



What Would YOU Name the New Fossil?

Enter the Competition and Stand to Win a R75,000 Education Bursary

Five Simple Steps:

1. Read about the new fossil discovery made by scientist Lee Berger!
2. Decide what you would like to name this new fossil. It can be named anything you like, as long as the name is less than 16 letters. It can be in any South African language.
3. Write a brief explanation of why you chose your name (no more than 150 words).
4. Bring it to Mae J. and we will help you submit it online to enter the contest.
5. Wait to hear if you've won the big prize!

Start Thinking!

Fossils have been named all sorts of things. Sometimes they are named after someone famous. They could be named after where they were discovered or who discovered them. Or, sometimes they are named after something silly that just seems to stick.

The nickname **Mrs. Ples** was derived for one fossil from the scientific designation *Plesianthropus transvaalensis* (meaning "near-man from the Transvaal").

Perhaps the most famous fossil is named **Lucy**, supposedly because the people who discovered it played the Beatles song *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds* over and over in celebration of their find!

Other well-known fossil nicknames are **Turkana Boy**, **Java Man**, and **Peking Man**.

Fossil Find of the Century!

On Thursday April 8, 2010 scientists announced to the world that 9-year-old Matthew Berger, son of renowned paleoanthropologist Professor Lee Berger, had found the bones of a new hominid species that lived almost two million years ago.



Australopithecus sediba

This is the very same Professor Berger who enthralled us with his lecture on human evolution at our first year anniversary celebration in January; you will also remember the wonderful fossil casting demonstration by Boy and Bongani, who demonstrated a new casting technique created under his tutelage, making a cast of the Taung Child, a juvenile *Australopithecus africanus*.



Professor Lee Berger

On Aug. 15, 2008, Matthew discovered the bones of a 1,27 meter boy who had been just a few years older than Matthew himself, in the Malapa site in the Cradle of Humankind, north of Johannesburg. Along side the boy were the ancient remains of an adult female.

The school children of South Africa have been asked to compete to name the boy (see sidebar).

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Find of the Century

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The *New York Times* reported on Thursday: "Dr. Berger, 44, and a team of scientists said the fossils from the boy and a woman were a surprising and distinctive mixture of primitive and advanced anatomy and thus qualified as a new species of hominid, the ancestors and other close relatives of humans. It has been named *Australopithecus sediba*."

"The species *sediba*, which means fountain or wellspring in Sotho, strode upright on long legs, with human-shaped hips and pelvis, but still climbed through trees on apelike arms. It had the small teeth and more modern face of *Homo*, the genus that includes modern humans, but the relatively primitive feet and 'tiny brain' of *Australopithecus*, Dr. Berger said." (Read the full story at <http://nyti.ms/dbYUSF>.)

On Friday, *Science* magazine published two research articles introducing *Australopithecus sediba*; see: <http://www.sciencemag.org/extra/sediba/>.

The *NY Times* writes: "Dr. Berger's team said that the new species probably descended from *Australopithecus africanus*. ... [H]e described the species as a possible ancestor of *Homo erectus*, an immediate predecessor to *Homo sapiens*, or a close 'side branch' that did not lead to modern humans."

Isn't it fantastic that Professor Berger, who along with his son, has made world news with this find, is a friend of the Mae Jemison U.S. Science Reading Room?



Mae Jemison members admire Boy and Bongani's skull casting

April Events (All programs start at 3 p.m.)

April 7

Lecture: Climate Change in South Africa

Prof. Hannes Rautenbach, University of Pretoria

April 14

Lecture: Climate Change and Population Growth

PhD Student from UP Richard Wade

April 21

Come Celebrate Earth Day with Sci-enza!

Sci-enza will present a special Earth Day program for the 40th Anniversary, designed for Mae Jemison Reading Room

April 23

Photography Contest Judging

If you participated in the Photographing Your Environment project, please be sure to attend! A panel of photography experts will select the winning photos.

April 28

Sci-enza presents ... Hands On Science



University of Pretoria PhD student Richard Peter Wade lectures to a group of 60 Mamelodi students at Mae J.

March Statistics

2010 visitors; 392 books checked out.