Fossil Clues

Use fossils to make claims about places long ago.

L.3.4.5 "Construct scientific arguments using evidence from fossils of plants and animals that lived long ago to infer the characteristics of early environments (e.g., marine fossils on dry land, tropical plant fossils in arctic areas..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each fossil Maya finds, and circle the words that tell where its plant or animal lived. Use your marks to make claims about each place long ago.

Maya's Four Fossil Stops

1. Maya visits a dry hill far from the coast. In its rock, she finds fossil sea clams. Living sea clams need salty water. At a second site, she sees fossil water lily leaves in stone beneath a dusty road. Living water lilies float on still freshwater. The two places look dry today, but their fossils give Maya clues about what each place was like long ago.

2. At a third site, snow covers the ground for much of the year. Maya sees a fossil palm leaf pressed into rock. Palm trees grow in warm places. A leaf can become a fossil when it is buried in mud and the mud hardens into rock over a very long time. Maya checks the shape of the leaf before writing down her idea about this place.

3. Maya's last stop is a valley that is warm and rainy today. There, a scientist shows her a fossil woolly mammoth bone found in the ground. Woolly mammoths lived in cold places with open grassland. They are extinct, so none are alive today. Maya knows a fossil cannot tell every detail of a place, but it can support an idea about the past.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What was the dry hill like long ago? Use a fossil as evidence.

2. What kind of water was likely near the dusty road long ago? Use fossil evidence.

3. Was the snowy site likely warm or cold when the palm tree lived there? Give the fossil clue.

4. How was the warm, rainy valley likely different when the mammoth lived there? Use the fossil as evidence.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a fossil of a desert cactus is found in a rainy place, although desert cacti grow in hot, dry places. Write two sentences explaining what this place may have been like long ago and how the fossil supports your idea.

ANSWER KEY

Fossil Clues

GRADE 3 · L.3.4.5

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each fossil Maya finds, and circle the words that tell where its plant or animal lived. Use your marks to make claims about each place long ago. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What was the dry hill like long ago? Use a fossil as evidence.	**The hill was likely under salty water because fossil sea clams were found there.**
2	What kind of water was likely near the dusty road long ago? Use fossil evidence.	**Still freshwater was likely there because water lily leaves were found in the stone.**
3	Was the snowy site likely warm or cold when the palm tree lived there? Give the fossil clue.	**It was likely warm because a fossil palm leaf was found there.**
4	How was the warm, rainy valley likely different when the mammoth lived there? Use the fossil as evidence.	**The valley was likely colder and had open grassland because a woolly mammoth bone was found there.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

This place may have been hot and dry long ago. The fossil cactus supports my idea because desert cacti grow in hot, dry places.

Accept claims that match the habitat evidence in the passage. Students should connect each claim to the fossil found at that site.