



Brachiopods

By

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Brachiopods live on the bottom of the oceans. They belong to the phylum Lophophorata. All of the members of this phylum are filter feeders. This means that they eat tiny particles of food that float in the water. They collect these particles with a special tube called a lophophore. Tiny arms inside the tube moves the water toward the mouth.

Brachiopods are bivalves. Bivalve means that they have two shells like a clam. They are not related to clams though. Clams are mollusks and their shells are very different if you look closely. Each valve (shell) of a clam looks just like the other half. The valves of a brachiopod are each shaped differently. The insides of a brachiopod are different than mollusks also. Mollusks do not have a lophophore.

There are fossils of brachiopods from the Cambrian Period that are over 500 million years old.

Since that time there have been many different kinds of brachiopods. They have lived in the Paleozoic, Mesozoic, and the Cenozoic Eras. Most of these brachiopods have become extinct. We only know about them because of the fossils they left behind.

There are still some brachiopods living in our oceans today! You won't see one the next time you go to the beach though. The brachiopods of today only live in very cold water near the north or south poles and in very deep water