What is a Fossil?
The Active Learning Approach

Activity One:
What is a Fossil? Activity

Materials: Lab Handout, One Baggy for each group with the following items: at least 4 fossils from your department, plus at least four nonfossil items, such as, walnuts/peanuts, pottery shards, modern shark tooth, mineral/rock, stick, modern shell. etc.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Hand out labsheet and sample baggy. Give brief directions. Basically, use the definitions on your labsheet and separate into two piles: fossils and nonfossils. Then give a reason for each choice. Work on the questions if you are done early.
2. Do NOT tell them ahead of time what is or isn’t a fossil. They are to deduce this from the definitions on their labsheet.
3. Walk around during lab time. Don’t directly answer any questions, but rather ask another question back that guides them.
4. When they are all done, discuss. Now you can give the “correct” answers and why. Allow students to correct their answers.
5. Collect sample baggies, counting each to be sure you get all the items back.
6. Collect labsheets.
What is a Fossil? Activity

Name ________________________________ Class _____

DIRECTIONS: Use the following definitions to help you separate into two groups: Fossils and NonFossils. Then give a reason for each choice.

Fossil: A remnant or trace of an organism embedded and preserved in the earth’s crust.

Fossil: Any evidence of past life.

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<th>Item</th>
<th>Fossil or NonFossil?</th>
<th>Reason</th>
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SUMMARY QUESTIONS:

1. Which Items did you think were Fossils?
   Why did you think this?

2. Which Items were NonFossils?
   Why did you think this?

3. What one Item was the hardest to figure out?
   What was the problem?

4. Which of the definitions do you think is better for figuring this lab out?
   Why?