

Y4 Writing task 2

Read and research the character of Mary Anning.

Mary Anning was born in the seaside town of **Lyme Regis, Dorset, UK**, in **1799**. Although her parents had ten children, only Mary and her brother **Joseph** lived to adulthood. It's said Mary had a lucky escape when she was a baby. The lady holding her was struck by **lightning**. Miraculously, little Mary survived. Phew!

Mary's father didn't earn much in his job as a **cabinet maker**, so he boosted the family's earnings by looking for **fossils** (known as '**curiosities**' back then) at the beach and selling them to holidaymakers. Young Mary and Joseph would join him, and they developed a deep love of **fossil-hunting**.

After their **father's death** in **1810**, Mary and Joseph carried on fossil hunting, to support the family. In **1811**, when Mary was **12**, they uncovered a strange **5.2-metre-long skeleton!** At the time, people believed that any unrecognisable creatures must have travelled from far-off lands, so scientists simply thought it belonged to a **crocodile**. Eventually, though, they realised it was an **ancient species**, and it was named **Ichthyosaurus** – meaning '**fish lizard**'.

Mary continued to scour the beach and crumbling cliffs of Lyme Regis with her dog **Trey**, and in **1823** she made another important discovery – the first ever **Plesiosaur skeleton!** This long-necked sea creature (above) looked so odd that many people thought it was **fake** at first!

Mary made many other exciting discoveries, such as a flying reptile, later named the **Pterodactyl**, and **coprolites** – fossilised poo – which helped her work out what dinosaurs ate! Having taught herself **geology, anatomy** and **scientific illustration**, Mary was so highly skilled that she took **important scientists** fossil hunting and discussed ideas and **theories** with them.

Mary died in **1847**. Although she was well-known for her discoveries, Mary wasn't taken seriously as a scientist in her lifetime because of her **gender** and **poor background**. Some of the male scientists she worked with claimed her findings as their own! But today, Mary is recognised as a **pioneer** in the field of **palaeontology** (the study of fossils) and is celebrated as the greatest fossil hunter of all time!

