

Project FOCUS

Best Lesson

Third Grade

Title: Observing Fossils

Theme: Earth Science

Unit Title: Minerals, Soil, and Fossils

Georgia Performance Standards:

S3E2: Students will investigate fossils as evidence of organisms that lived long ago.

- a) Investigate fossils by observing authentic fossils or models of fossils or view information resources about fossils as evidence of organisms that lived long ago
- b) Describe how a fossil is formed

Materials:

Fossils Science Box from the UGA Museum of Natural History (link = <http://gmnh.uga.edu/>)

Paper and pencil

Safety Concerns:

Fossils are fragile and must be handled very carefully by students

Lesson (can be performed within one class period):

This lesson allows students to learn about the many different kinds of fossils through personally observing authentic specimens.

- a) It's best to begin with a short discussion on what a fossil is (the hardened remains of a plant or animal that lived long ago), examples of fossils, and how they are made

- b) After this short opening, pass out the fossils. Several fossils per group of three-five students will suffice. Be sure to include a variety of fossils within each group (a piece of wood, animal and plant remains, teeth, bones, etc)
- c) Have the students record their observations about the fossils, including how they feel, what they look like, and how long ago they might've been made
- d) Depending on the length of the class period, allow enough time for each group to look at each set of fossil samples.
- e) Finally, take up the samples and discuss everyone's findings. Compare and contrast each group's/student's conclusions with each other and finish the activity by revealing some of the more ambiguous fossils to the class. Also, be sure to talk briefly about different fossils, such as the bones, pieces of wood, and plant remains.

Would I Do Anything Differently?

The only major thing I could have done better with this lesson was making sure each group had enough time to observe each set of fossils. I only had 30 minutes to do the activity, which unfortunately led to me rushing groups through each fossil set and consequently denying all the students equal time with each set. In the end, however, everyone got to see the majority of the specimens.