OWTER 9 The History of Life on Earth

RICHON T

Looking at Fossils



California Science Standards

2.3.c. 244, 24e

BEFORE YOU READ

After you read this section, you should be able to answer these questions:

- What are fossils?
- · How are fossils formed?
- What can fossils tell us about the history of life on earth?

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STUDY TIP

Organize Make a spider map to show the different ways fossils can form.



1. Define What is a fossil?

A fossil is a trace or remain from an organism that lived in the past



List Give three examples of hard parts of an organism that could become fossils.

Their shells, teeth, and bones are usually preserved

What Are Fossils?

Can you name any dinosaurs? Do you know what they looked like or how they moved? Scientists have been able to tell us many things about organisms, such as dinosaurs, that lived millions of years ago. How do scientists learn about these organisms if they have never seen them? They study fossils. A fossil is the trace or remains of an organism that lived long ago. Fossils can form in five different ways.

FOSSILS IN ROCKS

Usually when an organism dies, it begins to decay or it is eaten by other organisms. Sometimes, organisms are quickly buried by sediment when they die. Sediment can preserve the organism. Hard parts, such as shells, teeth, and bones, are preserved more often than soft parts, such as organs and skin. The parts of the organism that remain can become fossils when sediment hardens to form sedimentary rock.

FOSSILS IN AMBER

Sometimes organisms such as insects are caught in sticky tree sap. If the sap hardens around the insect, a fossil is created. Hardened tree sap is called *omber*. Some of the best insect fossils are found in amber. Frogs and lizards have also been found in amber.

This insect is preserved in anaber. It is more than 36 million years old.



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Guillaume Favre

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