

NATIONAL POETRY DAY

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anniversary

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Dinosaur Distortions

A National Poetry Day
resource created by
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Key stage 2



The Emma Press is an independent poetry publisher based in Birmingham, UK, and dedicated to producing beautiful, thought-provoking books.
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Iguanadon't

Iguanadon't want to discuss it.
Iguanadon't get in my space.
Iguanadon't see why you don't understand:
it's as plain as the nose on your face.

Iguanadon't you know what happened?
Iguanadon't act like you don't.
The scientists thought my thumb-bone was my nose.
Did they think that my back was my front?

*Iguanadon't worry, don't worry.
Iguanadon't give them the time.
Iguanadon't let them define you.
Their words can't do that. Nor can mine*

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From *Dragons of the Prime: Poems about Dinosaurs*,
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www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk

Activity:

If you like dinosaurs, you'll know that everything we know about their lives today comes from the work of modern scientists. Dino digs and museum experts are always trying to get closer to the **truth** about how these creatures looked and behaved but they haven't always got it right. For instance, scientists in the past sometimes got the position of dinosaurs' bones mixed up, or didn't realise that some dinosaurs had feathers, or thought that some species were fiercer than they actually were. It's the job of scientists to look critically at the evidence and think about what's most likely to be true: and poets can do the same. Often writers use creative techniques to persuade the reader to believe in their version of events.

Richard O'Brien has just edited a new anthology of poems about dinosaurs. In his poem "Iguanadon't", he imagines a dinosaur getting annoyed about the mistakes people used to make when picturing how its bones fit together. Some of the techniques Richard uses to create the voice of this character telling its own truth are **wordplay** (because the **imperative verb** 'don't' sounds like a bit like the end of 'Iguanadon'), **repetition** (the same word at the start of every line) and **rhetorical questions** (questions used for effect or emphasis). These writing techniques make the voice sound more powerful and insistent, and also make the ideas in the poem – about being misunderstood and wanting to challenge a misleading story – easier to remember.

To write your own poem on truth and perception, think about another dinosaur with a reputation. Your poem is going to be about your dinosaur having its own chance to speak, with the title **'What I was really like'**. Maybe T.Rex reveals it was a big softie, or you could tell the story of the Oviraptor: when fossils of this dinosaur were found near the remains of eggs, people thought it must have been trying to steal and eat them. Now scientists believe the eggs were more likely to have been its own children.

If it's helpful, you can use two phrases to help structure your poem, making a list of ideas under each heading:

- **'You think'**, e.g. 'You think I'm scary...' / 'You think I fought...' / 'You think I ate...' etc
- **'But you don't know...'** e.g. 'you don't know that I took good care of my eggs' and explain all the nice things in your life that people don't know about: what did you do?

Then weave these two lists together, mixing up ideas to create contrast as well as **repetition**. This will help you explore the different ways to tell a story: there is a big difference between thinking and knowing, and often scientists – as well as writers – have to guess on the best available evidence.

We'd love to see what you come up with.

If you'd like us to take a look, email your poems and pictures to hello@theemmapress.com with 'Dinosaurs' in the subject line.

