

Read the short story. Then answer each question.

Fossil Mystery

“What is *that*?”

“It looks like a fossil.”

“It looks part-human.”

“It can’t be...”

The archeologists all started talking at once. I listened to snippets from each of their conversations. The words “animal” and “human” were argued about, with half of us thinking it looked like one while the other half was thinking it looked like the other.

As the chatter started to dwindle, I spoke. “What if it’s neither human nor animal? What if it’s something we haven’t discovered yet? Maybe even something from out of our world...”

There was silence as my **colleagues** digested what I was saying.

Frank said, “I think you might be right. It’s not a dinosaur or any other animal we’ve encountered. It’s not a human. What else could it be?”

The other scientists started talking with one another again. They were talking about tests they could run, and about species of animals they could look up to compare this fossil to. They began to head back to their laptops to begin researching.

Frank and I stayed behind. We continued to examine the fossil. It was hard to describe the creature that was fossilized. It was smaller than a human, but looked like it would have stood on two legs instead of four. Its head was large and it had 6 fingers on each hand, and 8 toes on each foot.



“Do you think it could have been a human from long ago?” Frank asked.

“Maybe, but I’ve never seen one with that many fingers and toes,” I answered. “It could be a new animal species. Maybe it just looks like it would have stood on two legs, but it only looks like that because of the way it was fossilized. I really don’t know.”

Frank and I headed back to our rooms to think it over and get some sleep.

The next morning, I rushed straight to the fossil. There were already other archaeologists there, with confused looks on their faces. As I headed closer, I began to see why. The fossil was different. It had changed overnight! Now it looked like a small bear.

“What happened?” I asked. No one had an answer. None of us could understand how a fossil we had dug up yesterday had just changed. We spent time examining it again. We took pictures and videos of it. We searched to see if anyone had ever come across a changing fossil. No one found anything that was helpful in solving our mystery. What kind of fossil was this?

When night fell, we set up a rotation to make sure two of us were with the fossil at all times. We wanted to make sure that someone wasn’t playing a prank on us by switching fossils somehow. All was quiet for my watch, which was in the middle of the night.

In the morning, I went by the fossil to again find my colleagues puzzling over the fossil. It had changed *again*! No one had seen or heard anything on their watch. How and why did it keep changing? To this day, no one has found the answer to the mystery, but it is very interesting to see the creatures the fossil dreams up!



Questions:

1. Retell the story in your own words.

2. Is this short story fiction or nonfiction? How can you tell?

3. Create your own creature that the fossil might show next.

4. What does the word “*colleagues*” mean? How do you know?

5. Why do you think the fossil keeps changing?

Answers:

1. Retell the story in your own words.
Answers will vary.
2. Is this short story fiction or nonfiction? How can you tell?
The short story is fiction, because it tells a story with characters.
3. Create your own creature that the fossil might show next.
Answers will vary.
4. What does the word “colleagues” mean? How do you know?
The term ‘colleagues’ means people with whom you work in a profession or business. The people are talking about the fossil in a professional way. They know what a fossil is and they are trying to work out what kind of fossil it is.
5. Why do you think the fossil keeps changing?
Answers will vary.