They will get stuck in the hard plaster.
 - D. They will sink into the plaster.
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9. The writer gives step 4 to tell how

- A. thick the plaster of Paris must be.
 - B. long to stir the mixture.
 - C. much plaster of Paris to use.
 - D. to make pancake batter.
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Many thousands of years ago, people did not have books. They had other ways to pass on messages. Read the story to find out about some of these ways, and then answer the questions that follow.

The Story of Books

by Harry Ellwood

Getting the Message Across

A long, long time ago, people tried to think of different ways to pass on messages to each other. The first people lived in caves. They sometimes drew pictures on the cave walls to tell stories. We can still see some of these pictures today.

In Africa, some people sent messages by beating drums. Different rhythms had different meanings. The ancient Greeks used a shiny piece of metal to flash messages using the sun's rays.

How Writing Began

Then people invented writing. Some people, such as the Egyptians, used pictures to represent words. We call this kind of writing hieroglyphics.

Later, people began to write using an alphabet. They wrote a different symbol for each sound in their language. We call these symbols the letters of the alphabet. There are many different kinds of alphabets in the world today.

From Clay to Paper

Finding something to write on wasn't always as easy as it is today. In the early days, people tried writing on slabs of clay. Then they baked the clay. Sometimes it broke, and the writing could not be read.

People also tried cutting letters into stone. This was hard work—and just imagine carrying a stone block to school with your homework written on it!

Then, in Egypt, people discovered that a plant called *papyrus* could be made into thin sheets for writing on. (You can see where we get our word paper.)

The Egyptians rolled up long sheets of paper and attached wooden rods to the ends. These were called *scrolls*. Later, someone had the idea to cut the scrolls into pieces and tie the pieces together down one side.

And that's how the first book was made!

10. How are books and scrolls alike?

- A. Both were invented by Egyptians.
- B. Both are made from paper.
- C. Both were invented by Greeks.
- D. Both are used for writing on clay.

Answer Key

1. A) shape.
2. D) remove
3. C) a piece of paper
4. A) find a project for science class.
5. D) mix the plaster of Paris.
6. D) spread newspapers on the floor
7. C) clay
8. C) They will get stuck in the hard plaster.
9. A) thick the plaster of Paris must be.
10. B) Both are made from paper.