## Unearthing the Past: Fossil Fascination Unleashed!

Study the image to the right.

- 1. How many different tracks can you find? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. What do you think made the different kinds of tracks? List all the tracks that you can identify.
- 3. Which track do you think was made first and how do you know?
- 4. Which track do you think was made last and how do you know?
- 5. Were all the tracks moving in the same direction?

Understanding fossils helps **scientists** understand the story behind the scene. Scientists use **clues** from fossils that help us know about past events, the **environments** that made up an area, and what ancient animals and plants looked like.

When an animal dies, the soft parts decay quickly or are eaten. Only the hard parts like **bones**, **teeth**, and **shells** usually survive. These hard parts have a better chance of becoming fossils. Almost all **fossils** are found in a rock type called **sedimentary** rock. If an organism is buried by sediments quickly and then remains undisturbed for a very long **time**, it has a chance of becoming a fossil.

Let's take Snappy here and imagine how it might become a fossil. Snappy gets stuck in the mud. It sinks to the bottom of the mud and dies before any other creature gets to eat it. There, his soft parts **decay** leaving just its shell. The mud then dries and begins to harden. Over a long time, it turns into a rock. The shell will most likely fall apart eventually leaving the shape of its shell in the **rock**, called a void. This void can then fill in with other sediment and minerals. The sediment turns hard as well and eventually turns into a rock. Over many many years, the void where Snappy once was **buried** is brought to the surface of the Earth again, where you might get lucky and find the Snappy fossil.

The **void** that is filled in with the shape of Snappy is called a **cast**. The impression **Snappy** made in the mud is called a **mold**.

S	U	н	E	Ν	V	1	R	0	Ν	Μ	Е	Ν	Т	S	J	U	V	Т	1	Μ	Е	В	G	н	Ζ
Ν	С	С	V	0	Т	D	L	Α	F	0	S	S	Т	L	S	В	F	Ζ	D	Е	С	Α	Υ	С	J
Α	Α	L	Ζ	S	Ε	D	Т	М	Ε	Ν	Т	Α	R	Υ	н	0	J	J	Ζ	Т	Ε	S	0	R	Ε
Ρ	S	U	В	U	R	R	Т	Ε	D	S	Ζ	R	0	С	κ	Ν	R	S	н	Ε	L	L	S	L	L
Ρ	Т	Е	w	S	С	Т	Е	Ν	Т	1	S	Т	S	Κ	Α	Е	Υ	Ρ	Α	М	U	D	Ζ	S	Ρ
Υ	x	S	S	L	J	Т	Е	Е	Т	н	V	F	Ρ	Е	J	S	М	0	L	D	0	Е	Α	Ρ	Ρ

In the word search below find the bolded words from the passage.





Now you are going to make your own mold and cast fossil. Read and follow the directions below.

- A. Pick a shell from the table to use as your fossil.
- B. Spray cooking oil on the shell or object.
- C. Gently press your shell or object onto the salt dough.
- D. Let it dry for a few days or cook it in an oven at about 200 degrees until the salt dough is dry.
- E. Spray some cooking oil into the fossil mold.
- F. Fill the mold with plaster of Paris.
- G. While the plaster of Paris dries, use a toothpick to write your name, grade, and year below the impression.
- H. Use a toothpick to poke a hole into the salt dough just above the mold.
- I. Leave your fossil on a table for a few days.
- J. Now gently remove the plaster of Paris from your salt dough.
- K. Let both sit for another day.

Answer the following question.

- 6. Which fossil is the cast and which is the mold?
- 7. What part of an animal is most likely to become a fossil?

Learning about fossils can also help scientists know what an animal might have actually eaten. Below are two images of two different types of teeth. Place the following words that describe each set of teeth in the boxes below.

- a. Woolly Mammoth
- b. Saber-toothed Tiger
- c. Carnivore
- d. Herbivore
- e. Prey
- f. Predator





Saber-Toothed Tiger



8. What evidence or clues do the teeth have that helped you know you place the words under the correct picture?