

What Do We Know About Dinosaurs?

Reading/discussion

Dinosaurs lived on earth during the **Mesozoic Era**, which is also known as the 'Age of Reptiles', and have been extinct for over 65 million years, yet scientists, can tell us many things about them. For example, we know that dinosaurs were reptiles. They ranged in size from dinosaurs like the **Brachiosaurus** which were enormous – over 100 feet long and 50 feet tall to those, like the **Compsognathus**, which were only about the size of a chicken. Some, like the **Triceratops**, were plant eaters, while others, like the **Tyrannosaurus Rex**, were meat eaters. Some dinosaurs could run very fast, for example, the **Velociraptor**, while others, like the **Ankylosaurus**, moved very slowly.

How do we know so much about them? Well, **palaeontologists** study **fossils** to learn about creatures which lived on this earth millions of years ago. Although fossils are the same shape as the animal part, they usually consist of **minerals** like **silica** or **calcite**, which have replaced the original bones or organs over the centuries and turned them into stone. Fossils may include bones, skin, teeth or claws. Other types of fossils are impressions of footprints or tooth marks or fossilized dung.

Dinosaur fossils were first identified almost 200 years ago and new discoveries are still being made regularly. Unfortunately very few complete skeletons are found. Palaeontologists have to use clues like footprints to work out how fast the dinosaur moved and whether it walked on two legs or four; teeth or teeth marks and dung to decide what it ate; and the markings on fossilized skin, and their knowledge of animal anatomy to work out what it looked like.

There are many things fossils can't tell us, though. For instance, no one really knows what color the dinosaurs were. Nor do we know what sounds they made. We can only guess.

Name _____

Date _____

What Do We Know About Dinosaurs? Questions

A. Work out the anagrams.

Palaeontologists have given the dinosaur fossils they have found some very strange names. Here are six which are mentioned in the reading, but they are all mixed up. Do you think you can sort them out?

1. **rcousbahisura**
2. **pgtschuanooms**
3. **porectriats**
4. **ernxoutryasusnar**
5. **oprcavltreio**
6. **nyosuralkuas**

B. What do we know about them?

Now that you have worked out the names, write one thing we know about each of the dinosaurs and say what fossils could have helped us to know this.

Name	What we know about it	Fossil

Name _____

Date _____

What Do We Know About Dinosaurs? Answers

Activity A.

Brachiosaurus
Compsognathus
Triceratops
Tyrannosaurus Rex
Velociraptor
Ankylosaurus

Activity B.

Name	What we know about it	Fossil
Brachiosaurus	Very big	Bones
Compsognathus	As small as a chicken	Bones
Triceratops	Plant eater	Dung, teeth
Tyrannosaurus Rex	Meat eater	Dung, teeth, teethmarks
Velociraptor	Very fast	Foot prints
Ankylosaurus	Slow moving	Footprints