

Shields Large regions of stable, ancient basement rocks within a continent; generally applied to the exposed portion of continental cratons.

Singularity Something so unique or remarkable that there is little or no rational explanation for its cause. The finite instant of the origin of the Universe, wherein all energy and matter, and even space and time, came into existence as manifested in the Big Bang explosion is considered to be a singularity.

Solar winds The flow or bursts of ionized gases (plasmas) from the Sun toward the Earth and which interact with the Earth's magnetic field.

Spontaneous prebiotic chemical synthesis The belief that original life came into existence as a result of chemical reactions which occurred in accordance with natural laws of statistical probability.

Stromatolites Laminated deposits of fossil material built up by various simple organisms, primarily blue-green algae. The layers are formed mostly of carbonated minerals, but clay or even fine sand may be bound into the structure. Mound and finger-like forms are characteristic.

Static equilibrium A concept in the theory of punctuated equilibrium that holds that life forms remain stable for long periods of time. In essence, the organisms are in equilibrium (in balance) with their habitat and with each other.

Steady state theory An older theory of the origin of the Universe which held that it had always existed in essentially the same state it is in today. Opposite of the Big Bang theory.

Strong force The force or interaction that binds the protons and neutrons into the atomic nucleus, thus holding the nucleus together. Also known as the nuclear force.

Supernova A violently exploding star in which all but the inner core is blown off into interstellar space. Produces extreme and vast amounts of energy.

Subatomic elementary particles A term generally applied to protons, neutrons, electrons, positrons, neutrinos, and photons. These are thought to be in turn composed of the fundamental particles (quarks and leptons).

Therapsids Members of the extinct reptilian order Therapsida that existed over 200 million years ago. The various species had many mammal-like characteristics and were of varied size.

Theropods A group of early dinosaurs who were flesh-eating and preyed on their plant-eating relatives.

Trilobites Extinct marine animals of the phylum Anthropoda that had a flattened oval body with numerous appendages. Common as fossil forms from 570 to 240 million years ago.

Varves Sedimentary bed or lamination that is deposited within one year's time. Each varve represents one year's deposit, and ordinarily the portion deposited in summer can be distinguished from that deposited in winter.

Vertebrate An animal with a backbone.

Young-Earth creationist One who believes the Earth to have been created within the last 6,000 to 10,000 years. Generally speaking, the term "scientific creationists" is applied to "young-Earth creationists" who gather scientific evidence to support their belief.