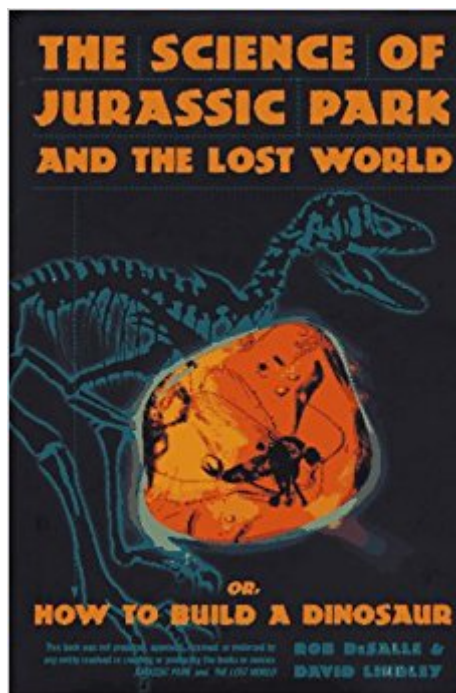




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# Science Of Jurassic Park And The Lost World: Or, How To Build A Dinosaur



## Synopsis

In this work two scientists look at whether the fictional science behind the movie "Jurassic Park" could really happen.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The premise of Michael Crichton's Jurassic Park and the Steven Spielberg movie that it spawned (along with its sequel, The Lost World) is simple enough. Scientists extract dinosaur DNA remnants lingering in the stomachs of insects entombed in amber for millions of years, reconstitute them into complete copies of dinosaur DNA, and then "grow" dinosaurs inside the lab. It sounds intuitively plausible--if far-fetched--but could it really work? In this fascinating book, Rob DeSalle and David Lindley explain in detail how scientists might attempt this painstaking task and the challenges they would face. In the process, they provide a running tutorial on the techniques of genetic engineering and play spoilsport to the occasional sloppy science of the Crichton and Spielberg works. The result is thoroughly entertaining yet simultaneously enlightening.

The best science fiction must be consistent with science fact. With the blockbuster status of Michael Crichton's Jurassic Park and its sequel, The Lost World (LJ 9/15/95), it is fair to ask, Could dinosaurs really be cloned from ancient DNA? DeSalle, an associate curator at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, and Lindley, an associate editor of Science News, do not have a definitive answer, but they do explore how it might possibly be done. The authors take a

critical approach, questioning every premise and exposing presumptions. Copious references to events and characters in Crichton's books make familiarity with them a prerequisite. George and Roberta Poinar's *Quest for Life in Amber* (LJ 9/14/94) would be a better choice for anybody who hasn't read the book or seen the movie. Still, this book will benefit greatly from the tie-in to the forthcoming release of the film version of *The Lost World* and will be in demand at public libraries. ?Gregg Sapp, Univ. of Miami Lib. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

excellent read for a curious teenager

As a kid (now 22, so to some I may still fall in that category) the Jurassic Park movies were one of few movies that completely captivated my imagination and curiosity into scientific and engineering possibilities. In this book, being a little outdated at the time of reading even a few years ago, I really did get a look into the further thoughts and explanations with general scientific looks into the concepts of the book. The author does a great job of seeing all sides the different concepts of the movies, from both the standpoint of possible and impossible. Overall, the book successfully looks into the facts of the movies and books a little deeper and really satisfied my curiosity into if Jurassic Park really could be made.

Over all I'd say this book was a good read, it wasn't as I expected, which was some book written by a buzz kill scientist ruining a cool movie, it actually explained how something like the cloning of dinosaurs could actually happen. In a way it made me feel like it was actually possible, which I suppose it could be (from an extremely radical perspective) but none the less, very doubtful. The tone and feel I received from the author and his writing skills were very welcoming in a way that made me want to keep reading, in many examples there were examples from the other books and movies being highlighted, which of course being a fan of the films, gained my interest. It did bring up a small plot whole in the movie though, how could they get a usable piece of dinosaur DNA from a mosquito that was trapped in amber for hundreds of thousands of years? The chances of someone finding a bug that was trapped just after it had its dino meal are extremely slim, and it might have not even have been from the dinosaur age, for all we know it could have been from the ice age or something else far more different than the age of dinosaurs. But I do suppose everything else that was explained from that point on made sense and can be viewed as possible. I am glad I read this book, and glad to say it was not the kind of read I was expecting (which is good).

This book begins with a good overview of our understanding dinosaur biology. There is a description of how the notion of dinosaurs being stupid, lumbering, cold-blooded beasts has given way to the notion of them being at least partly warm-blooded. The discoveries of iridium by the Alvarez team, and how it has revolutionized our understanding of possible dinosaur extinction, is recounted. The authors freely acknowledge that we know little about DNA. It is frozen in mammoths, but not in dinosaurs. They also acknowledge (p. 17, 42) that the idea of useable dinosaur blood inside an insect trapped in amber is conjecture. If nothing else, the digestive enzymes in an insect's stomach would probably pulverize the DNA long before an even prompt "amberization" could immobilize them. Any dinosaur DNA would almost certainly be broken into fragments, so it would be a Herculean task using overlapping segments to attempt to recreate the dinosaur's complete genome. Moreover, if the DNA was all cleaved in the same position, reassembly would be virtually impossible. Even if reconstructed, it would be challenging to get a dinosaur DNA to work together with, say, within ostrich cell. However, more modest goals may be attainable in the foreseeable future. For instance, sections of dinosaur DNA may have discernable functions once implanted into the genomes of current organisms. Anything beyond that is farfetched by today's standards of knowledge.

This book may bring tears of sadness to every die-hard Jurassic Park fan. While the authors try to remain positive and reassure the reader that cloning dinosaurs may one day be possible, it is made clear by the second chapter that the task is impossible. However, this is still an enjoyable read which every true JP fan should own. The authors scrutinize every bit of science within JP and its sequel, *The Lost World*. Fortunately, the book's writers rely on the science found within Crichton's books instead of the dumbed-down movie versions. My only problem with the book is that it seemed a bit sluggish at times, especially at the beginning. The authors felt the need to describe every step in the procedure of isolating dino DNA, yet some of it was extremely technical and only mildly interesting. However, the book makes up for this with its wealth of information (plus JP bloopers). Were Isla Nublar and Isla Sorna large enough to contain their dinosaur populations? (No) Are insects trapped in amber reliable sources of dino DNA? (No) Was Ian Malcolm as smart as he thought he was? (No) These are only a few of the questions this book answers

"First preheat your oven to 350 degrees". How many recipes have you seen have started with that familiar instruction? Consider: "Take a piece of amber containing an insect that lived in the the Jurassic along with the dinosaurs". That is what Michael Crichton had millions of us believe was the

first step in his recipe for creating the dinosaurs in his book Jurassic Park. It sounded so logical and straightforward to the general reader that we all took it at face value that everything that Ingen Corporation's scientists did was correct. We then read on, never thinking to question the science again. Until now. It reminds one of the scene in the Wizard of Oz when Toto pulls back the screen and reveals the real wizard. We ignored the man behind the curtain until Rob DeSalle & David Lindley forced us to look beyond the smoke & mirrors. They have written an excellent "expose" on the errors of the dinosaur creation, but have done so in such a fun and enlightening way so as not to make the Wizard (aka M

This book would have been more accurately titled " 176 pages of technical reasons why you can't build a dinosaur." I realize that these are complex issues, but it was still quite dry in places. On the other hand, I did read the whole thing. I guess I was hoping they would say that bringing a dinosaur back was just around the corner.

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