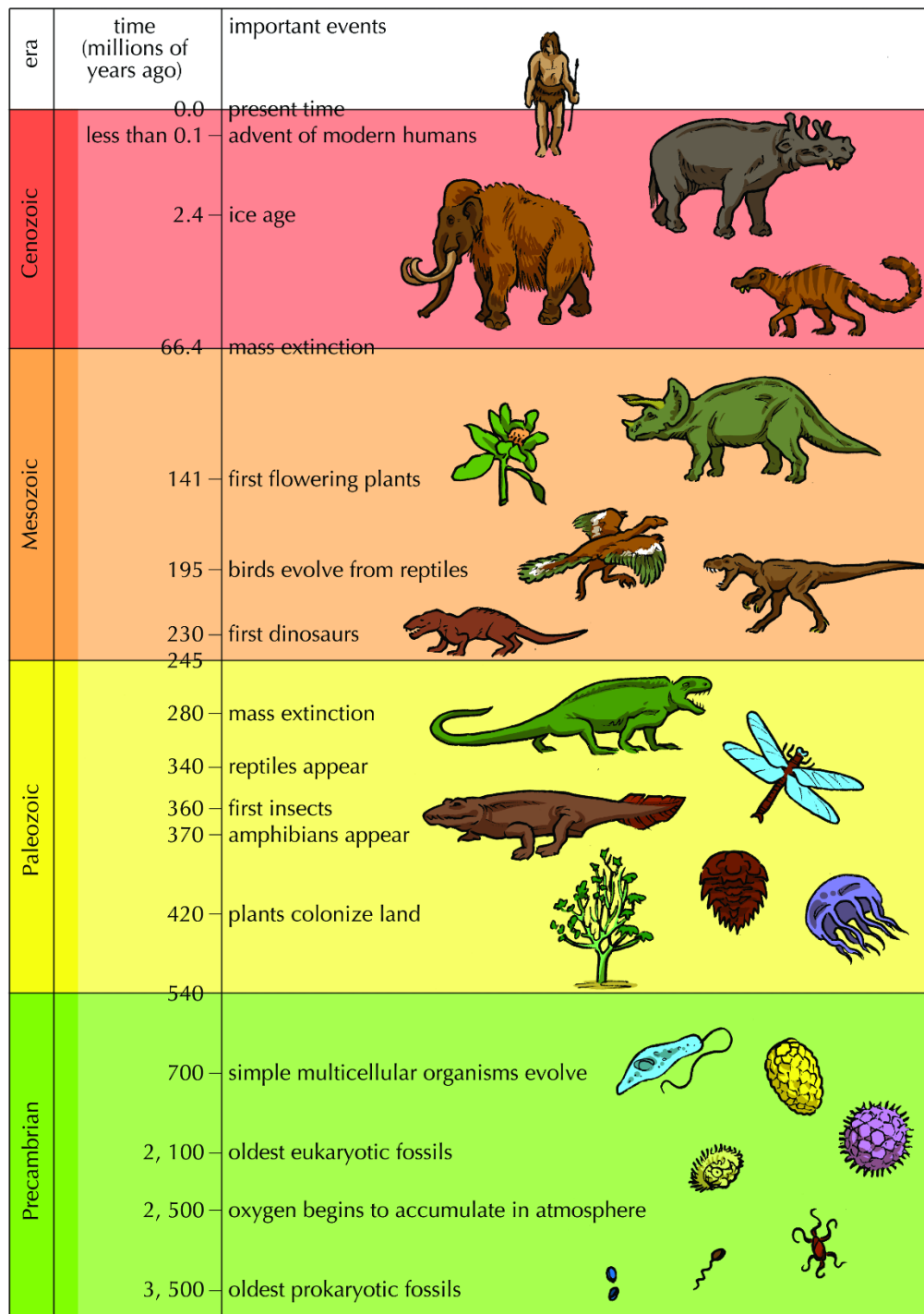


Horseshoe Crabs: Our Oldest Friends

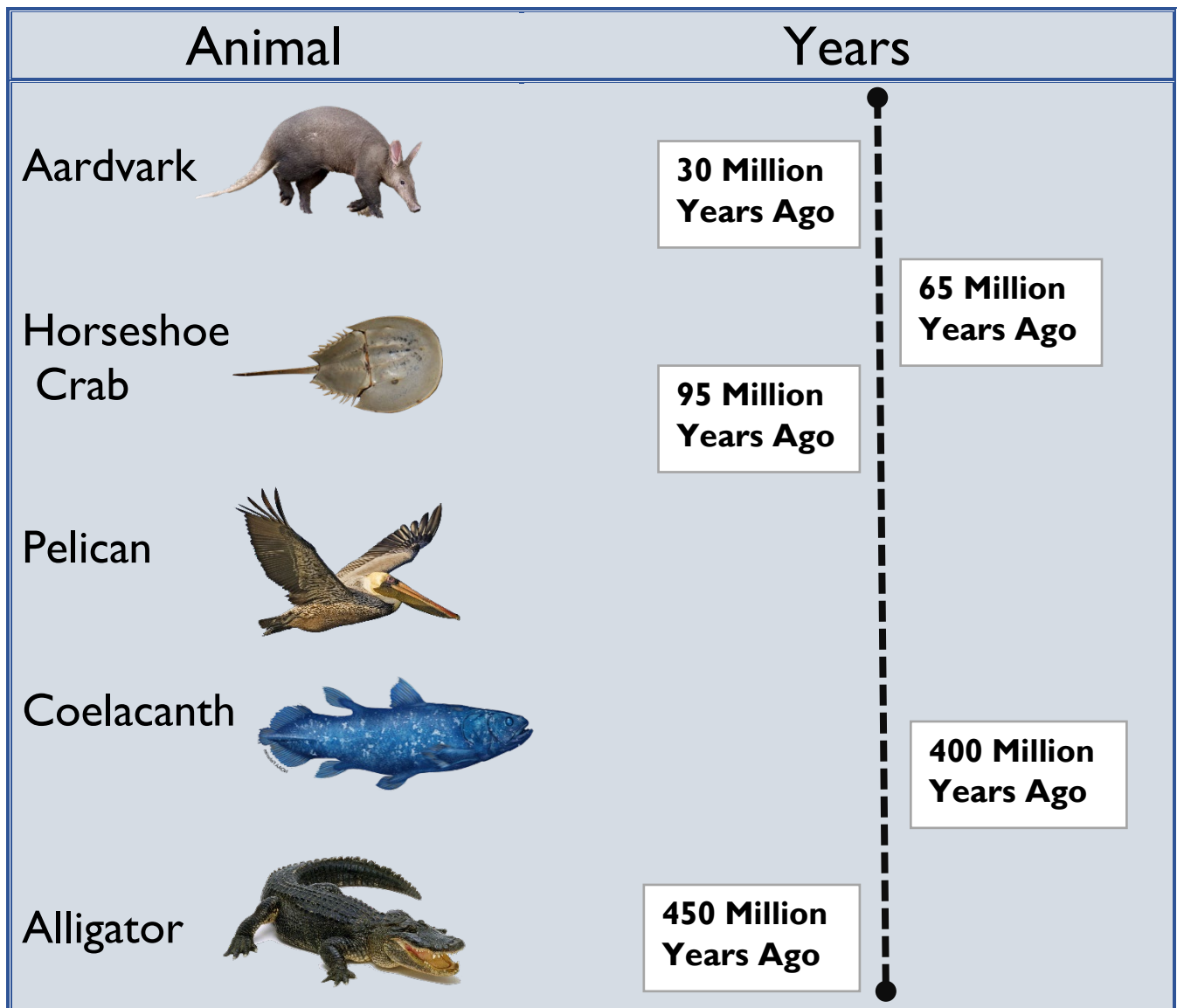
Look at the timeline of life on earth, many animals have come and gone, or evolved to better adapt to the earth the way it is today. Animals that have been around for a long time, but have not changed very much or at all are called living fossils



Horseshoe Crabs: Our Oldest Friends

Horseshoe crabs are ancient creatures, they have been around for millions of years. Horseshoe crabs are a type of arthropod. Other arthropods include spiders, bugs, and crabs. They have changed very little since they first showed up on earth. When an animal that has been around for a long time, and has not changed much at all in that time is still alive today, we call them living fossils.

Do you know of any other living fossils? Place these animals in the order that you think they have been around: Draw a line to connect the animal to the year they first evolved.

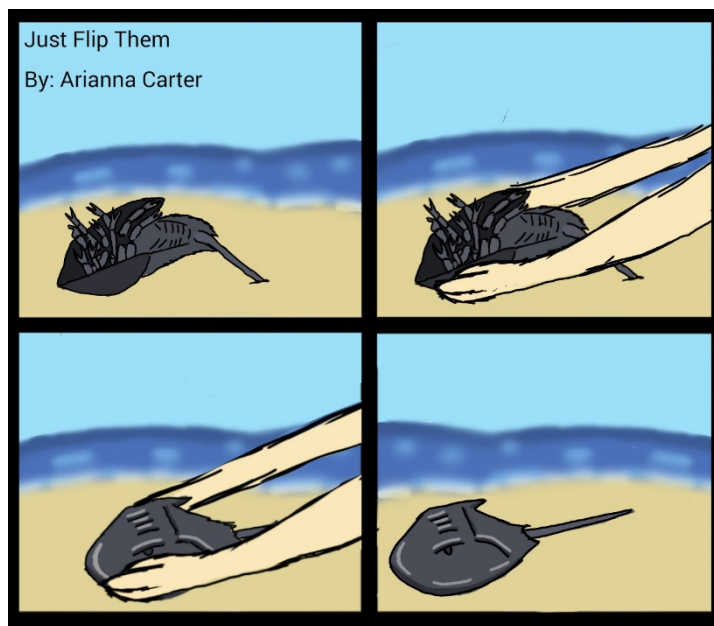


Horseshoe Crabs: Our Oldest Friends

Horseshoe crabs have strong rounded shells that protect their legs and organs and make it easy for them to crawl along the ocean floor, they have special blood that fights infections, and can heal a cut faster than a human could. They are pointy and hard to eat, making them less likely to be food for other animals. They lay thousands of eggs to make sure that at least some of their babies survive. Horseshoe crabs are strong, they are little tanks that crawl along the ocean floor. But they have one weakness, sometimes when they crawl on the beach they get flipped over!

They have that long pointy tail to help them flip themselves, but it doesn't always work, that's why when you see an overturned crab on the beach, flip them!

But be careful! Flip them by gently holding the sides of their shell, don't pick them up by the tail.



Horseshoe crabs are some of the oldest living fossils on the planet! At 450 million years and counting!

Why do you think animals stay the same, or evolve very little over long periods of time?

Answer: They are already well suited to live in their environment, so they don't need to change, "If it ain't broke don't fix it" or something like that. This is a critical thinking question, and may be better for older students