

Name: _____

How Fossilization Occurs

Directions: Fill in the missing words to help explain fossilization.

dissolves minerals feathers decay remains fossilization solid
taphonomy sediment formed organism pressure buried

Fossilization, or _____, is the process that occurs when plant and animal _____ are preserved in sedimentary rock. Fossilization occurs after an _____ dies and only affects hard body parts, such as bones and shells. Soft flesh, scales, and _____ will not become fossils, although, imprints of these parts are sometimes made.

In order for _____ to occur three things must happen. First, an organism dies. The body is usually rapidly _____ through erosion, silt layering, or sinking into mud. Then, the body will _____.

Some fossils are formed by permineralization when _____ from "hard water" enter small pores and cavities of dead organisms, and harden. The _____ of being buried helps to turn the organism _____.

Natural molds are _____ when hard body parts, like shells, are buried in _____, such as mud or silt. Over time, the sediment hardens, and the shell _____ away, leaving a mold of itself.

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Answer Key

Fossilization, or *taphonomy*, is the process that occurs when plant and animal *remains* are preserved in sedimentary rock. Fossilization occurs after an *organism* dies and only affects hard body parts, such as bones and shells. Soft flesh, scales, and *feathers* will not become fossils, although, imprints of these parts are sometimes made.

In order for *fossilization* to occur three things must happen. First, an organism dies. The body is usually rapidly *buried* through erosion, silt layering, or sinking into mud. Then, the body will *decay*.

Some fossils are formed by permineralization when *mineral* from “hard water” enter small pores and cavities of dead organisms, and harden. The *pressure* of being buried helps to turn the organism *solid*.

Natural molds are *formed* when hard body parts, like shells, are buried in *sediment*, such as mud or silt. Over time, the sediment hardens, and the shell *dissolves* away, leaving a mold of itself.