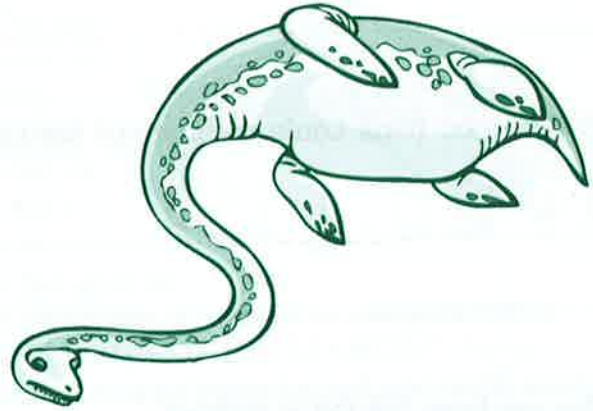


Reign of the Sea Dragons

Reign of the Sea Dragons is an information book by Sneed Collard about reptiles known as "sea dragons" — creatures that lived in the oceans at the same time as dinosaurs lived on Earth. This extract introduces sea dragons and how they were different from today's ocean creatures.

In a time when dinosaurs walked the earth, a strange, large animal called an *elasmosaur* (ee-LAZ-moh-sohr) slipped silently through warm ocean waters.

- 5 The elasmosaur had long, elegant flippers to propel its turtle-shaped body, and a fifteen-foot neck that came in handy for sneaking up on its favorite food, squid.



- 10 Soon, in fact, the elasmosaur spotted a school of squid and began swimming toward it. As it opened its jaws to strike, however, a thirty-foot-long *pliosaur* (PLEE-oh-sohr) suddenly shot up out of the depths. With its massive, seven-foot long jaws, the pliosaur seized the elasmosaur and impaled it with dozens of cone-shaped teeth. The elasmosaur struggled and thrashed to free itself, but it was no use. Soon, it died and became prey in the food web of the ancient ocean world.

15 Radical Reptiles

The elasmosaur and the pliosaur belonged to an astonishing collection of reptiles that filled our oceans during the *Mesozoic* (MEZ-oh-zoh-ik) era, about 250 to 65 million years ago. Some of these reptiles, such as crocodilians and turtles, have familiar relatives that survive today. Most, however, were totally different from anything in our modern world.

- 20 They included porpoiselike *ichthyosaurs* (IK-thee-oh-sohrs), the long-necked elasmosaurs, and enormous *mosasaurs* (MOSS-uh-sohrs) with curved daggers for teeth. Scientists often refer to these reptiles as sea dragons, and they include some of the most extraordinary, awesome predators the world has ever known.

An extract from *Reign of the Sea Dragons* by Sneed Collard.