



## A Lesson Learnt

It was the way the treetops shuddered that alerted him. He lifted his huge head and listened. A flock of flying creatures burst into the air in an explosion of colour and noise; their tiny wings were flapping furiously. Soon, they were merely minuscule dots in the sky and he was left alone with whatever was lurking beyond the trees. A deep growl vibrated through the forest. Instinctively, he spun round to point his three horns in the direction of the danger.



Silence.

He surveyed the area but his little eyes made it hard for him to see far ahead. He sniffed but all the smells were coming from behind him. He listened but all of the forest sounds had disappeared. All that was left was his own quickened breath and a thump, thump, thumping in his ears. He felt sick, wishing desperately that he was back with the others, and he slowly lowered his head, his wide, armoured frill-plate ready to defend.

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It was his own fault that he had been separated from the herd. The lure of the fresh forest leaves as they passed through the valley had proved too tempting. They had been travelling along the banks of the great river for weeks, mainly munching on moss grown on old boulders and stones. The idea of a proper breakfast that morning - a pile of large, juicy forest leaves - was something the young triceratops had found impossible to resist. Like a moody teenager, he waded into the undergrowth, grunting to his mother as if to say 'I'll be back soon'. She'd always taught him the importance of strength in numbers but he wanted to look brave in front of the young females. He ignored his mother's cries as he sauntered off, but paused when the herd elder had called him back; his deep roar caused the entire herd to stop and stare. However, the young dinosaur wasn't a calf anymore, he had grown almost to the size of Mother. He wasn't always going to follow orders. Even so, as he wandered into the darkness of the forest, the elder's warning had sent a shiver down his spine.

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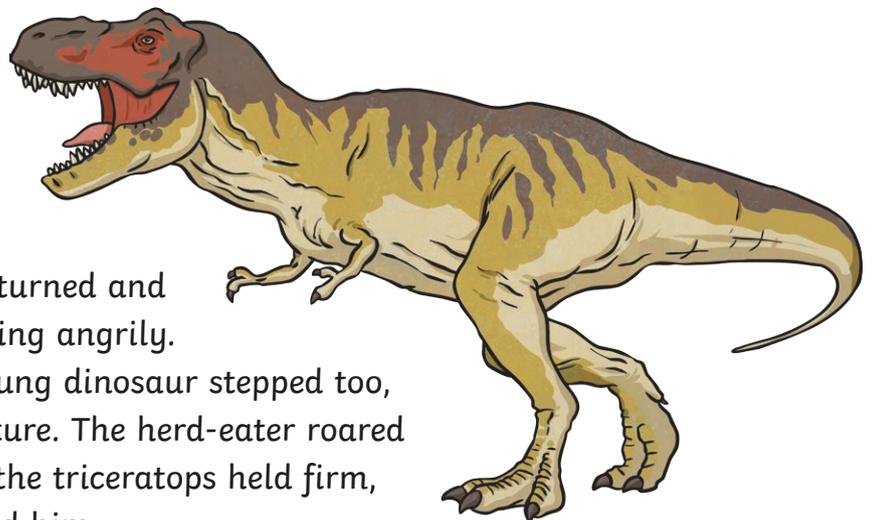
He drew back his right front leg, daring himself to charge, and using all of his senses to get a clearer idea of what was out there. The trees moved again. They juddered and shook; leaves fell from quivering branches and an incredible roar thundered through the forest. The young dinosaur scrambled back, his beady eyes darting this way and that. He'd heard that roar many times. He knew what was coming next.

Suddenly, the trees shook again, much more violently this time, and a large, two-legged herd-eater came bounding forward. The young dinosaur had seen this beast before; long legs, short arms, swishing tail and jaws that snarled with furious, flesh-cutting teeth.

He'd been in lots of fights growing up; always training to defend himself. He'd learnt about positioning and posturing, when to defend and when to attack. He'd also discovered from experience that it was always better to face his enemy. When he was very young, he would often get scared and flee, only to find a sharp horn prodded into his rump as he ran away! But those fights were against his brothers, plus they were just for fun. This was different. This was for real...

The beast lunged forward but the young dinosaur couldn't move. He had never felt fear like this before. As if teasing, the monster stopped charging, instead choosing to prowl around to the triceratops' side, staring into his eyes as he moved. Still the young dinosaur stood rooted to the ground, hypnotised by the larger animal's fiery gaze, but something about the way he stalked clicked his mind into gear. The beast was huge; its fearsome jaws could kill him with one bite. But it also seemed wary. It must have learnt that attacking a triceratops from its front – where the three horns and battle shield were – was never a good idea. Far better to attack the side, or the back, where the flesh was soft and unprotected. That must have been how this predator killed in the past.

Just as the monster was about to pounce, the young triceratops scrambled round, pointing his deadly horns directly at the beast's mouth. The creature pulled back, roaring in frustration; a cord of drool hung from its ferocious jaws. It turned and prowled round to the other side, snarling angrily. With every step the beast took, the young dinosaur stepped too, always pointing his horns at the creature. The herd-eater roared again, even louder this time, but still the triceratops held firm, never allowing his enemy to get behind him.



Suddenly, a distant, low grunting noise echoed through the trees and the large carnivore froze and tilted its head. The noise echoed and was followed by more grunts. It was his mother and the elder! They were coming! They must have heard the monster's roars and feared the worst.

The predator paused, eyeing his victim menacingly. The young dinosaur had been heartened by the calls of his mother and took a threatening step forward. The beast flinched and skipped backwards. Then the triceratops' mother and the elder suddenly appeared by his side, bellowing loudly with their heads low and horns pointed. Although the beast was powerful, it would never be able to defeat all of them. It was a ruthless, lone killer, preferring instead to pounce on unsuspecting victims who had been separated from the group.

The beast stared into the young triceratops' eyes and roared defiantly, spit frothing from its teeth, then skulked back into the darkness of the forest. The elder bellowed triumphantly but the young triceratops' mother turned to her son and grunted. He bowed his head obediently and followed her back to the others. He would never forget the taste of those juicy forest leaves that morning but never again would the young triceratops stray away from the herd. He had learnt his lesson. His mother was right: there really was strength in numbers.

**Q1:** *'It was the way the treetops shuddered that alerted him.'*

What do you think the word alerted means in this sentence?




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**Q2:** How did the main character use the following senses to assess the danger:

Sight: \_\_\_\_\_

Smell: \_\_\_\_\_

Hearing: \_\_\_\_\_



**Q3:** *'All that was left was his own quickened breathing and a thump, thump, thumping in his ears.'* What does this sentence tell you about how the main character is feeling?

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**Q4:** How did the forest leaves compare to what the main character had been eating in recent weeks?

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**Q5:** What kind of creature is the main character of this story?

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**Q6:** Why do you think that the main character 'wanted to look brave in front of the young females'?

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**Q7:** Look at the paragraph beginning 'The beast lunged forward ...' How is the main character feeling in the 7th paragraph? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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**Q8:** What sort of creature do you think the predator was? Explain your answer.

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**Q9:** '*...bellowing loudly with their heads low and horns pointed.*' Why do you think the mother and the elder reacted this way?

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**Q10:** '*The elder bellowed triumphantly...*'

How else could the author have written this sentence?



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**Q11:** Do you think that the main character would wander away from the herd again?

Yes

No

Explain your answer



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**Q12:** Summarise the story of *A Lesson Learnt* in **thirty words or less**.

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## A Lesson Learnt Answers

**Q1:** *'It was the way the treetops shuddered that alerted him.'*

**What do you think the word alerted means in this sentence?**

**Accept any answer which compares the meaning of alerted to making him aware, warning him or letting him know that something was about to happen.**

**Q2:** How did the main character use the following senses to assess the danger:

**Accept one phrase or idea from each column of the table.**

### Sight

- He watched but his little eyes made it hard for him to see that far ahead.
- His beady eyes darting this way and that.

### Smell

- He sniffed but all the smells were coming from behind him.

### Hearing

- He listened but all the forest sounds had disappeared.

**Q3:** *'All that was left was his own quickened breathing and a thump, thump, thumping in his ears.'* What does this sentence tell you about how the main character is feeling?

**Accept answers which discuss that the main character is feeling scared, anxious or nervous, such as:**

- His breath is getting quicker and his heart is racing because he is scared by the noise.

**Q4:** How did the forest leaves compare to what the main character had been eating in recent weeks?

**Accept answers which discuss that the forest leaves were fresher, larger and juicier than the old moss they had previously been eating, e.g.**

- The leaves in the forest were fresher and juicier than the moss on the old boulders.

**Q5:** What kind of creature is the main character of this story?

**Accept the answers 'triceratops' or 'dinosaur' only.**

**Q6:** Why do you think that the main character 'wanted to look brave in front of the young females'?

**Accept answers which discuss the fact that he was trying to impress them or wanted to look strong, such as:**

- **He was trying to look brave so that he could impress all of the females into choosing him.**

**Q7:** Look at the paragraph beginning 'The beast lunged forward ...' How is the main character feeling in the 7th paragraph? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

**Accept any answer which states that the main character felt scared, terrified, fearful or stunned, providing that one of the following pieces of evidence is quoted in support:**

- **I think the main character feels scared because he 'had never felt fear like this before'.**
- **I think the main character was stunned because 'the young dinosaur stood rooted to the ground, hypnotised by the larger animal's fiery gaze'.**

**Q8:** What sort of creature do you think the predator was? Explain your answer.

**Accept any reasonable inference regarding the type of creature the predator is, providing that evidence from the text is given in support of their answer, such as:**

- **I think that the creature was a T-Rex because it says that the creature had short arms, long legs and a swishing tail.**
- **I think that the creature was a large dinosaur because it had furious, flesh-cutting teeth and was 'a large carnivore'.**
- **I think that the creature was another type of dinosaur which was bigger than the triceratops because it is described as the 'larger animal' and it says 'the beast was huge.'**

**Children do not have to infer that it was another type of dinosaur provided that the evidence given fits the alternative creature chosen.**

**Q9:** '...bellowing loudly with their heads low and horns pointed.'

**Why do you think the mother and the elder reacted this way?**

**Accept answers which discuss the fact that the mother and the elder were trying to protect the triceratops by scaring away the predator, e.g.**

- **They reacted this way to look strong and intimidate the enemy.**
- **They wanted to scare the enemy by making themselves look fierce.**

**Q10:** 'The elder bellowed triumphantly...'

**How else could the author have written this sentence?**

**Accept any reasonable re-write of the sentence which conveys the same meaning, e.g.**

- **'The elder shouted victoriously.'**
- **The elder yelled proudly.'**

**Q11:** Do you think that the main character would wander away from the herd again?

**Explain your answer.**

**Accept either yes or no as the answer provided that a relevant supporting explanation is given, such as:**

**Yes because:**

- **He knows that he can hold his own against an enemy by never turning his back.**
- **He knows that his mother and the elder will always come to find him.**
- **He really enjoyed the taste of the leaves before the beast appeared.**

**No because:**

- **The experience scared him.**
- **He was only saved because his mother arrived to help and next time he might not be so lucky.**
- **The title of the story says that he has learnt his lesson so I do not think that he would do it again.**

**Q12:** Summarise the story of A Lesson Learnt in thirty words or less.

**Accept any reasonable attempt to sum up the main points of the story within the word limit, such as:**

- **A triceratops wanders off from his herd and almost gets attacked by a predator. His mum and elder save the day and he learns his lesson.**