

DISCOVERY FILM FESTIVAL

Scotland's International Film Festival
for Young Audiences

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Teachers' Resource Pack: **Mary Anning**

First and Second Level Learners | Created by Lucie Maupetit, Virginie Bradbury

Discovery Film Festival | Mon 2 – Wed 18 November 2026

DCA

Dundee Contemporary Arts

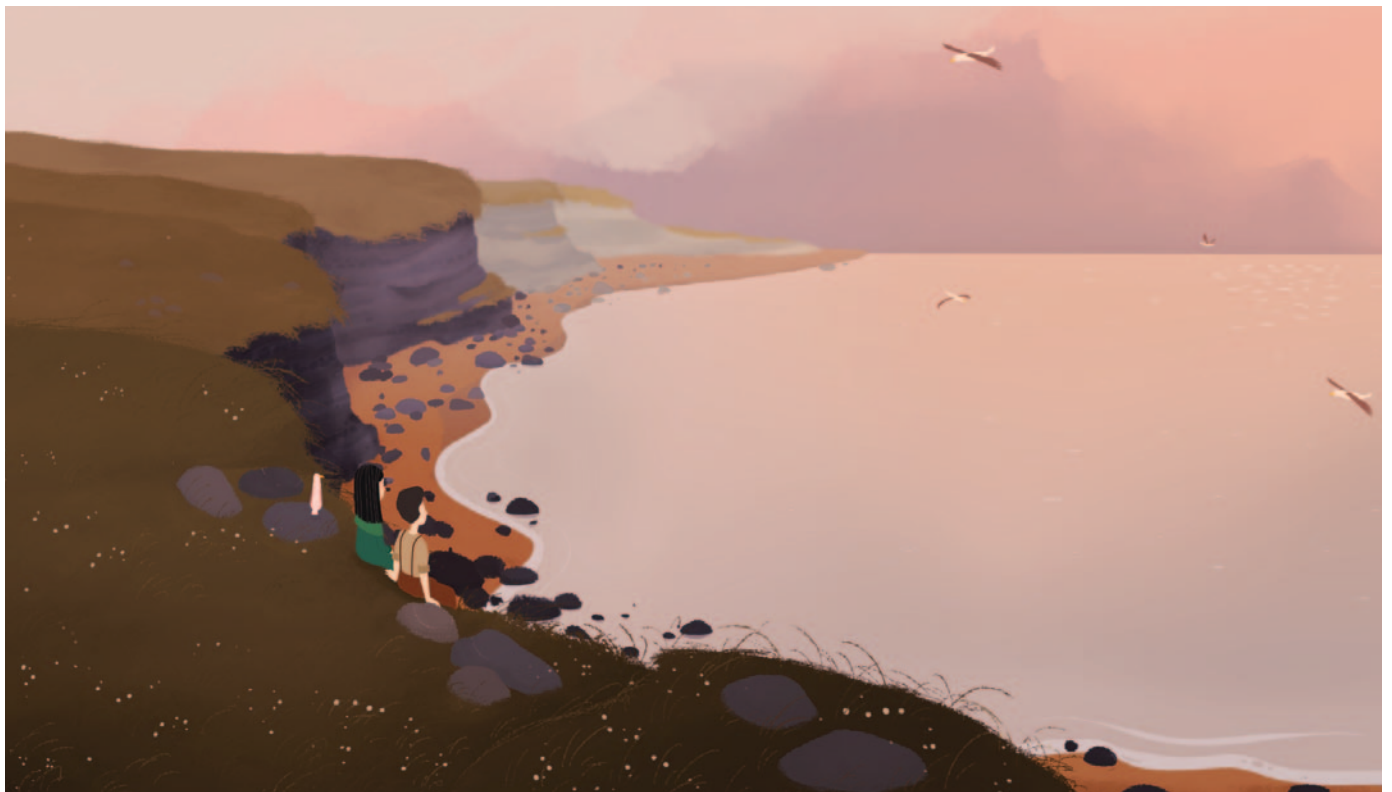
DUNDEE
ONE CITY, MANY DISCOVERIES

CREATIVE
LAND
SCOT
ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

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dca.org.uk/discovery-film-festival

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Introduction

Discovery Learning Resources give you exciting classroom activities to enhance Curriculum for Excellence delivery.

They are created by classroom teachers and education professionals.

Each resource aims to:

- support and extend working with film in the classroom
- help prepare teachers for a class visit to a Discovery Film Festival film and to extend the impact of that visit for delivery of CfE
- develop confidence in Moving Image Education approaches and working with 21st Century Literacy/moving image texts

Each resource is free and available to download from:

<https://www.dca.org.uk/discovery-film-festival-resources/>

Mary Anning

Dir: Marcel Barelli

Switzerland, Belgium, 2025 / 1h 12m



Mary Anning

Synopsis:

In 1811, Mary Anning, an inquisitive and tenacious twelve-year-old girl, spends her days searching for fossils. Her father passed on this passion to her, but her life suddenly changes when he disappears, leaving behind a mysterious drawing and a struggling family.

Advisory note:

This film contains some mild language (which looks worse in the subtitles than in the original French): blessed ass/bullshit/weirdo. This film contains scenes of bullying (mild) and the death of a parent. Catholic schools need to be aware that *Mary Anning* highlights some of the oppositions between religion and science and the Reverend character does not portray a very open-minded image of the Church. The film is in French with English subtitles. However, it is very visual and with the appropriate preparation (see **Activity 1**), even learners who are poor readers should get a lot out of the film.

Teacher's notes:

Age and stage recommendations, including CfE objectives:

The film is suitable for ages 7 and above. This pack is aimed at First and Second Level learners. This film is recommended for P4 and up. The following CfE Experiences and Outcomes are covered in this pack:

Social Studies: **SOC 1-03a / SOC 2-03a, SOC 1-04a / SOC 2-04a**

Literacy and English: **LIT 1-13a / LIT 2-13a**

Digital Literacy: **TECH 1-02a / TECH 2-02a**

Modern Languages: **MLAN 1-03 / MLAN 2-03a**

Film and Screen curriculum: **I am exploring stories and characters in Film and Screen products from different cultures to learn about the world around me.**

Teacher quote:

This charming animated movie retraces the life of Mary Anning at 12 years old. Mary and her dog Tray set out along the Dorset cliffs to seek a mysterious giant fossil inspired by her late father, in the hope of saving the family home. The film presents a charming, picture-book aesthetic, with hand-drawn frames that capture the Jurassic Coast's distinctive beauty. It is a sensitive and poetic children's adventure, challenging sexism and social determinism.



Before watching the film:

Activity 1: **The poster (Literacy)**

Look at the poster (See **Appendix 1**) and write down/share everything you see. Be as specific as you can. Then write down/share what you think about it. Finally, write down anything you wonder.

E.G: I see a boy with a strange stone in his hand. I think he might be looking for fossils. I wonder if this is what the film will be about.

This activity should bring forward the fact that the film is likely to be in French. It is also worth noticing that the 2 girls are standing whereas the boy is kneeling down so there is an element of girl power. It is set on the coast.

Activity 2: **Who was Mary Anning? (History)**

Having an understanding of the life of Mary Anning, will help all learners follow the story even if they might find it difficult to read subtitles.

Ahead of your cinema visit, watch this 12 minutes video about Mary Anning:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNOh-85_Dmc

Ask learners to work in groups to organise the different events from Mary's life in chronological order. Each group should be given a set of 9 cards to sort. (See **Appendix 2**).

You can then ask one person from each group to retell the story, adding some of the details they remember from the video, if they can.

Activity 3: **The place of women during Mary Anning's life (Social Studies)**

Through the film, the learners will have gathered evidence of what was acceptable or not for women/girls to do.

Using the worksheet provided (see **Appendix 3**), ask the learners to decide which activities women were allowed to take part in, in the 19th century. The learners can either copy each phrase or cut out and paste each label in the correct category.



Activity 4: **Jeu de l’oie – Goose game (Social Studies)**

Henry, Mary and Joseph play a game called jeu de l’oie. This game is very old but is still very popular in Europe.

Use the board provided (**Appendix 4**) to play the game in groups of 3 to 6. You will need a counter for each player and 2 dice.

Many variations of that game exist, you could create your own on a theme of your choice using the blank board. You could decide which squares are special and what the players have to do if they land on that square.

Activity 5: **Women in Science (Digital Literacy)**

Print a worksheet for each learner or if this is the first time your learners are doing this type of activity, they could work in pairs.

- Model how to open a teacher-approved website on the board. Show pupils exactly where to click and explain that we only use safe, checked sources in school.
- Demonstrate how to search for one scientist’s name using a simple key word, such as “Mae Jemison” or “Mary Somerville”. Narrate your thinking aloud, reminding pupils to look for pictures, headings and short facts.
- Read a short section of information together and highlight 2–3 key facts. Show how to select only important details, rather than copying everything, and record them as notes, pictures or short phrases.
- Model how to turn information into a simple research record on the worksheet. Include name, job, one achievement and one interesting fact.

Here are examples of websites your learners could use to search information:

- Plan Bee:
https://planbee.com/blogs/news/10-women-trailblazers-in-science?srsId=AfmBOop7Wym2G3c8S4INfkFrUkV_vafMzBTKIZeREBqIRXsOX26iTkYj
- Museum of Natural History:
<https://ournh.ox.ac.uk/learn-shout-out-for-women-in-science>

Activity 5: **Women in Science (Digital Literacy)**

Name: _____ Date: _____

Famous Female Scientist Research Worksheet

My Scientist:

Choose a famous female scientist to research.

📄 Scientist's Name: _____

👩🔬 What was her job? _____

🌍 Where was she from? _____

🖋️ What did she discover, invent, or help us learn? _____

☆ Write one interesting fact about her. _____

🎨 Draw a picture of your scientist below.



Activity 6: **Feelings in French (Modern Languages)**

Introduction:

Activity 6: Mary Anning emotions.pptx

Practice the question with the learners: Comment ça va ?

Introduce flashcards one by one, let the learners ask you the question and you answer or use the sound file.

(For the Happy flashcard, there are 2 possible answers depending on whether the happy person is a boy or a girl. It does not impact any of the other answers. Similarly, there are 2 possible written answers for the Tired flashcard but this does not affect the pronunciation either way.)

Go over flashcards again and ask the learners to repeat (feel free to play with it and make them repeat with a loud voice, with a low voice, slowly, fast, high pitched, low pitched...)

Ask the learners to repeat with a delay, make them wait for 3 seconds before repeating to allow them to process and think of the answer.

C'est quel numéro? (What's the number):

Ideally, you would like the learners to be able to answer in French but if your learners haven't practised French numbers yet, this can be answered in English.

You can use flashcards if you prefer and blu-tack them on the board. For each flashcard you need to write a number of your choice.

Choose a range of numbers the pupils have learnt.

You call out an item and pupils say the number in French.

Qu'est-ce qu'il manque? (What is missing?):

Again, encourage the learners to formulate an answer in French. Please note that the answers are recorded for support.

As the previous activity, it can be delivered using flashcards.

The learners look at the picture then close their eyes.

The teacher goes on to the next slide and the children can then open their eyes and see what picture is missing.

The pupil saying the instruction in French wins. The teacher goes on to the next slide to reveal the answer. Please note that the answer is recorded for support.

Activity 7: **Fossils (Science)**

Mary Anning is now recognised as the best fossil hunter ever. But what actually is a fossil?

In small groups, match up the pictures with the sentences. (See **Appendix 5**) Then place them in order, to recreate the processes of fossilisation.

Mary Anning found lots of fossils throughout the film. Can you help her identify them? In small groups, match up the fossil with the living creature. (See **Appendix 5**) Look for shapes and remember that the soft parts of the animal would have decayed so only the skeleton remains.

Many fossils are now displayed in museums. Could you create a class art display where each child draws a different fossil? There are many examples of fossil drawings online for inspiration.



Activity 8: About the director (Literacy)

With the class, read the page “About the Director” and discuss the following questions:

Retrieval:

1. What two things did the filmmaker say they loved as a child?
2. What happened during the trip to Lyme Regis, and what did it lead to?

Inference:

3. What is a pioneer? Why do you think the filmmaker describes Mary Anning as a pioneer?
4. How the filmmaker feels about Mary Anning and why?

Word Meaning:

5. What does the word “palaeontology” tell you the film is about?
6. Use the text to explain what “anachronistic” means in the description of the music.

Comparison:

7. Answer in 1–2 complete sentences. Compare the two visual styles described in the text.
8. Answer in 2–3 complete sentences. Compare the kind of music in the film with the historical setting of Mary Anning’s story.

About the director
Marcel Barelli

(1985, Lodrino, Switzerland) is a director of animated films and author of illustrated books. Passionate about animals and nature, he develops all his projects around these themes. His short films have been selected in hundreds of international festivals and won numerous awards all over the world. He lives and works in Geneva.

FILMS (shorts)

- 2025 "EX-tract" 3 min – animation – Nadasdyfilm
- 2024 « Martha » 6 min – animation – Nadasdyfilm / RSI
- 2021 "Dans la nature" 5 min – animation – Nadasdyfilm / RSI (Prix du Cinéma Suisse)
- 2017 "Uno strano processo" 10 min – animation – Nadasdyfilm / RSI
- 2017 "Ralph et les dinosaures" série d'animation – 26 x 5min – Nadasdyfilm / RSI / Vivement lundi !
- 2016 "Habitats" 2min – animation – Nadasdyfilm
- 2015 "Lucens" 6 min – animation – Nadasdyfilm / RSI
- 2013 "Vigia" 8min – animation – Nadasdyfilm / RSI / Foliascope (Pardino d'argento Locarno)
- 2011 "Gypaetus helveticus" 7 min – animation – Nadasdyfilm / RSI
- 2009 "Peripheria" 7 min – animation – HEAD/ RSI (Film School)
- 2008 "No penguin's land" 9 min – animation – HEAD (Film School)
- 2008 "Bianconero" 1 min – animation

BOOKS

- 2025 "Bestiaire de la 6e extinction" 430pp 41 – EPFL press
- 2024 "Génial végétal" 40pp La Martinière jeunesse (avec F. Daugey)
- 2023 "Dans la nature" 40pp La Martinière jeunesse (avec F. Daugey)
- 2022 "Bestiaire désenchanté" 120pp 41 – EPFL press
- 2020 "Bestiaire helvétique" 430pp EPFL press éditions

marcelbarelli.com
bsky.app/profile/marcelbarelli.bsky.social

From Childhood Fascination to a Film
Ever since I was a child, I have had a passion for dinosaurs and prehistoric creatures. That is how I learned about Mary Anning, a little-known but crucial contributor to the field of palaeontology. Making a film about her has been a longstanding dream of mine. It was during a trip to Lyme Regis to retrace her footsteps that the idea for this project began to take shape. I am overjoyed to have succeeded in bringing this film to life.

An Inspiring Modern Heroine
Mary Anning was only 12 when she started revolutionizing our understanding of the history of the Earth. At a time when women were invisible, and women from poorer classes even more so, her curiosity, rigour, and passion made Mary a pioneer in her field. Her story illustrates what can be achieved through sheer determination and courage. To me, she seemed an ideal choice to depict a strong female character, far from stereotypes, one that young people could relate to. Even now, science remains a very male-dominated field. Except for Marie Curie, the average person would be hard-pressed to cite the names of the handful of women who have contributed to the annals of science. It seems critical to me to relate the story of the woman who basically invented palaeontology by herself.

Truth and Sensitivity
I did the initial development of the project with Magali Pouzol and then continued with Pierre-Luc Granjon. Pierre-Luc and I wanted to tell the story of a specific period in Mary's life: when she was 12, the age when she both discovered a fossil of major importance and

lost her father. The film is based on a great deal of research, validated by Lionel Cavin, palaeontologist and curator at the Museum of Natural History in Geneva. Even though it is an animated feature, scientific rigour was essential. The story thus combines real events and artistic licence to convey both the emotion and the truth about her exceptional career.

A Graphic Universe With Two Voices
For the visuals, I worked with Marjolaine Perreten. Our styles are complementary: mine is more cartoon-like and naive; hers, more subtle and delicate. Together, we created an accessible and evocative world, inspired by children's books, that could portray the gentleness and power of this story.

A Bold Score
The music in the film is deliberately anachronistic: pop punk with a teen flair that boldly contrasts with the story's historical context of the 19th century. This choice powerfully reflects Mary's bubbly, rebellious, counter-current personality while highlighting her unique energy in her era.

An Intergenerational Film
Although imagined for young audiences, the film speaks to people of all ages as it touches on universal themes: the search for self, the role of women in society, loss, and discovery. I hope that the film will not only convey my deep admiration for Mary Anning, but also the values of emancipation, curiosity, and freedom. It is a heartfelt homage to a pioneer who deserves to be better known.



Activity 8: **About the director (Literacy) – Answers**

Answers:

Retrieval:

1. The filmmaker loved dinosaurs and prehistoric creatures.
2. During a trip to Lyme Regis, the idea for the film began to take shape. It led to the creation of the film about Mary Anning.

Inference:

3. Mary is called a pioneer because she was doing very important work at a young age and “Revolutionising our understanding of the history of the Earth”.
4. The filmmaker feels deeply admiring and respectful towards Mary Anning. This is shown by phrases like “overjoyed”, “deep admiration”, and “heartfelt homage”, which suggest they think Mary was brave, important, and deserved to be remembered.

Word Meaning:

5. It tells us the film is about the study of fossils and prehistoric life.
6. “Anachronistic” means something that does not match the time period. The music is described this way because it is pop punk, which is very different from the 19th-century setting.

Comparison:

7. One visual style is cartoon-like and naive, while the other is more subtle and delicate. Together, they make the film feel accessible and evocative.
8. The music is pop punk and teen-like, but the story is set in the 19th century. This makes the music contrast strongly with the historical setting and helps show Mary’s lively personality.

Appendix 1: The poster



Appendix 2: Chronology of Mary Anning's life

Mary looks for fossils with her brother and dad.



200 years later, Mary Anning is recognised as one of the greatest fossil hunter ever.

Mary meets Elizabeth Philpot.



Mary Anning was born in Lyme Regis, In 1799.



Mary's father dies when she is 12.



Mary was struck by lightning and survived.



Mary sells the Ichthyosaurus' fossil to William Buckland



Mary sells fossils in the village.



Mary discovers the Ichthyosaurus' fossil.



Appendix 3: The place of women during Mary Anning's life

Name: _____

Females were allowed to...

Women were not allowed to...

Go for a walk on the beach

Talk about things they weren't supposed to know about

Go shopping

Wear boots

Go to school

Swim in the sea

Work in science

Read books

Play boardgames

Cook

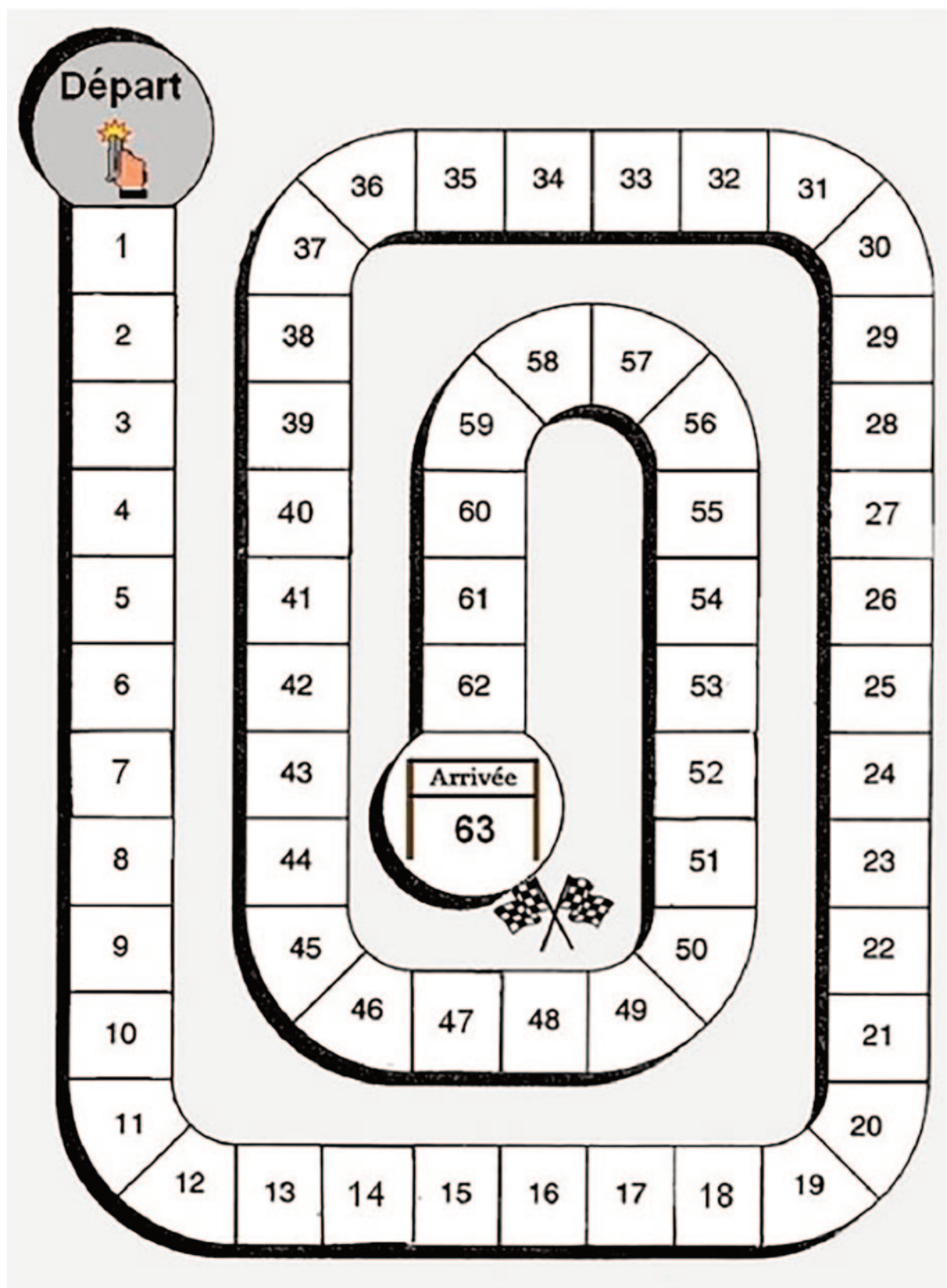
Get married

Own a pet

A horizontal row of 30 small orange dots.



Appendix 4: The Goose game



Appendix 5: How do we get fossils?



The fish gets old and dies.
It sinks to the seabed.



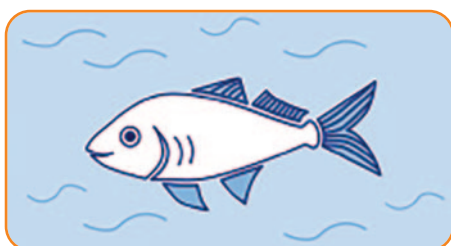
The fish fossil is
discovered. It might
be put in a museum.



The soft parts of the
fish rot away. Only the
skeleton remains.



Over millions of years,
the mud turns to rock and
the fish becomes fossil.



The fish is alive,
swimming in the sea.

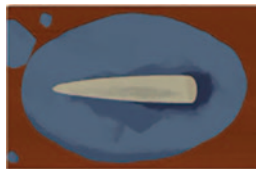


Mud covers up the fish.
The fish is buried.

Appendix 5: How do we get fossils?



A gryphaea



An ichthyosaurus



An ammonite



A sea urchin



A belemnite



More information:

Mary Anning grew up at the start of the 19th century. At the time, a pound was divided into 20 shillings. £1 at the time would be the equivalent of £150 now.

Paleontology is the study of fossils. There are many words ending with the suffix -ology which means 'the study of'. It could be interesting to research the meaning of other words with the same suffix, such as biology, geology, zoology, chronology, ornithology, entomology, herpetology, ecology, microbiology, meteorology, volcanology, cardiology, psychology, criminology and many others...





Evaluating this resource

We hope that you found this resource useful and appropriate. Please do send us any film reviews, letters from your pupils, documentation of classwork and your feedback by e-mailing **olivia.knight@dca.org.uk**

Would you make a good Discovery Film Festival Case Study?

We are seeking a number of simple Case Studies in how teachers have used or are using Discovery films in the classroom across Curriculum for Excellence and across the Levels.

Any case studies that we develop would be intended for presentation on GLOW, the Creativity Portal and on Discovery Film Festival websites. We have a simple template to be completed and are keen to have classwork and documentation included. If you would like to be a Discovery Case Study please e-mail **olivia.knight@dca.org.uk**

