

Dinosaurs

A Reading A-Z Level N Benchmark Book

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DINOSAURS

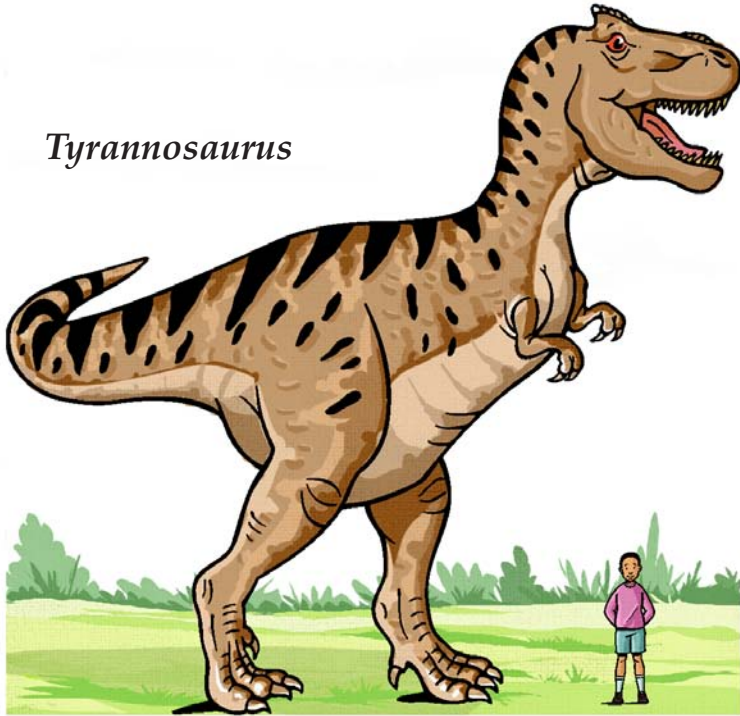


Written by Elizabeth Austin
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DINOSAURS

Tyrannosaurus



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Correlation

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Table of Contents

The World of the Dinosaurs.	4
Dinosaur Basics	7
A Few Kinds of Dinosaurs.	10
Theropods	11
Sauropods	13
Ceratopsians	15
Pterosaurs	17
The Death of Dinosaurs	18
Index	20



Anurognathus



The World of the Dinosaurs

Imagine that you've been sent back in time 200 million years. The world looks very different from the one you know. All the land on Earth is one giant continent. Shallow seas cover parts of the land. The weather is warm, even near the poles. In the shadow of an enormous plant, you hear a noise. Something large is hiding there.

You have arrived in the time of the dinosaurs. You probably know dinosaurs from books and movies. But sometimes we forget that dinosaurs were just one part of a whole world.

The age of dinosaurs lasted 170 million years. The Earth changed a lot in that time. The continents split apart, and the first flowering plants grew.

Some kinds of dinosaurs died out, and new ones appeared. Like today's world, the world of the dinosaurs was a changing place.

Stygimoloch



Rhamphorhynchus



Velociraptor



Compsognathus



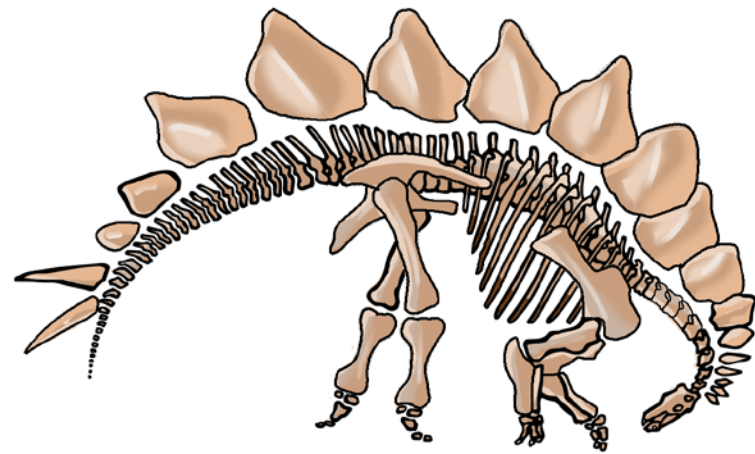
Dinosaur Basics

Dinosaurs were a special kind of reptile that no longer exists. Dinosaurs stood up off the ground, while other reptiles crawled. Many scientists believe that dinosaurs were faster and more active than other reptiles. They had large eyes that could probably see color. These things helped dinosaurs spread across the Earth.

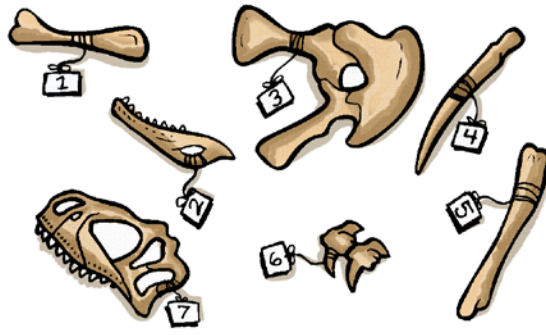
There have been more than 3,000 kinds of dinosaurs. They were as small as chickens and as large as a school bus. Some grew up to 24 meters (80 ft) or more.

Everything we know about dinosaurs and their world comes from fossils. Fossils are very rare. Scientists have found only a few whole dinosaur skeletons.

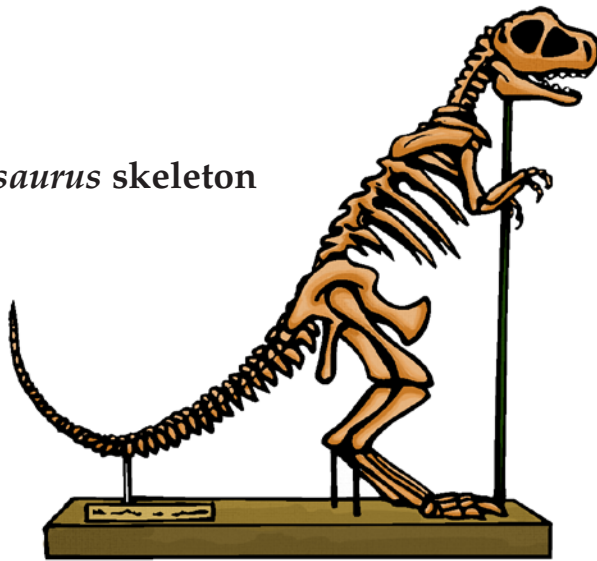
Stegosaurus skeleton



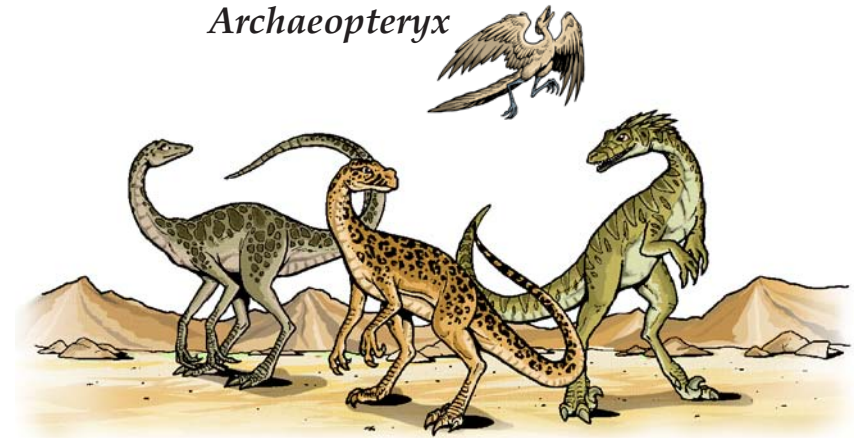
Most of the skeletons in museums were put together from parts of many skeletons. But scientists have found fossil dinosaur footprints, eggs, and even the things that were in dinosaurs' stomachs. All these things tell scientists how dinosaurs lived, ate, and died.



Tyrannosaurus skeleton



Archaeopteryx

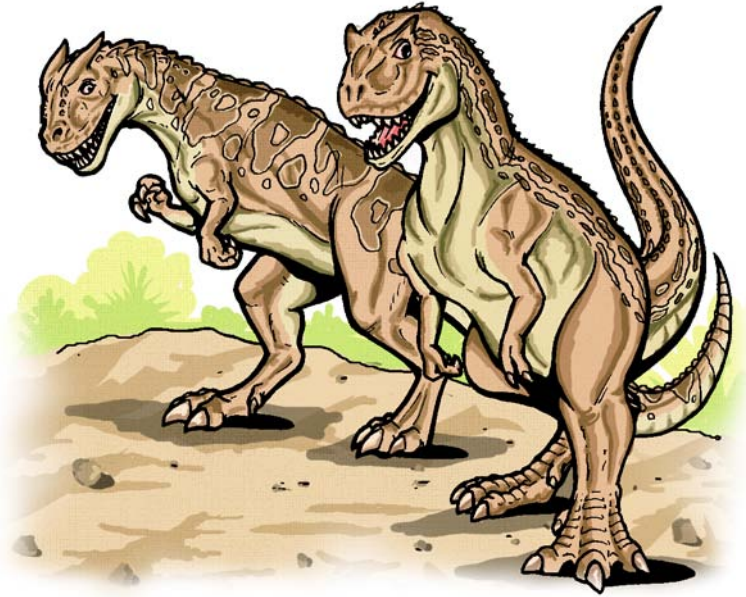


Dromiceiomimus, Oviraptor, Velociraptor

A Few Kinds of Dinosaurs

Scientists name dinosaurs based on how they were shaped and what they ate. Different kinds of dinosaurs lived in different places and at different times. A *Tyrannosaurus* (tah-RANah-SOAR-us) could never have attacked an *Apatosaurus* (ah-patah-SOAR-us). They lived almost 50 million years apart! Different kinds of dinosaurs came and went, but the groups stayed about the same.

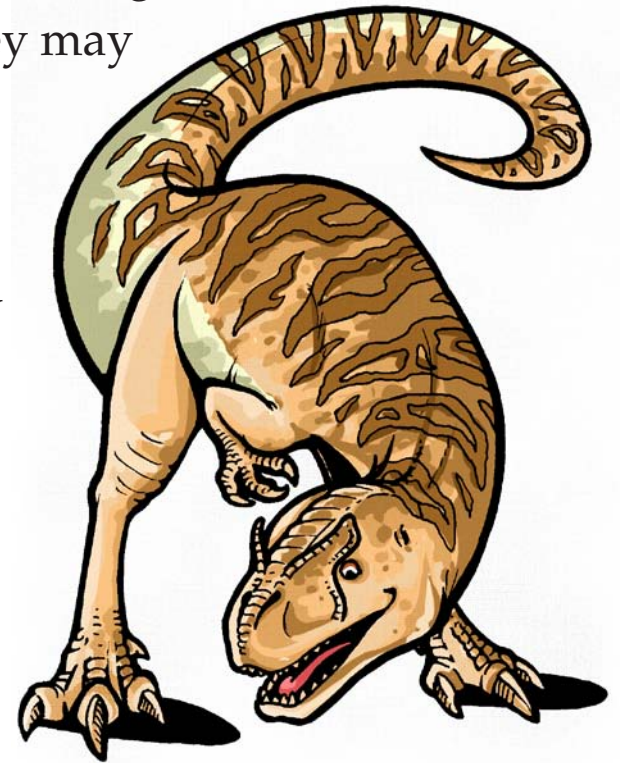
Carnotaurus, Tyrannosaurus



Theropods

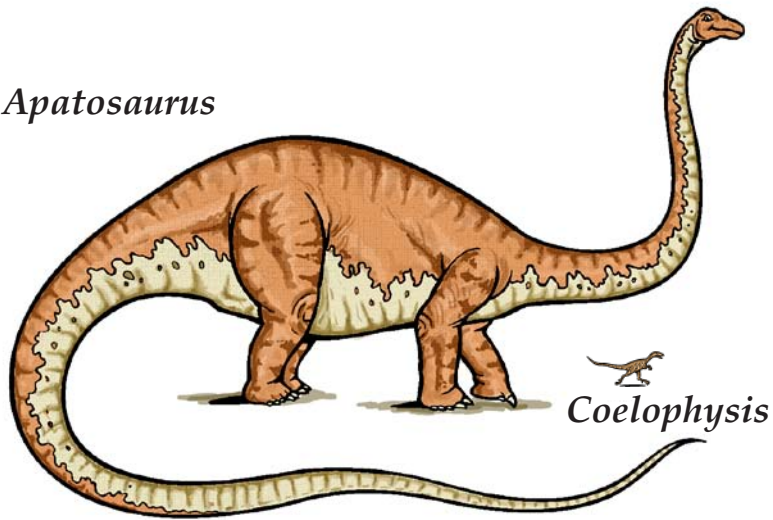
This group of dinosaurs is made up of the scary, meat-eating dinosaurs of nightmares. The largest, *Tyrannosaurus*, stood over 12 meters (40 ft) high. Others weren't much smaller. One was about the size of a human second-grader but ran as fast as a horse.

These dinosaurs ran on two legs, and they had big, heavy heads and jaws. A *Tyrannosaurus* tooth was almost as long as this book is tall. Most dinosaurs in this group had giant hooked claws on their feet to catch and kill their food. They were fierce, and fossil skulls show that they also had large brains and were smart. They may have lived in family groups and gently cared for their young.



Allosaurus

Apatosaurus



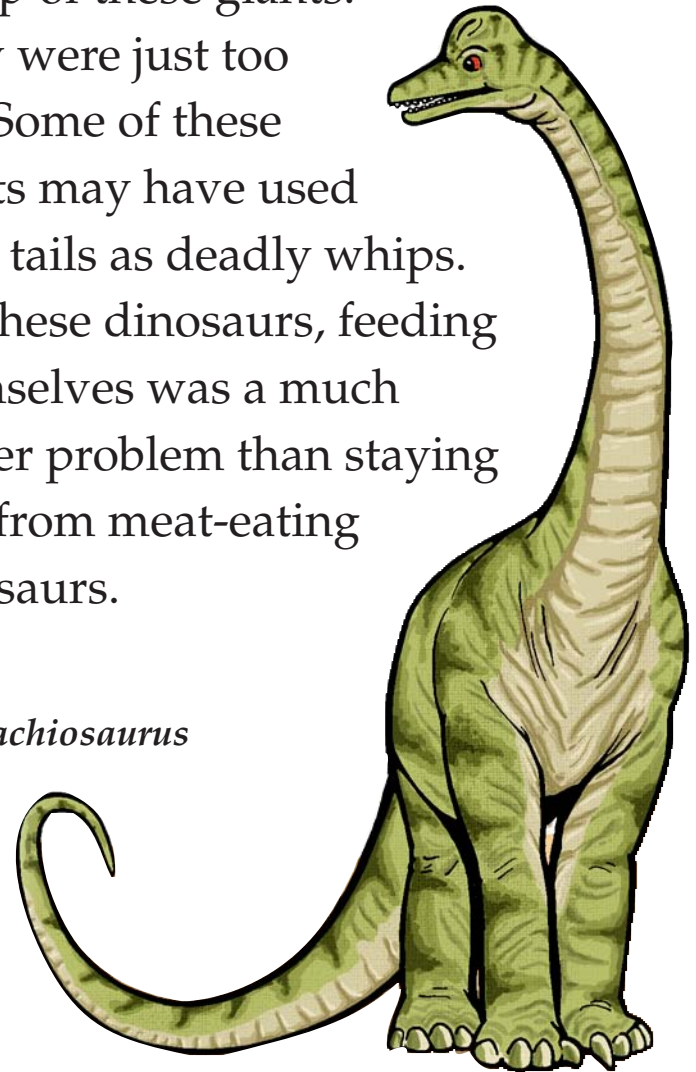
Sauropods

This next group of dinosaurs may have contained the largest creatures to ever walk on land. These giants had large, hard-to-move bodies, legs like tree trunks, and long, slim necks and tails. One may have been as tall as a five-story building. If another stood on a baseball field, it could touch home plate with its head and second base with its tail.

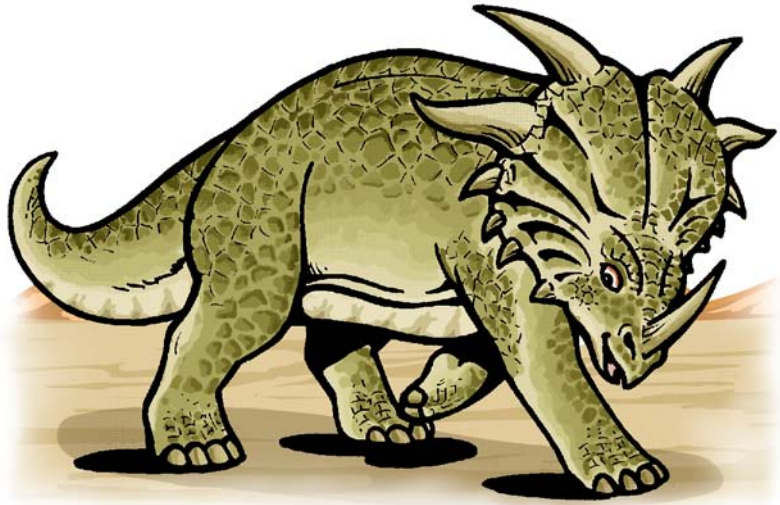
A group of these plant-eaters must have eaten entire forests. Most meat-eaters wouldn't attack a group of these giants.

They were just too big. Some of these giants may have used their tails as deadly whips. For these dinosaurs, feeding themselves was a much bigger problem than staying safe from meat-eating dinosaurs.

Brachiosaurus



Styracosaurus



Ceratopsians

The members of this next group of plant-eaters were smaller. They were usually about 3 to 12 meters (10–40 ft) long. But they made up for their size with large fan-shaped crests that protected their heads and necks. The crests could have as many as eight horns.

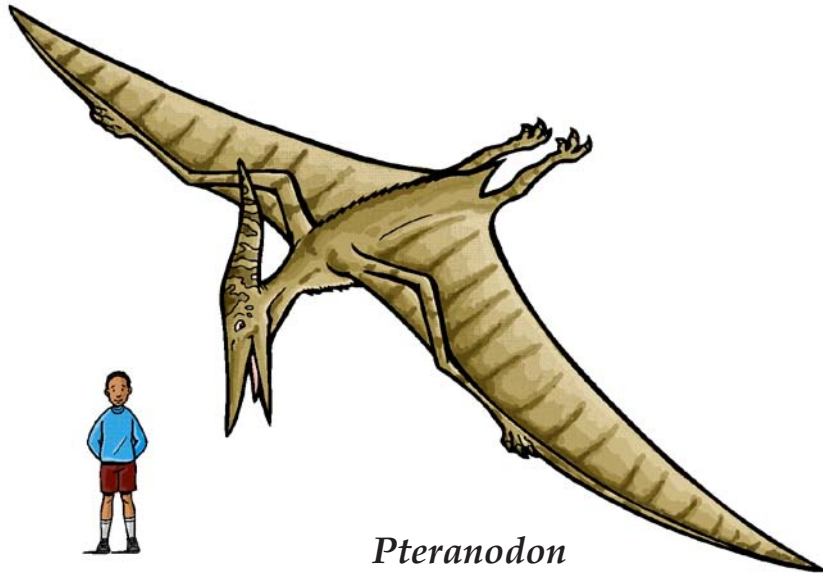
Many of these dinosaurs also had horns on their noses and above their eyes. They had strong parrot-like beaks that could snap tree trunks.

Triceratops



Pterosaurs

These next dinosaurs didn't run fast, but they could fly. In fact, they were the first animals to fly besides insects. Most of these flyers ate meat. Some caught fish, lizards, and insects while they flew. Others ate dead animals that had been killed by others. One even had wings as long as a bus.



Pteranodon

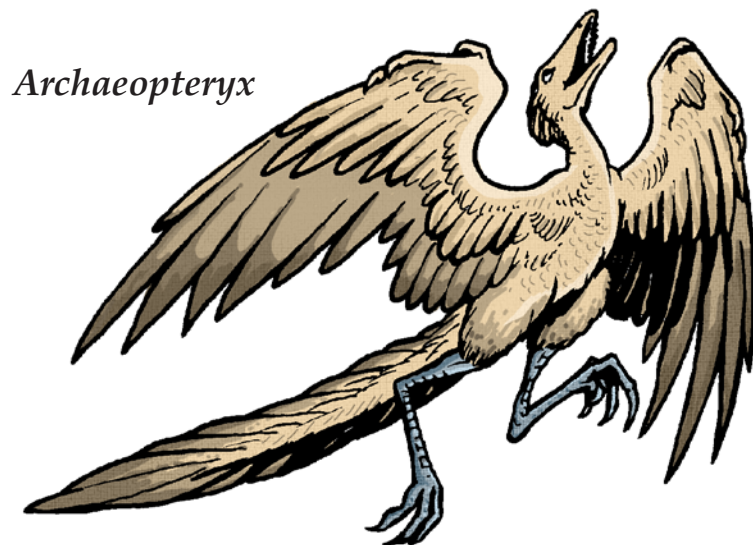


The Death of Dinosaurs

The dinosaurs disappeared in a short period of time. What happened? Most scientists agree that an enormous meteor crashed into Earth. The meteor sent dust and fire into the air. The sun was blocked out for months. The air became colder. Plants died. Rainwater turned muddy and undrinkable. Both plant-eaters and meat-eaters died from not having enough food and water, and from getting sick.

Whatever killed the dinosaurs also killed hundreds of other kinds of plants and animals. It is difficult to think that a single event could have destroyed so much.

But one small group of dinosaurs may have lived. When scientists look at the bones of birds and dinosaurs, they see many things in common. Many scientists now believe that some dinosaurs later became birds.



Index

birds, 19

continents, 4, 5

fossils, 8, 9, 12

meat-eaters, 11, 14, 17, 18

meteor, 18

plant-eaters, 14, 15, 18

plants, 4, 5, 18, 19

scientists, 7–10, 18, 19

skeletons, 9