

Mary Anning

Mary Anning was a **palaeontologist** who is recognised as one of the most important fossil hunters.



Mary's Curiosities

Mary was born in the seaside town of Lyme Regis in Dorset in 1799. Her father was called Richard; he was a furniture maker who collected fossils in his spare time. Mary would spend hours on the beach with her father hunting for fossils in the rocks. Mary and her family would sell their curiosities to tourists for a penny each. This was welcome extra income for the poor family.

Did You Know... ?

Mary and her family sold their curiosities since they did not know what they were or how they were made.

Mary befriended fellow fossil collector Elizabeth Philpot, who taught her more about her collection of curiosities.

Dear Diary,

Today has been an extraordinary day!

My new friend Elizabeth showed me some of her books and informed me that my curiosities are actually called 'fossils'. They are the remains of creatures that had lived on the Earth millions of years ago. Can you believe that our Earth is really that old?

There are so many fossils out there on the beach waiting to be discovered. All I want to do is be out there searching for them.



Mary's Ichthyosaur

When Mary was 12 years old, she and her brother discovered a mysterious creature poking out from a rock. With the help of some local quarry workers, they took the slab home where Mary began to slowly chip away at it using a hammer and chisel. The specimen is now known to be an ichthyosaur: a type of extinct marine mammal dating back around 195 million years.

Dear Diary,

Today, an important man of science travelled all the way from London to take a look at my specimen.

He could tell instantly that it was something special. He said it was like nothing he'd ever seen before and that he'd never seen a creature with such an enormous eye. He said that all of science would be amazed!

They called it an ichthyosaur, which means 'fish lizard' in Greek.



Mary went on to make many more remarkable discoveries along the Jurassic Coast and these were put on display in London.

Did You Know... ?

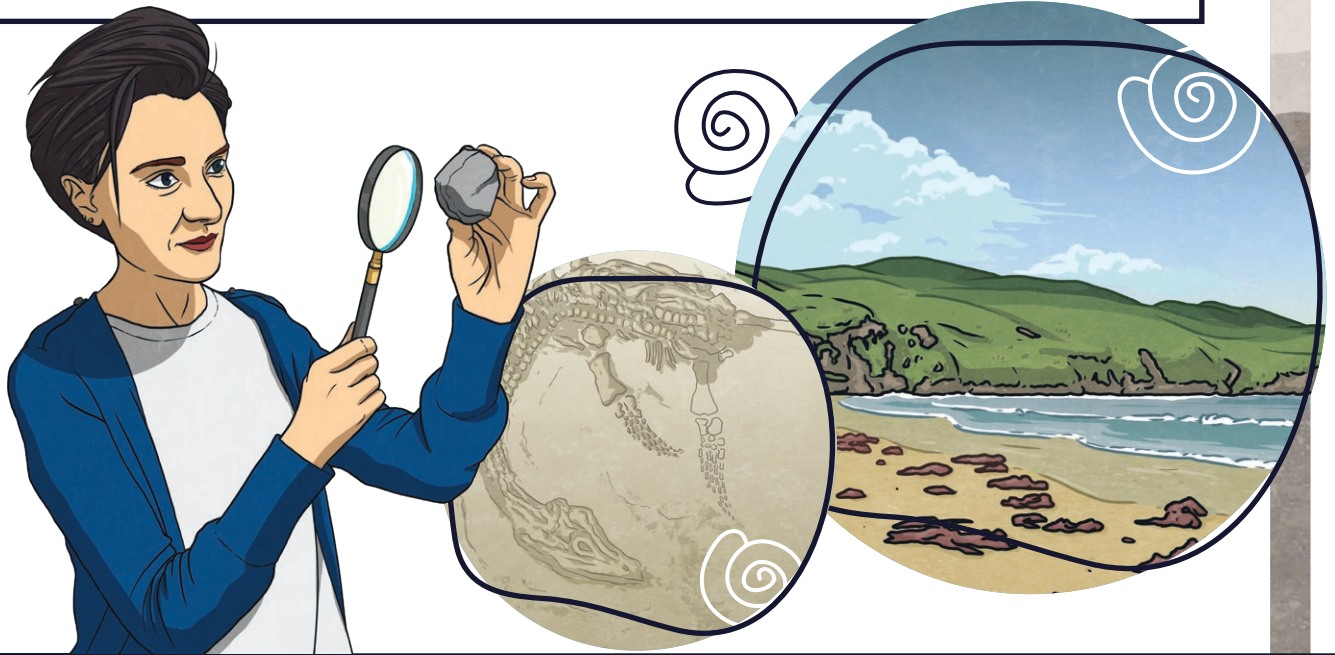
Because she was a poor and uneducated woman, Mary was not given any credit for her discoveries at the time.

Mary's Legacy

Over recent years, there has been a growing interest in Mary's life and work. Many people believe that her fossils are some of the most remarkable scientific discoveries of all time. Today, Mary's ichthyosaur and other fossilised creatures are on display at the Natural History Museum in London.

About the Jurassic Coast

The Dorset and East Devon Coast is known as 'the Jurassic Coast' and extends for 95 miles. It was awarded UNESCO World Heritage status in 2001 for its combination of rocks and fossils dating back almost 185 million years. Fossils are still being unearthed along its coastline.



Glossary

palaeontologist: A person who studies or is an expert in fossil animals and plants.

Mary Anning

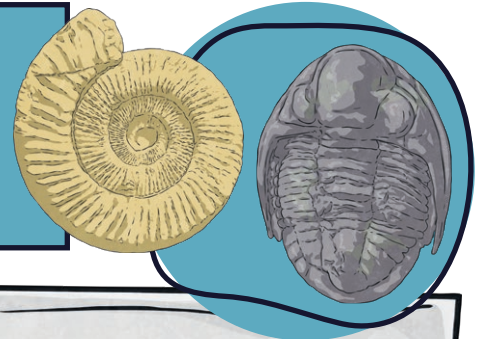
Mary Anning was a **palaeontologist** and fossil collector who made many important discoveries along the Jurassic Coast. She is widely recognised as one of the most significant fossil hunters that ever lived.



Mary's Curiosities

Mary was born in 1799 in the seaside town of Lyme Regis, Dorset. Her father, Richard, was a furniture maker and amateur collector of fossils, which he would then call 'curiosities'. Mary would spend hours on the beach with her father hunting for fossils in the rocks. The curiosities that the family found on the beach would often be displayed and sold to tourists for a penny each: welcome extra income for the poverty-stricken household.

Mary befriended fellow fossil collector Elizabeth Philpot, who taught her about the true origin of her curiosities.



Dear Diary,

Today has been a remarkable and extraordinary day!

My new friend Elizabeth showed me some of her books and informed me that my curiosities are actually called 'fossils' and are the remains of creatures that had lived on the Earth millions of years ago. Can you believe that our Earth is really that old?

There are so many fossils out there on the beach waiting to be discovered; all I want to do is be out there searching for them.

Mary's Ichthyosaur

When Mary was 12 years old, she and her brother discovered what looked like a mysterious creature poking out from a rock. With the help of some local quarry workers, Mary and her brother took the specimen home where she began to slowly and carefully chip away at the great slab using a hammer and chisel. Initially, it was thought that the creature was a crocodile. However, it soon became evident that this creature was something very different. The specimen is now known to be an ichthyosaur: an extinct marine mammal dating back around 195 million years.

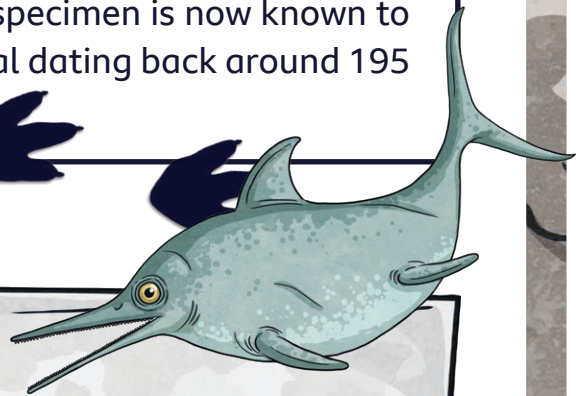
Dear Diary,

Today, an important man of science travelled all the way from London to take a look at my specimen.

He could tell instantly that it was something special. He said it was like nothing he'd ever seen before and that he'd never seen a creature with such an enormous eye. He said that all of science would be amazed!

They called it an ichthyosaur, which means 'fish lizard' in Greek. He paid me £25 for it. It's such a relief to know that, for the first time in my life, my family will not need to worry about money.

Mary went on to make many more remarkable discoveries along the Jurassic Coast — most of which were put on display in London. In recognition for her work, Mary was given a yearly payment by the Geological Society of London. However, as a woman, she was denied membership. Being poor and uneducated, Mary's achievements were largely overlooked and she was not mentioned in any scientific papers at the time.

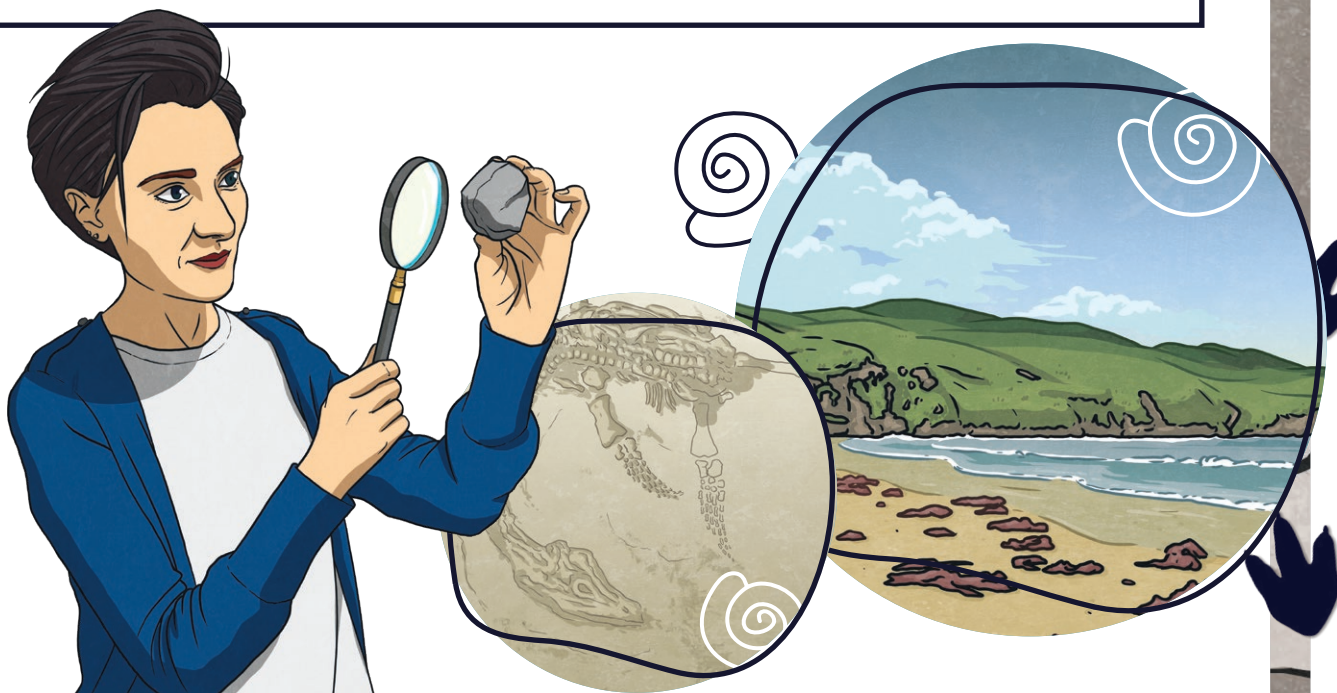


Mary's Legacy

Over recent years, there has been a growing interest in Mary's life and work. Her finds are still considered by many to be some of the most remarkable scientific discoveries. Today, Mary's ichthyosaur - along with several other of her fascinating fossils - are on display at the Natural History Museum in London.

About the Jurassic Coast

The Dorset and East Devon Coast begins in Exmouth, Devon, and extends 95 miles to near Swanage, Dorset. In 2001, it was awarded UNESCO World Heritage status for its combination of rocks and fossils dating back almost 185 million years. Despite being commonly called 'the Jurassic Coast', the site includes rock formations from the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods. Fossils are still being unearthed along the rich coastline today.



Glossary

palaeontologist: A person who studies or is an expert in fossil animals and plants.

Mary Anning

Mary Anning, born in 1799, was a pioneering palaeontologist and fossil collector who made some groundbreaking discoveries along (what is now commonly known as) the Jurassic Coast. She is widely recognised as one of the most significant fossil hunters that ever lived.



Mary's Curiosities

Born in the seaside town of Lyme Regis in Dorset, Mary was raised in relative poverty. Her father, Richard, was a furniture maker and amateur collector of curiosities, which we now know to be fossils. Mary would spend hours on the beach with her father hunting for fossils in the rocks. She was shown, by her father, how to look for and clean the mysterious and eye-catching curiosities that they found on the beach and the family would display these and sell them to tourists for a penny each — unaware of what they actually were.

Following Richard's death, Mary began fossil-hunting alone; sales from these curiosities provided much-needed extra income for the poor family. The young Mary befriended fellow fossil collector Elizabeth Philpott and her sisters, who had moved to the area with their brother. Elizabeth enlightened her as to the true origins of her mysterious curiosities.

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There are so many fossils out there on the beach waiting to be discovered; all I want to do is be out there searching for them.

Mary's Ichthyosaur

When Mary was 12 years old, she and her brother discovered what looked like a mysterious creature poking out from a rock near a cliff face while hunting for curiosities on the beach. Mary enlisted the help of some local quarry workers to lift the slab back to her workroom, where she began to chip away, slowly and patiently, at the great slab using a hammer and chisel. Initially, it was thought that the creature was a crocodile that had migrated from distant lands. However, it soon became evident as Mary chopped away that this creature was something altogether different. The specimen is now known to be an ichthyosaur: an extinct marine mammal dating back around 195 million years.

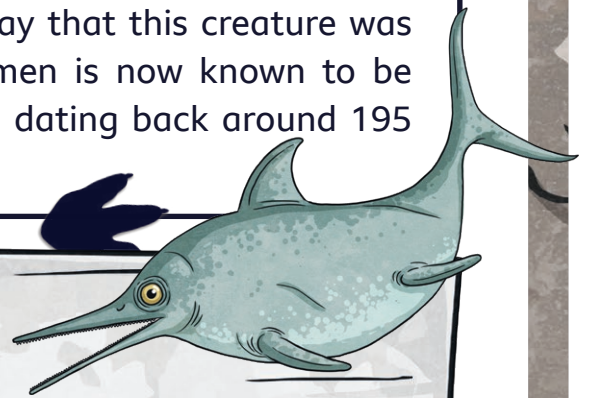
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Mary went on to make many more notable discoveries along the Jurassic Coast, most of which were put on display in London. In recognition for her work, Mary was given a yearly payment by the Geological Society of London but was denied membership because she was a woman. At the time, Mary's discoveries and achievements were not recognised (perhaps because she was a poor and uneducated woman) and she was overlooked by many scientists and academics.



Mary's Legacy

Over recent years, there has been a growing interest in Mary's life and work. Her finds are still considered by many to be some of the most remarkable scientific discoveries; a film about her life has been produced and there are plans for a statue of Mary to be erected along the Jurassic Coast to mark, what would have been, her 222nd birthday. Today, Mary's ichthyosaur - along with several other of her fascinating fossilised specimens - are on display at the Natural History Museum in London.

About the Jurassic Coast

The Dorset and East Devon Coast, commonly known as the Jurassic Coast, begins in Exmouth, Devon, and extends 95 miles to near Swanage, Dorset. In 2001, it was awarded UNESCO World Heritage status for its "outstanding combination of globally significant geological and geomorphological features" dating back almost 185 million years. Despite being called 'the Jurassic Coast', the site includes rock formations from the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods. Fossils are still being unearthed along the rich coastline.

