The Lost World

Michael Crichton

About the author
Born in Chicago, in the United States, in 1942, Michael Crichton was educated at Harvard College and Harvard Medical School. At the age of only twenty-three, he was a visiting lecturer in anthropology at Cambridge University. While training as a doctor he was also writing thrillers, including the science fiction novel, *The Andromeda Strain*, which was made into a highly successful film. Crichton decided to give up the medical profession in order to write full-time. Since then, he has published over fifteen novels. He is hugely successful as a novelist. Since 1992, sales of his books have reached over 35 million copies in the United States alone.

Summary
Chapters 1–3: The story begins as Dr. Ian Malcolm is speaking to a group of scientists about dinosaurs. After the talk, he and his friend, Sarah Harding, who studies African animals, meet a young man. He is Richard Levine, a scientist who studies extinct animals. Levine tells them that he has heard that a company called InGen discovered a way to make dinosaurs. They put the dinosaurs on an island in Costa Rica, but something went wrong, people were killed, and the dinosaurs died. Malcolm tells him the story is not true, but it was. Although no one knows, Malcolm was one of the scientists on the island. Levine says he has heard reports of large dead animals in Costa Rica, and asks Malcolm to join his expedition there. Malcolm refuses at first, then agrees.

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Lewis Dodgson and George Baselton are corrupt scientists who work for Biosyn, a medical company. They are talking to Ed James, whom Dodgson pays to spy for him. James tells them that Levin has disappeared in Costa Rica. Malcolm receives a packet from Costa Rica with skin from the animal Levine found—skin that may be from a dinosaur. At a school where Levine teaches, two young students wonder where he is. The students, Kelly and Arby, go to the factory of Dr. Thorne, who is preparing the equipment for Levine’s expedition. Thorne tells them he doesn’t know where Levine is. Meanwhile, Levine has landed on a Pacific island called Isla Sorna, a “lost world” with giant plants and trees—and dinosaurs. While Kelly and Arby are at Thorne’s factory, Levine calls. He tells them that he is on an island, and something wants to kill him—and then the phone goes dead.

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Thorne and Malcolm, along with Thorne’s assistant Eddie Carr, arrive by helicopter at Isla Sorna. They check their equipment and get into cars with trailers to search for Levine. On the way, they see small but poisonous dinosaurs called *compys* and later larger dinosaurs: *triceratops*, *stegosaurus* and *apatosaurus*. They continue driving and come to Site B. They leave the trailers at the site and drive off to look for Levine.

Kelly and Arby have hidden themselves in one of the trailers. Malcolm, Thorne and Eddie discover that the main building at the site is an InGen factory for making dinosaurs. Malcolm tells them that a man called John Hammond discovered how to make dinosaurs from cells, and planned to open a zoo called Jurassic Park. The park and the dinosaurs were destroyed but the dinosaur factory on Isla Sorna was not. They search the factory, and find out that at the factory, scientists had let the dinosaurs go
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loose on the island to eat natural food. Meanwhile, while using a computer in the trailer, Arby finds that there are TV monitors on the island, and they show that there are living dinosaurs everywhere. He radios the others and tells them to get in the car because a tyrannosaur is coming towards them. It passes by their car without hurting them and they see Levine following the dinosaur on a bicycle. Levine tracks the tyrannosaur to its nest, followed by Thorne on a motorcycle. Arby and Kelly watch on the TV as two tyrannosaurs feed their young. The dinosaurs hear Levine and Thorne and one tyrannosaur threatens them, but they escape on the motorcycle. Back at the trailers, the others tell Levine they have come to save him, but Levine doesn’t want to be saved. He wants to get the expedition started.

Chapters 7–9: Sarah Harding arrives in Costa Rica and tries to get to Isla Sorna. Dodgson and Baselton find her, tell her they are friends of Thorne and offer to take her by boat to the island. She tells them that Thorne and Malcolm do not know she is coming, and as they come near the island, Dodgson pushes her into the sea. When they reach the island, Dodgson and Baselton steal dinosaur eggs. Sarah survives. She swims to the island and begins walking. Arby sees her on the TV and Thorne goes to get her. Malcolm sees Dodgson and Baselton near the tyrannosaur nest. They try to take the eggs, but Baselton is killed by a tyrannosaur. Dodgson escapes in a car but crashes it. Thorne, Malcolm, Harding, and Eddie reach the nest. Eddie finds an injured baby tyrannosaur and takes it back to the trailer and Malcolm and Harding try to fix its leg. Meanwhile Thorne, Eddie, and the children wait in an observation cage, called a high hide, hanging in the trees. The two tyrannosaurs come looking for their baby. Harding puts the baby outside the trailer. The tyrannosaurs take it, but come back and push the trailer over the edge of a hill. Thorne rescues Harding and Malcolm. Then a group of raptors attack the high hide. Kelly escapes but the raptors kill Eddie and take Arby, who is locked in the metal cage. Levine and Thorne find Arby but he cannot get out of the locked cage. The key is around the neck of a raptor. Kelly and Harding follow it on a motorcycle and Kelly shoots the animal. They rescue Arby and all go back to the factory. The next morning, Dodgson finds Harding trying to repair their vehicle. A tyrannosaur appears. Harding pushes Dodgson in the way of the animal so that she can escape. The tyrannosaur takes Dodgson and feeds him to its young. The group leaves the island, glad to be alive.

Background and themes

Good and bad scientists: Crichton often takes a very critical attitude toward scientists and makes them the villains of his stories. The Lost World is no exception. The greedy, corrupt scientists in the book try to steal the dinosaurs’ eggs, but are prevented from doing this, of course, by the dinosaurs. But scientists can also be “driven” by the desire for knowledge. The “good” scientists in The Lost World—Dr. Ian Malcolm, Dr. Thorne and Sarah Harding—are fine and convincing examples of this kind of scientist. Another character in the story, Richard Levine, is an example of a scientist who is neither good nor bad. He is also driven by a thirst for knowledge but he is a very irresponsible man.

Survival: Part of the fascination of The Lost World is that the reader can observe how people—and scientists in particular—react when their own survival is at stake. Dr. Thorne, for example, puts his own life at risk in order to save others. Levine, a much more selfish man, is reluctant to do that. Animal scientist, Sarah Harding, realizing that a tyrannosaurus rex is going to kill either her or one of the evil scientists in the story, cold-bloodedly sacrifices the villain so that she can survive.

Dinosaurs: As in Jurassic Park, the dinosaurs are themselves a focus of interest. Dinosaurs such as tyrannosaurus and velociraptor are terrifying. However, the book also shows that they can be fiercely protective of their offspring, and some of the species described are peaceful vegetarians.

Discussion activities

Before reading

1 Discuss: Put students into groups. Find out if any students have seen the film Jurassic Park. If so, ask them to tell the rest of their group as much of the story as they can. Then elicit the story from the groups and write it on the board. Tell students that The Lost World is the sequel to the book Jurassic Park.

2 Write and discuss: Ask students to write down three facts about dinosaurs. Then ask them about their facts and write them on the board. Try to collect as many facts about dinosaurs from students as possible. If they are not sure a dinosaur fact is correct, ask them to do some research and check the fact.
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Introduction

After reading
3 Pair work: Have students read the Introduction (pages v–viii). Then ask them in pairs to answer these questions.
   a What happened to Jurassic Park?
   b Why is it a secret?
   c When does the story in The Lost World begin?
   d Where have strange animals been seen?
   e What might these strange animals be?
   f What do you think will happen to some of the characters in the story?

4 Pair work: Have students close their books and try to remember what they read about the author, Michael Crichton.
   b How are these places important in his life?
   c Put these movies in the order that they were made: The Lost World, Coma, Jurassic Park.

5 Discuss: Ask students in groups to answer these questions.
   • Have you heard of Dolly the sheep?
   • Should scientists continue to make animals from cells?
   • Should they try to make humans from cells?

Chapters 1–3

After reading
6 Write: Tell students to imagine that they are Levine and they have just discovered the dead animal on the beach in Costa Rica. Have them write a short report about it. They should say where and when they found the animal, and describe the animal.

7 Pair work and art work: Put students into pairs. Students decide on an extra picture for each of the chapters. They write a paragraph describing each picture in some detail. Then, as a class activity, each pair reads out their descriptions and the class votes on the best picture for each chapter. The class can try to draw the pictures based on the descriptions.

8 Role play: In pairs, ask students to imagine that Levine has a longer conversation on the telephone with Thorne (page 17). Have them prepare and act out the conversation:
   Student A: You are Levine. You have arrived at the island and now it is night. You think you are in danger. Tell Thorne where you are, what you have seen and why you are afraid.
   Student B: You are Thorne. You are very surprised to hear from Levine. Tell Levine who you are with right now. Ask him why he went there by himself. Tell him what you will do to help him.

Chapters 4–6

After reading
9 Pair work: Put students into pairs. Students make notes on what they know about the following:

   • Island: Isla Nublar, Site B, Biosyn, DX, Isla Sorna, InGen, compys, tyrannosaurus rex. As a group, elicit the information from the students and write it up on the board. This will help students to get the story clear in their minds.

   10 Pair work: Ask students to find the meaning of horn (n) and scale (n) in their dictionaries. Then read out these descriptions and students give the name of the dinosaur. For one of the sentences students will need to look at the pictures of dinosaurs on page 2.
      a This dinosaur has a very long neck.
      b This dinosaur has two big horns in the middle of its head.
      c This dinosaur is the size of a chicken and is bright green.
      d This dinosaur has large scales along its back.

   Put the students into pairs. One student draws a dinosaur. The other student gives the name of the dinosaur. They take turns.

11 Pair work: In pairs, students explain why each of the following characters have come to the island: Malcolm, Levine, Dr. Thorne, Eddie, Arby, Kelly.

12 Predict: In class or as homework, ask students to write on the following. What do you think will happen in the next three chapters? Write down four guesses, then find another pair and ask them to read you their guesses. Tell them what you think of their guesses.

Chapters 7–9

After reading
13 Discuss: Put students into groups of four. Ask each person in the group to choose one of the following dinosaurs and to imagine that they are that dinosaur. They must say how they feel when they see the humans and they must explain their actions.
   a The stegosaurus that licked Sarah Harding’s face (page 39).
   b The tyrannosaurus that pushed the Challenger over the edge of the hill (pages 46–47).
   c One of the baby tyrannosaurs in the nest (page 55).
   d One of the maiasauras that came for Dodgson’s egg (page 53).

14 Role play: Students work in pairs. Ask them to imagine that Sarah Harding has a longer conversation with Lewis Dodgson before the tyrannosaurus comes (page 54). Then have them prepare and act out the following conversation:
   Student A: You are Sarah Harding. Remember what Dodgson has done to you. What will you say to him? What should you do with him?
   Student B: You are Lewis Dodgson. Remember what you did to Harding, and what has happened to you since then. What will you say to her? Can you get her to help you?

Vocabulary activities

For the Word List and vocabulary activities, go to www.penguinreaders.com.