

The Two Dinosaurs in the Sand

Most fossils show an animal lying still. This one shows a fight.

4 min read

Before you read

- **fossil** — a bone or shell that has turned to stone
- **desert** — a dry place with very little rain
- **dune** — a hill made of sand
- **claw** — a sharp, curved nail
- **museum** — a place where important things are kept and shown



Sand dunes in the Gobi Desert, Mongolia, with the wind moving the sand

¹ The Gobi Desert is in Mongolia. It is dry, and the wind there never stops moving the sand.

² In 1971, people digging in that sand found something strange.

³ They found two dinosaurs holding on to each other.

⁴ One was a Velociraptor. It was about the size of a large dog. It had a long tail and one big claw on each back foot.

⁵ The other was a Protoceratops. It was heavier and slower, with a hard beak and a wide frill of bone around its head.

⁶ The Velociraptor had one claw at the throat of the Protoceratops. The Protoceratops had the arm of the Velociraptor held tight in its beak.

⁷ Neither one let go.

⁸ Scientists think a dune of sand fell on them while they were still fighting. The sand covered them in a moment. They stayed exactly as they were for about 74 million years.

⁹ That is why the fossil is called the Fighting Dinosaurs.



The two dinosaurs locked together, claw and beak



The fossil in its glass case in a museum in Mongolia

¹⁰ Most fossils show one animal lying still. This one shows two animals in the middle of doing something.

¹¹ The fossil is kept in a museum in Mongolia today. It is so important that it is not allowed to leave the country.

¹² The wind is still moving the sand in the Gobi. There may be more down there.

Part A Choose the best answer

Circle the letter next to the right answer.

1. Where was the fossil found?
 - A under the sea
 - B the Gobi Desert in Mongolia
 - C in a museum garden
 - D at the top of a mountain
2. How big was the Velociraptor?
 - A about the size of a large dog
 - B about the size of a bus
 - C about the size of a mouse
 - D about the size of an elephant
3. What do scientists think covered the two dinosaurs?
 - A deep water
 - B falling snow
 - C sand from a dune
 - D a pile of leaves
4. Why is the fossil not allowed to leave Mongolia?
 - A it is far too heavy to lift
 - B it is too old to be moved
 - C nobody has ever asked for it
 - D it is too important to the country

Part B Write your answer

Answer in one or two sentences.

5. The passage says most fossils show one animal lying still. What makes this fossil different?

6. How do we know the two dinosaurs had not stopped fighting before the sand covered them?

Part C

Think deeper

There is no single right answer here. Say what you think, and say why.

7. The last line says there may be more fossils under the sand. What do you think someone might find there one day? What in the passage makes you think so?

8. Scientists worked out what happened 74 million years ago just from the clues left behind. Think of a time you worked out what had happened without being told. What were your clues?

Answer key

For parents and teachers

Part A

1. B — the Gobi Desert in Mongolia | 2. A — about the size of a large dog | 3. C — sand from a dune | 4. D — it is too important to the country

Part B

5. It shows two animals caught in the middle of an action — fighting — instead of one animal lying still. Accept any answer that names the fight, or the fact that two animals are joined together.
6. They were still holding on to each other when they were buried — the claw was at the throat and the arm was in the beak. Accept: neither one let go.

Part C

These answers vary. Mark the reasoning, not the answer.

7. A strong answer predicts something and ties it to the passage — more dinosaurs, because the wind keeps uncovering the sand, or because this one was only found by digging. A weaker answer predicts something with no link back to the text. Prompt with: what does the wind keep doing?
8. Any honest personal answer counts, as long as it names at least one clue and the conclusion drawn from it. The skill being practised is evidence — the child should be able to say 'I knew because I saw...'.

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