

Unit 7: Dinosaurs: A Brief History

Narrator: Probably no other creatures on the planet have struck as much fear and wonder in our hearts as dinosaurs.

The earliest dinosaurs appeared about 245 million years ago during the Triassic Period. At that time, most of the land on earth was joined together in a supercontinent called Pangaea. Over millions of years, Pangaea broke into different parts. Different groups of dinosaurs now lived on different continents. As the dinosaurs adapted to live in their own environments, this gave rise to different dinosaur species.

There were many types of dinosaurs, in all shapes and sizes. Some dinosaurs were very small, like *Compsognathus* which was about the size of a chicken. Others were huge, like *Dreadnoughtus* which was 26 meters long and weighed 59,000 kilograms. It was probably the largest land animal to have ever lived.

Dinosaurs ate differently too. Herbivores, like *Hadrosaurs*, had strong, flat teeth for breaking up plants. Meanwhile, carnivores, or meat eaters, made up about 40 percent of dinosaur species. Some predators, like the raptor *Deinonychus*, worked together to hunt larger prey.

Other dinosaurs also lived in family groups. Their footprints tell us that some of these ancient reptiles traveled together. Evidence also shows that some families may have visited certain sites every year to lay eggs.

But by around 66 million years ago, most dinosaurs died out. And the reason why is still a mystery. One popular explanation is an asteroid strike. But in reality, many different things probably led to the dinosaurs' extinction. In fact, dinosaurs were already disappearing by the time the asteroid struck.

However, several dinosaur species survived. Some are even relatives of today's birds. The world has never again seen land creatures as great as the dinosaurs. But they continue to live on through their fossils left behind. There are many more species still to be discovered.