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Opening extract from

How Dinosaurs Really Work

Written by

Alan Snow

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For

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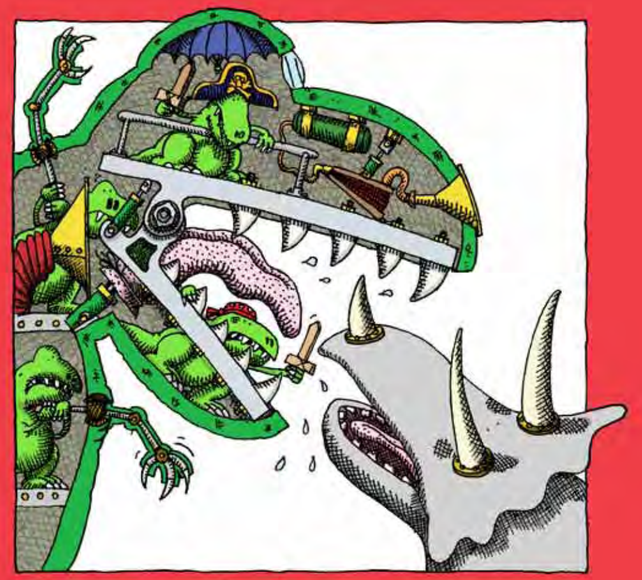
How Dinosaurs Really Worked!



by Alan Snow

SIMON AND SCHUSTER
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THE TERRIBLE LIZARDS!

or not . . .

Dinosaurs didn't exist when your parents were young so attacks on the way to school were not a problem.

Oi!
Are you our cousin?

There was a time long ago when dinosaurs ruled the Earth. The word DINOSAUR comes from two Greek words – DEINOS which means terrible, powerful or wondrous, and SAUROS which means lizard so they could be called TERRIBLE LIZARDS except that, in fact, not all were terrible and none were lizards. Dinosaurs were beasts of many shapes, sizes and types, and they were more closely related to modern birds. Some were meat-eating monsters whilst others were plant-eating creatures.

So when DID the dinosaurs rule the Earth? Well, you know that your parents are old – dinosaurs are much, MUCH older than that. Even when your grandparents were young, there were no dinosaurs. The first dinosaurs lived a quarter of a BILLION years ago and the last of the big dinosaurs died out around 65,000,000 years ago.

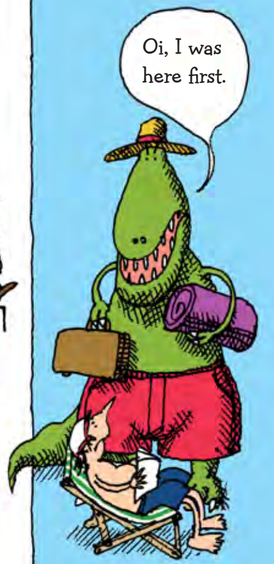
Triassic Period
248–206 million years ago

Jurassic Period
206–144 million years ago

Cretaceous Period
144–63 million years ago

Tertiary Period
63–1.8 million years ago

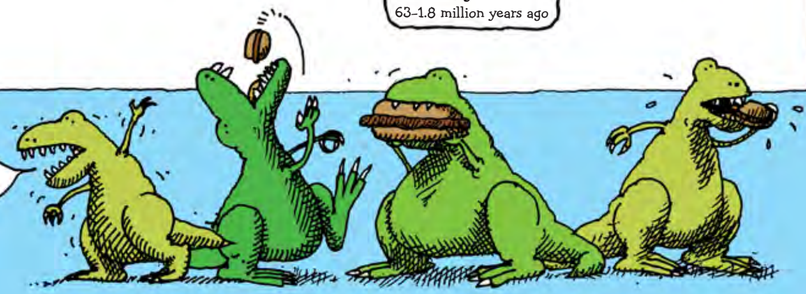
Humans have only been around for maybe two million years.



Dinosaurs lived on the planet for about 20 million years (which is about 10 times longer than us humans have been here).

Terrible vegetarian dinosaurs attacking pre-historic giant carrots (which probably didn't exist).

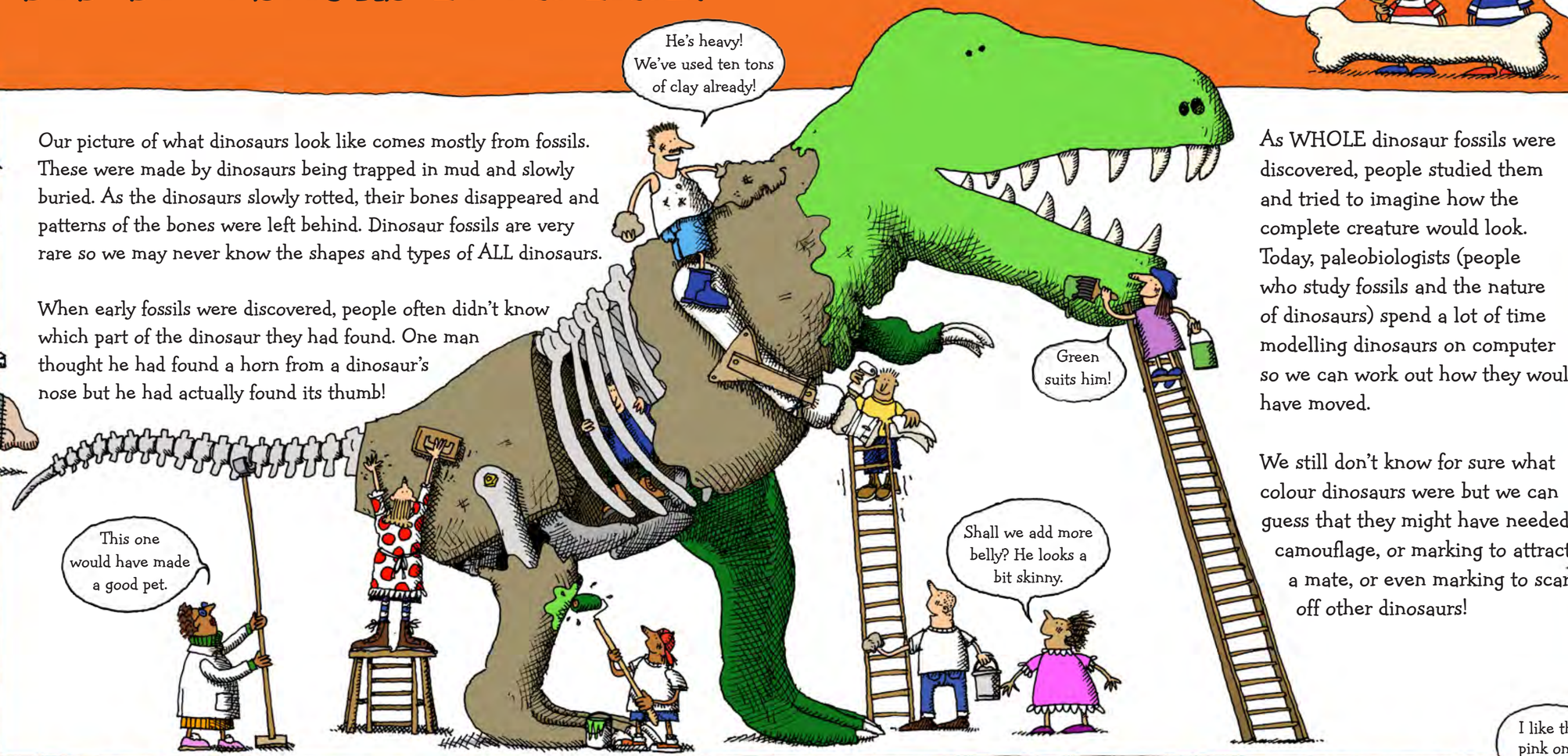
You lot!
Fancy a burger?



WHAT DID DINOSAURS LOOK LIKE?

Our picture of what dinosaurs look like comes mostly from fossils. These were made by dinosaurs being trapped in mud and slowly buried. As the dinosaurs slowly rotted, their bones disappeared and patterns of the bones were left behind. Dinosaur fossils are very rare so we may never know the shapes and types of ALL dinosaurs.

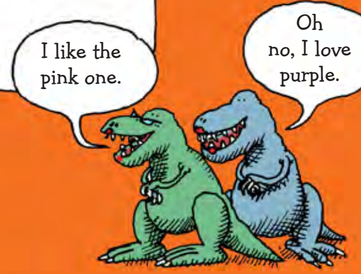
When early fossils were discovered, people often didn't know which part of the dinosaur they had found. One man thought he had found a horn from a dinosaur's nose but he had actually found its thumb!



As WHOLE dinosaur fossils were discovered, people studied them and tried to imagine how the complete creature would look. Today, paleobiologists (people who study fossils and the nature of dinosaurs) spend a lot of time modelling dinosaurs on computer so we can work out how they would have moved.

We still don't know for sure what colour dinosaurs were but we can guess that they might have needed camouflage, or marking to attract a mate, or even marking to scare off other dinosaurs!

Mary Anning was one of the greatest early fossil hunters. She discovered the first Ichthyosaur when she was only 12 years old.



STEGOSAURUS (STEG-uh-SAWR-us)

Stegosaurus means Roof Lizard

The stegosaurus was a large dinosaur with seventeen big, sharp protective plates on its back, and spikes that were over a metre long on its tail. If it was attacked, it was definitely a fighter rather than a runner-away!

Mashed salad again!

What's for lunch?

WALKIES!

The stegosaurus was a plant-eating creature. It had a beak and small teeth so it couldn't chew its food. Instead, it would swallow plants and then, in its tummy, rocks (that it had also swallowed!) would move around and mash up the plants.

The stegosaurus' head was about the same size as a cow's head but its brain was about the same size as a rabbit's!

I'll have the salad with a side order of rocks please.

Of course, Sir.

The Stegosaurus' tail is called a thagomizer. The cartoonist Gary Larson did a cartoon about a Stegosaurus bashing a caveman with his tail.

The caveman was called Thag Simmons, hence the word 'thagomize'.

And what are you implying exactly?

Take your partner by the hand.

Aargh! Why aren't you running away from me?

DINO FACTS

WEIGHT: 2,722 KILOGRAMS
HEIGHT: 4.3 METRES
LENGTH: 8.5 METRES

DINO JOKE

What do you call a plated dinosaur when he's asleep?

StegoSNOREus

There have been some weird theories about the Stegosaurus. One theory is that they had two brains – one in its head and the other in its behind.

Another Stegosaurus theory is that it walked on two legs