

A Dinosaur Mystery

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THIS LESSON IS AIMED AT STUDENTS WITH AN UPPER INTERMEDIATE LEVEL OF ENGLISH.

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Listening

We are going to watch a movie about a dinosaur mystery. Watch it once and write how many times you hear each of the words below.

claw		plant eater	
dinosaur		predator	
herbivore		prey	
mammal		skeleton	
meat eater		theory	

Watch again and try and put the words from the box into the spaces in the text. The sections below are from different parts of the movie

The thing about waterholes being a magnet for wildlife. The **a.**[]. know that too. In Africa lions wait for zebras coming to drink. This could be a Tarbosaurus coming down, waiting for **b.**[], so we have really got to watch our step here.

What is that? I don't believe it. At last! There's **c.**[]. – Therizinosaurus. I could never have imagined anything like that. Tiny head, and those great **d.**[]. at the front. It is the oddest of **e.**[].

I was in for a surprise. A whole herd of them appeared and started browsing on the trees. Now everything adds up. Those teeth scattered in the **f.**[]. They were the teeth of a **g.**[]. The dung crammed with plant vegetation at the nest site. Therizinosaurus – it's a **h.**[], not a **i.**[].

I want to get really close, but of course **j.**[]. of this size, they're not safe, but hopefully because of my smell – I smell like a **k.**[]. – I won't be attacked. The only **l.**[]. around at this time are really, really small rat like **m.**[]. so they shouldn't be threatened by me. At least, that was the **n.**[]. As far as I could see, those huge **o.**[]. weren't for killing things, though they clearly discouraged Tarbosaurus.

Read the text and try and answer the questions.

1. Why are waterholes good for predators?
 - a. They're a good place to have a safari.
 - b. They're a good place to wait for prey.
 - c. They are a good place for a drink.
 - d. None of these.

2. What is Nigel's first idea about the giant claw he finds?
 - a. It is from a Tarbosaurus.
 - b. It is from a plant eater.
 - c. It is from a Therizinosaurus.
 - d. It's heavy.

3. What does he find that suggests Therizinosaurus is not a meat eater?
 - a. A giant claw.
 - b. A nest with eggs in.
 - c. Tarbosaurus dung.
 - d. Teeth from a plant eater.

4. What does he use to make the velociraptors run away?
 - a. A bicycle horn.
 - b. A triceratops horn.
 - c. A giant claw.
 - d. A keffuffle.

5. Why does Nigel think Therizinosaurus is an odd dinosaur?
 - a. It has a tiny head.
 - b. It has a long neck.
 - c. It has giant claws.
 - d. All of these.

6. Nigel's theory is that the Therizinosaurus won't attack him because he smells like a mammal.
 - a. True.
 - b. False.

Words and Expressions

For the words in bold write in the meaning from the list a ~ k.

[**d**] **Predators** can be divided into two types. Those that hunt in groups like wolves and those that hunt alone like leopards.

[] Both crabs and bears have **claws** on their front limbs though they look very different.

[] There is a **theory** that birds are related to dinosaurs. They have the same type of bone structure.

[] After failing her driving test for the fifth time Jenny became very **discouraged**.

[] **Herbivores** like cows and sheep eat a lot of vegetation and produce a lot of gas that contributes to global warming.

[] There was a tremendous **kerfuffle** next door last night. I'm surprised the noise didn't wake you up.

[] **Mammals** only became the dominant species on earth after the extinction of the dinosaurs.

[] I would really like to **sneak out** of this meeting today, but it's too important.

[] Alan took careful aim at his **prey**, but a sudden noise alerted the deer and she ran into the forest before he could shoot.

[] I'm a little **confused**. Did you say you'd do your homework by Monday or one day?

[] After a lot of work the dinosaur **skeleton** was slowly cut out of the rock.

- a. Hard, sharp nails or pincers that an animal uses to grasp or cut something.
- b. An animal that eats only plants.
- c. The species of life that gives birth to live young and has warm blood and hair.
- d. An animal that hunts others for food.
- e. An animal that is hunted by others.
- f. The frame of the body that is made of bone.
- g. An idea about why or how something should work.
- h. To be unable to understand a situation.
- i. A fight, disturbance or argument.
- j. To walk away without attracting attention.
- k. To lose enthusiasm for a task or become tired of it after failure.

- **... watch your step ...** *This expression is used as a warning to take care. Examples are;*

Watch your step. There are a lot of deep puddles after the rain.

The boss knows that you were late today so you'd better watch your step. Once more and you might get fired.

- **... what's going on ...** *This is used when you don't know what is happening. For example;*

Do you know what's going on in the office? There seems to be some kind of argument.

What's going on here? I thought I told you to complete this exercise not chat all day.

- **... do you want a hand with ...** *Used to offer help to someone. Examples are;*

Do you want a hand with the dishes, Jane?

It would be great if you could give me a hand with the kids while Ben is on his business trip.

- **... get under cover ...** *This means to hide. For example;*

We'd better get under cover. It looks like there's going to be heavy rain in a minute.

Quick! Get under cover before the helicopters spot us.



Reading - Dinosaur Size

While the evidence is incomplete, it is clear that, as a group, dinosaurs were large. For much of the dinosaur era, the smallest sauropods were larger than anything else in their habitat, and the largest were far more massive than anything else that has since walked the Earth. Giant prehistoric mammals such as the



mammoth were dwarfed by the giant sauropods, and only a handful of modern aquatic animals approach and sometimes exceed them in size — most notably the blue whale, which reaches up to 173,000 kilograms and is over 30 meters in length — the largest animal ever. There are several proposed advantages for the large size of sauropods, including protection from predation, reduction of energy use, and longevity, but it may be that the most important advantage was diet. Large animals are more efficient at digestion than small animals, because food spends more time in their digestive systems. This also allows them to exist on food with lower nutritive value than smaller animals.

Most dinosaurs, however, were much smaller than the giant sauropods. Current evidence suggests that dinosaur average size varied through the Triassic, early Jurassic, late Jurassic and Cretaceous periods. Theropod dinosaurs, when sorted by estimated weight most often fall into the 100 to 1,000 kilogram category, whereas recent predatory carnivores peak in the 10 to 100 kilogram category.

1. Which group of dinosaurs was the largest?
2. What were the largest comparable land mammals?
3. Which animal is the largest to have ever existed?
4. What is the most important advantage of large size?
5. Which were larger, dinosaur or mammalian carnivores?

Writing

These two dinosaurs appeared in the movie. Write about the differences you have learned between them.



Tarbosaurus	Therizinosaurus

Transcript

For this transcript I have highlighted the words and expressions I think are difficult for this level. Students can look them up in a dictionary or review the lesson.

This is beautiful. On any safari you look for the waterhole. They're a magnet for animals, and on a **dinosaur** safari it's no different. And this must be the best chance for me to find evidence of the giant **claw**.

The thing about water holes being a magnet for wildlife. The **predators** know that too. In Africa lions wait for zebras coming to drink. This could be a Tarbosaurus coming down, waiting for **prey**, so we have really got to watch our step here.

Look what I've found – a **claw** – I think it's a Therizinosaurus. And there is a whole **skeleton**. Let's see what else I can find. There we go. It's pretty heavy.

Look at the size of it. I'm 6ft 2in (190cm?) and it actually dwarfs me. And this is just the front leg. And to be truthful, I'm actually a little nervous about meeting a creature with **claws** like this. They must be for disemboweling **prey**. But the more I get closer to the mystery of Therizinosaurus, the more I get confused.

Look at these. I found these amongst the bones. They're not the teeth of a **meat eater**. They're leaf shaped and serrated. That suggests they're designed for slicing through vegetation. And earlier, when I found the nest, there was also that **herbivorous** dung there so I just don't know what's going on with this amazing creature.

Velociraptors! And they're paying attention to us.

Nigel!

Come on! They're gaining.

I've got an idea which may work. And this is a bicycle horn I brought from home and let's see what happens. Just as I thought. Velociraptors, like most animals don't like loud noises. Are you okay? Do you want a hand with yours?

Can you hear that? There is a terrific kerfuffle, and I think it's by the lake.

Sshh! It's Tarbosaurus. Get down!

What is that? I don't believe it. At last! There's **claws** – Therizinosaurus. I could never have imagined anything like that. Tiny head, and those great **claws** at the front. It is the oddest of **dinosaurs**.

Tarbosaurus – He's noticed too. Normally big **predators** avoid each other but it looks like there could be a clash and we'd better get under cover.

It was an awesome fight, but Tarbosaurus eventually backed down and I got a chance to sneak out and observe the Therizinosaurus.

I was in for a surprise. A whole herd of them appeared and started browsing on the trees. Now everything adds up. Those teeth scattered in the **skeleton**. They were the teeth of a **herbivore**. The dung crammed with plant vegetation at the nest site. Therizinosaurus – it's a **plant eater**, not a **predator**.

Look at them now. They're moving those giant **claws** to drag leaves towards their mouths. Those great, long necks for reaching up for vegetation. And those pot bellies. Those are great fermentation chambers for the tons of vegetables they have to eat.

I want to get really close, but of course **herbivores** of this size, they're not safe, but hopefully because of my smell – I smell like a **mammal** – I won't be attacked. The only **mammals** around at this time are really, really small rat like **mammals** so they shouldn't be threatened by me. At least, that was the **theory**. As far as I could see, those huge **claws** weren't for killing things, though they clearly discouraged Tarbosaurus.

In fact, these seemed like quite gentle creatures and this gave me an idea. Something that would bring my quest for the giant **claw** to a natural end. They seem completely oblivious, even if I speak quite loudly. So I'm going to go even closer and see if I can touch one.

Teacher Notes

You can find the answers to the exercises on this page with a few guidelines for teachers.

VIDEO AND LISTENING

- Play the video through once with sound off. Ask the students (in groups) to write down what they think the video is about and make a note of any words or expressions they think may appear in the script. Also, what do they think the narrator is saying? These can be discussed in class and will give the students a background from which to start the listening section. One exercise would be to get students to make their own narration for the video. If necessary, give students practice with the vocabulary and word sections before showing it.
- Play video again with sound on. Students are asked to fill in the number of times they hear each word.

Answers;

claw	8	plant eater	1
dinosaur	2	predator	3
herbivore	3	prey	1
mammal	3	skeleton	2
meat eater	1	theory	1

- Listen again to the middle portion of the story. Fill in the gaps with the words you hear.

Answers; a. predators b. prey c. claws d. claws e. dinosaurs
f. skeleton g. herbivore h. plant eater i. predator
j. herbivores k. mammal l. mammals m. mammals
n. theory o. claws

- Answer the questions

Answers; b c d a d a

WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

- As well as the exercise here I might practice the words introduced in this section by use of short quizzes or vocabulary games. There are many.

Answers; d a g k b i c j e h f

READING

- The reading text expands the lesson to include cross culture experiences. For my own classes, depending on the level, I ask the students to read the text first without a dictionary. They then answer the questions and then we will come back to the text and go through it again with the aid of a dictionary to cover any new words or expressions.

Answers;

- 1. The sauropods were.**
- 2. Whales.**
- 3. The blue whale.**
- 4. Diet. Large animals are more efficient at digestion than small animals.**
- 5. Dinosaurs (therapods)**