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includes pictures includes a bibliography for further reading the early history of earth covers such vast stretches of time that years centuries and even millennia become virtually meaningless instead paleontologists and scientists who study geochronology divide time into periods and eras the current view of science is that earth is around 4 6 billion years old and the first 4 billion years of its development are known as the precambrian period for the first billion years or so there was no life in earth then the first single celled life forms early bacteria and algae began to emerge it's unclear where they came from or even if they originated on this planet at all but this gradual development continued until around four billion years ago when suddenly in geological terms more complex forms of life began to emerge scientists call this time of an explosion of new forms of life the paleozoic era and it stretched from around 541 250 million years ago mya in the oceans and then on land new creatures and plants began to appear in bewildering variety and by the end of this period life on earth had diversified into a myriad of complex forms that filled virtually every habitat and niche available in the seas and on the planet's only continent pangea despite all of the scientific advances made in the past few centuries including an enhanced understanding of earth's geological past very little is known about the planet's early history it is generally accepted that the planet formed somewhere in the region of 4 5 billion years ago and at some point the first life appeared in the form of tiny single celled creatures but scientists are unsure of what this life looked like one of the problems for those seeking to trace the history of life on earth is that modern scholars are almost entirely dependent on fossil records but the earliest types of life left few fossils the best fossils are formed from the bones and hard body parts of dead creatures but the earliest types of life were so small that they had no bones or cartilage and thus left no fossils thus even though the precambrian period 4 600 541 millions of years ago mya covers over 80 of the entire history of the planet scientists have very little idea of what forms of life existed then then as earth entered the cambrian period there was a relatively sudden increase in life form diversity throughout the oceans completely new forms of life more complex and more diverse than anything that had been seen before began to spread this acceleration in the evolution of new forms of life was so dramatic that this has come to be known as the cambrian explosion although new species in the cambrian explosion developed almost entirely in the oceans the land was not entirely devoid of life though there were no plants or animals mats of cyanobacteria and other types of microbes covered large terrestrial areas scientists have discovered the tracks of a creature that were left in mud that existed 551 mya and those tracks were left by leg like appendages was this a fish like creature that temporarily invaded the land or was it something completely different than anything that exists today there is no general consensus but the cambrian period left a rich fossil record that provides a clear idea of the development of life during this time at the same time new discoveries are continually

being made and the more scientists discover about this mysterious period the more their understanding of ancient earth changes the cambrian period the history and legacy of the start of complex life on earth looks at the development of the era the extinction event that preceded it and how life began to evolve during it along with pictures depicting important people places and events you will learn about the cambrian period like never before

discusses the cambrian era in earth s history when the first forms of life appeared and began to flourish and evolve

a comprehensive guide to the evolution of life during the cambrian period and a story of one man s search for the world s oldest animal fossils told with a wry humor the odd pop cultural sci fi reference and personal anecdotes foster does a great job in making this an enjoyable read and bringing the cambrian to us an alien world is transformed before our eyes into one that is increasingly more familiar quarterly review of biology this volume aimed at the general reader presents the life and times of the amazing animals that inhabited earth more than five hundred million years ago the cambrian period was a critical time in earth s history during this immense span of time nearly every modern group of animals appeared although life had been around for more than two million millennia cambrian rocks preserve the record of the first appearance of complex animals with eyes protective skeletons antennae and complex ecologies grazing predation and multi tiered ecosystems with animals living in on or above the sea floor became common the cascade of interaction led to an ever increasing diversification of animal body types by the end of the period the ancestors of sponges corals jellyfish worms mollusks brachiopods arthropods echinoderms and vertebrates were all in place the evidence of this cambrian explosion is preserved in rocks all over the world including north america where the seemingly strange animals of the period are preserved in exquisite detail in deposits such as the burgess shale in british columbia cambrian ocean world tells the story of what is for us the most important period in our planet s long history definitely the best introductory textbook within its field it is clearly worth reading deposits magazine

the authors explore the late precambrian and earliest cambrian fossil record to explain the cambrian phenomenon and discuss the possibility of a major turnover in marine ecology at the beginning of the cambrian period or whether a new improved type of animal appeared at this time they support their often controversial conclusions with photos and illustrations of fossils some never before published

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the cambrian period records one of the most extraordinary transitions in the history of life although animals may have first appeared nearly 700 million years ago with the earliest sponges their initial diversifications appear to have been modest until a richly diverse fossil fauna appeared relatively abruptly about 170 million years later in the cambrian explosion erwin and valentine synthesize research from many fields to explain why there was such remarkable novelty of animal forms

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