

DISCOVER
our AMAZING
WORLD
CLIL READERS

Alligators

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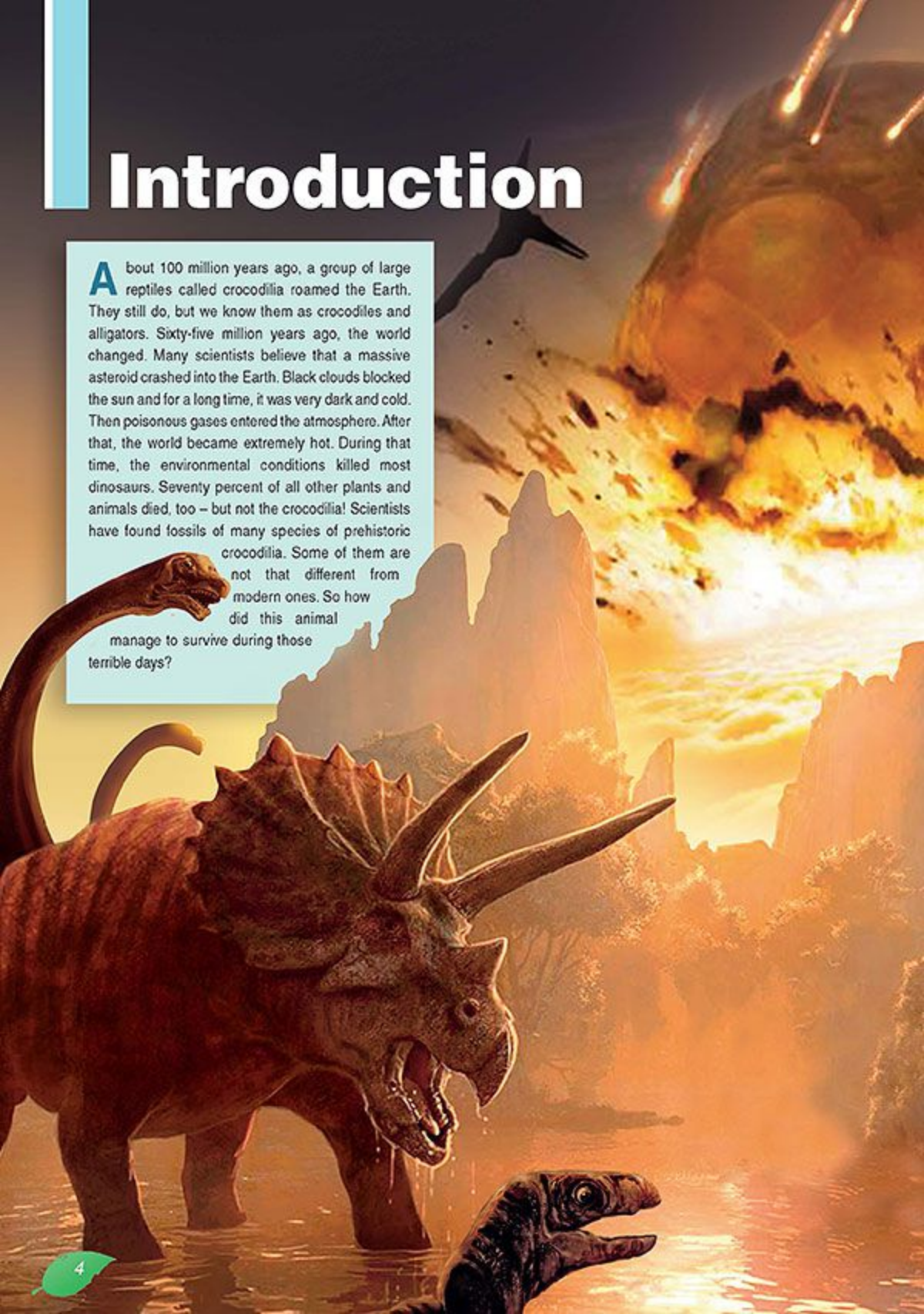
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Introduction

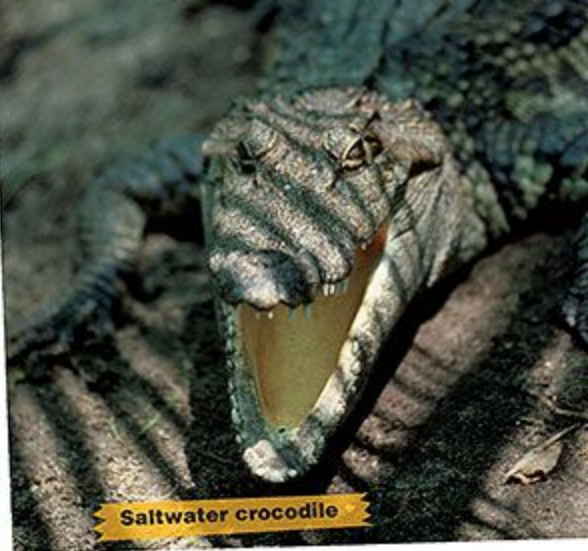
About 100 million years ago, a group of large reptiles called crocodilia roamed the Earth. They still do, but we know them as crocodiles and alligators. Sixty-five million years ago, the world changed. Many scientists believe that a massive asteroid crashed into the Earth. Black clouds blocked the sun and for a long time, it was very dark and cold. Then poisonous gases entered the atmosphere. After that, the world became extremely hot. During that time, the environmental conditions killed most dinosaurs. Seventy percent of all other plants and animals died, too – but not the crocodilia! Scientists have found fossils of many species of prehistoric crocodilia. Some of them are not that different from modern ones. So how did this animal manage to survive during those terrible days?



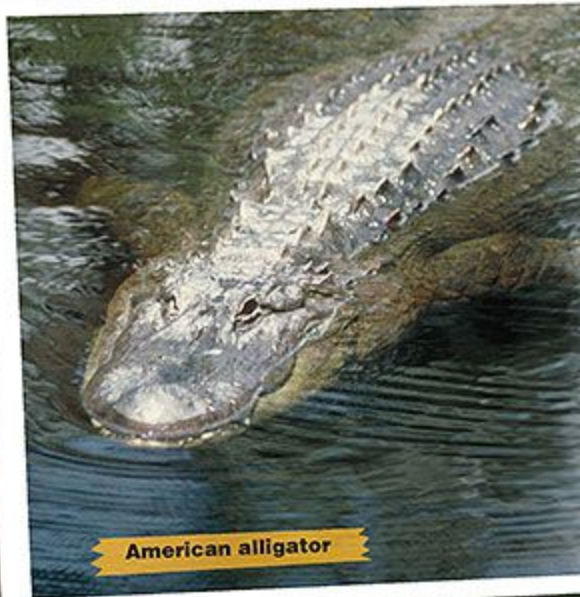


Crocodiles, alligators, and their relatives are incredibly resilient. They can survive almost anything. The prehistoric crocodiles adapted to the dark and cold conditions and managed to survive.

Today, they live in many parts of the world. There are crocodiles in the United States, Central and South America, Africa, Australia, and parts of Asia. Europe and Antarctica are the only crocodile-free continents. Three of the largest members of crocodilia are the Australian saltwater crocodile, the gharial, and the American alligator.



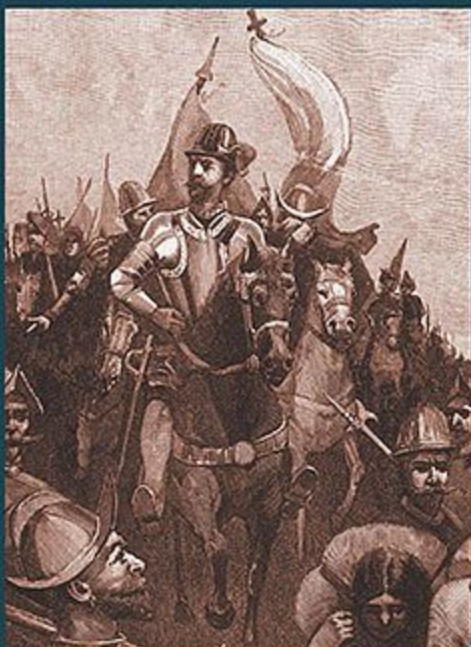
Saltwater crocodile



American alligator



Gharial



When the Spaniards arrived in the place we now know as Florida in the 1500s and 1600s, there were swamps everywhere. A fearsome reptile with sharp teeth lived in the swamps. It ripped animals apart and swallowed them whole. Rough, black, armor-like scales covered its body. Its tail was so strong that it could knock a man over effortlessly! They called it "el lagarto de Indias" — the lizard of the Indies. Native Americans had encountered this animal frequently, but it was completely new to the Spaniards. Measuring about 20 feet long, this "lizard" was probably the biggest animal the explorers had ever seen. As English settlers arrived, they took the Spanish words "el lagarto," blended them into 'al-ligarto' – and eventually, 'alligator'!



Crocodilians, including the alligator, have three eyelids. Two are like human eyelids. The third one is a clear, thin membrane. It covers the eye when the animal goes underwater so it can see.