

It once rained for two million years, say scientists

11th March 2024



Farmers pray for rain in times of drought. Most of us have experience of wanting the heavens to open for our garden to be watered during an excessively dry spell. However, none of us can imagine a prolonged period of rain lasting two million years. U.K.

geologist and forensic scientist Alastair Ruffell has discovered that 200-300 million years ago, before the single landmass of Pangea separated into continents, Earth did see an era during which it rained non-stop for up to two million years. Dr Ruffell said this helped forge the development of flora and fauna all over the globe. He believes the precipitation may have been sparked by a huge rise in humidity following a series of massive volcanic eruptions.

Dr Ruffell and his team based their findings on research conducted on strata of rock in the Eastern Alps in Europe in the 1970s and 80s. The data showed unusual layers deposited in ancient rock that dated back over 200 million years. Ruffell said this led to growing evidence that the wet period may have been, "the trigger that enabled dinosaurs, and possibly the other members of our modern land-based fauna, to diversify and dominate the land". He added: "It may have been one of the most important events in the history of life, in terms of its role in allowing not only the age of dinosaurs, but also the origins of most key classes that form the modern fauna of...turtles, crocodiles, lizards and mammals."

Sources: unilad.com / earth.com / iflscience.com

Writing

The most important events in history happened millions of years ago. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

farmers / pray / rain / dry spells / geologist / forensic / scientist / flora / fauna / globe / rock / data / evidence / dinosaurs / diversify / important events / history / crocodiles

True / False

- 1) Farmers pray for drought in times of heavy rain. T / F
- 2) The article says rain turns our gardens into heaven. T / F
- 3) There was a single landmass on Earth 300 million years ago. T / F
- 4) The rain may have been caused by volcanic eruptions. T / F
- 5) The geologists studied research data from the 1990s. T / F
- 6) The research data showed unusual rock from the early 10th century. T / F
- 7) Geologists say the rain may have facilitated the emergence of dinosaurs. T / F
- 8) Geologists say the rain may have facilitated the death of ancient lizards. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. drought | a. left behind |
| 2. spell | b. set up |
| 3. prolonged | c. set off |
| 4. forge | d. part |
| 5. sparked | e. period |
| 6. conducted | f. branch out |
| 7. deposited | g. carried out |
| 8. diversify | h. lack of rain |
| 9. role | i. basic |
| 10. key | j. elongated |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What can we learn from studying rocks?
- c) What do you know about the dinosaurs?
- d) Would you like to go back to the time of the dinosaurs?
- e) What do you know about the earth 200 million years ago?
- f) What are the most important events in the history of your life?
- g) What will Earth be like in 200 million years from now?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the geologists?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Farmers pray for rain in | a. and fauna |
| 2. for our garden to be watered during an | b. eruptions |
| 3. forge the development of flora | c. dominate the land |
| 4. precipitation may have been sparked by | d. of rock |
| 5. following a series of massive volcanic | e. have been the trigger |
| 6. research conducted on strata | f. times of drought |
| 7. unusual layers deposited | g. mammals |
| 8. evidence that the wet period may | h. a huge rise in humidity |
| 9. diversify and | i. in ancient rock |
| 10. turtles, crocodiles, lizards and | j. excessively dry spell |

Discussion – Student B

- Have you ever prayed for rain?
- What do you think of rain?
- How important is rain?
- How do you feel when it rains all day long?
- How would you feel if it rained every day for a year?
- How does heavy rain make you feel?
- Would you like to live somewhere where it never rains?
- What do you know about the Earth of 200 million years ago?

Spelling

- pray for rain in times of turdogh
- during an ysesylxicee dry spell
- a goprldoen period of rain
- geologist and cneifro scientist
- sparked by a huge rise in tyihiumd
- a series of massive volcanic uronpstie
- research conducted on saartt of rock
- deposited in cnnieat rock
- growing ndivceee
- esvfridiy and dominate the land
- the age of isnsdauor
- crocodiles, idarzsl and mammals

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. e	3. j	4. b	5. c
6. g	7. a	8. f	9. d	10. i

Role Play

Role A – Study English

You think studying English is the best rainy-day activity. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): going for a walk, visiting a museum or sleeping.

Role B – Go for a Walk

You think going for a walk is the best rainy-day activity. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): studying English, visiting a museum or sleeping.

Role C – Visit a Museum

You think visiting a museum is the best rainy-day activity. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): going for a walk, studying English or sleeping.

Role D – Sleep

You think sleeping is the best rainy-day activity. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): going for a walk, visiting a museum or studying English.

Speaking – Rainy Days

Rank these with your partner. Put the best things to do on a rainy day at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| • Go for a walk | • Study English |
| • Splash in puddles | • Sleep |
| • Do the gardening | • Housework |
| • Visit a museum | • Watch a movie |

Answers – True False

1	F	2	F	3	T	4	T	5	F	6	F	7	T	8	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.