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Age of the Dinosaurs
Dinosaur Journey Museum

Travel back in time to when dinosaurs walked the Earth as you explore this hands-on, interactive museum which includes over 15,000 fossil specimens in its collections, exhibits and displays. Learn how paleontologists determine if a dinosaur was a carnivore (meat-eater) or herbivore (plant-eater). Discover additional differences between carnivores and herbivores by reading this article and listening to this podcast.

Word Alert:

Paleontologist—a scientist that studies fossil animals and plants

Fossil—trace of an animal or plant that has been preserved in the Earth's crust.

Carnivore—an animal that feeds on flesh.

Herbivore—an animal that eats plants.

Omnivore—an animal that eats both flesh and plants (This activity will be focused on the differences between carnivores and herbivores).

Bipedal—an animal that walks on two legs.

Quadrupedal—an animal that uses all four legs for walking.

Mesozoic—a geologic time of about 250 million years ago to 66 million year ago. The time periods in this are Triassic, Jurassic, and Cretaceous.

Questions to Ask:

1. What is a dinosaur? (*Extinct reptiles that flourished during the Mesozoic era from the late Triassic period to the end of the Cretaceous period. Dinosaur means "terrible lizard" coined in 1841 by Sir Richard Owen.)*
2. Are there differences in the teeth of dinosaurs? *(Carnivores had sharp, cone-shaped in the front for gripping and pulling, while the back teeth shaped like blades for cutting and slicing. Herbivores had spoon shaped teeth that became flat and worn).*

3. Did dinosaurs chew differently? *(Carnivores didn't chew their food and opened their mouths very wide—like a lion and herbivores chewed with grinding motions like a giraffe).*
4. Were dinosaur legs different? *(Carnivores had strong back legs and walked on two legs (bipedal) with short arms, while herbivores had four legs that were all on the ground (quadrupedal). Carnivores were faster).*
5. Were there differences between the eyes between the carnivores and herbivores? *(Yes, carnivores had larger eyes located in the front of the skull for finding prey while herbivores had smaller eyes located more on the sides of the skull for a larger field of vision).*

Activity: Choose three different dinosaurs on display at the museum and complete the chart below. Look closely at each dinosaur examining their teeth, how they walked, and the location of their eyes on their head. Based on your observation, decide whether each dinosaur is a carnivore or herbivore.

Dinosaur Name	Shape of Teeth	How they walked (Quadrupedal or bipedal?)	Location of Eyes	Carnivore or Herbivore?

Interested in learning more? Inquire at the front desk about signing up for a dinosaur dig.

Visit the American Museum of Natural History's website for additional dinosaur activities and learning opportunities.