

# *Fossils: A Very Short Introduction\** and *Dinosaurs: A Very Short Introduction*<sup>+</sup>

\*By Keith Thomson

<sup>+</sup>By David Norman

Reviewed by Eric Demoncheaux, Battle Abbey School, UK

*Fossils: A Very Short Introduction* and *Dinosaurs: A Very Short Introduction* are both real tours de force and very engaging books. Their small size makes them easy to pack and take away to read during any spare moments.

How did Darwin use fossils to support his theory of evolution? This is one of the fascinating questions that Keith Thomson has ventured to answer in his book. He deals with issues surrounding fossils and more particularly addresses some of the uncertainties that scientists faced when trying to understand their origins. He successfully highlights the impact of fossils on mythology, history and philosophy while keeping the reader grounded by tackling their important role in our concept of time and popular culture in a manner that is easy to understand. The book contains ten chapters, a short introduction and a final summary entitled 'Back to the future'. This all-encompassing explanation of fossils gives the reader a remarkable overview of the field. Keith Thomson is Professor Emeritus of Natural History at the University of Oxford, UK.

*Dinosaurs: A Very Short Introduction* was written by David Norman, who is Director of the Sedgwick Museum

of Earth Sciences in Cambridge, UK, and who was the advisor for David Attenborough's *Lost Worlds Vanished Lives*, and *Walking with Dinosaurs* programmes for the BBC, and *Dinosaur!* for Granada TV/AE Network. His book is more akin to a scientific investigation in which the reader is taken through anatomy, genetics, forensics and engineering design to build a picture of what dinosaurs looked like. It also tackles their place in evolutionary history with a chapter describing how animal life evolved on Earth. The book contains eight chapters and concludes with an insightful discussion of the future of research on the past. For all of us who are fans of the film *Jurassic Park*, this book should provide some definitive answers about the appearance and whereabouts of dinosaurs.

Both books are well-written, contain a wealth of information and include many (black and white) illustrations. Although non-native English speakers may struggle with the complicated language, they will find the definitions of keywords helpful. The books were not designed to be used as teaching aids but could be useful for secondary-school teachers and a helpful addition to a secondary-school library. They could also be used as a

resource for self-motivated students aged 14 and above, or for bright younger students.

## Details

*Fossils: A Very Short Introduction*

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