

Inorganic Not having the organized anatomical structure of animal or vegetable life. An inorganic compound is a chemical compound not based on carbon.

Interstellar Between or among the stars.

Invertebrate Animals without a backbone.

Ionized The state of an atom or group of atoms that have gained or lost electrons and thus acquired a net electric charge.

Isotope One of several forms of one element, all having the same number of protons in the nucleus, but differing in their number of neutrons and thus in atomic weight. Isotopes of the same element differ from each other in their atomic weight, not in their chemical properties.

Kelvin An absolute temperature scale whose zero point is -273.15°C .

Krebs cycle A sequence of reactions in respiration: acetyl coenzyme A is oxidized by the removal of hydrogen atoms and high-energy electrons, which are transferred to electron carriers. Oxygen also combines with carbon to form CO_2 during these reactions.

Labyrinthodont Pertaining to a peculiar tooth structure characterized by deep infolding of the enamel. Labyrinthodonts were early, large, now extinct amphibians having massive skulls and teeth with "labyrinth" structure in cross-section. All possessed a tail and a strong rib cage.

Leptons In current thinking, leptons are considered one of two (quarks are the other) classes of indivisible particles that comprise the ultimate building blocks of matter. The electron, the neutrino, and the muon are comprised of leptons.

Lithosphere The solid, outer shell of the Earth, including the crust and the uppermost portion of the mantle.

Limestone A sedimentary rock mainly of calcium carbonate (CaCO_3); often formed from the skeletons of marine life.

Macro-evolution Large-scale evolutionary changes, such as the hypothetical long-term evolution of a single-celled organism into a multi-celled, multi-organed animal. (See micro-evolution.)

Magma Molten rock material generated within the Earth, from which igneous rock results by cooling and crystallization.

Mantle The thick layer of Earth between the crust and the core.

Magnetic field reversal A change in the polarity of the Earth's magnetic field, the south pole becoming the north magnetic pole, or vice versa.

Mechanistic Pertaining to the belief that all phenomena and events can be explained solely by the laws of science.

Melanic Being abnormally dark-colored. Refers to the dark variant of a species.

Mesosphere A large solid portion of the Earth's interior. Comprises the bulk of the mantle and lies below the hot plastic asthenosphere and above the outer core.

Mesozoic era The third era of geologic time and characterized by the predominance of reptilian forms.

Meta Altered or changed.

Metabolism The sum of the chemical reaction within a cell (or a whole organism), including the energy-releasing breakdown of molecules and the synthesis of complex molecules and new protoplasm.

Metamorphic rock A rock changed in composition or texture through pressure, heat (without melting) or chemistry.

Metaphyte Any plant in which more than one kind of cell makes up the organs and tissues.