

A Backyard Discovery

What does Daniel find in his backyard when construction begins for an addition to his house?

¹ Daniel sat at the breakfast table drinking his orange juice. Something seemed different that morning, but he just couldn't put his finger on it. He bit into a crisp slice of toast, when all of a sudden he realized what was missing. It was the sound of jackhammers and big pieces of machinery working in the backyard. During the past week, Daniel had become accustomed to the constant roar of engines as a crew of workers prepared the backyard for the addition to Daniel's house.

² "Mom, did you notice something different this morning?" he asked.

³ Daniel's mom smiled. "Silence," she said. "I can actually hear birds chirping again. The construction crew was called away for a couple of days to work on another project. I'm anxious to have our addition finished, but I told the foreman that I wouldn't mind a couple of days of peace and quiet, even if it does delay our schedule a bit."

⁴ "Can we go outside and look around?" asked Daniel, finishing his last bite of toast. "I know you said it was dangerous to go out there with all the heavy equipment nearby, but I'd really like to take a look around."



⁵ "Sure," said Daniel's mom. "I'm pretty curious myself."

⁶ The Ivanovics' backyard looked completely unfamiliar to Daniel and his mom. Piles of rocks and dirt nearly obscured the garage. A backhoe was parked where the tulip bed used to be. Daniel was relieved to see that the chestnut tree he had helped plant when he was four years old had been spared.

⁷ While Daniel's mom worked to salvage a few plants from the edge of the construction site, Daniel walked around the perimeter of the gaping hole. Something caught his eye, and he stooped down to take a closer look. He gently blew away the rust-colored dirt that partially covered his find. Once the dust had settled, he was able to take a closer look.

⁸ "Mom, I think you're going to want to see this," said Daniel. A moment later, his mom crouched beside him, looking at the nearly perfect fossil he had found.

⁹ "This is amazing, Daniel!" said Mrs. Ivanovic, shaking her head. "If you weren't so observant, this fossil probably would have been destroyed in a couple of days and we would have never known it was here."

¹⁰ "What do you think it is, Mom?" asked Daniel, peering closer.

¹¹ "I don't know," Mrs. Ivanovic answered. "It looks like a fish of some kind, but I suppose it could have been a reptile. We should call the Natural History Museum and ask if someone can help us remove it from these rocks without damaging it."

¹² Daniel headed to the house to get the phone. He couldn't wait to find out what sort of prehistoric animal had once lived in his backyard. Whatever it turned out to be, Daniel knew he had made a discovery he wouldn't soon forget.

1. Check the phrase that best describes the author's purpose.

___ to instruct

___ to explain

___ to entertain

Read the sentences below. Write **B** next to the sentence if it describes something that happened before Daniel went outside. Write **A** if it describes something that happened after.

2. ___ Daniel was glad his chestnut tree hadn't been damaged.

3. ___ Daniel drank his orange juice.

4. ___ Something caught Daniel's eye.

5. ___ Mrs. Ivanovic said that Daniel was observant.

6. ___ Mrs. Ivanovic explained why the construction crew wasn't working.

7. Do you think Daniel will be able to identify the fossil he found? Explain your answer.

Write the idiom from paragraph 1 on the line next to its meaning.

8. to be unable to identify something or figure it out

9. What is the setting for this story?

10. What do Daniel and his mom decide to do to make sure the fossil is not damaged?

