

ISLAND KIDS

& PAPERBENTOS

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Digging Up Dinosaurs

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SCIENCE
FEATURE

Digging Up DINOSAURS

By Gregory Grambo



Imagine for a minute that there is a small fish swimming in a lake. One day the fish dies and sinks to the bottom of the lake. Over time, mud covers the fish. Soon the fish begins to rot away as the mud around it begins to harden. As more mud is deposited on top of the old, the mud gets harder and turns into stone. Eventually the lake dries up.

Millions of years later, after the earth has twisted and turned, that site is being excavated in order to build a new home. As the workers dig, they come across that fossil imprint of this fish, which swam in a lake on that spot millions of years before. A fossil is *an imprint, a recording, of a dead animal or plant from the past.*

People once believed that all fossils were the remains of the animals killed by the great flood told to us in the biblical accounts of Noah; people believed this theory until

the early 1800s.

It was then that two scientists, William Smith, a geologist from England, and Baron Georges Cuvier, a French Scientist, began to notice certain things about the fossils people found.

For example, Smith noticed

that the same type of fossil creatures were always found in the same layers of the earth's crust.

Smith later found ways of dating each layer, thereby determining when that animal was alive. Cuvier used

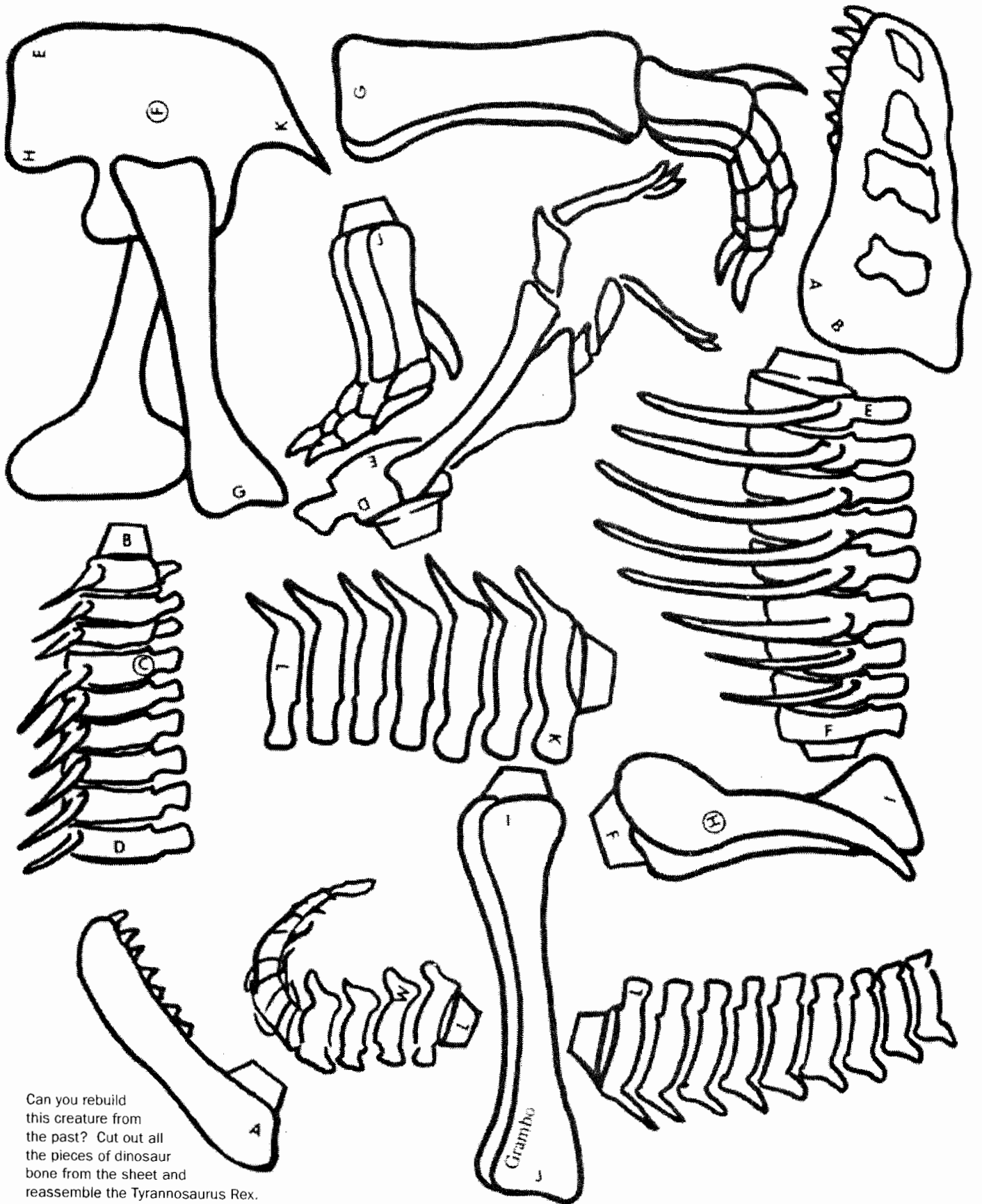
information about the animals anatomy to classify **extinct** animals—animals that are *no longer alive*. These two people began the science of **paleontology**, *the study of prehistoric life through fossils.*

In the 1820s, Gideon Mantell found the remains of what he thought was a 15-foot reptile. After examination, Richard Owen, an anatomist, concluded that this animal was not a reptile at all. It was a completely new type of creature. He called this new creature **Dinosauria**. This is a Greek word meaning *terrible lizard.*

Since then, thousands of animals have been discovered telling more about the biological history of our planet Earth.



Tyrannosaurus Rex Skeleton



Can you rebuild this creature from the past? Cut out all the pieces of dinosaur bone from the sheet and reassemble the Tyrannosaurus Rex.