Fossil Finder

Trace how an author develops a key historical individual.

6.RI.1.B "Describe how a key individual, event or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in historical, scientific, or technical texts (e.g., through examples or anecdotes)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence that introduces Mary Anning. Circle two details that illustrate her work, and number two details that elaborate on why her discoveries mattered.

Mary Anning and the Cliffs

1. On the rocky coast of southern England, twelve-year-old Mary Anning searched for fossils after storms. In 1811, she and her brother Joseph found a large skull in cliffs near Lyme Regis. Over many months, Mary uncovered the rest of the skeleton. It belonged to an ichthyosaur, an extinct marine reptile that looked somewhat like a giant dolphin. The discovery introduced Anning as a careful observer in a time when few scientists took girls' work seriously.

2. Anning did not simply collect unusual objects. She studied where fossils lay in the rock layers and taught herself about their shapes. Visitors later described her carrying a hammer, basket, and notebook along the shore. In 1823, she found the first complete plesiosaur skeleton recognized by scientists. Its long neck and small head puzzled experts, and some doubted the animal was real. The detailed skeleton gave scientists evidence that ancient seas held creatures unlike living animals.

3. Although Anning made major finds, scientific societies did not allow women to join. Many wealthy collectors bought fossils from her family, then presented the discoveries to learned groups. Still, some scientists credited her skill. Geologist Henry De la Beche used Anning's fossil evidence when he painted a scene of prehistoric sea life. Her finds helped people understand extinction, the idea that some kinds of living things disappear forever. Today, museums display fossils like hers while historians work to name the people who found them.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the author introduce Mary Anning in the first paragraph? Use one detail from the passage.

2. Which detail in paragraph 2 illustrates that Anning worked like a serious scientist? Explain what the detail shows.

3. How does the plesiosaur discovery elaborate on Anning's importance? Use evidence from paragraph 2.

4. What contrast in paragraph 3 helps develop the idea that Anning's work mattered?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence explanation of how the author develops Mary Anning as an important person. In sentence 1, state how she is introduced. In sentence 2, give one illustration of her work. In sentence 3, explain how the author elaborates on the importance of her discoveries.

ANSWER KEY

Fossil Finder

GRADE 6 · 6.RI.1.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence that introduces Mary Anning. Circle two details that illustrate her work, and number two details that elaborate on why her discoveries mattered. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the author introduce Mary Anning in the first paragraph? Use one detail from the passage.	**The author introduces Anning as a twelve-year-old fossil hunter and careful observer who helped uncover an ichthyosaur skeleton.**
2	Which detail in paragraph 2 illustrates that Anning worked like a serious scientist? Explain what the detail shows.	**The detail about carrying a hammer, basket, and notebook, or studying fossils in rock layers, shows that she carefully collected and studied evidence.**
3	How does the plesiosaur discovery elaborate on Anning's importance? Use evidence from paragraph 2.	**It shows that her complete skeleton gave scientists evidence of ancient sea creatures unlike living animals, even though some experts doubted it at first.**
4	What contrast in paragraph 3 helps develop the idea that Anning's work mattered?	**Scientific societies excluded women and collectors sometimes presented her discoveries, yet scientists used and credited her fossil evidence, and her finds helped explain extinction.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The author introduces Mary Anning as a young fossil hunter who uncovered an ichthyosaur skeleton. The description of her carrying tools and finding a complete plesiosaur illustrates her careful, skilled work. The final paragraph elaborates on her importance by explaining that her fossils supported ideas about prehistoric life and extinction, even though scientific societies excluded women.

Accept different accurate details as illustrations, including Anning's study of rock layers, her tools, the plesiosaur skeleton, or De la Beche's use of her evidence. For the open response, check for all three steps of development: introduction, illustration, and elaboration supported by passage details.