

## Civilisation anglophone | Jurassic Park (1993)

### What is a Dinosaur?

#### A | General background information

Dinosaurs is the name given to a group of reptiles – often very large - that dominated The Earth for over 140 million years (more than 160 million years in some parts of the world). The English anatomist Richard Owen proposed the formal term Dinosauria in 1842. The name dinosaur comes from the Greek words deinos (“terrible” or “fearfully great”) and sauros (“reptile” or “lizard”).

Dinosaurs evolved diverse shapes and sizes, from the fearsome giant Tyrannosaurus to the chicken-sized Microraptor, and were able to survive in a variety of ecosystems. They first appeared roughly 245 million years ago (near the beginning of the Triassic Period) and most of them died at the end of the Cretaceous Period, about 66 million years ago. However, many lines of evidence now show that one lineage evolved into birds 155 million years ago.

Geological evidence indicates that dinosaurs became extinct about 66 million years ago, at a time when there was worldwide environmental change resulting from the impact of a large celestial object with the Earth and/or from vast volcanic eruptions.

#### B | Dinosaurs and Birds

The latest fossil evidence makes clear that not all dinosaurs suffered extinction 65 million years ago. This revelation has profoundly changed the way we perceive the natural world, giving us a new understanding about the origins of birds. Most paleontologists now staunchly believe that all living birds are descendants of certain predatory dinosaurs, the theropods, many of which have been preserved with feathers as part of their skin.

