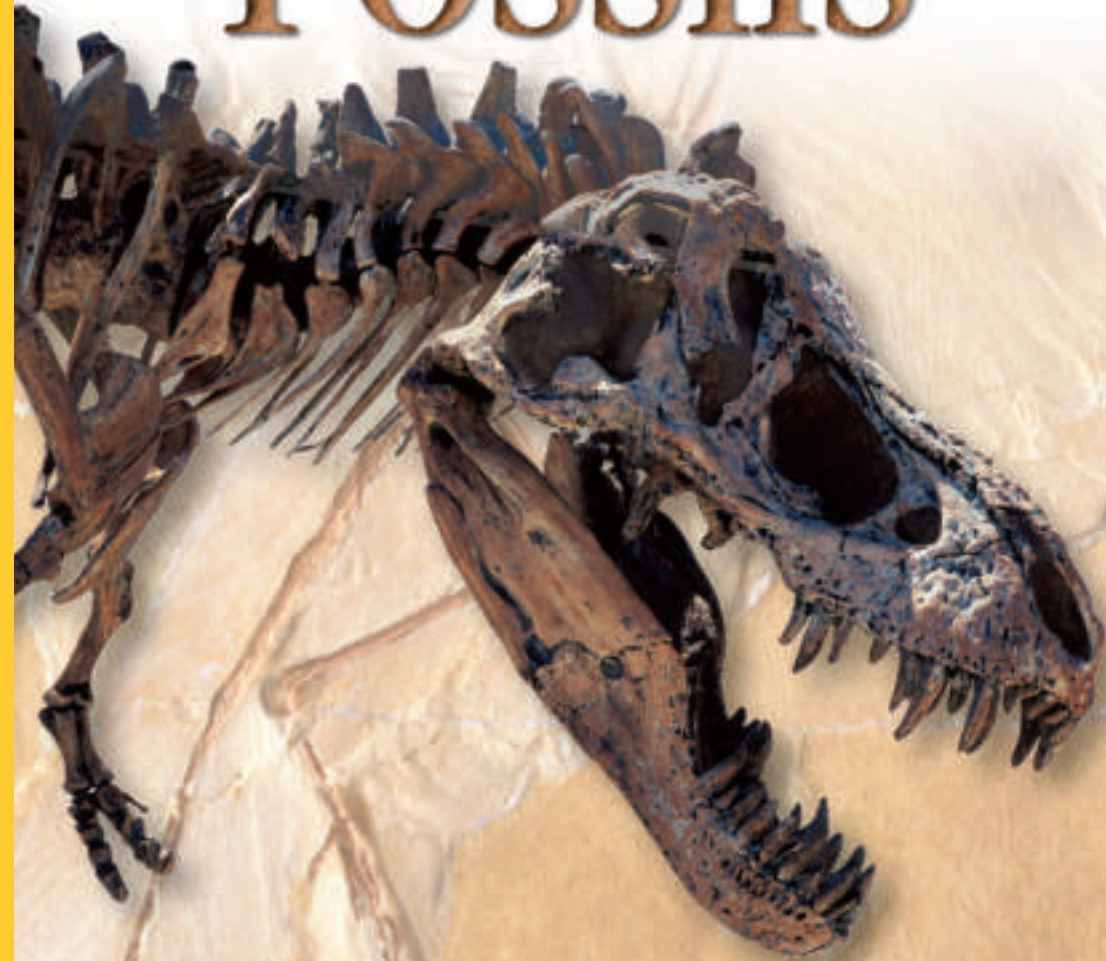


Science

Science

Earth Science

Dinosaur Fossils



Genre	Comprehension Skill	Text Features	Science Content
Nonfiction	Retell	• Labels • Glossary	Fossils and Dinosaurs

Scott Foresman Science 2.7



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by Kim Borland

Vocabulary

dinosaurs
extinct
fossil
paleontologist

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Dinosaur Fossils

by Kim Borland

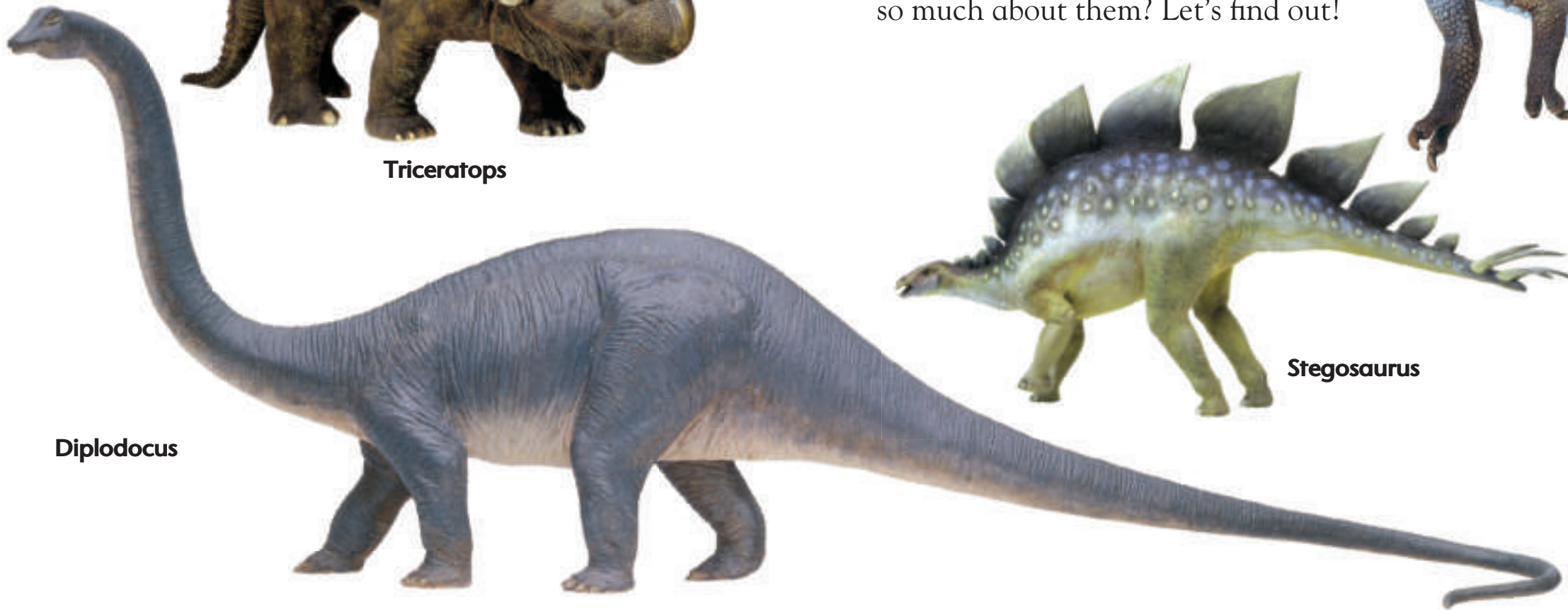




Millions of years ago, **dinosaurs** roamed the Earth. Dinosaurs of all shapes and sizes lived together on the land.



Triceratops

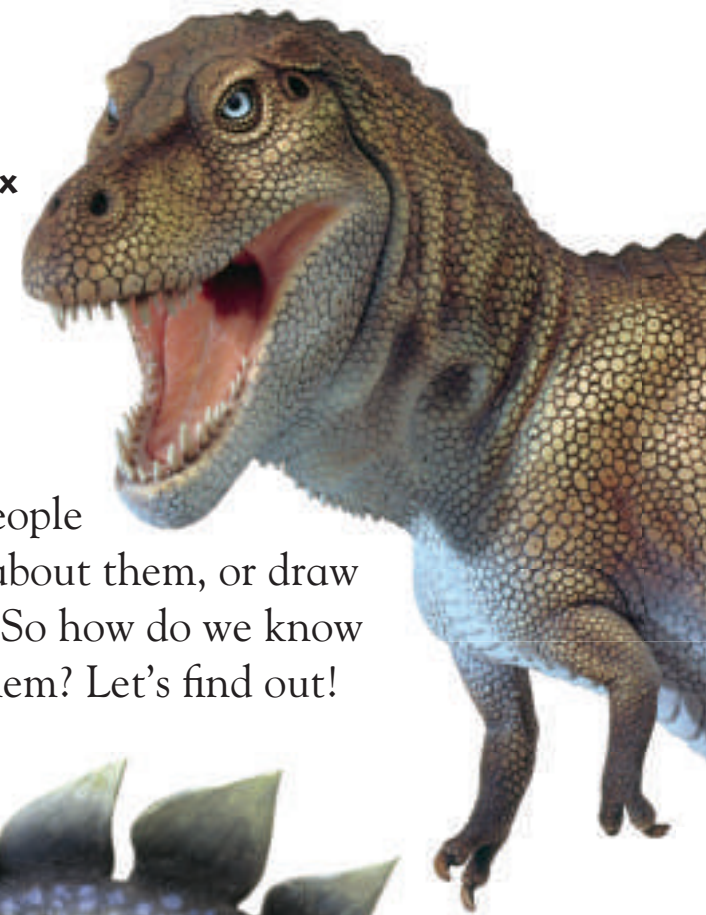


Diplodocus



Tyrannosaurus rex

The dinosaurs disappeared from the Earth before there were any people to see them, tell about them, or draw pictures of them. So how do we know so much about them? Let's find out!



Stegosaurus





Learning About the Past

Everything we know about dinosaurs comes from fossils. A **fossil** can be a very old bone, a tooth, a footprint, or even a piece of skin.

A **paleontologist** is a scientist who studies fossils. These paleontologists are studying the fossils of a Tyrannosaurus rex, T. rex for short, that lived more than 67 million years ago.

How did dinosaur fossils form?

Paleontologists think this dinosaur fell into a river when it died. It was buried under soft sand and mud. When the river dried up, the sand and mud turned into rock. Over millions of years, this dinosaur's bones turned into rock too. These are the fossils we find today.



This paleontologist is looking at the fossil skull of a small kind of T. rex, called an Albertosaurus.



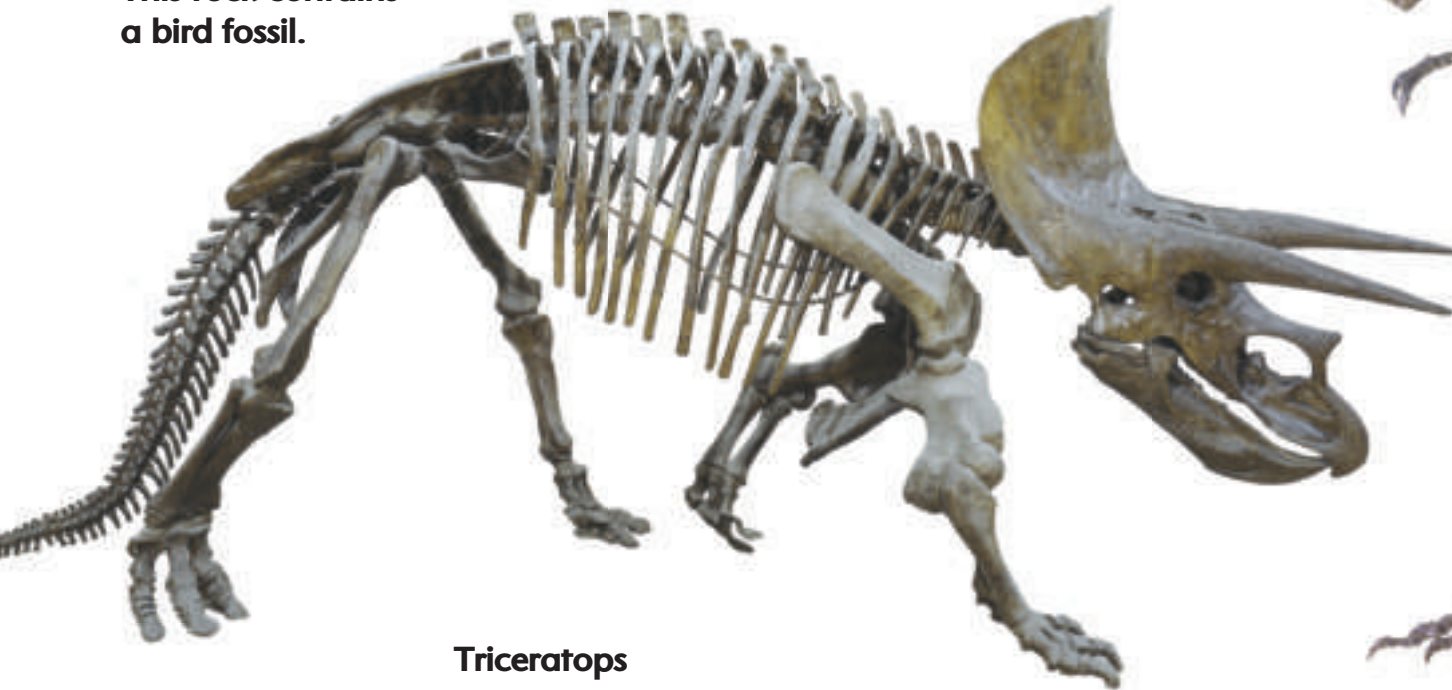


What can we learn from fossils?



This rock contains a bird fossil.

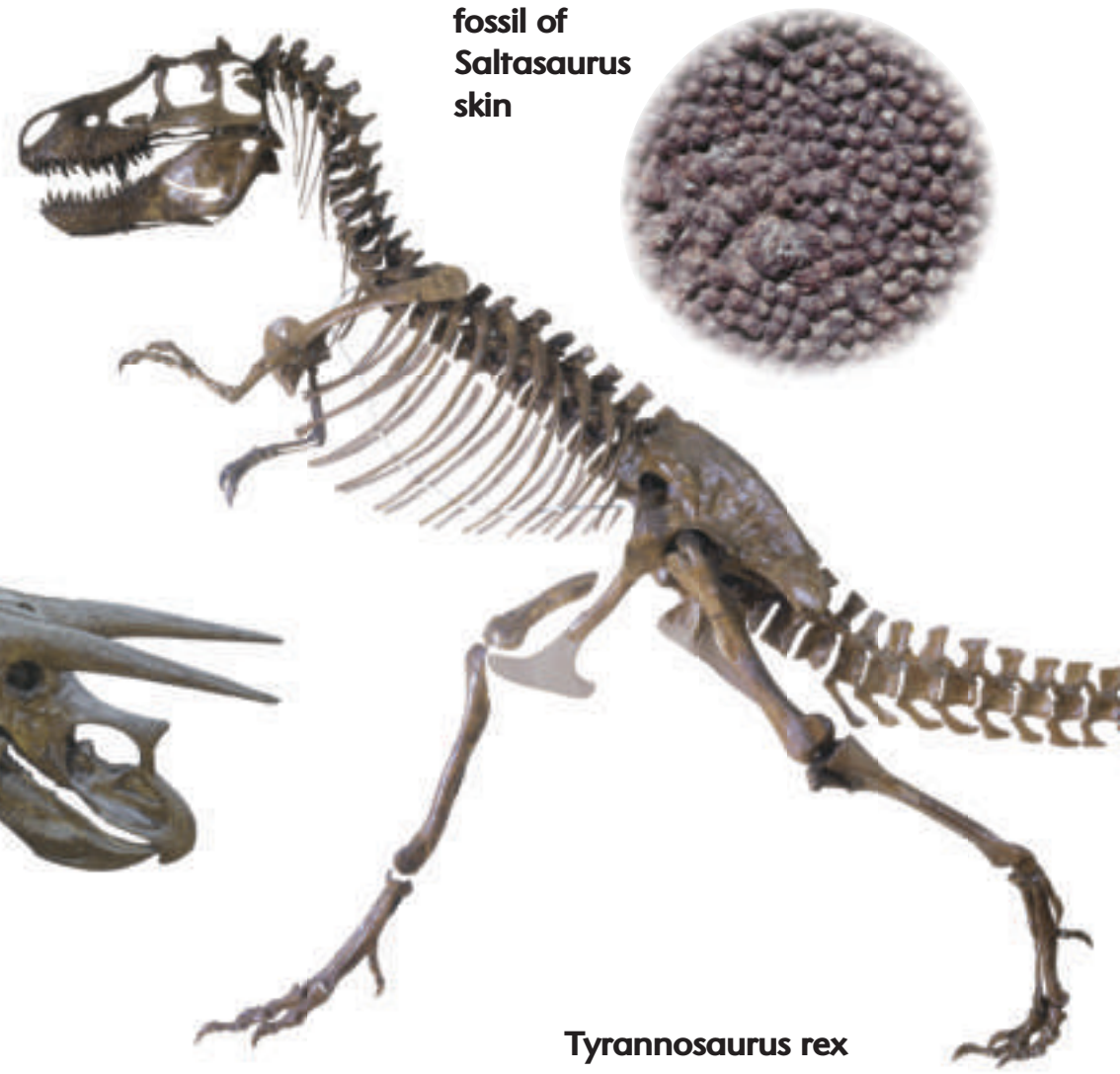
Fossils are like a journal. They tell us what the Earth was like in the past. By studying fossils, paleontologists learn interesting things about different dinosaurs.



Triceratops



What did dinosaurs really look like? How big were they? How did their bodies work? What did they eat? How did they move? Paleontologists ask these questions as they study dinosaur fossils.



fossil of
Saltasaurus
skin

Tyrannosaurus rex





What were dinosaurs like?

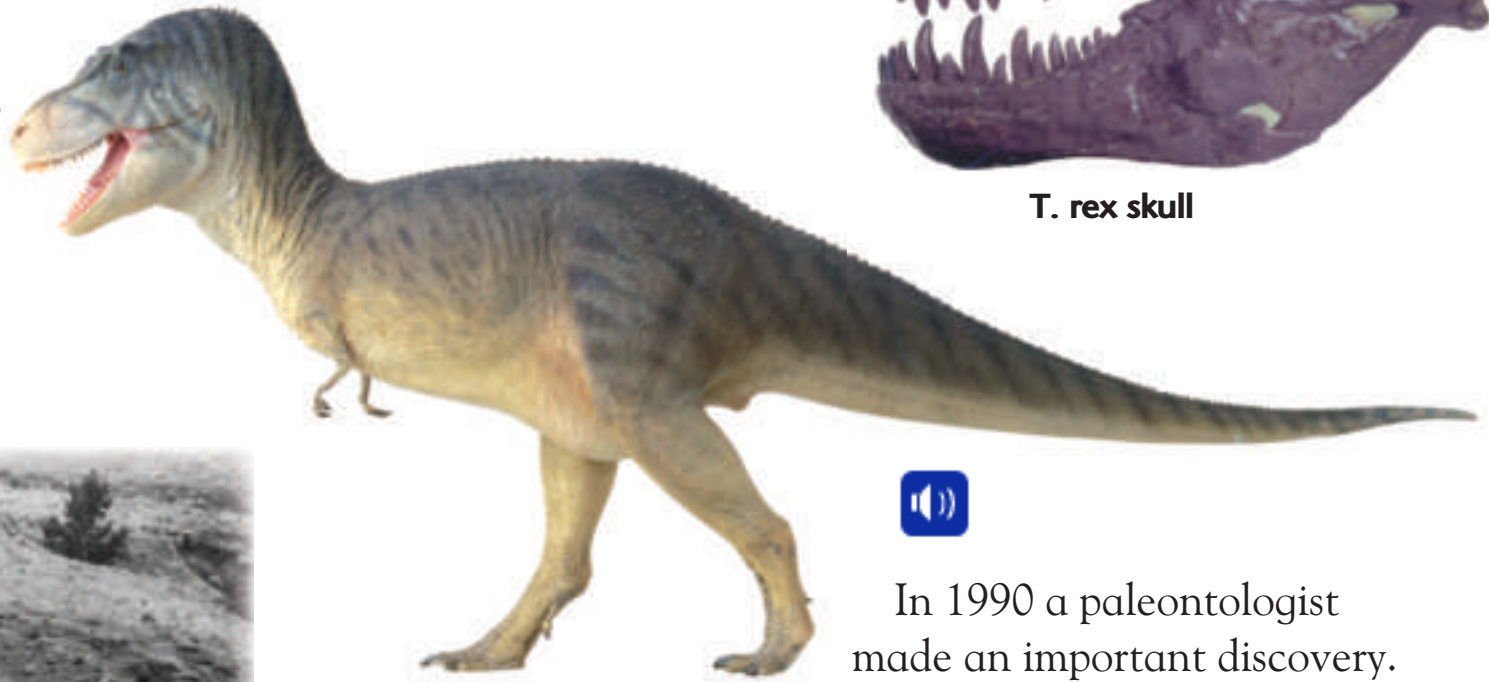
The first T. rex fossil was discovered in Montana more than one hundred years ago! Since then, paleontologists have found other T. rex fossils. They know that this huge dinosaur had long, strong leg bones. It had very short arms. Each arm had two claws.



Workers find part of a T. rex skeleton in Hell Creek, Montana.



T. rex skull



In 1990 a paleontologist made an important discovery. She saw three large bones poking out of a mountain. The bones were part of the most complete skeleton of a T. rex ever found. The most interesting fossil was the dinosaur's skull. By studying the skull, paleontologists learned that T. rex had a powerful sense of smell.





Animals and plants that no longer live on Earth are **extinct**. Dinosaurs disappeared from the Earth a long time ago. They are extinct. For some reason the dinosaurs' habitat could no longer meet their needs. Some paleontologists think that this is because their habitat changed.



Euoplocephalus

Brachiosaurus



Coelophysis



Gallimimus



Paleontologists know that some dinosaurs were as tall as buildings. Some were as small as chickens. Some dinosaurs ate leaves and fruits. Some ate other animals.

By studying dinosaur tracks, paleontologists know that some dinosaurs moved slowly on four legs. Some raced on two legs.



two-
legged
dinosaur

four-
legged
dinosaur

**These are dinosaur
footprints.**





Studying Dinosaurs

By studying the fossils of a Barosaurus (ba-ruh-SAW-ruhs), paleontologists know that this dinosaur had a long, strong neck. The dinosaur could stand on its back legs and reach the highest trees. It used its tiny teeth to pull leaves off branches.

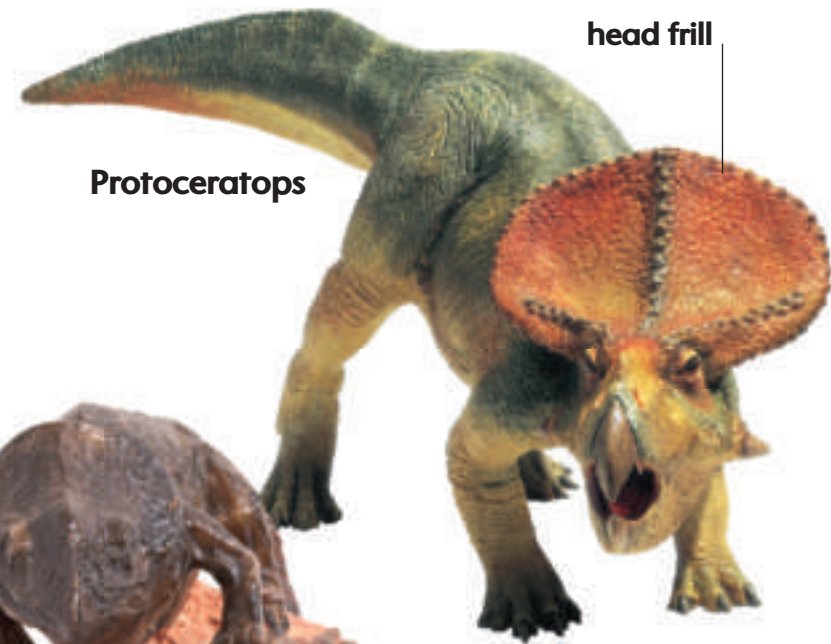


Diplodocus skull



By studying the fossils of the Triceratops (try-SE-ruh-tops), paleontologists know that its babies were born with three horns. The three horns got bigger as the dinosaur grew older.

Fossils of baby Protoceratops show that it was born with its head frill.



Protoceratops

head frill



Protoceratops babies



New Discoveries

For many years paleontologists thought T. rex was the largest meat-eating dinosaur. In 1993 a paleontologist made an amazing discovery. He found the fossils of a Gigantosaurus in Argentina. This dinosaur was even bigger than T. rex!



Are there even bigger dinosaur fossils to be found? Paleontologists are always looking for new fossil clues. Each discovery tells us more about how these animals lived. So keep your eyes open. Maybe the next big dinosaur discovery will be yours!

Gigantosaurus

Tyrannosaurus rex

**Tyrannosaurus rex was 39 feet long.
Gigantosaurus was 45 feet long.
How much longer was Gigantosaurus?**



Glossary

dinosaurs	extinct animals that lived long ago
extinct	a plant or animal that no longer lives on Earth
fossil	a print or remains of a plant or animal that lived long ago
paleontologist	a scientist who studies fossils

What did you learn?

1. Which is the biggest dinosaur ever found? Where was it found?
2. What is a fossil?
3. **Writing in Science**
Paleontologists study living things from long ago. What do you think a paleontologist's day might be like? Write to tell your ideas. Use words from the book as you write.
4.  **Retell** On page 4, the author explains how a dinosaur fossil might form. Using your own words, retell how this might happen.

