

Back to the Past

Area: Geology

Age Group: 1st – 3rd Grade

Materials:

For Dough: (1 cup flour, 1/2 cup salt, 1 cup water, 1 tbsp oil, 2 tsp cream of tartar)

- Mix all ingredients in a pot and stir over medium heat.
- Mixture will be soupy with lumps. Suddenly it will form into a ball.
- Remove from heat, and knead on a non-stick surface.
- Useful for many types of projects.
- Store in fridge, or allow creations to air dry

Make imprints of the following: Leaf with twig, coin, animal print, seashell, pinecone, bone

Introduction/Background:

What are fossils? Fossils are not always the actual remains of the living organisms. Many fossils are just copies called imprints, molds or casts. Imprints are impressions made by organisms in soft mud that were preserved when the mud hardened. Imprints can be traces of an animal's activity, rather than its actual remains. The hardened tracks of animals or the burrows of prehistoric worms in hardened mud are examples of fossil imprints. Molds are made when organisms are totally or partially buried in mud that hardens into rock. Over time ground water may dissolve the organisms, leaving cavities shaped like their bodies. Both imprints and molds are mirror images of the organisms. If a mold was later filled with mud or mineral material, the hardened filling is called a cast. It is a reproduction that has the same outer shape as the organism. A cast looks like the organism itself, not like its imprint.

What is a paleontologist? A paleontologist studies fossils and makes casts of fossil molds by filling them with liquids, such as plaster, that harden.

Demonstration:

Set up 6 stations with the fossil imprints labeled from 1 to 6. Have the kids go around to each station and label on their worksheet the number that corresponds to the matching fossil. At the end, ask the kids what they labeled each fossil and they will answer as a group/by raising their hand.

Ask them again what a fossil is to see if they realize that fossils are not just bones.

References:

<http://www.nps.gov/archive/badl/teacher/fossils.htm>

http://www.creativekidsathome.com/activities/activity_26.html

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BACK TO THE PAST

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