

Pam Berger, Editor

## *The Strangest Dinosaur That Never Was:* Web Evaluation for Primary Students

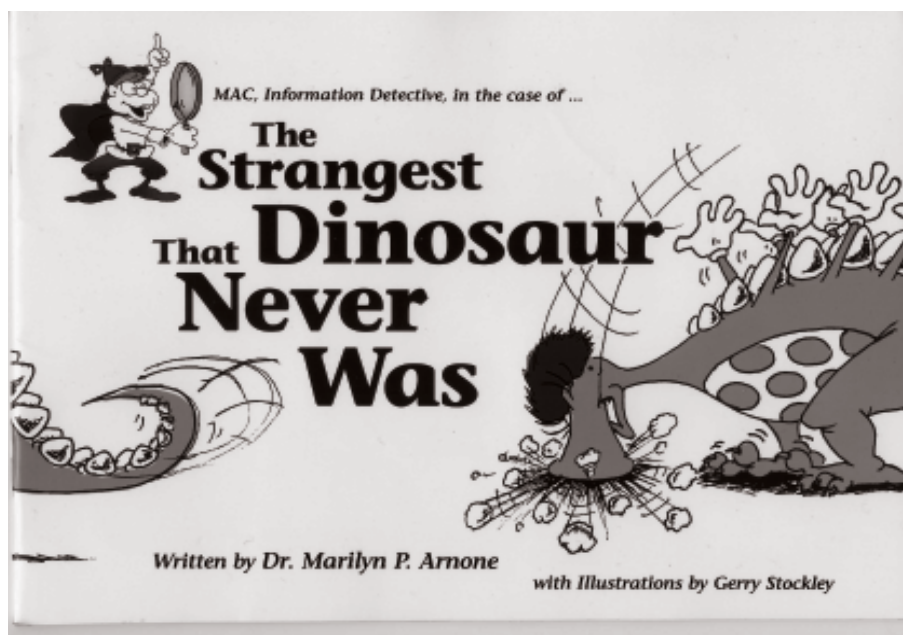
### *The Strangest Dinosaur That Never Was*

Marilyn Arnone,  
with illustrations by Gerry Stockley  
Librares Unlimited, Westport, CT,  
1-59158-147-8, ©2003

3 book-set, \$38.00  
<http://www.lu.com/>

Sandy had a problem – her dinosaur ate rocks! In her research of unusual dinosaurs, she found the Hammer Nose Dinosaur website. It certainly fulfilled the requirement of being unusual; it had a crop of red hair that stuck out all over its head, six arms and a spotted stomach. However, it also had the strange habit of eating rocks every night before it went to sleep. This was very suspicious: Sandy knew animals don't eat rocks. Something was strange about this website so she went to see MAC, the Internet Detective. From Sandy's first knock on MAC's office door in the big old tree, the reader becomes engaged in this delightful, well-executed storybook of two kids problem solving their way through a series of carefully planned website evaluation strategies.

Marilyn Arnone has created a three-book set to introduce young children to an important information literacy skill, evaluating Internet resources and "provide a guide for educators that both suggests activities to reinforce learning points in the books and also provides additional



ideas for planned lessons around the topic of evaluation in a curriculum unit." The set includes the storybook, *The Strangest Dinosaur That Never Was*, in hardcopy and paperback and an instructional manual, the Educator's Guide.

*The Strangest Dinosaur That Never Was* is designed as a read aloud for students in primary grades as part of a school or at home lesson or unit on evaluation skills. It includes three interactive pages that can be used to introduce an activity or discussion or as a pausing point to pick up the story at a future class period to accommodate scheduling or students' attention spans. The first

"What do you think?" interactive page asks kids to share what they already know about dinosaurs and other animals. Have you ever heard of a dinosaur that ate rocks? Do you know of ANY animal that eats rocks? The second and third interactive pages ask kids to brainstorm clues that might help them decide if the information on a Web site is true or not and ways to check the information if you can't get in touch with the website author.

The storybook design uses a two-color combination that works well to focus the readers' attention on the expressive cartoon-type

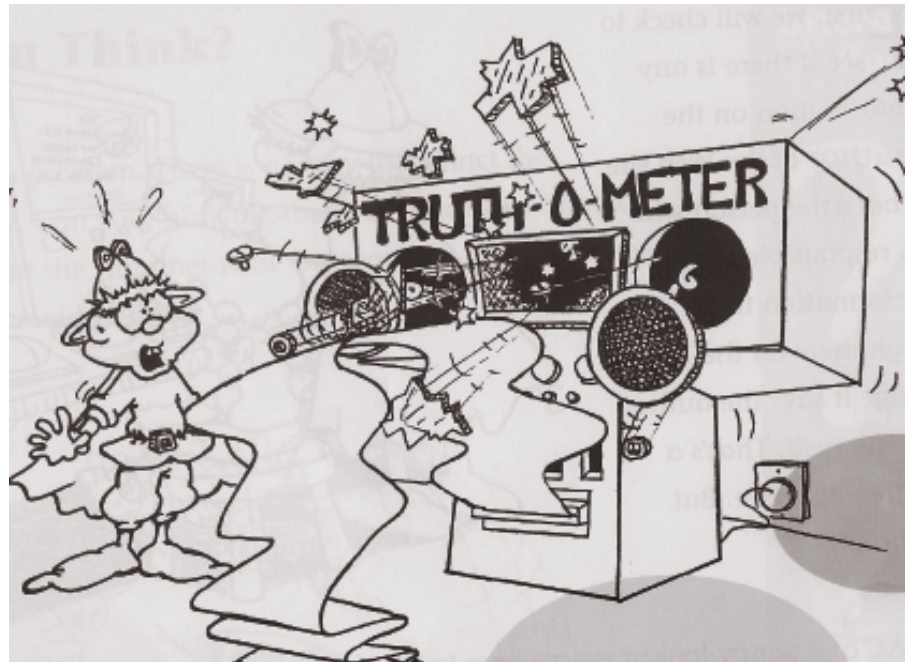
characters, Sandy and MAC, and the key concepts and vocabulary in the text. Green circles of various sizes and shading move the readers' eye across the page and add just enough color to add continuity and interest.

The characters are endearing and kids will identify with their actions and concerns. When they decide to contact an expert on dinosaurs, Sandy shares that she is scared that the expert, Professor Young will think she is stupid. Mac reassures her, "No question is stupid. Just relax. He will admire that you take your project seriously enough to ask an expert for help." Students that I read the storybook with immediately liked the courageous, capped MAC and giggled at his attempt to fly like Superman. Even though MAC's wacky-looking Truth-O-Meter intrigued the students, it didn't fool them for a minute; however, the hidden clue embedded in the author's name did. (The website author's name, Eko Jasti, written backwards spells "It's a Joke.")

The Educator's Guide (see page 27) is a gold mine that provides additional tips, suggestions and activity sheets to support and to extend students' learning. The guide is divided into four parts:

Part I -Making the Most of *The Strangest Dinosaur That Never Was* has suggestions for making the experience the most beneficial for students, ways to prepare you and the students. Motivational theory is carefully embedded as well as the key strategies to read aloud to children.

Part II -Strategies and Lesson Plans for Teaching Evaluation Skills to Young Children includes a full curriculum unit incorporating science, information literacy and early literacy/language arts. Web evaluation is skillfully integrated



along with some practical tips to incorporate motivators into your lessons.

Part III -Activity Pages to Reproduce presents eight activity pages to expand the learning from the storybook. Each activity sheet is tied to a concept presented in the storybook and reinforces the learning. These are very useful when you don't have time to do a full unit on evaluation.

Part IV, Information Literacy provides the theoretical basis for why we teach information literacy, the importance of teaching evaluation skills, explains the pedagogical approach of the book.

Kudos toLibraries Unlimited, the publisher. Packaging of this storybook is cleverly done: creating a three-book set expands the opportunities to use it and shows a real understanding of the variety of school library/classroom situations that exist. The hard copy of the book can be circulated,

or it can be placed in the classroom or it can be an extra copy in the library while the soft copy can be keep for ongoing storytelling sessions. So often I wished I had an extra copy of a book when collaborating with a teacher on a resource-based unit, not to mention well planned lessons, motivators and discussion topics.

*The Strangest Dinosaur That Never Was* should be in every elementary library collection. Marilyn Arnone successfully teaches evaluation skills within the familiar context of the storybook and embeds constructivist and motivational strategies in both the storybook and the Educator's Guide to support and model good teaching. MAC, the Internet Detective, needs to become a regular in our elementary libraries. Do you think he can help us teach Internet searching skills next?

# CONTENTS

- Introduction 3
- Welcome 5
- Goals 6
- Using This Guide 6
- Part I: Making the Most of *The Strangest Dinosaur That Never Was*
  - Plan (you) 9
  - Prepare (students) 11
  - Read (the story) 14
  - Reinforce (learning) 15
- Part II: Strategies and Lesson Plans for Teaching Evaluation Skills to Young Children
  - Strategies That Motivate Learning 21
  - Sample Learning Tasks for Teaching Evaluation Skills 21
  - A Collaborative Integrated Unit and Sample Lesson Plans 23
  - Another Unit Idea and Sample Lesson Plans From an LMS 30
- Part III: Activity Pages to Reproduce!
  - Suggestions for Using Activity Pages 39
  - Look for Clues! 40
  - Be an Information Detective 41
  - WWW I.D. Checklist 42
  - Write the Author! 44
  - Make Your Own I.D. Badge! 45
  - Fiction or Non-Fiction: You Decide 46
  - Hammer-Nose Dinosaur Coloring Page/Poster 47
- Part IV: Information Literacy
  - Information Literacy and IL Skills 51
  - Where Does Evaluation Fit In? 52
  - Why Teach Evaluation Skills to Young Learners? 52
  - What's Special About *Strangest Dinosaur*? 52
  - Integrating *Strangest Dinosaur* With the Curriculum
  - The Power of Collaboration
  - References
  - Coloring Pages



What do you think MAC has found?

## Write the Author!

To do this activity, you must first fill out your I.D. checklist on the Web site you investigated. Then, using that information, you can write to the person or group who is responsible for the Web site. Use the report form below to tell them what is good about the site and what could use some improvement. Your report could make a difference!

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

As a Junior Information Detective, I have been exploring your Web site. I thought you might be interesting in reading my report.

What I like about your Web site is:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Here is what I think could use some improvement:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

signed \_\_\_\_\_  
 grade \_\_\_\_\_  
 school \_\_\_\_\_  
 address \_\_\_\_\_

name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 date: \_\_\_\_\_

### WWW I.D. Checklist

(Adapted from Hobbs/C Jenkins, Aronson & Small) (1999)

Now, you have learned some important skills for being a Junior Information Detective! Using your skills, investigate a Web site. Then, decide if it is good, a poor one, or one that needs improvement. For each question, use the face that best describes how YOU feel the Web site should score.

1. When you first arrived at this Web site, did it look like this would be a interesting or fun Web site to explore?
 

0  1  2  3
2. Was it easy to find your way around the different parts of this Web site?
 

0  1  2  3
3. Was the information on this Web site believable? (Did it seem to be true?)
 

0  1  2  3
4. Were there lots of activities to do?
 

0  1  2  3
5. Did this Web site have links to other interesting or useful Web sites?
 

0  1  2  3
6. Did all the parts of this Web site work the way they should?
 

0  1  2  3