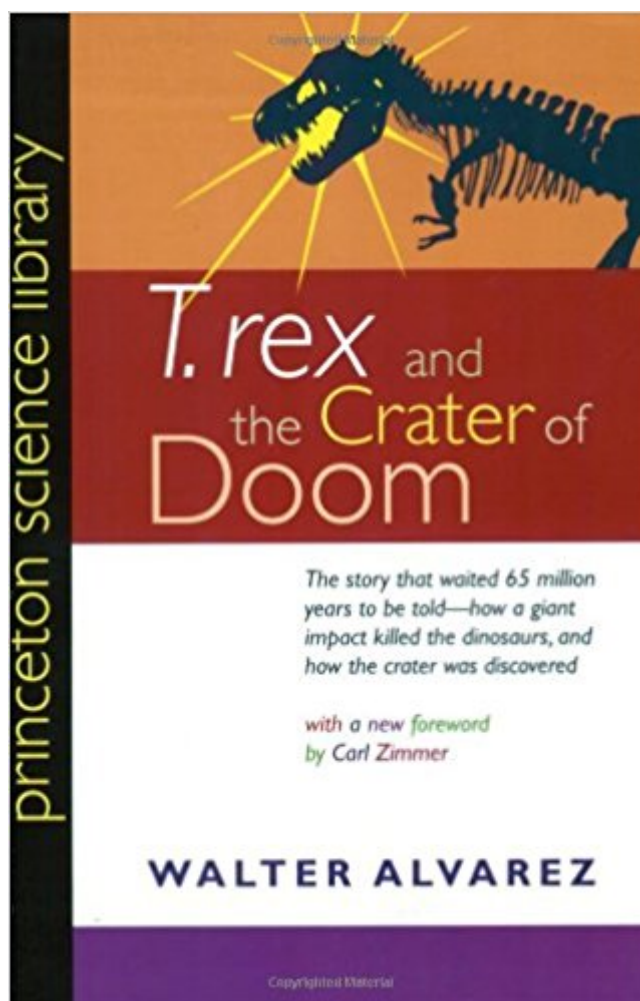


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"T. Rex" And The Crater Of Doom (Princeton Science Library)



Synopsis

Sixty-five million years ago, a comet or asteroid larger than Mount Everest slammed into the Earth, inducing an explosion equivalent to the detonation of a hundred million hydrogen bombs. Vaporized detritus blasted through the atmosphere upon impact, falling back to Earth around the globe. Disastrous environmental consequences ensued: a giant tsunami, continent-scale wildfires, darkness, and cold, followed by sweltering greenhouse heat. When conditions returned to normal, half the plant and animal genera on Earth had perished. This horrific chain of events is now widely accepted as the solution to a great scientific mystery: what caused the extinction of the dinosaurs? Walter Alvarez, one of the Berkeley scientists who discovered evidence of the impact, tells the story behind the development of the initially controversial theory. It is a saga of high adventure in remote locations, of arduous data collection and intellectual struggle, of long periods of frustration ended by sudden breakthroughs, of friendships made and lost, and of the exhilaration of discovery that forever altered our understanding of Earth's geological history.

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Customer Reviews

One of the great mysteries is what happened to the dinosaurs, and it has taken great detective work to give us an answer. In *T. Rex and the Crater of Doom*, some brilliant, not to mention determined, scientists roam the world and seek out the clues. What they conclude is that the earth withstood a colossal impact with a meteor (or perhaps a comet) 65 million years ago. The resulting cataclysm destroyed half the life on the planet. Walter Alvarez, a geologist at the University of California at

Berkeley, and one of the four scientists who present this theory on the mystery, tells the story in a clear narrative that contains a wealth of scientific material. The book does require an investment of attention, but the presentation is quite readable, and the story itself is fascinating. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

When Nobel prize-winning physicist Louis Alvarez and his geophysicist son Walter announced that they had discovered evidence of a giant meteor that slammed into Earth 65 million years ago, causing the extinction of the dinosaurs, they were met with much fanfare from the popular press and skepticism from the scientific community. The Alvarezes were vindicated in 1991 when a huge impact crater was discovered on the Yucatan Peninsula, and the possible connection with dinosaur extinction is becoming more widely accepted. After a vivid description imagining the global devastation that would be caused by such an impact, Alvarez offers a first-person account of the discovery. It's a nicely told and well-written tale of scientific discovery, and though he occasionally comes across as a bit smug, Alvarez is quite generous in crediting objectors for helping show the direction to improve and refine the theory with further research. This informal, readable book is appropriate for high school readers on up, and the subject has strong popular appeal. Amy Brunvand, Univ. of Utah Lib., Salt Lake City Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

An excellent book. Written generally for the non-scientist, there's enough critical evidence here to convince just about anyone that the Impact Theory is based firmly on fact. The author covers the ground from back to front in lively style, and with wonderful examples which explain the relevant geology, physics, and paleontology to the layman. The "plus" in all of it is that this book was written by THE major contributor/investigator. Who better to present the story? My overall rating includes this factor. My rating also includes the fact that the book has varied pictorial material which highlight the text. This is definitely a book that popularizes a scientific issue - and shows how real scientific investigations progress from ideas/guesswork to accepted theory. The description of the asteroid/comet impact is the best I've read. I recommend this book without reservation to those interested in the mystery of dinosaur extinction, and in the controversy over whether evolution is "punctuated", "gradual", or a mixture of both. It compliments and enhances all we've seen via TV presentations. I also recommend it for another reason - the underlying tug of war between the ideas of geology, and the hard evidence obtained via physics. There's an undercurrent here (behind the obvious story) of a real clash of ideas and beliefs between the two worlds. Author Walter Alvarez -

son of Nobel Prize winner Luis Alvarez - seems to have smoothed over this clash. One wonders whether the story would have ever come out without the input from father Luis, and the integration of ideas, methods, and data he infused into the investigation. Again, an excellent book worth reading.

Do you want to? This is about the theory and its history of acceptance, nicely written and interesting, not amazing or wonderful, but I've been interested in this since before it was widely accepted and enjoyed the book. It is absolutely not too dry or horrible, it shouldn't be too lightweight for you unless you have seriously studied the subject.

Fantastic book - very scientific, very well-written. One of the best geology-for-lay-readers books I have read for a long time! Went on to read Alvarez's other major book "The Mountains of St. Assisi" EVEN BETTER! (I have a Ph.D. in Physics, so this is not an "amateur" scientist review. It's a professional scientist review, although only an amateur geologist.)

This is a well-told story of one of the most significant discoveries of the 20th Century: definitive proof that a comet was responsible for the demise of the dinosaurs. It's particularly intriguing to trace the gathering of evidence which established this fact and the many scientists who contributed to the discovery. Bravo!

It is a great read! I highly recommend it.

Short book (150 pages of text, dozens more of footnotes). Easy read. Great story of discovery including all the mistakes, errors and luck that make up science. Experts in the field may likely find it overly simplistic, but don't read it for the latest academic details on the state of the science. Read it for the travelogue of a voyage of discovery and in that vein I give it 5 stars. I appreciate that Walter Alvarez notes that there was and is some hot debate about the science, and honors those involved by not trying to quote blow by blow who said what to whom, but rather that to argue over uncertainties is part of being human and part of being a scientist. That is a key take-away from the book, that science is not a neat linear flow from darkness to light. There are many missteps along the way. I notice that several of the one-star ratings are from school kids who were assigned the book in class and found the book boring. As they confess, it isn't actually that the book was boring but that any book about science was bound to be boring. Ouch, I am sure this book was carefully selected

by the teacher as most likely candidate to entertain the students. It is too bad if even this book couldn't engage some of the kids, but hopefully others were turned on and will take their own voyage of discovery when their turn comes.

This is the book that started it all: Dinosaur extinction by bolide from outer space. Catastrophic tsunamis. Intercontinental ejecta layer. Geologic evidence everywhere you look once you know where to look. And the laughingstock of serious geologists everywhere until the evidence started mounting up to where it couldn't be ignored. This is the story of Walter Alvarez and his colleagues and their careful science that yielded ideas, insights, and then, whammo! the Big Idea that there might be an external component to the extinction of dinosaurs 65 million years ago. It is a forensic mystery worthy of "CSI" except this is the real deal, and the slog work of doing research took this band of scientists all over the world in search of enlightenment. Leveraging new developments in dating techniques and the best minds in the field and out of it (did I mention that Walter Alvarez is the son of Luis Alvarez, the Nobel Award winner for physics?), the adventure is somewhat stalled until the discovery of oil company drilling cores from the Chixulub region of Mexico that confirm evidence of an impact in that region. It is an eleventh-hour discovery just as interest is waning and funding is running out - a development worthy of the "Nova" episode that it eventually became. As much fun as it is to read mysteries, it is equally fun to read about the real-life trials and tribulations of a band of intrepid individuals who have a hypothesis and then are able to methodically test it, with startling results. One of the joys of this book is Alvarez's generosity toward those whose work supported him and propelled him forward, as well as his occasional head-scratching humility. This really isn't a vanity piece but it is a definite good read.

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