

Nature Adventures Module: What is a Triceratops?

(Highlighted words are found in the Glossary List)

Terri: Dinosaurs are one thing I have always been curious to learn more about. Thankfully for the hard work of **paleontologists**, we know things about creatures such as a **triceratops**, even though they lived long before we were born. Dinosaurs were present on the Earth much before humans. Triceratops is one such species of dinosaurs which lived some 65 million years ago at a time referred to as the Cretaceous Period.

Todd: The Triceratops was one of the largest and most distinctive dinosaurs that roamed earth. Fossils have been found in western Canada and the western United States. The word Triceratops means "three-horned face" and that name is fitting for these creatures as they had 3 horns on their faces. Out of the three horns, one was above its nostrils and the other two were above its two eyes. They used their horns to knock down branches of big trees and also for weapons against predators and perhaps to determine dominance.

Terri: Triceratops were **herbivores**, which survived on various types of plants and trees. Due to their low head, it is believed they mostly ate shrubs and bushes. Their teeth were arranged in a number of tooth columns. The number of teeth varied from 430 to 800. At any given point of time, they used only one section of the teeth. The big shape, and the size and number of teeth suggest that they used to eat large quantities of fibrous plants.

Todd: They were big too - measuring 30 feet long and 7 feet tall at the hips, weighing in at 6-12 tons! But despite their large size, other dinosaurs, such as the T rex, preyed on them. When threatened, the Triceratops probably charged into its enemy like the modern-day rhinoceros does. Paleontologist studies have also revealed that Triceratops had a tendency to be herd animals, residing and traveling with other Triceratops. They lived in groups and each group had one group leader.

Terri: Now, they are extinct, but we are still very much fascinated by these creatures. Research and studies are on as we speak to find out more interesting facts about this magnificent creature.