

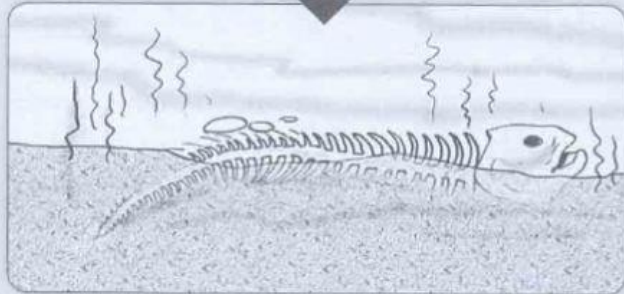
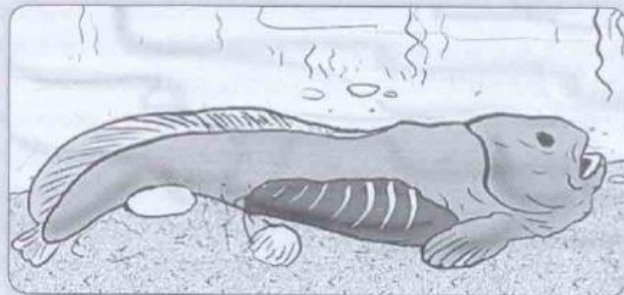
FOSSILS

The study of fossils tells us about animals and plants living on the Earth millions of years ago. When the organic material of any living being is transformed into inorganic minerals and preserved in rock, fossilisation has occurred.

How are fossils formed? First, the body of a dead animal sinks to the bottom of the sea. Bacteria and other animals eat its flesh. Then sediment (mud and sand) cover the skeleton. Over a long period of time, minerals in the sediment replace the hard parts of the animal, such as the bones and teeth. These hard minerals form a fossil. After millions of years the muddy sediment becomes rock. Eventually, erosion of the rock by wind and rain reveals the fossil.

The best place to find fossils is by the sea and the most common fossils are of seashells and shellfish.

It is also possible to find fossilised animals in certain materials. Amber is the sticky resin from trees. It contains many insect fossils. These insects were trapped in the amber millions of years ago. Mammoth fossils are also found from time to time in frozen soil.



1 Put the sentences in the correct order (1-4).

- a. The animal's organic material transforms into minerals.
- b. The animal falls to the bottom of the sea.
- c. Erosion exposes the fossil.
- d. Sedimentary rock forms over the remains as they mineralise.

2 Fossils are found in different materials. Give three examples.

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Let's Investigate

Use an encyclopedia or the Internet. Find out how a trace fossil is different to a body fossil. Write a few sentences explaining the difference.



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