

Dinosaurs: Prehistoric Detectives

Teacher guide | Foundation-Year 2

Release candidate 0.9 | Reviewed 14 August 2026 | Curriculum-linked release candidate

Program position: Students use projected reconstructions to practise observation and classification. Fossils and trace evidence provide clues about past life; the experience itself is not fossil evidence.

At a glance

Phase	Time	Learning evidence
Before	10-15 min	Prediction: What counts as a dinosaur?
During	moving show	Three remembered observations
After	30-45 min	Grouping, evidence labels and feature-function task
Share	10 min	Observation, fossil clue and uncertainty statement

Learning intentions

- Observe and record visible features.
- Group prehistoric animals using features.
- Connect a body feature with a possible job.
- Distinguish fossil clues, scientific reconstructions and fantasy moments.

Victorian Curriculum F-10 Version 2.0

This excursion supports selected Foundation-Level 2 Science content. It does not assess the complete achievement standard.

Code	Status	Pack evidence
VC2S2H01	Core	Observations and fossil clues are separated from reconstructions.
VC2S2U01	Core	Students group dinosaurs and other prehistoric animals.
VC2S2U02	Supporting	Past habitats are used to discuss food, water, air and shelter.
VC2S2U03	Core	Feature-function matching and evidence story.
VC2S2I03	Core	Observations recorded through drawing, speech, pointing or writing.
VC2S2I04	Core	Students sort fossil clues, reconstructions and fantasy.
VC2S2I06	Core	Students communicate an observation and uncertainty.
VC2S2I01 / I05	Conditional	Use only when prediction and post-visit comparison are completed.

Controlled claim: The projected scenes can prompt questions and observations. They cannot show the exact colour, sound or behaviour of an extinct animal.

Answer guidance

Dinosaur or not?

- Dinosaurs: Triceratops and Apatosaurus.
- Not dinosaurs: pterosaurs were flying reptiles; plesiosaurs were marine reptiles; griffinflies were insects.
- Tyrannosaurus and Velociraptor are also dinosaurs. Ichthyosaurs and Arthropleura are not dinosaurs.

Evidence labels

Label	Examples	Teacher language
Fossil clue	Bones, teeth, eggs, footprints and body impressions	Scientists can observe and measure this evidence.
Reconstruction	Colour, sound, complete movement and habitat scene	Scientists use clues to make a careful idea.
Fantasy	Shrinking, human lifting, safe falls and screen bites	This is a playful show moment, not a scientific claim.

Feature-function answers

- Pterosaur wing - flight.
- Plesiosaur flippers - swimming.
- Triceratops beak - cropping plants.
- Apatosaurus long neck - reaching vegetation across a broad area.

Accept other defensible observations. Ask students to point to the clue behind their idea.

Teaching, access and wellbeing

Before the visit

- Teach dinosaur, prehistoric, fossil, clue, reconstruction and fantasy.
- Explain that not every prehistoric animal was a dinosaur.
- Preview darkness, loud sounds, falling scenes and close predator images.
- Let students choose a quiet noticing goal rather than requiring spoken answers during movement.

During and after

- Use calm advance cues before the Kronosaurus and Tyrannosaurus bite moments.
- Do not delay the moving group for call-and-response.
- Invite drawing, pointing, speaking, circling or supported writing.
- Use a still-scene list or transcript for students unable to process moving imagery.
- Praise qualified language such as might, may and scientists think.

Assessment snapshot

Evidence	Beginning	Developing	Secure
Observation	Names an animal.	Names a visible feature.	Records a precise scene observation.
Grouping	Sorts with support.	Uses one visible feature.	Explains why an example belongs in a group.
Evidence thinking	Retells the show.	Names a fossil clue.	Separates clue, reconstruction and fantasy.
Communication	Shares an idea.	Uses some topic words.	Shares an observation, clue and uncertainty.

Fact, source and release control

Topic	Required control
Time	Carboniferous, Jurassic and Cretaceous scenes are not one time or community.
Pterosaurs	Flying reptiles, not dinosaurs or birds.
Marine reptiles	Plesiosaurs, pliosaurs and ichthyosaurs are not dinosaurs.
Giant insects	Use griffinfly; oxygen may have helped gigantism but was not necessarily the only cause.
Behaviour	Treat exact calls, colours, groups and hunting sequences as reconstructions.
Fantasy	Label shrinking, lifting, falls and screen bites as theatrical.
Projection	Describe projected digital imagery, not live animals or fossil evidence.

Approval gate

- Venue operator confirms the 20-scene order and all visible animals.
- Science reviewer approves facts, age ranges and controlled uncertainties.
- Education lead approves curriculum mapping and age suitability.
- Timing, sensory cues and accessibility checks are recorded.

Sources

- [VCAA - Level 2](#)
- [Natural History Museum - Dinosaurs](#)
- [Natural History Museum - Pterosaurs](#)
- [Natural History Museum - Plesiosaurs](#)

Sources checked 14 August 2026. Recheck immediately before publication.