Informational Vocabulary

Grade 3 Reading Worksheet

Name _____ Date _____

Circle the answer.

READ THIS FIRST

Clues in the Rocks

Long ago, animals and plants lived in places that look very different today. How do we know? Scientists study fossils, or the hardened traces of plants and animals from long ago. A fossil can be a bone, a shell, or even a footprint left in mud.

Most living things never become fossils. A fossil forms only when something is buried quickly. Mud or sand covers a shell on the floor of a sea. Over many years, more layers pile on top. The layers press down and slowly turn into rock. The shell is preserved, or kept safe from rotting, inside the stone.

Sometimes the shell itself wears away. Then only its shape is left behind. This kind of fossil is called an imprint. An imprint is like the mark your shoe makes in wet sand.

Scientists who study fossils are called paleontologists. They dig with small tools, such as brushes, picks, and spoons. They work slowly so they will not crack a fragile bone. A fragile thing breaks easily, unlike a strong rock.

Fossils tell us about animals that are now extinct. Extinct animals are gone forever, and none are living anywhere today. Mammoths are one example. Fossils also show that some deserts were once covered by warm seas. Ancient shells, from millions of years ago, have been found on dry land far from any ocean.

1. In paragraph 1, what are 'fossils'?
   traces of plants and animals from long ago
   rocks that form at the bottom of a sea
   bones of animals that are living today
   tools scientists use to dig in the mud

2. In paragraph 2, what does 'preserved' mean?
   kept safe from rotting dug up by scientists broken into small bits
   washed away by water

3. Which phrase from the text is the best clue for 'imprint'?
   kept safe from rotting
   buried quickly
   more layers pile on top
   the mark your shoe makes in wet sand

4. In paragraph 4, scientists dig with 'picks.' What are picks here?
   bones found in rock maps of where to dig small digging tools
   choices a person makes

5. In paragraph 4, what does 'fragile' mean?
   hard as stone very old found underground breaks easily

6. Which phrase shows a contrast clue for 'fragile'?
   unlike a strong rock dig with small tools work slowly Mammoths are one example

7. In paragraph 5, what does 'extinct' mean?
   hidden deep under rock
   very large and heavy
   living only in warm seas
   gone, with none living today

8. Which word from the text means from a very long time ago?
   extinct ancient preserved fragile

9. What is a 'paleontologist'?
   a scientist who studies the stars
   a worker who sells shells
   a scientist who studies fossils
   a guide who leads ocean trips

10. In paragraph 2, a shell lies on the 'floor' of a sea. What does 'floor' mean here?
   the bottom of the sea
   the part of a room you walk on
   one level of a tall building
   the top of the water

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Answer Key - Grade 3 Reading Worksheet

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