Sharks vs. Trees: Who Came First?

Max & Nib cool-fact timeline · write your answers by hand

Max asked Nib: what's older, sharks or trees? Use the clue cards and the blank timeline to figure it out. Then answer the questions in complete sentences.

Clue cards (cut out or just read)

Card A: Shark-like scales

Found in rocks about 450 million years old (Late Ordovician).



Card B: First trees

Grew about 385–390 million years ago (Middle Devonian).



1) Fill in the timeline (write the event on each blank)

500 mya — 450 mya — 400 mya — 385 mya — 350 mya

What happened? _____

What happened? _____

2) Answer in complete sentences (show your thinking)

1. Which came first — sharks (or shark-like animals) or trees? By about how many million years?

2. Early sharks looked different from today's sharks. Does that change the answer? Why or why not?

3. Where did early sharks live if there were no trees yet? (Hint: think about their name.)

Bonus: Name one reputable place you could check a cool science fact (museum, NASA, Live Science…).

_____

Answer Key · Sharks vs. Trees Timeline

For parents and teachers · Max & Nib free printable

Timeline

• 450 mya → First shark-like scales (Late Ordovician). Scientists debate whether these were true sharks or shark-like animals; either way, the shark lineage is this old.

• 385–390 mya → First trees (Middle Devonian). Early tree-fern-like plants such as Wattieza (Eospermatopteris stumps at Gilboa, NY) and woody trees like Archaeopteris.

Written answers (sample)

1. Sharks (or shark-like animals) came first — by about 60–65 million years (450 vs. ~385–390).

2. No. The claim is about the shark family / lineage, not modern-looking sharks. Early forms still count.

3. In the ocean. Sharks are fish; trees grow on land. No trees does not mean no ocean.

Sources (same as the Max & Nib video)

• Natural History Museum (London): Shark evolution, a 450 million year timeline — https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/shark-evolution-a-450-million-year-timeline.html

• Live Science: Are sharks really older than trees? — https://www.livescience.com/animals/sharks/are-sharks-really-older-than-trees

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