Informational Vocabulary

Grade 3 Reading Worksheet

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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
   bones of animals that are living today
   rocks that form at the bottom of a sea
   tools scientists use to dig in the mud

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Answer Key - Grade 3 Reading Worksheet

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