The Megalodon: King of the Ocean

Read the article and answer the questions. *NOTE This assignment is 3 pages long.

Dinosaurs walked the earth millions of years ago. At the same time, thousands of **creatures** lived under the ocean's surface. One of these marine **creatures** was the megalodon.

The megalodon was the largest shark in the world. It was over 50 feet long. That's about three times longer than the length of a great white shark! How do scientists know about the megalodon? They have discovered thousands of large megalodon tooth **fossils**. The name megalodon actually means "big tooth."

Megalodon teeth **reveal** a lot of information about the megalodon's diet. The megalodon was a carnivore. In fact, it was at the top of the ocean food chain for more than 13 million years. The megalodon ate small sharks, fish, and even large whales. Scientists know megalodons ate whales because they have discovered megalodon teeth marks on whale bones. The megalodon would open its jaw very wide and chomp down on its prey. It would use its large teeth to tear the animal and eat it. Many scientists think this **creature** had the most powerful bite of any ocean predator.

Like all sharks, the megalodon had rows of teeth. It would shed these teeth as it grew. These teeth would then be replaced by new ones. At any time, a megalodon had 276 teeth. The size of a megalodon tooth could reach up to 7 inches! Today, many people collect megalodon tooth **fossils**.



a reconstruction of the megalodon jaw
Serge Illaryonov (CC BY 3.0)

Although scientists know a lot about the megalodon diet based on tooth **fossils**, they do not know exactly what megalodons looked like. They think that megalodons had a short nose and a squashed jaw. Megalodons also likely had long fins on either side, similar to a modern-day blue shark's fins.

Today, humans do not have to worry about finding a live megalodon in the ocean. They have been **extinct** for millions of years. Megalodons most likely went **extinct** when the sea waters began cooling down. At the time, many large sea animals had adapted to warm tropical waters, including the megalodon. Megalodons could not adapt to living in cold water. Their habitats began to shrink. During this time period, many large mammals also began going **extinct**. Megalodons found less and less prey to eat and eventually died out. The megalodon most likely went **extinct** about 3.6 million years ago.

Comprehension Questions

1. What does the name megalodon mean?

A. big tooth

B. great white shark

C. powerful bite

D. short nose

2. What does the text compare the length of a megalodon to?

A. the length of one large whale

B. 276 times the length of a small fish

C. 50 times the length of a small shark

D. three times the length of a great white shark

3. Read the following sentences from the text.

"Megalodon teeth reveal a lot of information about the megalodon's diet. The megalodon was a carnivore. In fact, it was at the top of the ocean food chain for more than 13 million years. The megalodon ate small sharks, fish, and even large whales. Scientists know megalodons ate whales because they have discovered megalodon teeth marks on whale bones."

What conclusion can you draw from this evidence?

A. The megalodon is a close relative of small sharks, fish, and large whales.

B. Megalodons have similar teeth and bones as the large whales today.

C. Scientists can learn about an extinct animal from fossils of other animals.

D. Animals in the ocean did not eat each other 13 million years ago.

4. Scientists know a lot about megalodon teeth but are not sure what the animal looked like. According to the text, what might be the reason?

Answer

A. The megalodon had a lot of teeth that would keep shedding and get replaced so it's easier for scientists to find and learn from them.

B. Scientists have found ancient drawings of the inside of a megalodon's mouth but they haven't found any drawings of its face and body.

C. The megalodon had such an impressive mouth and bite that scientists have not been interested in learning anything else about it.

D. Scientists can only find megalodon teeth to learn from since teeth can last in cold ocean waters but other bones cannot.

5. What is the main idea of this text?

Answer

A. Many people like to collect megalodon tooth fossils since they could be as large as 7 inches.

B. The megalodon was the largest shark in the world, lived millions of years ago, had many powerful teeth, and went extinct when ocean temperatures changed.

C. Scientists have found megalodon teeth marks on whale bones which shows that megalodons ate whales.

D. Millions of years ago, water in the ocean used to be warm and tropical and then it started to cool down and many animals could not live in the cold water.