

Fossil Origins

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The students are placed in groups of three, and each group receives a shoebox filled with various fossils. The students are to sort the fossils, give each fossil a geographic origin, and explain how they believe each fossil could have been formed.

TIME: Approximately 50 minutes.

PROCEDURES:

1. Separate fossils into groups that are similar in appearance.
2. Write a brief description of each group of fossils. What type of rock is the fossil in? What does the fossil look like? etc.
3. Try to come up with a present-day animal or “thing” that looks like your fossil. Does it look like a flower? Does it look like a shell? etc.
4. Where do you think this fossil came from? A swamp? A lake? An ocean?
5. Select one group of fossils and write a brief (at least one complete paragraph) “history” for these fossils. Where were they when they were alive? How long ago did they exist? What happened to them? Why did they fossilize?
6. Be prepared to share your ideas out loud with the class.

ASSESSMENT:

- Student achievement is assessed through cooperative participation in a small group (no more than 3 per group).
- Students’ ability to express their thoughts in an organized written description and ideas.
- Students’ sharing their ideas with the rest of the class.

Further Challenge:

Use this activity as an introduction to the fact that West Virginia was periodically covered by a shallow sea. Relate this idea to plate tectonics and reasons for changes in sea level.

OBJECTIVES:

- *Categorize and hypothesize the origin of fossils.*
- *Explain the reasoning behind their ideas.*

Materials and Equipment:

- Marine fossils of West Virginia
- Plant fossils of West Virginia
- Sheet of poster board per group
- Lots of imagination

