

I am not a dinosaur!

The following activity will encourage pupils to think about the characteristics that distinguish dinosaurs from other creatures.

Preparation

You will need clip boards, pencils and copies of the 'dinosaur checklist' and 'letter template'.

Introduction: In the fossils gallery in front of the T-rex

What makes a dinosaur a dinosaur? Dinosaurs were all very different – some were big, others were small, some ate meat, others ate plants. Explain that many people think that all of the large creatures in the museum are dinosaurs. To be classified as a dinosaur, a creature must:

1. Be a reptile: dinosaurs were reptiles
2. Be extinct: dinosaurs lived from around 230-65 million years ago during the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods
3. Be a land animal: dinosaurs lived on land, not in the water
4. Have walked with its legs directly underneath its body: dinosaur legs were not sprawled out to the side like a crocodile
5. Have walked on their toes: Dinosaurs did not walk with flat feet

Activity 1: dinosaur checklist

Hand out the dinosaur checklist sheet and ask pupils to complete the first row for Stan (T-rex). Pupils should discover that Stan is a dinosaur: he was a reptile, he lived 65 million years ago, he lived on land, he walked with his legs directly beneath him, and he walked on his toes.

Still in the fossils gallery, look at the large Ichthyosaur and Plesiosaur models that are hanging from the ceiling. Ask pupils if they think that either of these creatures was a dinosaur? Using their sheets, ask pupils to complete the checklist for these two creatures.

Take the class to the Living Worlds gallery (back up the stairs and then left). In the middle of the gallery, point out the sperm whale skeleton that is hanging from the ceiling. Ask pupils to complete the checklist for the whale.

Finally, go up the stairs at the end of the gallery, and walk through Nature's Library, Live Animals, Exploring Objects and the Money Gallery, and down the stairs to the Manchester Gallery. Point out the elephant skeleton in the middle of the room. Ask pupils to complete the checklist for the skeleton of Maharaja the elephant.

Activity 2: write a letter


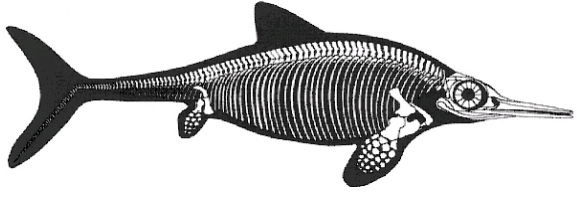
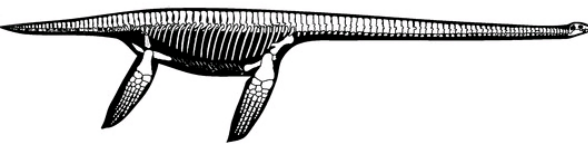
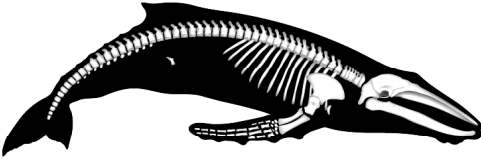
Ask pupils to imagine that they are either the elephant skeleton or the whale skeleton, and are really fed up because so many people think that you are a dinosaur. Ask pupils to write a letter of complaint to the Museum's director, from the point of view of the skeleton. The letter should:

1. Mention some of the similarities between the elephant/whale skeleton and a dinosaur skeleton.
2. Explain why the whale/elephant is not a dinosaur.
3. Offer some suggestions as to how the museum could stop people from confusing you with a dinosaur.

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What makes a dinosaur a dinosaur? Dinosaurs were all very different – some were big, others were small, some ate meat, others ate plants. There are five key features that can be used to find out if a creature is a dinosaur. Only creatures that meet all five criteria are dinosaurs.

Dinosaur Checklist for Activity 1

	Use this checklist to find out if a creature is a dinosaur...	Is it a reptile?	Is it extinct? Did it live between 230 and 65 million years ago?	Did it live on land?	Did it walk with its legs under its body?	Did it walk on its toes?	Is it a dinosaur? <i>A dinosaur will meet all 5 criteria</i>
Stan the T-rex <i>(Fossils gallery)</i>							
Ichthyosaur <i>(Fossils gallery)</i>							
Plesiosaur <i>(Fossils gallery)</i>							
Sperm Whale <i>(Living Worlds)</i>							
Elephant <i>(Manchester gallery)</i>	