Introduction to Dinosaurs

Preschool  |  Science  |  65 minutes

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This preschool science lesson teaches kids about dinosaurs while prompting them to draw conclusions based on visual evidence.

Learning Objectives

Students will compare and contrast features among different types of dinosaurs.

Materials and Preparation

- *Dinosaurs Big and Small* by Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld (one for each student or pair of students)
- Pictures or drawings of dinosaur footprints
- KWL chart
- Crayons
- Markers
- White construction paper

Key Terms:

- dinosaurs
- huge
- fossil
- theories
- paleontologist

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Lesson

Introduction (15 minutes)

1. Ask your students to raise their hands if they have ever seen a dinosaur in a movie or on television. Great follow-up questions include: What are some movies or television shows with dinosaurs in them? Where can you see dinosaur skeletons or models?
2. Next, ask your class if anyone has ever seen a real, live dinosaur—not a dinosaur in a movie or in a museum. Follow up with more questions, such as: Has anyone in the world ever seen a living dinosaur? Why or why not? What is left of dinosaurs that lived millions of years ago?
3. Explain that dinosaurs lived so long ago that no human being has ever seen a live one. This means that we have to guess, or make theories, about what dinosaurs looked like and how they behaved.
4. Let your class know that they will make guesses about dinosaurs, based on what they have left behind.
5. Tell them that scientists who study dinosaurs are called paleontologists. Write this word on the board.
6. Explain that paleontologists make theories about dinosaurs, and sometimes they’re wrong. These paleontologists must use clues to develop theories about dinosaurs.
7. Write the word fossils on the board, and explain that fossils include dinosaur bones, dinosaur footprints, dinosaur teeth, and even dinosaur eggs.

Explicit Instruction/Teacher Modeling (5 minutes)

- Show a dinosaur footprint to the class. Explain that paleontologists can use footprints to learn about what dinosaurs looked like and how they behaved.
- Point out features of the footprint, such as size, number of toes, and shape, and discuss what these might tell you about the dinosaur.

Guided Practice/Interactive Modeling (5 minutes)

- Choose two students to join you in front of the class.
- Hold up a picture of a dinosaur footprint.
- Have the volunteers make theories about the dinosaur based on its footprint. Make sure that students explain what characteristics of each footprint led them to their conclusions.
- To extend this exercise, break the class into pairs and have each pair create their own theories about the dinosaur footprint.

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Independent Working Time  (15 minutes)

- Distribute a copy of the *Dinosaurs Big and Small* to each pair of students and have them do a picture walk through the book.
- After going through the book, have them discuss what they think might have happened to the dinosaurs whose footprints they are examining.
- Ask the students to draw what they think happened and support their ideas with evidence from the pictures.
- Call on students and ask them to describe what they think happened in the story. Different students may have different ideas about what they think happened—there is no correct answer. It is important only that students can point to evidence from the book or footprint to support their ideas.

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**Extend**

Differentiation

- **Enrichment:** Students who excel in this lesson can present their findings on a footprint to the class. You may choose to have students present these findings as a scientist and take questions from the observing 'journalists' (students).
- **Support:** Students who need help understanding the concept may need to go through the book with an adult who asks prompting comprehension questions.
Review

Assessment *(15 minutes)*

- Hang a large KWL chart in front of the class, or create one on the board.
- As a class, complete a KWL chart, which is broken into three columns: What I Know, What I Want to Know, and What I Learned.

Review and Closing *(10 minutes)*

- Gather the class together and ask what they learned about dinosaurs today. Have students volunteer answers by raising their hands.