Rock Layers Are History Books

Using fossils to tell how land changes





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BIG IDEA

Lower layers are older, and fossils show past places.



Diagram: brewbooks from near Seattle, USA · CC BY-SA 2.0 · Wikimedia Commons

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From Ocean to Land



Long ago

Sea covers area, shelled animals live

Later

Animals die and get buried in mud

Much later

Layers press into rock, land rises

Today

We find sea fossils on dry land



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DID YOU KNOW?

Seashell fossils can sit high on dry land!

It means that land was once under the ocean.

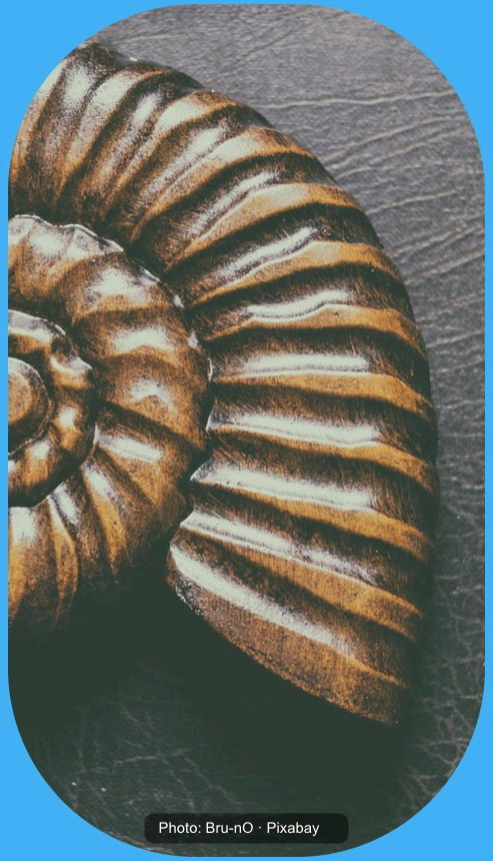


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What could this be?

Swirly shell in rock, far from water. Why?



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Watch: Layers and Clues

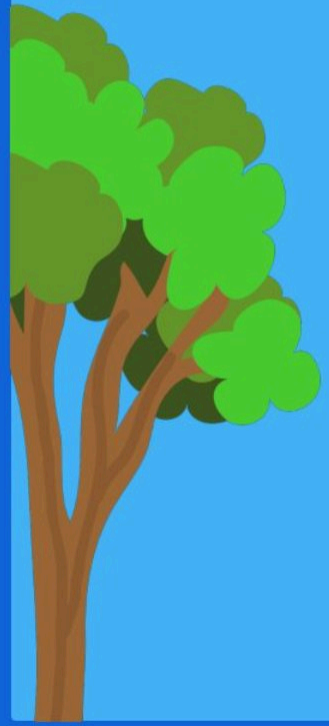


▶ 0:00 – 4:34

- Spot which layer is oldest
- Spot fossils that lived in water

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Which Layer Is Older?



Top Layer

- Made last, so younger
- Sits above older rock

Bottom Layer

- Made first, so older
- Sits under younger rock



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Watch: Past Environments



▶ 0:00 – 3:23

- Look for land or water clues
- Listen for how land changed

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Your task

Draw a 3-layer rock column and tell its Earth story.

1. Draw 3 flat layers, bottom oldest.
2. Add shell fossils low, plant fossils high.
3. Write 2 sentences: what changed?

10 min

Groups of 4

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How a Fossil Forms



1. Animal dies and sinks to bottom
2. Quick burial in mud or sand
3. More layers pile on and press
4. Bone turns to rock fossil



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Best Clue?

Which clue best shows land changed over time?



A Seashells in rock on land

B Animal footprints in rock

C Tilted or broken rock layers



Vote with your hands, then explain why.

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True or false?

Bottom layers are older than top layers.

Most fossils are found in layered rock.

Tilted layers were laid down tilted.





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