

intrigue and excitement. *Tophier* is recommended as an excellent addition to any library. It demonstrates the value of truth, the importance of family bonds, and the rewards of a strong relationship between siblings.

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In Search of the Secrets of History

Albertosaurus: Death of a Predator. Monique Kieran. Raincoast, 1999. 56 pp. 24.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55192-258-4. *I Was There: Graveyards of the Dinosaurs: What's It Like to Discover Prehistoric Creatures*. Shelley Tanaka. Illus. Alan Barnard. Scholastic Canada, 1998. 48 pp. \$19.99, \$7.99 cloth, paper. ISBN 0-590-12446-3, ISBN 0-590-12447-1. *I Was There: Secrets of the Mummies: Uncovering the Bodies of Ancient Egyptians*. Shelley Tanaka. Illus. Greg Ruhl. Scholastic Canada, 1999. 48 pp. \$19.99, \$8.99 cloth, paper. ISBN 0-590-51494-6, ISBN 0-590-51495-4.

For palaeontologists or archaeologists, digging up the secrets of history takes time, patience, an understanding of their subject, and insightful speculation on their discoveries. Writers who explain it to children have a daunting task. How to present those facts and insights and make the search both interesting and exciting requires all of those skills plus copious amounts of imagination. Following the recent trend to combine nonfiction with fiction both Kieran in *Albertosaurus*, and Tanaka in the *I Was There* series, *Graveyards of the Dinosaurs* and *Secrets of the Mummies*, accepted the challenge admirably and made reading it worthwhile.

Both of the books on dinosaurs are excellent additions to a genre already littered with numerous titles. Their focus is different — Kieran centres on one location and the remains of one special fossil; Tanaka travels around the world to three different locations and examines three different kinds of dinosaurs. Although Tanaka includes one of the same locations as Kieran, she follows another path of discovery. Both books contain a table of contents in lieu of an index to help one navigate the content.

Albertosaurus takes us to the badlands of southern Alberta in Dinosaur Provincial Park where Palaeontologist Phillip Currie found a fossilized bone sticking out of the ground. His discovery in 1991 led to the world's best-articulated juvenile tyrannosaur skeleton ever found. Kieran takes us on that search, capturing the wonder and the excitement of Currie's find. Recreating the drama of detective work inherent in palaeontology, she gives the facts about bones bit by bit. Interspersed in the narrative of the discovery, she weaves a compelling story of the young tyrannosaur as it struggled to survive but died an untimely death where it was found millions of years later in the same position with almost all its bones intact. Throughout the book, she maintains a connection to credible research and the Royal Tyrrell Museum.

Features include the Mesozoic Era timeline with dinosaur silhouettes on

the inside cover, a glossary of 27 terms, and a black-and-white illustrated family tree to help show the connection of dinosaurs to reptiles, mammals, birds and snakes. Kieran also includes a “Meet the Scientists” photo gallery to put faces to the people involved in the research. The photographs, selected to capture the desolate place, the people, and the history, whet the appetite for more and foster a desire to visit Drumheller, the Royal Tyrrell Museum, and Dinosaur Provincial Park in person.

The fictionalized accounts, boxed in green and covering one or two pages at a time, have colour illustrations with green as the predominant colour. Black-and-white drawings enhance the technical and scientific explanations. In spite of having no index, the book is well organized and information is fairly easy to find.

The picture book format, although attractive to young children, belies its estimated ninth grade reading level based on the Fry readability scale. This book, especially the fictional parts, would have to be read to young children for them to get the full impact.

Graveyards, with a reading level of grade five or six, is slightly more appropriate for young children to read on their own. Tanaka takes us on a round-the-world journey from the Gobi Desert in Mongolia, to Dinosaur Provincial Park in Alberta, Canada, to the Valley of the Moon in Argentina. Tanaka’s Prologue tells how Roy Chapman Andrews uncovered some of the secrets of the Gobi Desert in 1922. It was his children’s book, *All about Dinosaurs*, that inspired Palaeontologists Michael Novacek and Mark Norell to set out in 1992 to build on Andrews’s amazing accomplishment, finding proof that dinosaurs laid eggs. The desert graveyard they dug up showed that Oviraptor actually looked after their young and were very much like birds. Following this information, there is a sensitive account of Oviraptor’s demise in the desert protecting her young.

From there Tanaka takes us to Dinosaur Provincial Park to the site of an ancient river where in 1978 Phil Currie found a mass graveyard with the remains of thousands of Centrosaurs of all ages. Scientists’ speculation over the twenty years of research on the scattered and broken bones provided answers to questions about how dinosaurs lived together, but also raised many others. Tanaka’s tale speculates the details of that fatal river crossing.

We then head to Argentina and a lush river valley in the shadow of a volcano where Paul Sereno, a talented and very young professor leading his first expedition, made a dramatic discovery in 1988 — a complete skeleton of the earliest dinosaur then known, a *Herrerasaurus*. Tanaka makes Sereno’s search our own with her compelling description of Sereno’s emotions at his find.

Then Sereno looked more closely ... And he realized that the neck bones led to the back of a skull. A *Herrerasaurus* skull. For a few seconds he was frozen. Then he let out a huge yell that bounced off the distant cliff and brought his teammates running.... He was so overwhelmed that he broke down and started to cry.

She then takes us back 228 million years to recreate what it was like when the volcano erupted.

The book has many of the same features as *Albertosaurus*, an eighteen-term glossary, timeline, photos of the locations, the history, and the people, but its full-colour illustrations by Alan Barnard are more appealing, and the timeline is fleshed out with text to give greater understanding. Because of its broader scope, its timeline incorporates illustrations in the Paleozoic era, shows the earth as the continents drifted from the Triassic Period to today, and recommends three books for further reading. It contains a Prologue and Epilogue and also has a two-page spread of a map of the world with nineteen new dinosaur finds around the world since 1983. Although the layout of the book is logical, an index would have been helpful.

What *Secrets of the Mummies* really does is answer the question, “If mummies could talk what would they tell us?” — reams and reams of information according to Tanaka. This book, much like *Graveyards*, follows a similar layout with mummy facts followed by four different mummies that have been extensively researched. Two of them are royal — Ramses II, and King Tut — and two of them ordinary Nahkt, a teenaged weaver, and Djed, a middle-aged musician. And this is what makes this book extraordinary. Because Tut and Ramses were Pharaohs much is already known and written about them, but in Tanaka’s book we get to look at how the other half lived. Taking advantage of the opportunity, she sensitively presents their lives and their deaths. We feel compassion for Djed whose painful death prompted her husband to mourn for months and to pay for a beautifully decorated painted casket, which revealed her story for us to learn. We can understand Nahkt’s agony as he died of malaria as well as the agony of his parents losing a teenaged son. One can see why Tanaka’s this book and previous books in the *I Was There* series have won awards, such as The Silver Birch Award, the Information Book Award, and Mr. Christie’s Book Award.

Along with the fictional accounts, we also get the facts laid out in clear and precise language. Written at a 7th grade level *Mummies* found favour with grade six students at our school for a resource when it came to mummifying a chicken. The picture book format was appealing, and the full-colour illustrations by Greg Ruhl made the time periods come alive. Students joined in the fascination people have had for mummies over the ages, and learned about embalming, the tools of the trade, how to make a mummy, the greatness of Ramses, and Howard Carter’s search for and stumble upon the treasures of King Tut’s tomb. They pored over information on how X-ray, autopsy, and CAT scans revealed hidden secrets, sometimes without destroying the mummy.

With no Table of Contents to guide one in the layout, this book at least has a limited index to help find information and a glossary of eighteen terms to explain words such as abscess, parasite, or bitumen. Descriptions of three books for further reading about mummies and Egyptian times provide the impetus for us to continue the search.

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