



Dinosaur Discovery

Classroom Guide

The past has secrets buried right beneath your feet

CASEL Competency: Responsible Decision-Making

Grade Level: Pre-K–2

Duration: 40–50 minutes

Category: Adventure

Learning Objectives

- Practice observation skills — discovering clues in everyday surroundings
 - Learn that patience and careful digging reveal hidden treasures
 - Understand that things that seem scary up close (T-Rex) may surprise you
 - Connect the past to the present through curiosity and imagination
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Overview & Preparation

Key Vocabulary

Fossil • Dinosaur • Paleontologist • Prehistoric • Excavate • Discover • Ancient • Footprint • Skeleton • Extinct

Materials Needed

- The personalized story
- Sand or soil tray with hidden "fossils" (shells, bones)
- Paintbrushes for excavation
- Paper and crayons
- Optional: toy dinosaurs, magnifying glasses

Before Reading

Connection Question

If you could dig anywhere and find something ancient, where would you dig? What do you hope you'd find?

Background Building

Right under our feet, there are secrets millions of years old. In this story, the hero finds a fossil and is transported to the prehistoric world — baby dinosaurs hatching, a friendly Triceratops, a jungle of giant ferns, and finally, a T-Rex that turns out to be not as scary as expected. The hero discovers that patience and careful observation reveal wonders.

During Reading — Pause Points

- **When the hero carefully digs out the fossil** — Real paleontologists use tiny brushes and work very slowly. Why is being careful and patient important when you're discovering something?
- **When the hero meets the T-Rex** — The T-Rex is right there! But wait — is it as scary as the hero expected? What surprises them?
- **When the hero returns home clutching the fossil** — The adventure is over, but the hero has proof it was real. What does holding that fossil mean to them now?

Discussion Questions

1. The hero found a fossil just by looking carefully. What might be hidden in YOUR neighborhood that nobody has noticed?

↳ How does paying attention change what you find?

2. The T-Rex surprised the hero by being different from what they expected. When has something scary turned out to be not so bad?

↳ Why do we sometimes imagine things scarier than they really are?

3. Paleontologists dig very carefully and patiently. Why is it important to be gentle when discovering something new?

↳ How is this like making a new friend — slow and careful vs. rushing in?

4. The fossil connected the hero to creatures who lived millions of years ago. How does learning about the past help us understand today?

↳ What question would you ask a dinosaur if you could?

Facilitation Tips

If possible, set up a "dig site" with sand and hidden objects. The physical experience of patient excavation mirrors the story beautifully and teaches care, focus, and the thrill of discovery.

Emotional Payoff

A fossil is just a rock until you know its story. The hero learns that the ground beneath our feet holds millions of years of secrets, that scary things are often misunderstood, and that one curious kid with a brush can uncover wonders that have been waiting to be found.

After Reading Activities

Fossil Dig Site

Duration: 20 min | Materials: Sand tray, hidden objects (shells, stones, toy bones), paintbrushes

Create a classroom "dig site." Children use paintbrushes to carefully excavate hidden "fossils" from sand. Practice patience: brush gently, don't grab. Document each find in a "field journal" with drawings and descriptions.

Design a Dinosaur

Duration: 15 min | Materials: Paper, crayons, playdough

Create a NEW dinosaur species. Name it, draw it, describe what it eats, where it lives, and one surprising fact. "My dinosaur is called _____ and its special power is _____." Display in a class museum.

Then and Now Match

Duration: 10 min | Materials: Picture cards of prehistoric and modern creatures

Match prehistoric creatures to their modern relatives: T-Rex to chicken, pterodactyl to bird, giant fern to houseplant. Discuss: the past is alive in the present!

Writing Prompts

- You found a fossil. What does it look like? What creature did it come from? Draw and describe it.
- Write a diary entry from a day spent in the dinosaur world. What did you see, hear, and feel?
- If you could bring one dinosaur to school for a day, which would you choose and what would happen?

Home Connection

Family Letter

Dear Families,

Today we read "Dinosaur Discovery," about a child who finds a fossil and journeys to the prehistoric world. Your child practiced patience and careful observation through a fossil dig, learned that scary things (like T-Rex!) can surprise you, and discovered that curiosity connects us to the ancient past.

Here is how you can continue this learning at home:

- Go on a "fossil hunt" in your yard or a park — look for interesting rocks, shells, or imprints
- Visit a natural history museum or look at fossil photos together online
- Ask: "If you could travel back to dinosaur times, what would you want to see?"

With warmth,

Your Child's Teacher

Related Books

- Digging Up Dinosaurs by Alik
- Dinosaurumpus! by Tony Mitton
- Boy, Were We Wrong About Dinosaurs! by Kathleen V. Kudlinski
- Goldilocks and the Three Dinosaurs by Mo Willems