

The Life Story of a Fossil (student handout)

Imagine yourself as an ancient organism that has ended up as part of the fossil record.

Your job is to tell the story of your life and death—who you were, what your world was like, were you a predator or prey, what else lived along side you, etc. Tell your story in words and pictures. Imagine the world around you at that time. How long ago was did you live? What was the world like then? What was your scientific name?

After talking about your life, tell us about your death. How did it happen? Remember all the kinds of things that have to happen for an organism to become a fossil. What happened when you died that allowed you to become a fossil?

Who discovered your fossil and how did they discover it? Where are you now? Are you in a museum? Are you in a private collection? What do scientists think is your closest living relative? What characteristics did you share with your closest living relative?

You must draw a picture of your fossil, yourself and your closest living relative, and try to include the following information in your story. Bulleted items are required, the rest are extra credit. You will also be graded on how accurate the information is, and how well you use it in your story.

A worksheet is provided to help you record the required information that you find using *The Paleontology Portal* online resource and other resources.

The following is information required in your story:

- The state in which you were found
- The geologic period in which you lived
- How long ago you lived
- The scientific and common name of your organism
- The climate and geography during the time and where you lived and what evidence is there of that?
- Did you live in the air, freshwater, saltwater, on land or some combination of these and what evidence is there of that?
- Were you a carnivore, omnivore, or herbivore? And what evidence is there of that?
- Were you a predator or prey? If predator, what organisms did you eat, if prey, what organisms ate you? And what evidence is there of that?
- What evidence shows the other flora and fauna that lived during the same period as you?
- What kind of fossil are you? (Body part? Footprint? Something else?)
- What is your closest living relative?
- What characteristics do your living relatives share with you?
- Where is your fossil now located and if known, who found it?

To add to your story, answer the following within your narrative:

Evidence of how you died

Evidence of how you were fossilized

How your fossil was found