



Mary Anning

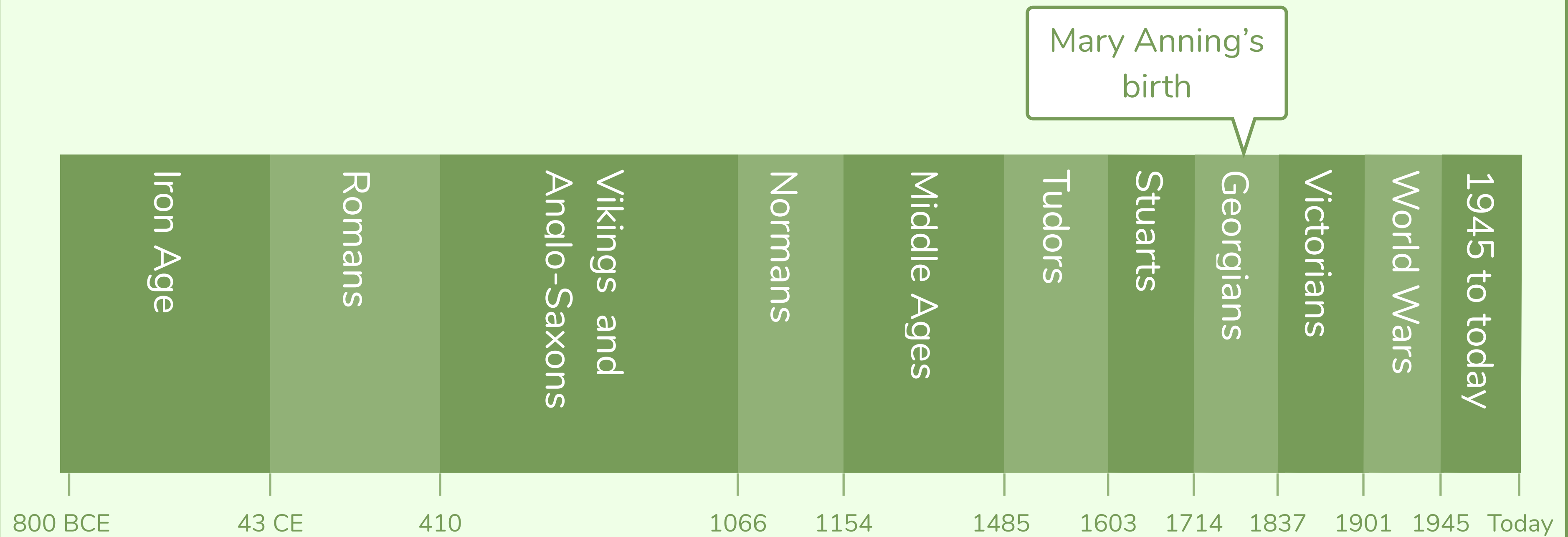
Learning Objective:

To learn about the life and achievements of Mary Anning.



This is Mary Anning.

What can you tell about her from this picture and the timeline?



Mary Anning is remembered today as being a pioneering **palaeontologist**.

Do you know what a **palaeontologist** does?
Use the picture clues to help you!



pioneering: involving new ideas or methods

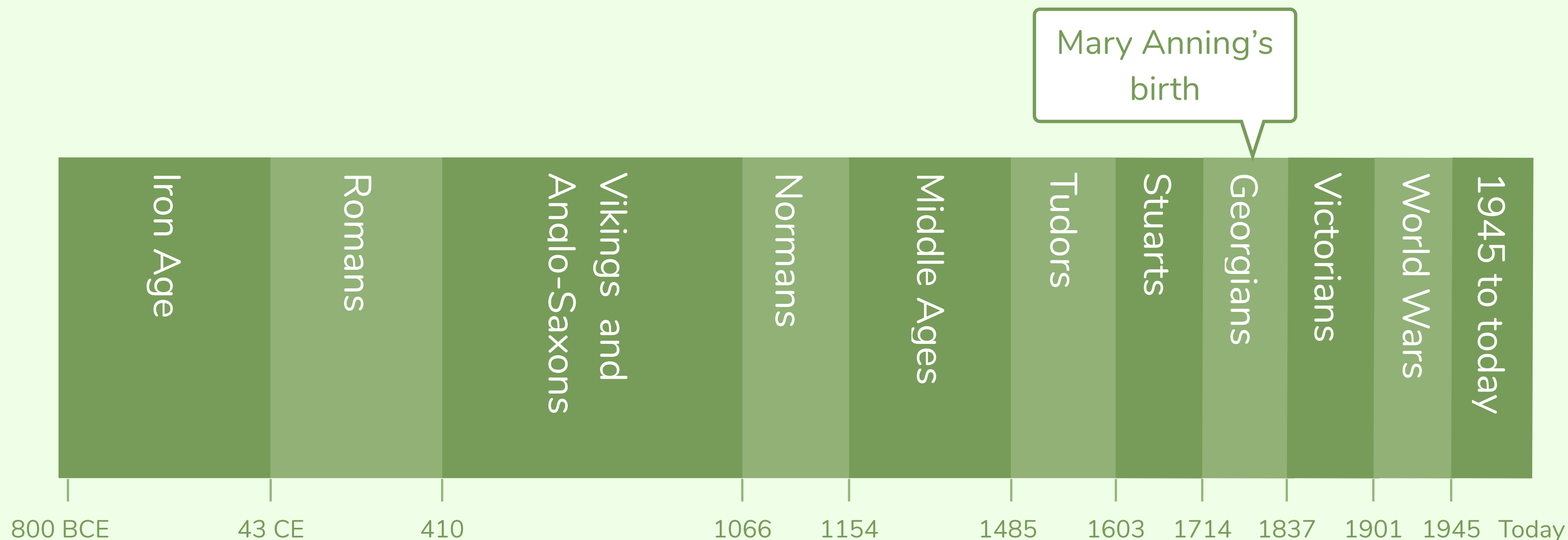
A palaeontologist is a scientist who studies **fossils** (the remains or traces of plants and animals that lived a very long time ago). They look at things like dinosaur bones, footprints and ancient plants to learn about life on Earth millions of years ago.



Before we find out about Mary Anning, we need to understand a bit more about what life was like during the Georgian period when Mary lived.



What differences do you think there might have been between Mary's childhood and your childhood?





HANGING OUT THE CLOTHES.

During the Georgian era when Mary lived, only rich boys went to school. Rich girls were educated at home by a tutor or governess. Children from poor families didn't go to school. Instead, they helped their families by working to earn money or by helping in the home.

At this time, women didn't have the same rights as men. Women were expected to take care of the home, cook the meals and take care of their families. Poor women had to work to earn money but wealthier women did not have jobs. All doctors, lawyers, scientists and other professionals were men. Most men believed that women were not as intelligent as men.



What do you think about this?

At the beginning of the 19th century, people still didn't know what they were looking at when they found fossils. No one knew what dinosaurs were or that the bones they found in the ground were millions of years old.

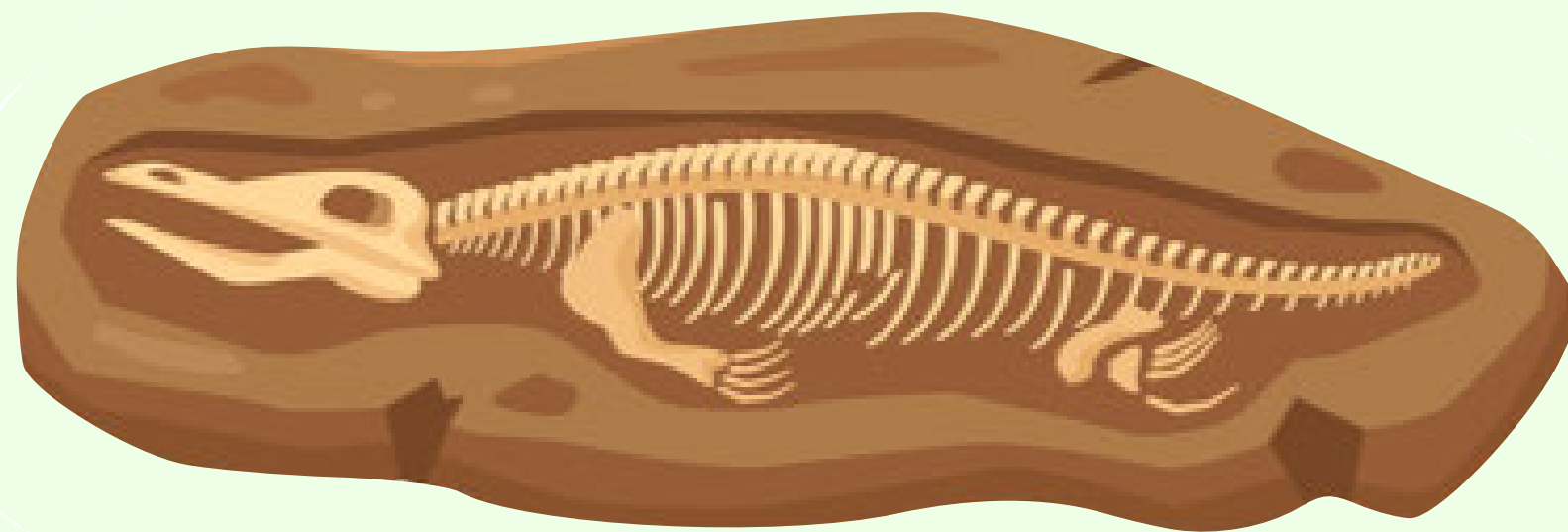


In ancient China, they believed dinosaur fossils to be dragon bones.

Some ancient Greeks thought dinosaur bones were the bones of giant humans.



In ancient Rome, many people believed dinosaur fossils to be the remains of monsters!



Now we know a bit more about the time when Mary Anning lived, let's find out about her life...



Mary Anning was born in 1799 in a town called Lyme Regis, a coastal town in the south of England. Her family was poor. She had eight or nine brothers and sisters, but only herself and her older brother, Joseph, survived childhood.



Mary's father, Richard Anning, was a cabinetmaker who also collected and sold fossils. When she was around five years old, her father started teaching her how to find fossils on the beach. They then cleaned and sold the fossils they found from his shop to make more money.

Mary's father died suddenly in 1810 from a disease called tuberculosis. This made life even harder for the family. Mary's brother had to get a job as an apprentice and Mary had to find and sell even more fossils to help make ends meet.

Mary didn't go to school but she could read and write. As she grew up, she taught herself about geology (the study of the Earth) and anatomy (the study of the body) from books.



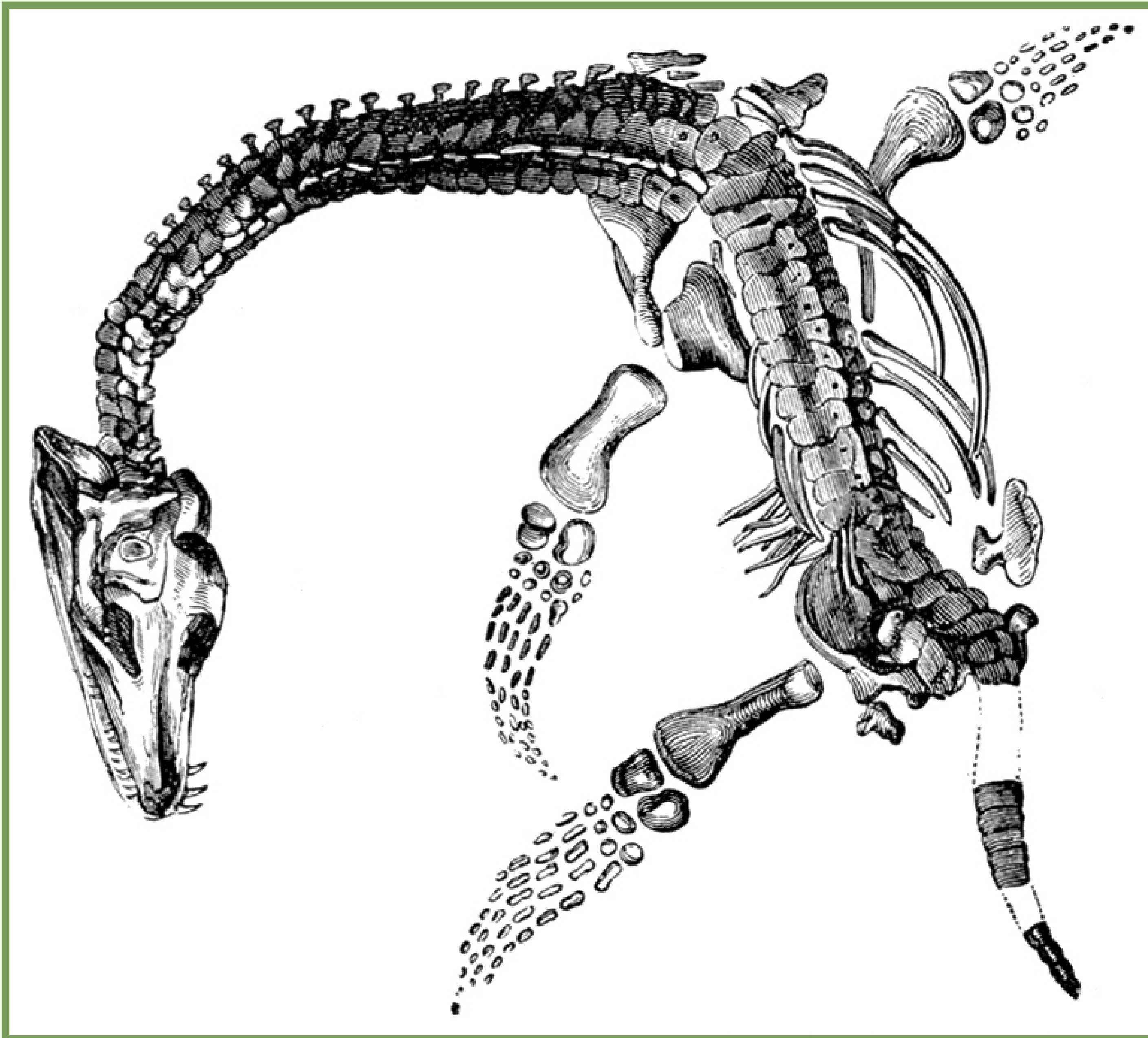


In 1811, when Mary was just 12 years old, her brother Joseph found something unusual sticking out of a cliff. It looked like a strange skull. Mary carefully returned to the spot and, over many months, uncovered the rest of the skeleton. It turned out to be the first complete ichthyosaur, a giant sea creature that had lived millions of years ago, to be discovered.

This discovery brought Mary some attention, but not much money. In those days, scientists were nearly always men, and many people didn't believe a young girl could make such an important find. Even when her fossils were studied and displayed in museums, Mary's name was often left out.

Despite this, Mary never stopped hunting for fossils. She continued to explore the cliffs of Lyme Regis, often in dangerous conditions. She discovered many more important fossils, including the first complete plesiosaur skeleton and the first British pterosaur, a flying reptile.





This is a drawing of the plesiosaurus found by Mary Anning.

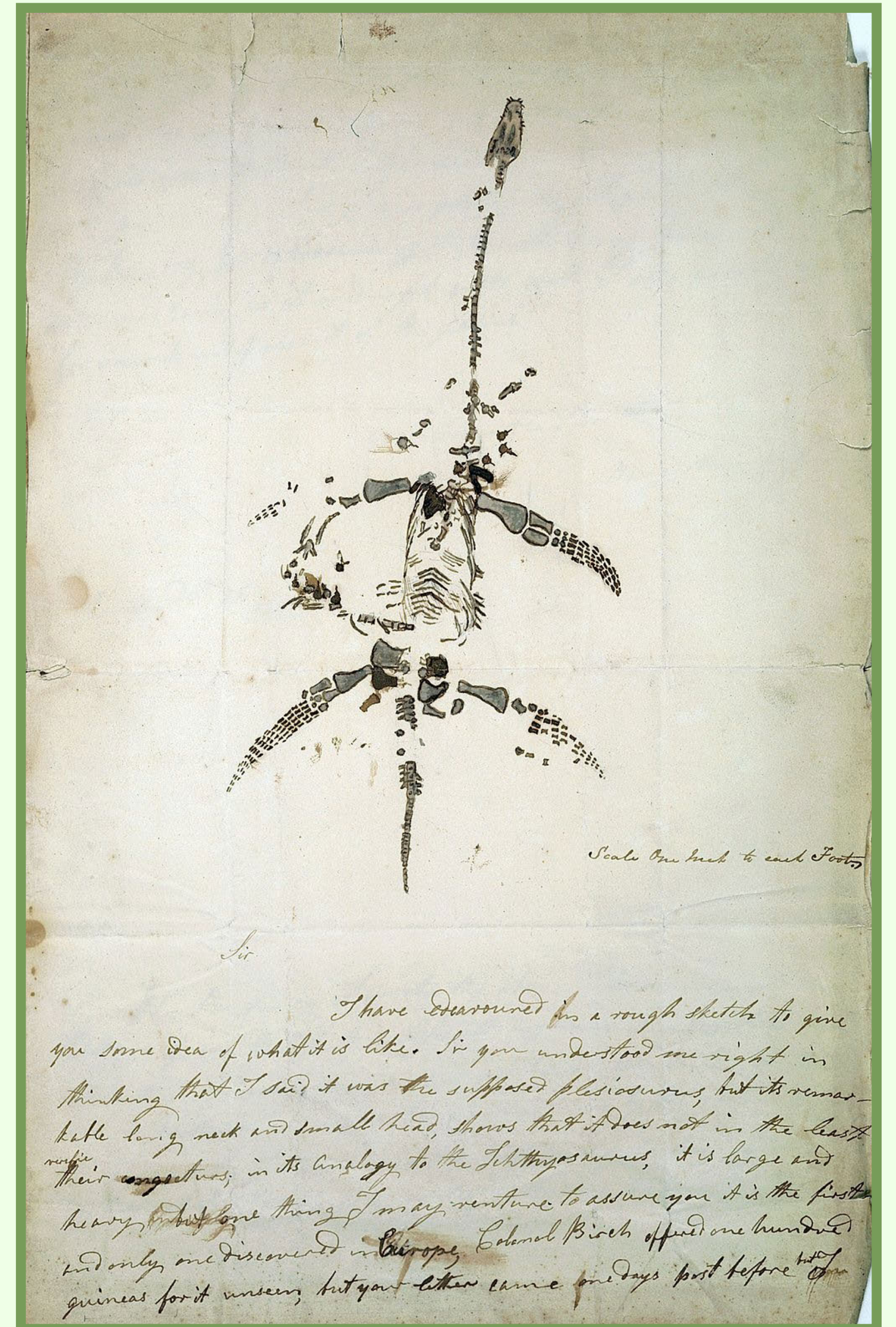




Later in life, Mary became better known. Visitors from all over the world came to Lyme Regis hoping to meet her or buy one of her fossils. Although she still struggled with money, her discoveries helped change the way people thought about the history of life on Earth. Mary Anning died in 1847 at the age of 47.

Despite the fact that Mary played such a big part in helping people learn about dinosaurs, the scientists who wrote about her discoveries hardly ever credited her. Because Mary was a woman and from a working-class background she couldn't join the Geological Society. It took a long time for her to get the credit she deserved for her findings.

This is part of a letter Mary Anning wrote concerning her discovery of the plesiosaurus.



Despite being one of the most knowledgeable people when it came to fossils, Mary didn't receive the recognition she deserved while she was alive. Today, Mary Anning and her work are remembered and celebrated in lots of different ways.



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Mary_Anning#/media/File:London_-_Cromwell_Road_-_Natural_History_Museum_1881_by_Alfred_Waterhouse_-_Mary_Anning_the_Fossil_Woman.jpg

This is one of the fossils Mary Anning found, which is now displayed in the Natural History Museum in London.





The Lyme Regis Museum now stands on the site where Mary Anning's house and fossil shop stood. The museum has a blue plaque to commemorate Mary Anning.

On what would have been her 222nd birthday, a statue of Mary Anning and her dog was unveiled in Lyme Regis. The statue was the result of a campaign started by a schoolgirl called Evie who couldn't believe that a memorial to such an important historical figure didn't exist in the town where she made such significant discoveries.



Wow, what an interesting life Mary Anning had!



What do you think is the most interesting thing you have found out about Mary Anning today?

Think, pair, share your ideas.

Who would like to sit in the hot seat?

Choose one child at a time to sit in the hot seat as Mary Anning.



What questions would you like to ask Mary about her life and achievements?