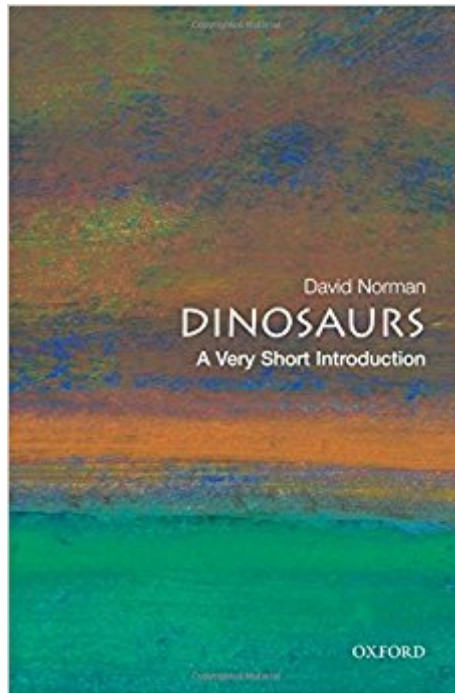




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Dinosaurs: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)



Synopsis

The popularity of dinosaurs seems never ending, as evidenced by the popularity of films such as Jurassic Park and documentaries like Walking with Dinosaurs. But how much do these types of entertainment really tell us about recent scientific discoveries and the latest research into the world of the dinosaur? This is the first book to explain how scientists have been able to put together a picture of how dinosaurs looked, what they ate, and how they moved and interacted with each other. Taking a new approach to the subject, David Norman combines different areas of science, such as anatomy, genetics, forensics, and engineering design, to piece together the latest evidence of how animal life evolved on earth. Norman engagingly lays out the history of dinosaur research, from the speculation over ancient myths about dragons, to the latest virtual reality animation sequences and engineering design analysis. He also discusses the role that informed speculation and luck has played in many of the major discoveries. This book is a fantastic introduction for those just beginning to take an interest in dinosaurs and a must-read for true dinosaur-lovers who want to know not just the latest theories and discoveries, but how scientists achieved them.

Book Information

Series: Very Short Introductions

Paperback: 176 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press (December 15, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0192804197

ISBN-13: 978-0192804198

Product Dimensions: 6.8 x 0.5 x 4.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #765,970 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #106 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Animals > Dinosaurs #337 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Paleontology #1372 in Books > Science & Math > Earth Sciences > Geology

Customer Reviews

'The Very Short Introduction series are fantastically informative books.' Simon Keegan, Big Issue in the North

David Norman is Director, Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge University and the author of several

books, including The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Dinosaurs and The Big Book of Dinosaurs.

As a kid you read books about dinosaurs, and they focus on interesting species, depicting the interactions of a dinosaur with its environment, of predatory with prey, or of the various dinosaurs within a herd. This is not that kind of book. I think it would have been more aptly entitled, "The Study of Dinosaurs: A Very Short Introduction," because that is really what you get. Dr. Norman focuses on the different processes involved in and the struggles associated with the study of dinosaur remains. You come away with a strong sense of how little we can really know, as the author frequently highlights the different ways a piece of evidence has been interpreted, or that the evidence doesn't really tell you what you would think it does (all of that uncertainty is, no doubt, one reason it's such a different book than the probably much more imaginative pictures of dinosaur life you read as a child). The first half of the book may have really been dubbed, "Iguanodon: A Very Short Introduction," as this one creature is the primary focus. That strategy is helpful in giving a more focused history of the discovery of dinosaurs - Norman focuses on the history of speculation and discovery surrounding Iguanodon - which is one of the highlights of the book, but eventually you're left longing for just one remark about a T-Rex or a Triceratops, anything besides Iguanodon. Occasionally you also feel like you're just reading a short introduction to the author's pet theory of this or that, but I think that happens in most volumes in this series to an extent. In short, if you're interested in learning about the practices of palaeobiologists and the challenges of studying dinosaurs today, this is the book for you. If you're looking for something exciting, it's really not. There are some very interesting bits here and there (and plenty of helpful illustrations!), but, well, I was eager to start the book and had to struggle to finish it.

A very interesting book. I've read this book 3 times.

This book presents the scientific evidence about dinosaurs and covers the discoveries and controversies surrounding the subject. It is a bit longer than most of the other books in the OUP "Very Short Intro" series at over 160 pages. The author begins with the history of thought on dinosaurs. In the 19th century, they were generally considered slow, cold-blooded reptiles. More recently, they have come to be seen as active, probably warm-blooded, more bird-like creatures. Norman presents both sides of the numerous controversies surrounding dinosaurs, including the questions of warm-bloodedness, the cause of extinction, and the relationship of dinosaurs to modern birds. This is a serious scientific book and is not written for young children. It is, however, a

great and painless introduction to the topic and is highly recommended.

The book is a decent introduction to the subject. While I do not object to the amount of detail the author went into on two particular dinosaurs, I am a tad upset that he did not give a more detailed analysis of the different types of dinosaurs that arose during their 160 million year reign over planet earth. He does a fine job of presenting the history of dinosaur research, although, it seemed as though he spent too much time describing it. He also does a fine job of weighing the evidence for and against the notion that dinosaurs were endothermic animals. However, the information is not overly well organized and upon completing it I did not feel as though I had gained a framework with which to think about problems in paleontology or truly visualize the ecosystems of the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods. I am inclined to say that the Wikipedia article, which is much briefer, is also more comprehensive and insightful. This is a rare occurrence, but everything is bound to happen once. Also, and this may sound a bit silly, but it is upsetting to me that he did not devote any space to any of the gigantic marine reptiles that coexisted with T. Rex and the rest.

The "Product Details" for this book, "Reading level: Ages 9-12," are wrong - it's definitely above that level. This is a short but informative book on dinosaurs by an author who has written some of the best material for the general reader. Unlike most dinosaur books, it's pretty short on illustrations - but for the price it covers a lot, and like the other books in this series it's small and fits in your pocket.

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