



Dinosaurs on the Beach Marilyn Helmer

1-55143-260-9

\$7.95 CDN / \$4.99 US, PAPERBACK

5 X 7 1/2, 144 PAGES

AGES 8-11

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Dinosaurs on the Beach by Marilyn Helmer

Story

Jodie is fascinated with fossils of all kinds and yearns to make a really important find during her visit to her grandfather's beachfront cottage in Nova Scotia. So far, her older brother and sister have always eclipsed her, but now she is visiting on her own. Tiny fossilized bones have been discovered on the beach, but what are they from? Josie searches for the answer, but the boy from the next cottage is determined to find it before she does. And he is willing to do just about anything to succeed in his quest.

Author

Marilyn Helmer's interest in fossils began many years ago when her son Chris found a rock covered with tiny shell prints in a field near their home. His discovery began a daily search until fossils and fields were buried under a new housing development. But that did not dampen the spirits of the intrepid hunters. On holidays, the family often included fossil hunting and beachcombing in their plans. Books, school projects and visits to museums kindled an interest in dinosaurs. Chris combined the two interests by studying paleontology and geology in university and Marilyn combined them in this book. Marilyn is the author of many other books for children, including *Fog Cat* (Kids Can, 1998), winner of the Toronto I.O.D.E. Book Award and Mr. Christie's Book Award. She lives in Burlington, Ontario, with her husband, Gary, and her cat, Misty.

The Ideas

- Read the author's note carefully. Then get a map on Nova Scotia and locate the Bay of Fundy. By researching, learn everything you can about what has been discovered there.
- Make a timeline that goes all the way around your classroom. At one end, two hundred and thirty million years ago, you could draw a picture of a dinosaur. Divide the line up into two hundred and thirty equal portions, each one representing a million years. Find out when the last dinosaur lived and draw them on the timeline. Put yourself and your school or your house

on the timeline at the present end. What else would you like to include? Research things that happened more than a million years ago that you could put on it. Anything that happened in the last few thousand years will have to be squished into the last centimeter or so!

- Go to the library and get lots of books on paleontology and dinosaurs. Find out all you can and share what you learn with your class in writing, on a poster, through artwork or in a presentation.
- Imagine what Josie's next find might be. Write a story about what she finds, what obstacles she has to overcome to find it and what happens after she does.
- Write a story, create a storyboard, paint a picture, or tell a story about what you think it was like near where Stone Trees Cottage is now back when tiny dinosaurs lived.
- Dramatize the confrontation between Josie and Lucan near the end of the story. Perform your drama for your class or for another class to entice them to read the book.
- Imagine that a reporter from a big magazine or newspaper is coming to interview you. What will they interview you about? Perhaps you have written something brilliant, or you are the fastest runner in the country. Use your imagination. Then write interview questions for another student who will pose as a journalist. Have them interview you with those questions and then go away and write an article about yourself. Or use a video camera to tape the interview and then broadcast it for the class. Or tape record the interview and play it as if it were a radio interview.
- Imagine that you are on an expedition and you make a remarkable discovery. Dramatize the discovery, describing how you made the find and what it is. If you are doing this as a group, you could include the comments and reactions of others on the expedition.
- Make a record book like Josie's and list, describe and sketch your finds.
- Make a diorama of a dinosaur scene. This could be as simple as a painted background with cardboard figures standing in the foreground or a more detailed scene using modeling clay or Plasticine figures. Natural plants, rocks and twigs could be used to create a more authentic atmosphere. When the dioramas are finished, set up an exhibit similar to a museum.

Invite other classes and possibly friends and family to tour the exhibit. Be sure to have someone on hand with a camera!

- In a box of potting soil or sand, use various types of pasta to create a dinosaur fossil find.
- Research and give a presentation on training dogs for Search and Rescue.

If you liked this book, you might also like:

Birdie for Now by Jean Little (Orca, 2002). Birdie's mother is so afraid of dogs that she will not let him have one. In the end he proves himself and she has to put aside her fears.

Dog Days by Becky Citra (Orca, 2003). Brady is afraid of dogs. But he realizes that in his new town, the only way that he is going to make friends is to enter the local dog show. But how can he do that without a dog?

Flight from Big Tangle by Anita Daher (Orca, 2002). Ever since her father and his plane disappeared in the Caribbean, Kaylee has been afraid to fly. Now, in the midst of a raging forest fire, the only way to safety is resting on pontoons at the end of the dock. Kaylee must overcome her fear and fly herself and her dog out of the fire.

A Few Words From the Author

Dear Readers,

I am a born collector! Since childhood, looking for things has been my passion, whether it was scanning the mail for new stamps to paste in my album, beachcombing for shells and driftwood, visiting flea markets searching for old spoons and postcards or trading buttons, coins, stickers or hockey cards with fellow collectors. I've even picked through dumps looking for old bottles and once helped clean out a dusty attic (and I'm terrified of spiders!), hunting for whatever treasures might be hidden there. Nothing gives me a greater thrill than finding that special something to add to one of my collections.

When my children were born, I passed my passion for collecting on to them. Their interest in fossils led to an excursion to Parrsboro, Nova Scotia during a holiday in the Maritimes. There we met several other treasure

seekers, diligently searching the beach. We had just joined them when we heard a shout from a young girl nearby. She had found a perfect fern fossil and lost no time in showing it off to the rest of us. She was keen to share her knowledge of dinosaurs and fossils and her enthusiasm was captivating. It reminded me of the delight we had experienced whenever we'd made a neat find. And it made me realize that you do not have to be an expert to experience the thrill of making a "remarkable" discovery. Although I didn't find any fossils that day, I was not disappointed because I knew that I had found a story and so *Dinosaurs on the Beach* was born.

Another great love of mine is cats, but I found out that cats and fossils do not mix well. I had a very fine example of a plant fossil, which I kept proudly displayed on my writing desk. One night I heard a resounding crash from our computer room. As I rushed to see what had happened, my cat, Star, raced guiltily past me. On the floor was a stack of books that had been sitting on the desk. No harm done, I thought—until I picked up the books and found my precious plant fossil beneath them, smashed to bits! Yes, I forgave Star, but I learned a lesson. Don't leave irreplaceable valuables where your cat can get at them!

It doesn't matter what you collect—it can be anything from bottle caps to valuable antiques, from pebbles on the beach to dinosaur bones—do it with a passion, enjoy the search and maybe one day you'll make a fabulous find.

Happy Hunting!

Marilyn Helmer

A list of Marilyn Helmer's other books

Picturebooks

The Boy, the Dollar and the Wonderful Hat (Stoddart, 1992)

Fog Cat (Kids Can Press, 1998)

Mr. McGratt and the Ornerly Cat (Kids Can Press, 1999)

Novels

Boathouse Treasure (Thomas Nelson, 1998)

Once-Upon-A-Time Retold Fairy Tales Series

Three Tales of Three (Kids Can Press, 2000)

Three Prince Charming Tales (Kids Can Press, 2000)

Three Tales of Enchantment (Kids Can Press, 2001)

Three Teeny Tiny Tales (Kids Can Press, 2001)

Three Barnyard Tales (Kids Can Press, 2002)

Three Tales of Trickery (Kids Can Press, 2002)

Three Tuneful Tales (Kids Can Press, 2003)

Kids-Can-Read Riddle Books

Critter Riddles (Kids Can Press, 2003)

Yummy Riddles (Kids Can Press, 2003)

Upcoming Books

Three Royal Tales (Kids Can Press, 2003)

Three Cat and Mouse Tales (Kids Can Press, 2004)

Three Tales of Adventure (Kids Can Press, 2004)

Spooky Riddles (Kids Can Press, 2003)

Yucky Riddles (Kids Can Press, 2003)

Favorite Books about Dinosaurs

1. *Digging for Bird-Dinosaurs* by Nic Bishop (Houghton Mifflin, 2000) is the story of paleontologist Cathy Forster's experiences searching for fossils on the island of Madagascar.
2. *Dinosaur Dig* by Kathryn Lasky (Morrow Junior Books, 1990) is about the adventures of two children excavating dinosaur bones with a team of paleontologists in the badlands of Montana.
3. *The Dinosaur Question and Answer Book* by Sylvia Funston (Greedy de Pencier Books, 1992) is a treasure trove of easy to read information on dinosaurs.
4. *Did Dinosaurs Live In Your Backyard?* by Melvin and Gilda Berget (Scholastic, 1998) answers many interesting questions about where and when dinosaurs lived and how we have learned about them.
5. *Dinosaur Fossils* by Dr. Alvin Granowsky (Raintree Steck-Vaughn, 1992) is an excellent book for the younger reader with minimal text enhanced by colorful illustrations.
6. *Dinosaurs Big and Small* by Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld (HarperCollins, 2002) is another good book for the younger reader which gives a clear picture of many different dinosaurs by comparing them in size and weight to things children would be familiar with.

Interesting Places to Visit

Parrsboro Rock and Mineral Shop, Parrsboro, Nova Scotia.

The Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Ontario.

The Royal Tyrrell Museum of Paleontology, Drumheller, Alberta.