

Fossils Answers

What is a fossil?

The remains of an organism from millions of years ago that has been preserved in rock.

How are fossils formed?

1. When the conditions for decay are absent when the organism dies. Organisms can be preserved in ice, amber or peat.
2. The hard parts of the organism are replaced by minerals during decay.
3. Traces of organisms that have been left behind, like footprints or burrows.

Explain why scientists can't be certain of how life on earth began.

The conditions for forming fossils are rare, and many early forms of life were soft-bodied so haven't left many traces behind. Many of the traces that were left behind have been destroyed by geological activity. We haven't yet discovered all of the fossils that will have formed.

What can we learn from fossils?

We can learn how much or how little different organisms have changed as life has developed on earth.

What might cause a species to become extinct?

1. change in temperature
2. geological changes over time
3. catastrophic events
4. new predators
5. new diseases
6. successful competition from a new species

Rabbits were introduced to Australia from Europe and their population size increased rapidly in the 19th century. The rabbits are suspected of being the most significant factor in species loss in Australia. Explain how the introduction of rabbits to Australia may have caused the extinction of other species.

When the rabbit population increased they will have eaten the local vegetation and could have caused the extinction of plant species that they used as food. The rabbits eat a lot of the food and breed very quickly which means they might outcompete other native species for food. This could result in the native species dying out.

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