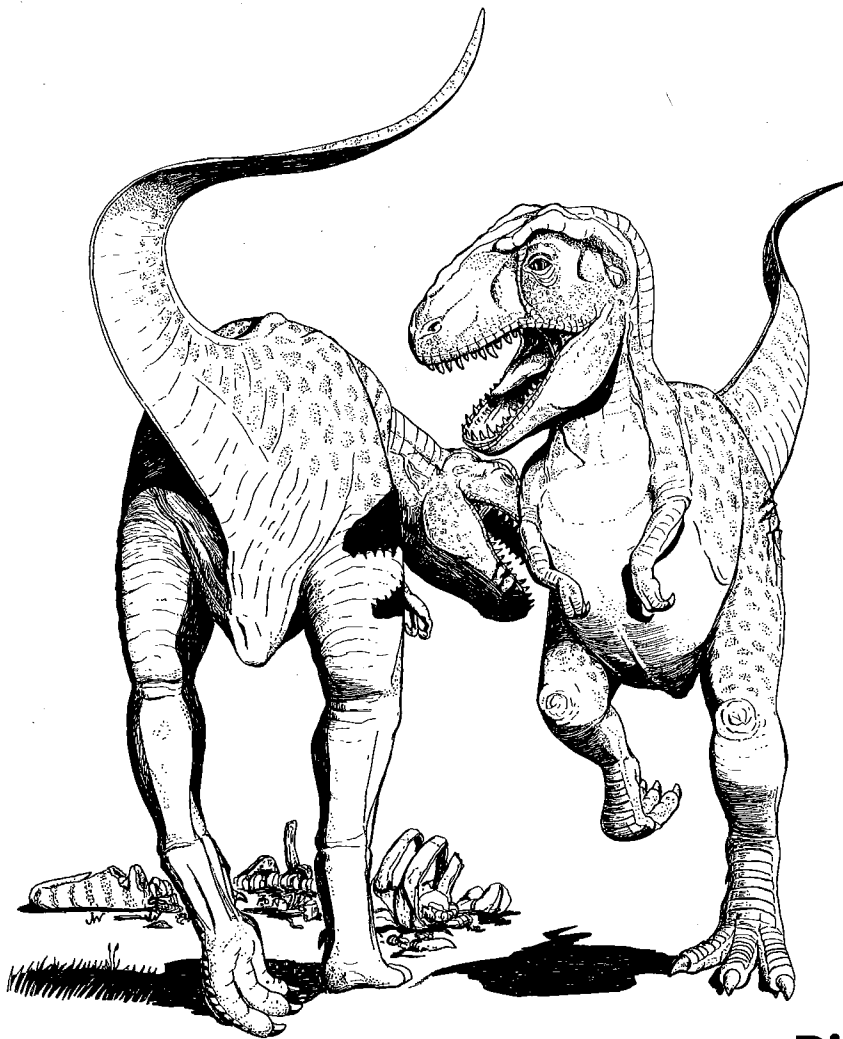


An illustration of two dinosaurs in a forest. On the left is a brown Tyrannosaurus Rex with its mouth open, showing sharp teeth. On the right is a long-necked dinosaur, possibly a sauropod, with its head tilted upwards. The background features tall, dark green trees under a blue sky with light clouds. The title 'THE Complete DINOSAUR' is overlaid on the scene.

THE
Complete
DINOSAUR

Edited by James O. Farlow and M. K. Brett-Surman



Dinosaurs and the Media

Why Are Dinosaurs So Popular?

For more than a century (since the publication by O. C. Marsh in the 1880s of his skeletal restoration of "*Brontosaurus*"), dinosaurs have been the most famous of all the animals. No other creatures have so captured the imaginations of both children and adults. Adults are often amazed (and bewildered) when children know the names of dinosaurs before they know the names of the streets on which they live. Not infrequently, those children can also spell those names. Even the word *dinosaur* evokes visions of an age long ago when "monsters" were real. Certainly that is one of the keys to their popularity: Dinosaurs were "real monsters," yet they are harmless to us today. Equally significant, perhaps, dinosaurs are fun. There is no single aspect about them that does not appeal to someone. Today these animals, extinct for 65 million years, are among the greatest of educational tools, especially in schools where "science phobia" runs rampant. Where else can a student combine hard facts from such diverse sciences as geology, biology, history, physics, and ecology and not be bored? With adults, the

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popularity of dinosaurs can be explained quite simply: Dinosaurs represent everything we loved as children—adventure, power, time travel, science, mystery, lost worlds, and even a certain (and somehow pleasing) “inner chill.”

The Science Fiction Dinosaur

Dinosaurs have often appeared in science fiction stories, one of the earliest important examples being the novel *The Lost World* (1912) by Sherlock Holmes creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (a lavishly illustrated, annotated version of which was recently published [Pilot and Rodin 1996]), with its lost plateau nestled away in the jungles of South America (Fig. 43.1). Edgar Rice Burroughs, the creator of Tarzan and other “pulp” magazine features, used dinosaurs in a number of his imaginative tales, most notably in the Pellucidar series (beginning with *At the Earth's Core* in 1914, in which the “lost world” scenario was transported to a hollow-earth environment); the Caspak series (starting off with *The Land That Time Forgot* in 1918); and *Tarzan the Terrible* (1921), set in a lost land in Africa. Regrettably, dinosaurs have most often been used in these stories in much the same way that Hollywood has used them: as vicious monsters that kill or must be killed. The most egregious use of dinosaurs as monsters was in the coarse pages of the mass-produced science fiction and fantasy “pulp” magazines of the 1930s and 1940s, often lurid “potboilers” churned out for a usually indiscriminating readership. Only in the last ten years have dinosaurs appeared in science fiction tales as animals instead of crazed killers. Once just a background foil, dinosaurs now appear as main characters (Sawyer 1992, 1993) in stories. They even have their own anthologies (Resnick and Greenberg 1993; Dann and Dozois 1995; see also Box 43.1 at the end of this chapter and Figs. 43.1, 43.2).

The Hollywood Dinosaur

Most people's first encounter with a dinosaur is in a motion picture. Unfortunately, Hollywood's portrayal of dinosaurs has rarely introduced them as they really were (*The Lost World* [1925] and *Jurassic Park* [1993] being notable exceptions); see below. One of the earliest dinosaur films was a silent animated cartoon entitled *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1912). In this short subject (which runs about ten minutes), an *Apatosaurus* was portrayed as the comical and quite lovable pet of Winsor McCay, the famous cartoonist who drew and shot the film. Gertie amazed audiences with such stunts as drinking dry a lake, leaving behind a dry Grand Canyon-sized hole.

Silent movies about prehistoric life, mostly featuring “cavemen” in Stone Age settings, were popular from 1913 to 1919, inspired in part by some early science fiction stories. Dinosaurs were first portrayed as villains in one of these pictures, *Brute Force* (1913), a “Stone Age” epic made by motion picture pioneer D. W. Griffith. The film was a sequel to *Man's Genesis*, which Griffith had made the previous year with cavemen but no dinosaurs. The dinosaur in *Brute Force*, portrayed by a life-sized mock-up of a *Ceratosaurus*, menaced cavemen in front of their caves, and was introduced on the screen by a title card reading “One of the perils of prehistoric apartment life.”

The animal's appearance as a threat to early man reinforced the common misconception (persistent to this day among the unenlightened) that dino-

