Name: _____ Date: _____

The Fossil That Was Really Fruitcake

Circle group

The Brookfield Middle School science club had searched the edge of the soccer field for six weeks. Then Imani Okafor hit something hard with her trowel. She brushed off the dirt. It was dark and lumpy, with odd speckles and bits like tiny colored pebbles. "It is a fossil," she whispered. "A fossil with gems." Soon the whole club was there. Someone named it "Dinosaur Treasure."

Their advisor, Ms. Delgado, said real scientists check their evidence first. The club took measurements. They took photos. They weighed it on the kitchen scale from the cafeteria. They saw that it was oddly light. The pebbles had a faint shine like candy. And it smelled like an old holiday. Skyler was the most careful member. He scraped off a tiny crumb and tasted it before anyone could stop him. He said, with great dignity, that it was fruitcake.

The club was sad for about a minute. Then they laughed. They read school records. Years ago, the cafeteria had a winter party. Someone had buried a leftover cake by the field. The club did not give up. They made a display called "The Fruitcake Era." A sign told how they tested their idea and changed their minds when the facts did not fit. Ms. Delgado said it was the best use of the scientific method she had seen. The cake, still strangely hard, became the club's mascot.

Questions

1. Who found the object by the soccer field?

_____

_____

2. What name did the club give the object first?

_____

_____

3. What did Skyler find out when he tasted a crumb?

_____

_____

4. What did the club make after they solved it?

_____

_____

5. Why did Ms. Delgado want evidence first?

_____

_____

6. Why did Ms. Delgado say they used the scientific method?

_____

_____

Words to know

fossil: the preserved remains or print of a plant or animal from long ago
evidence: facts or clues that help show what is true
advisor: an adult who gives guidance to a group
dignity: a calm, serious and proud manner
mascot: a person, animal or object that brings a group good luck

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Fossil That Was Really Fruitcake

Triangle group

The Brookfield Middle School science club had been searching the edge of the soccer field for six weeks when Imani Okafor struck something hard with her trowel. She brushed away the dirt and revealed a dark, lumpy object with odd speckles, studded with what looked like tiny colored pebbles. "It is a fossil," she whispered. "A fossil with gemstones." Within minutes the whole club had gathered, and someone had already named it "Dinosaur Treasure."

Their advisor, Ms. Delgado, suggested that real scientists check their evidence before announcing a discovery. The club took measurements, photographed the object, and weighed it on the kitchen scale from the cafeteria. They noticed that it was oddly light, that the pebbles had a faint shine like candy, and that it gave off a smell that could only be described as "old holiday." Skyler, the most careful member, scraped off a tiny crumb and tasted it before anyone could stop him. He announced, with great dignity, that it was fruitcake.

The club was crushed for about a minute and then began to laugh. Digging through school records, they learned that the cafeteria had held a winter party years earlier, and that someone had buried a leftover cake near the field to hide the evidence. Instead of giving up, the club created a display called "The Fruitcake Era," complete with a sign that explained how they had tested their idea and changed their minds when the facts did not fit. Ms. Delgado said it was the finest example of the scientific method she had ever seen, and the cake itself, which was still mysteriously solid, became the club's mascot.

Questions

1. Who found the object near the soccer field?

_____

_____

2. What did the club name the object at first?

_____

_____

3. What did Skyler discover when he tasted a crumb?

_____

_____

4. What did the club build after solving the mystery?

_____

_____

5. Why did Ms. Delgado ask the club to gather evidence first?

_____

_____

6. Why did Ms. Delgado say the club showed the scientific method?

_____

_____

Words to know

fossil: the preserved remains or print of a plant or animal from long ago
evidence: facts or clues that help show what is true
advisor: an adult who gives guidance to a group
dignity: a calm, serious and proud manner
mascot: a person, animal or object that brings a group good luck

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Fossil That Was Really Fruitcake

Square group

The Brookfield Middle School science club had been combing the edge of the soccer field for six weeks when Imani Okafor struck something unyielding with her trowel. She brushed away the soil and uncovered a dark, lumpy object with peculiar speckles, studded with what appeared to be tiny colored pebbles. "It is a fossil," she whispered. "A fossil with gemstones." Within minutes the entire club had crowded around, and somebody had already christened it "Dinosaur Treasure."

Their advisor, Ms. Delgado, gently reminded them that genuine scientists verify their evidence before announcing any discovery. The club took careful measurements, photographed the object from every angle, and weighed it on the kitchen scale borrowed from the cafeteria. They observed that it was strangely light, that the pebbles had a faint shine like candy, and that it gave off an aroma that could only be described as "old holiday." Skyler, the most meticulous member of the club, scraped off a tiny crumb and tasted it before anyone could stop him. He announced, with tremendous dignity, that it was fruitcake.

The club was crushed for roughly a minute and then dissolved into laughter. Digging through school records, they learned that the cafeteria had hosted a winter party years earlier, and that someone had buried a leftover cake near the field to hide the evidence. Rather than surrendering, the club assembled a display called "The Fruitcake Era," complete with a sign explaining how they had tested their idea and revised it when the facts failed to fit. Ms. Delgado declared it the finest example of the scientific method she had ever witnessed, and the cake itself, which remained mysteriously solid, became the club's mascot.

Questions

1. Who struck the unyielding object near the soccer field?

_____

_____

2. What did the club christen the object at first?

_____

_____

3. What did Skyler discover when he tasted a crumb?

_____

_____

4. What did the club assemble after solving the mystery?

_____

_____

5. Why did Ms. Delgado remind the club to verify their evidence?

_____

_____

6. Why did Ms. Delgado call the project a fine example of the scientific method?

_____

_____

Words to know

fossil: the preserved remains or print of a plant or animal from long ago
evidence: facts or clues that help show what is true
advisor: an adult who gives guidance to a group
dignity: a calm, serious and proud manner
mascot: a person, animal or object that brings a group good luck

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: The Fossil That Was Really Fruitcake

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: The Fossil That Was Really Fruitcake

Easier · 233 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 3.7

1. Imani Okafor found it with her trowel.
2. "Dinosaur Treasure."
3. The object was a fruitcake.
4. A display called "The Fruitcake Era."
5. Real scientists check their evidence before they say they found something.
6. They tested their idea and changed it when the facts did not fit.

Triangle: The Fossil That Was Really Fruitcake

This passage · 272 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 9.3

1. Imani Okafor found it with her trowel.
2. They called it "Dinosaur Treasure."
3. The object was a fruitcake.
4. A display called "The Fruitcake Era."
5. Real scientists check their evidence before announcing a discovery.
6. They tested their idea and changed their minds when the facts did not fit.

Square: The Fossil That Was Really Fruitcake

Harder · 279 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 10.8

1. Imani Okafor struck it with her trowel.
2. They christened it "Dinosaur Treasure."
3. The object was a fruitcake.
4. A display called "The Fruitcake Era."
5. Genuine scientists check their evidence before announcing a discovery.
6. The club tested their idea and revised it when the facts failed to fit.