

Note to Parents/Teachers:

This is an activity I have done many times to help students understand how scientists try to reconstruct the past. (It is found in *Forces & Motion*, DeRosa and Reeves, Master Books, and *Understanding Science While Believing the Bible*, Reeves, The Master Design.) Trying to figure out what happened in the past is much like a detective would try to figure out what happened at a crime scene. Print (or re-create) a copy of a "damaged" drawing of a tree and have students try to reconstruct the way it looked originally. Don't let them see any of the examples of completed drawings. After they finish, tell them there is no "right" or "wrong" proven answer. Then compare their efforts to reconstruct the tree to how a scientist might try to reconstruct the past.

According to a fictional story, the drawing below was found on the wall of a very old buried building, but part of the drawing had been damaged and was missing. This was such an important discovery that scientists were brought in from all over the world to analyze it and study it. This is the remains of what they found. The top of the picture looks like tree branches. Toward the bottom of the drawing, there's not much left, but the scientists set to work to try to reconstruct the drawing.

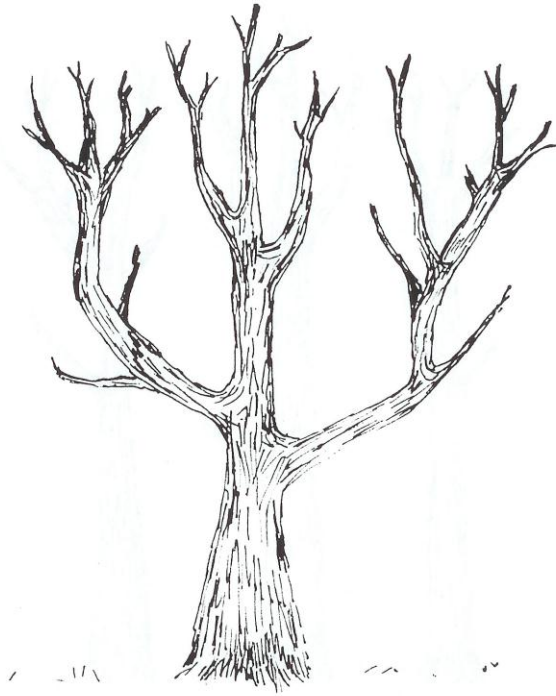
Remains of Original Painting



Why don't you see if you can figure out what the drawing might have looked like to start with? Use a different color to add lines until you think you have reconstructed the drawing to its original shape.

This activity has been done by numerous students. Many students reconstructed the drawing to look something like this:

Possible Reconstruction



Other students reconstructed the drawing to be more than one tree. Some of the drawings looked something like this:

Possible Reconstruction



Now let's compare your efforts to reconstruct the drawing with how creationists and evolutionists might try to reconstruct the past.

The black lines you started with are like scientific evidence and **facts**, and the lines you filled are like **explanations** based on the facts. You should recognize that there is more than one logical way to reconstruct the drawing, even though everyone began with the same set of facts. You should also realize that none of the reconstructed drawings can be called a fact on the basis of the evidence.

The same thing is true of science. Both evolutionists and creationists look at the same evidence, but they don't agree about how to reconstruct the history of the earth.

Look at other reconstructed drawings. Notice the top of everyone's drawing. They are probably very similar.

Now look at the bottom of everyone's reconstructed drawings. They may be very different.

Even though you weren't absolutely certain about how to reconstruct the top of the drawing, you had a **high level of certainty** about what you drew.

You were much less certain as you tried to reconstruct the bottom of the drawing, because you had to guess about whether there was one tree or more than one tree. You also had to guess about the size and shape of the trees. Your **level of certainty was much less** as you drew the bottom of the tree, because the evidence was scanty with lots of gaps.

Many evolutionists believe that all living things came from **one common ancestor**. They picture the history of life as a single branching tree of life, where all living things started from one original living organism that changed and evolved over millions of years.

Other scientists say that there is some evidence of branching taking place within similar groups, but not between big groups. These scientists see the history of life as a **forest of trees**, where each tree, or living thing, was designed and created by God. The original kinds of living things may have changed over the years in size, shape, color, etc., but not in major ways.

To clear up a misconception, **science is not about proving things**. It is about finding logical explanations that fit the facts. Many explanations have a high level of certainty, but some explanations have a low level of certainty. **The notion that all life arose from the same ancestor and evolved over millions and millions of years has a low level of certainty, because the gaps are very large and the evidence is scanty.**

The Bible teaching of a supernatural creation and destruction of the earth by a worldwide Flood is a logical explanation that agrees very well with fossil evidence and geologic landforms.