Activity Booklet

Palaeo Diets
PALAEO DIETS

What did extinct animals eat?

Scientists can study teeth to work out what extinct animals like me used to eat!

Question
Can we tell what something eats just from the shape of its teeth?

Answer
NO! - Animals with the same shaped teeth can eat different foods. We need Microwear!

MICROWEAR

What is Microwear?

Microwear is the tiny textures on the surface of teeth created by chewing food.

Question
We can compare the textures of living animals to look at what fossil animals ate!

Answer
'Soft' foods create different textures to 'crunchy' foods

You need a special type of microscope to see these textures!
NOW YOU CAN BE A PALAEO DIET EXPERT!

Can you work out what the extinct animals below used to eat?

Follow the numbered instructions to see if you can match the animals to the correct tooth texture...

Start

1. Match the extinct animals with their modern comparison

2. Then match the modern animals with the food they eat

3. Now match the foods with the textures they create

Remember: crunchy food = rough texture!

Extinct

Kuehneotherium

Basilosaurus

Modern

Dolphin

Bat

Food

Fish

Butterfly

Tooth Texture

Smooth

Rough

WHY WE STUDY FOSSILS

- Fossils are the remains of animals that died millions of years ago, and have amazingly been preserved in rock. They are studied by palaeontologists.
- The most common fossils are bones, shells and teeth.
- These can tell us about what an animal looked like, how it lived, and even what it ate!
- Palaeontologists use lots of different methods to understand these extinct animals – it isn’t always just digging up dusty bones!
- Without fossils it would be impossible to know how life has evolved.

FOOD DIARY

What did you eat today?

Was that food crunchy or soft?

What microwear texture would you expect it to produce - rough or smooth?

Produced by Jordan Bestwick and Chris Nedza.
Adapted from a handout previously funded from an award from the Palaeontological Society.