

# Fossils

## Objectives

Students Will Be Able To describe the process used to find and identify fossils.

SWBAT identify fossils found at Florissant.

SWBAT use appropriate vocabulary when describing fossils.

## Inquiry Questions

1. What different kinds of fossils can be found at Florissant?
2. How do scientists find the fossils?
3. How do scientists identify the fossils?

## Materials

- ◆ *Views of the National Parks* CD
- ◆ [Fossil Notebook](#)
- ◆ Plaster of Paris
- ◆ Sawdust or dirt
- ◆ 1 small paper cup per student
- ◆ 1 small chicken bone or shell per student
- ◆ construction paper
- ◆ bamboo skewers or craft sticks
- ◆ small paintbrushes

**Procedure (Part One - Identifying Fossils)**

1. Direct students to the "Tours" section of the Florissant module. (On the Introduction page, you will see the word "Tours" in three different places. Click on any one of these.)
2. Guide the class to the tour of "Recent Times." From this page, click on "Fossils."
3. Next, click on "Collection Book." There are two collections of fossils: Plants and Insects. Encourage students to explore in these collection books for a time.
4. Click on the "Plant Identification Book." Then click on the tab called "Terms." Students should begin filling out the first page of the [Fossil Notebook](#) using the information contained here. Students will also need to access the "Terms" located in the "Insect Identification Book" in order to complete the first page of their Fossil Notebooks.
5. Students should click on the "Plant" and "Insect" tabs to locate the information needed to complete the second and third pages of the Fossil Notebook.

**Procedure (Part Two - Virtual Fossil Discovery)**

1. A day or two before beginning this lesson, prepare "fossils" for students to excavate:
  - a. Mix the Plaster of Paris with the dirt or sawdust until the consistency is almost as thick as mashed potatoes.
  - b. Pour this mixture into the paper cups until it covers the bottom of the cup. (One cup per student.)
  - c. Drop in the chicken bone or shell and cover with more of the plaster mixture.
  - d. Allow to dry for a day or two, then remove the paper cups.
2. From the Fossils of Florissant Valley page, click on "Virtual Fossil Discovery." This is a self-directed activity that students can work through at their own pace.
3. Give each student one of the previously prepared hidden "fossils."
4. Use the construction paper as a workspace.
5. Using the bamboo skewers or craft sticks as picks, students should pick away at the plaster to reveal the embedded fossils, taking care not to damage the fossils.
6. The paintbrushes can be used to remove smaller particles of plaster from the fossils.
7. Students should describe and illustrate their fossil on the last page of their Fossil Notebooks.
8. Discuss the process. Ask: What did you enjoy about the process of "digging out" your fossil? Was there anything you did not enjoy? What qualities should a paleontologist have in order to be successful at finding and excavating fossils? Can anyone look for fossils at Florissant? Why or why not?

**Key Vocabulary**

- ◆ Paleontology
- ◆ Excavation
- ◆ Stratigraphic Column
- ◆ Biodegradable

**Discussion Questions**

1. What did you enjoy about the process of “digging out” your fossil?
2. Was there anything you did not enjoy?
3. What qualities should a paleontologist have in order to be successful at finding and excavating fossils?
4. Can anyone look for fossils at Florissant? Why or why not?

**Assessment**

Students Will Be Assessed On ...

1. Completed Fossil Notebooks.
2. Participation in classroom discussion and other activities.

**Differentiation**

To best meet all students' needs, we suggest ...

1. Pairing students who might need assistance with an appropriate partner for the Fossil Discovery activities.
2. Providing sentence starters or fill in the blank sentences on the Fossil Notebook.