

Dinosaurs dominated the Earth for more than 150 million years. They included the largest animals ever to have lived on land, as well as some that were smaller than a cat. Dinosaurs died out 65 million years ago. Nobody knows why.

When some hundred years ago people found very big bones, they believed to have found bones of dragons (Drachen) or giants (Riesen).

In 1841 the word dinosaur, from the Greek words for „terrible“ and „lizard (Echse)“ is used for the first time by an English scientist (Naturwissenschaftler).

In 1851 there was a World Exhibition (Weltausstellung) at Crystal Palace, in London. They showed models of two types of dinosaurs.



In 1947 a very large number of dinosaur skeletons (Skelette) were found.

About 65 million years ago the dinosaurs, together with many other animal species (Arten), became extinct (ausgestorben). Other animal groups, including turtles (Schildkröten), frogs, birds, and mammals (Säugetiere), survived.

There are two different theories for the mass extinction (Massenaussterben) of the dinosaurs:

Gradual extinction:

Gradual (nach und nach) changes in climate and vegetation caused (verursacht) by continental drift led to the dinosaur's slow extinction over about 50,000 years. Warm, tropical conditions were replaced by cooler, more seasonal climates, and mammals slowly replaced dinosaurs as the dominant (überragend) animal group.

Catastrophes:

The period when dinosaurs were dying out coincided (zusammenfallen) with many volcanic eruptions (Vulkanausbrüche) in India. At the same time, a huge (riesig) meteorite hit the Earth. Dust (Staub) thrown into the atmosphere blocked out sunlight, and dinosaurs could not survive the resulting climate changes.

Write TRUE or FALSE:

The name Tyrannosaurus means „tyrant lizard.“

The most intelligent dinosaurs were probably about as intelligent as chimpanzees.

About 400 species of dinosaur have been identified and named.

The fastest dinosaur sprinted as fast as a Ferrari (360 km/h).

The largest flying animal ever to have existed was a flying dinosaur with a wingspan of about 12 metres.

The plant-eating Seismosaurus („earth-shaking lizard“) was 40 metres in length, longer than an Airbus A320.

The dinosaurs were mammals.

What we know about the dinosaurs comes mostly from the Bible.

Some dinosaurs were herbivores (eating plants) and others were carnivores (eating meat).