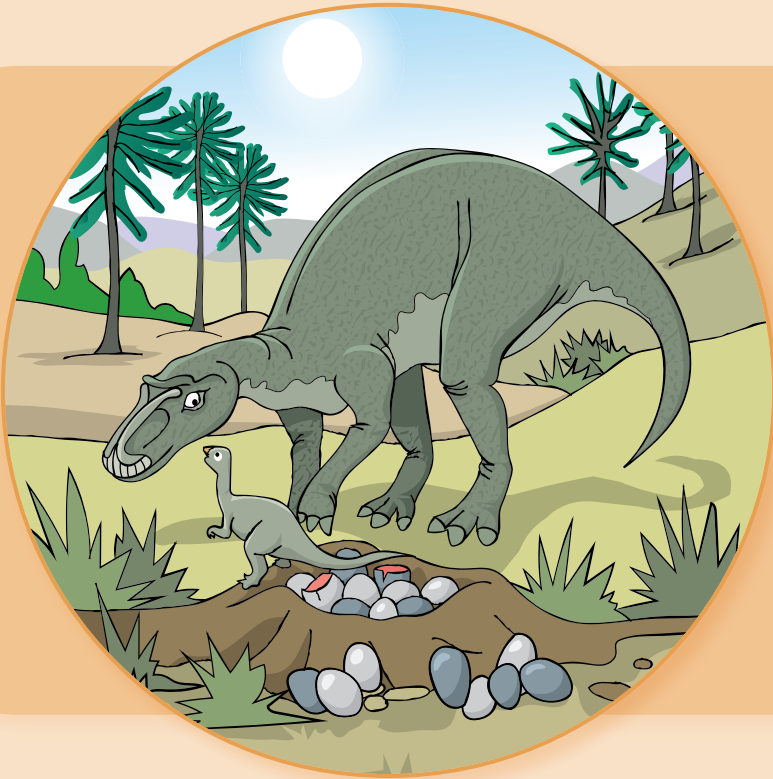


# The Age of the Dinosaurs



Written by Elizabeth Charman

Illustrated by Adam Linley

# Green words

Practises -ed, -ing

roamed

caused

having

evolved

destroyed

sticking

named

survived

being

hatched

amazing

slicing

dominated

thinking

grinding

# Red words

Previous red words

past\*

move

different

their

fast\*

half

last\*

because

everything

eye

many

improve

people

plant\*

great

\*These words may be tricky depending on regional accent.



## **Introduction**

Back in the distant past, around 230 million years ago, amazing animals roamed the Earth. To our way of thinking, they were like storybook beasts! But they were real.



Tyrannosaurus Rex fossil

Dinosaurs left traces of themselves in **fossils**, which help us understand what life was like all that time ago.



The Natural History Museum, London

One of the things that catches our imagination about these **prehistoric** wonders is their names. Titanosaurus, Brontosaurus, Bambiraptor, Gobisaurus. The Natural History Museum lists more than 300 sorts of dinosaurs.



Fact box: The Natural History Museum is home to a famous dinosaur called Dippy, a **replica** of a diplodocus skeleton.



It's only in the last 200 years – a blink of an eye in the scope of life on Earth – that people have worked out what we know about dinosaurs, described them and named them.



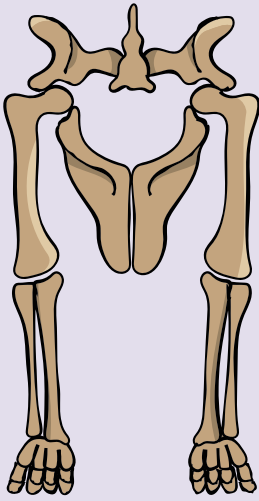
Mary Anning was a famous fossil hunter. As a child, Mary searched for fossils with her dad. When she was 12, they discovered an ichthyosaur together. A few years later, Mary was the first person ever to find a plesiosaur.



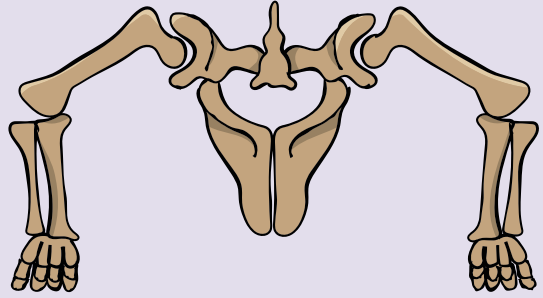


## All shapes and sizes

Dinosaurs **evolved** into a huge range of shapes and sizes, from the giant Apatosaurus (the length of a tennis court) to the chicken-sized Microraptor.



dinosaur



reptile

A difference between the dinosaurs and other reptiles was the shape of the hip joint. Instead of having their legs sticking out to the side, like crocodiles or modern lizards, the dinosaurs' legs were upright.



The Argentinosaurus was the heaviest and the longest dinosaur.

This meant they could move faster while using less energy. It also gave better support to their weight.

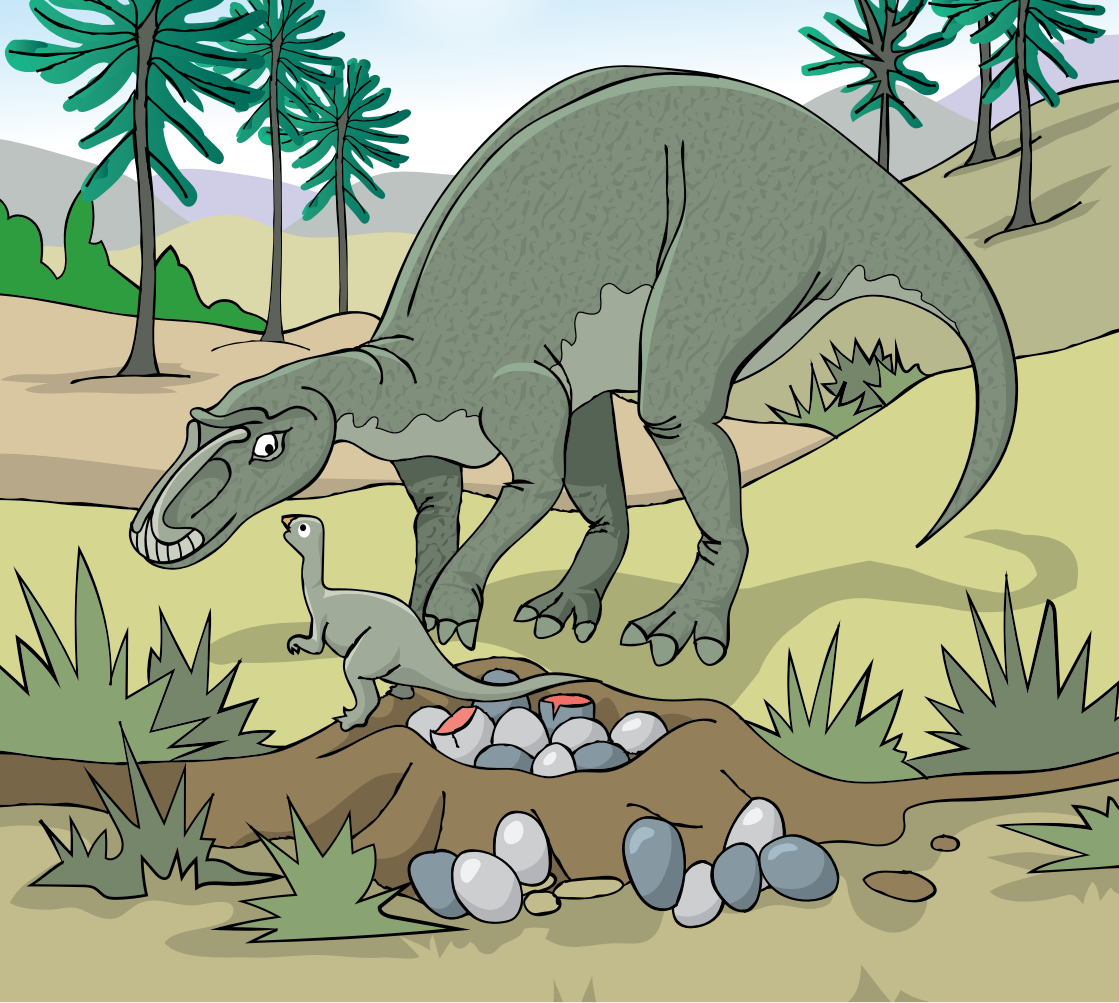
This was important for an animal which might grow to the weight of seven double-decker buses!



fossilised Hadrosaurus eggs

## Laying eggs

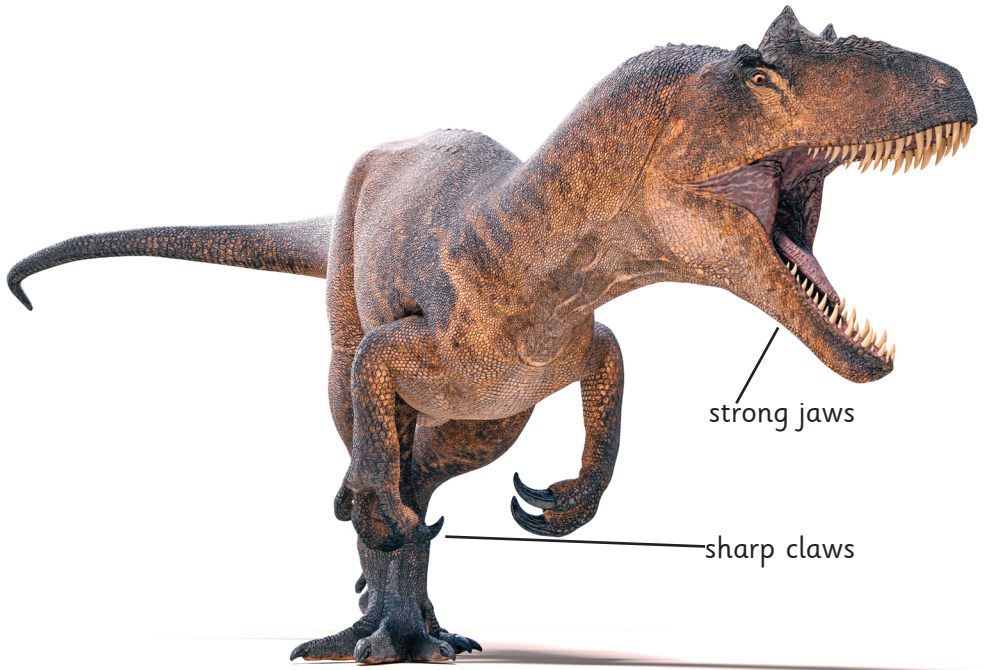
Like all reptiles, dinosaurs hatched from eggs. This made it possible for numbers to increase fast because an adult female could lay a lot of eggs in one go.



This is a Maiasaura, which means ‘good mother’. They laid 30–40 eggs at a time and cared for their babies after they’d hatched.



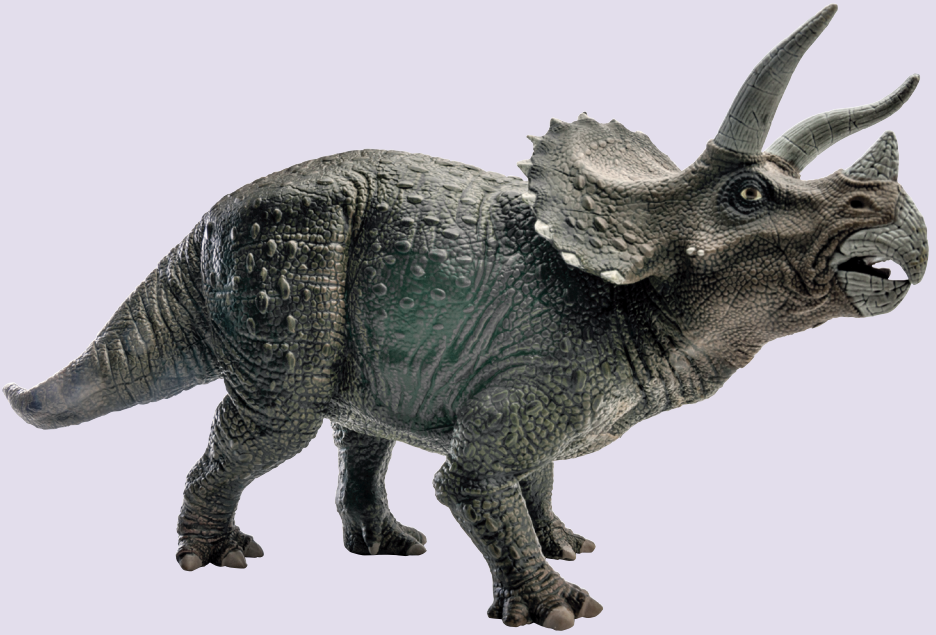
However, eggs and young creatures were at risk from being eaten by other hungry hunters.



The Allosaurus was one of the best hunters.

## **Hungry dinosaurs!**

Dinosaurs that ate eggs or other baby dinosaurs were meat eaters, or carnivores. They had fearsome claws, deadly jaws and great speed to catch, kill and eat up their prey.



The Triceratops had a sharp beak.

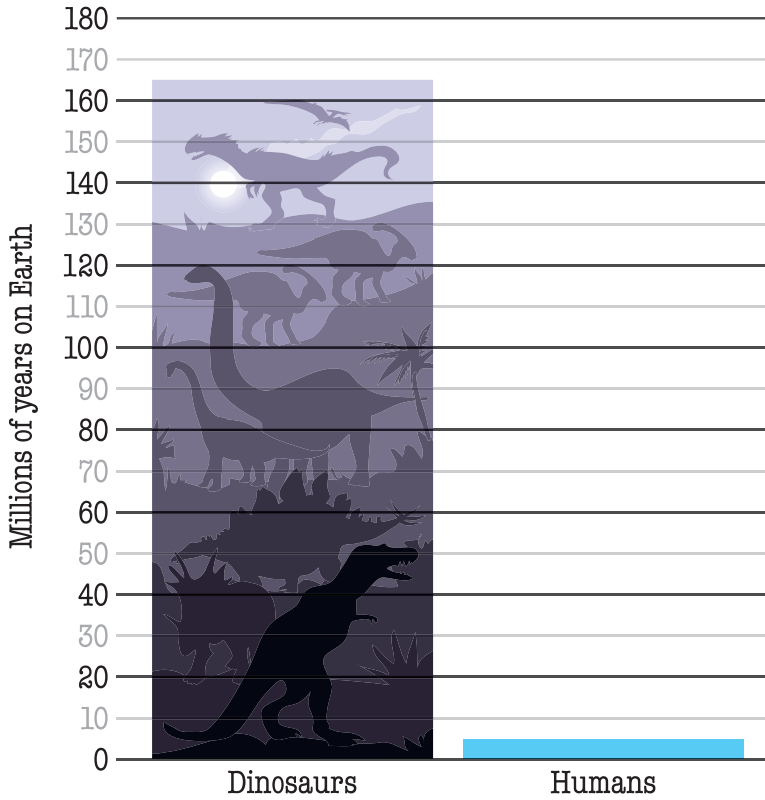
Many of the dinosaurs were plant eaters, or herbivores. They had to eat a lot to get all the energy they needed. They were helped by features like sharp beaks for slicing and lots of teeth for grinding.





The Oviraptor ate fruit, meat and eggs.  
Its name means 'egg thief'.

A few dinosaurs were able to eat both plants and small animals, like insects and lizards. These were called omnivores. They might have had several sorts of teeth to cope with the different foods.



Dinosaurs dominated animal life for far longer than we humans have been around, but at last their reign was over.



## The end of the dinosaurs

The age of the dinosaurs ended when Earth was struck by a huge **asteroid**. It crashed into the Earth off the coast of Mexico. The distance across the **crater** it made was as far as Plymouth to Bristol.



The impact caused chaos to the weather, seasons, air and water quality. The giant dinosaurs were wiped out and, with them, more than half of all species on the planet.



But not everything was destroyed. Some of the smaller animals survived and conditions slowly improved. The survivors and their descendants evolved into the reptiles, birds, mammals and insects we share the world with today.

# Glossary

**asteroid** – space rock

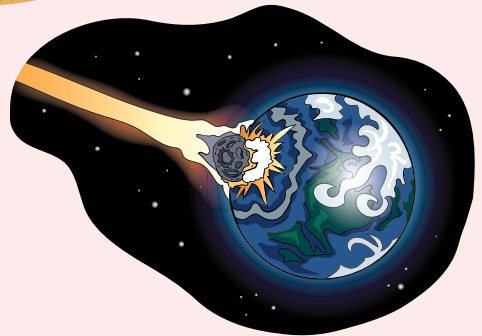
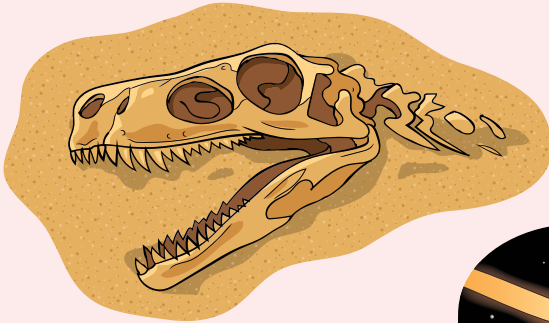
**crater** – hole after something has been hit by a big rock

**evolved** – changed slowly over time

**fossils** – remains of something that's been trapped in rock

**prehistoric** – 'before history' – a time before things were written down

**replica** – copy



# Questions

Can you answer these questions about the book?

1. About how long ago did dinosaurs live on Earth?
2. Which was smaller: Apatosaurus or Microraptor?
3. Explain one way dinosaurs were different from modern crocodiles.
4. Why was it a good thing that dinosaurs laid a lot of eggs?
5. How did the age of the dinosaurs end?
6. Which fact in the book do you think is most interesting? Why?

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Written by Elizabeth Charman  
Illustrated by Adam Linley  
(Beehive illustration)

Produced and edited by Oriel Square

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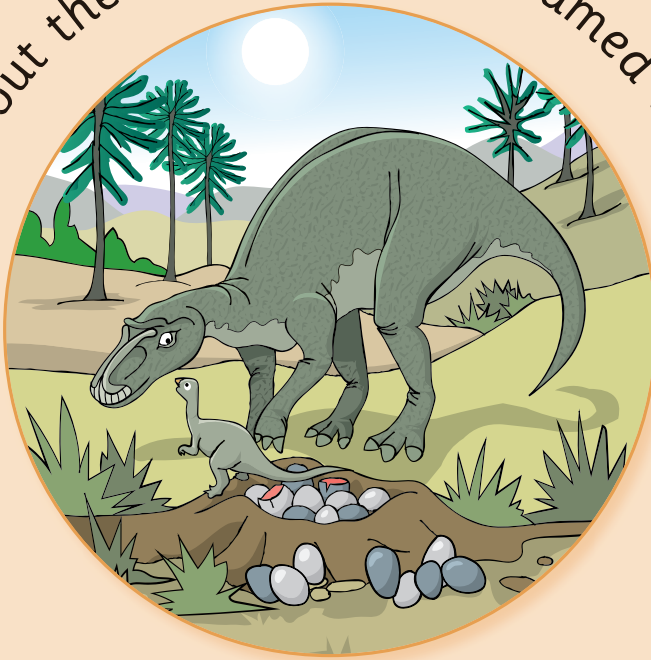
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