



THE MOST COMMON LARGE VERTEBRATE FOSSIL IN LOUISIANA: MASTODONS!

Link to our exhibit: "Mastodons"

MASTODONS

Fossils of mastodons are common in Louisiana. Some of the most interesting are found in the state, often associated with loess sediments. This is not surprising because during glacial periods, wind-blown silt and loess accumulated in the Mississippi River Valley. Excavations have found mastodon remains in the Bayou Manchac in Ascension Parish, and both in the Tunica and Natchez in the Tunica Parish.

Mastodons are sometimes mistaken for elephants, but their major difference is that mastodons have a single tusk, while elephants have two.

GAME 1: Cross out all the letters i, u, and r – then unscramble the remaining letters to find out the names of our three mystery animals.

ANIMAL A

M	O	I	T
I	U	R	
R	D		
I	A	N	I
S	R	U	R

Scrambled:

Unscrambled:

ANIMAL B

M	I	U	
I	M	U	I
R	R	I	I
U	I	U	R

Scrambled:

Unscrambled:

ANIMAL C

F	I	L	L	T
I	E			
R	I	A	I	

Scrambled:

Unscrambled:





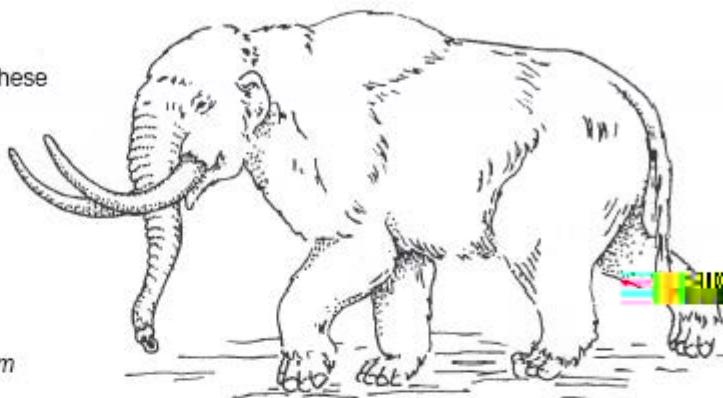
GAME:	ANIMAL A	ANIMAL B	
Place the remaining letters here	_____	_____	_____
Name unscrambled			
<i>What's the differences between these three large</i>			
	<i>Mammuthus americanus</i>	<i>Mammuthus primigenius</i>	<i>Loxodonta africana</i>
Teeth	Very different and much more primitive. The tooth crown looks like the bottom of an egg carton and the cusps are high and rounded.	Their teeth are more specialized, the crown is much taller and the cusps have been moulded into parallel side-to-side rows.	Their teeth are more specialized, the crown is much taller and the cusps have been moulded into parallel side-to-side rows.
Food	They use their cusped teeth to crush leaves, twigs of grasses, herbs and twigs.	They ate mainly grasses and shrubs, they also strip the bark off trees with their tusks.	They ate mainly grasses and shrubs, they also strip the bark off trees with their tusks.
Tusk	They had short, slightly upward curving tusks.	They had the most specialized, much larger and more strongly recurved tusks.	They had the most specialized, much larger and more strongly recurved tusks.
Environment	They lived in lowland areas (e.g. Louisiana)	They lived in forested areas (e.g. Alaska)	They lived in savanna areas (e.g. Africa)
Fur	Thick fur.	Thick woolly fur.	Naked skin, probably a result of warmer climate.
Ears	They had small ears.	They had small ears.	They have huge ears. This is also probably an adaptation to help them cool off in their huge ears.
Phylogeny	Their teeth suggest that this animal is more closely related to modern Indian elephants than African.		
Extinction	Extinct probably because of lost of habitat, change or food source disappearance.	Extinct for possibly the same reasons.	Still living.

This section is based on a museum handout by Earl Manning.

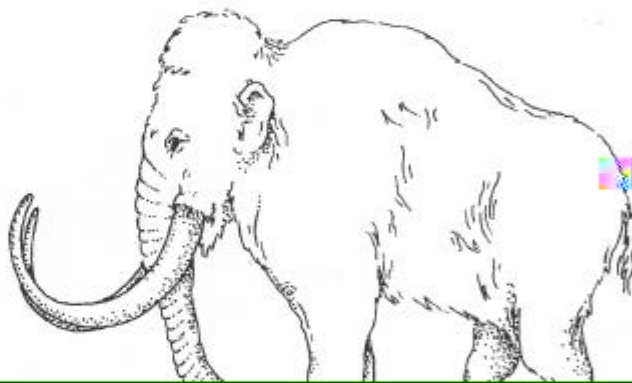




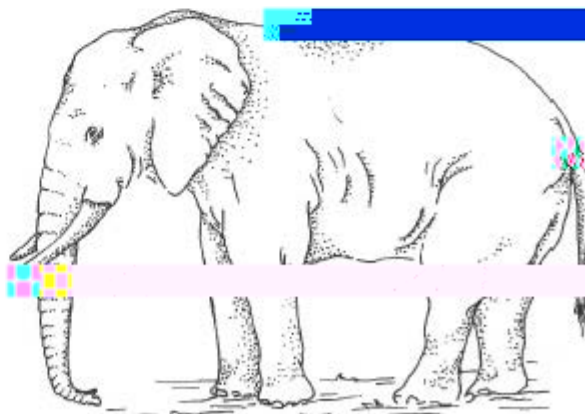
GAME 2 Now that you know all about these three big mammals, have fun coloring them.



Mammuthus americanus



Mammuthus primigenius



Loxodonta africana

Illustrations by Mary Lee Eggart of the LSU Department of Geography and Anthropology.

