

# The Mesozoic Era

By Cindy Grigg

<sup>1</sup> When we talk about time, we have many words to use to talk about different times in our lives. Summers, mornings, months, afternoons, years, and weekends are just a few of them. When you think back over your lifetime, you may remember blocks of time like the summer you were five or your second grade school year.

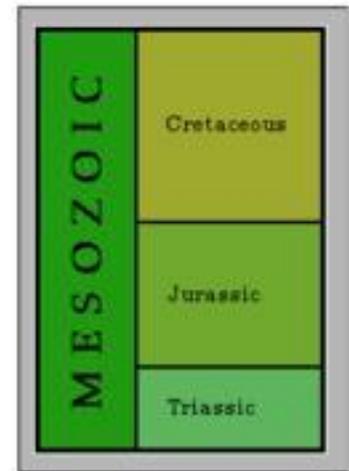
<sup>2</sup> When scientists talk about time, they need words to name the exact time they are talking about, too. Earth was formed about 4.6 billion years ago. That's the same as 4,600 million years. That's a very big chunk of time! So, those millions of years have been divided up into large chunks that have something in common. Then names have been given to each large chunk of Earth's history.

<sup>3</sup> The first dinosaurs lived about 225 million years ago. This was in the Mesozoic era, also called the Age of Dinosaurs. The Mesozoic is divided into smaller chunks of time.

<sup>4</sup> The oldest chunk of the Mesozoic era is called the Triassic period. About 245 million years ago, there was a mass extinction of about 90 percent of life on Earth. Life that survived started to diversify and change. New kinds of living things appeared in the fossil record. Dinosaurs were one of those new kinds of living things. Early dinosaurs (about 225 million years ago) were small. They were only about three feet long. They all were meat-eaters. The first mammals also appeared in the Triassic. The first mammals were small, shrew-like animals. They laid eggs, but they fed their young with mother's milk. Turtles, frogs, salamanders, lizards, and insects lived then. Corals lived in the oceans. Evergreen trees made up most of the plant life. Grass did not exist. Mosses and ferns covered the ground. The climate was hot and dry. Continents were joined together into one giant landmass called Pangaea.

<sup>5</sup> The second chunk of Mesozoic time is called the Jurassic period. Dinosaurs ruled the Earth. Larger and many different kinds of dinosaurs appeared. Some of these new dinosaurs were plant eaters. Large reptiles that were not dinosaurs flew in the skies and swam in the oceans. The first birds appeared. Plant life flourished. The climate was warm and wetter than the Triassic. Sharks appeared in Earth's oceans. The continents began to drift apart. The Atlantic Ocean opened up.

<sup>6</sup> The third and youngest chunk of Mesozoic time is called the Cretaceous period. The first flowering plants appeared, helped by the appearance of bees. Oak and maple trees existed. More kinds of mammals appeared, although they were still small. Birds split into two main groups: those that could fly and those that could not. Tyrannosaurus and Triceratops came into existence. Continents were spreading farther apart. India was an island by itself. The Himalaya Mountains did not exist. They would be pushed up later when India collided with Asia. The middle of the United States was covered by a shallow sea. The climate began to cool. At the end of the Cretaceous, another major extinction wiped out as much as 90 percent of ocean life and 50 percent of life on land. There were no more dinosaurs after the end of the Cretaceous, at about 65.5 million years ago. The Cenozoic era, also called the Age of Mammals, began.



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<p>1. : List the three periods of the Mesozoic era in order from oldest to youngest.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>2. The early dinosaurs were all _____.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Huge in size</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Plant eaters</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Mammals</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D Meat eaters</p>
<p>3. Which statement is <b>not</b> true about the Triassic period?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Tyrannosaurus and Triceratops lived in the Triassic period.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Turtles and insects lived in the Triassic period.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Mammals were small and laid eggs.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D Dinosaurs that lived in the early part of the Triassic were small meat-eaters.</p>	<p>4. : The author's main purpose for writing this story was to _____ readers.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Entertain</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Inform</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Persuade</p>
<p>5. When did the first flowering plants appear?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Triassic period</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Jurassic period</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Cretaceous period</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D Cenozoic era</p>	<p>6. Sharks appeared in Earth's oceans in the _____ period.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Jurassic</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Cenozoic</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Cretaceous</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D Triassic</p>
<p>7. The Mesozoic era was also called the Age of _____.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>8. When did the Age of Mammals begin?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A After the extinction of the dinosaurs</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B After the end of the Cretaceous period</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C About 65.5 million years ago</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D All of the above</p>

