



Key Vocabulary: Jurassic Park by Michael Crichton

Vocabulary Word	Definition	Context
Ambiguous	open to more than one interpretation; unclear or inexact	"Malcolm shook his head. 'That's ambiguous. What does "unusual" mean?'"
Anomaly	something that deviates from what is standard, normal, or expected	"Grant knew the bones were an anomaly, of course."
Artifact	an object made by a human being, typically one of cultural or historical interest	"A wide variety of artifacts were arranged behind glass, and Grant walked slowly past them."
Carnivore	an animal that feeds on flesh	"The kind of predator that was attacking them was a large carnivore, perhaps as much as eighteen feet in length."
Chaos Theory	A mathematical theory that studies the behaviour of systems that are highly sensitive to initial conditions, where small changes can have large effects over time	"Malcolm was one of the early pioneers of the chaos theory, the study of nonlinear systems."
Cretaceous	relating to or denoting the last period of the Mesozoic era, between the Jurassic and Paleogene periods	"The Cretaceous was the heyday of the dinosaurs."
Cryptic	having a meaning that is mysterious or obscure	"His notes were cryptic and incomplete."
Dilapidated	in a state of disrepair or ruin as a result of age or neglect	"The building was old, dilapidated, and covered with vines."
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid; a self-replicating material present in nearly all living organisms as the main constituent of chromosomes	"Henry Wu, the chief genetic engineer for InGen, sat at the control panel, reading DNA sequences."
Embryo	an unborn or unhatched offspring in the process of development	"At the centre of the room was a large metal table, and on the table was a single glass cylinder, sealed at the top with a black rubber stopper. Inside the cylinder, suspended in a clear fluid, was an embryo."
Extinction	the state or process of a species, family, or larger group being or becoming extinct	"The reason for their extinction has been a puzzle to palaeontologists for many years."
Fossilize	convert into a fossil by replacing organic matter with minerals	"The bones had fossilized in rock, and lay embedded in a crumbly sandstone matrix."
Genetics	the study of heredity and the variation of inherited characteristics	"But it is a rather extreme method of studying animal behaviour, and it doesn't have anything to do with genetics."
Genome	the complete set of genes or genetic material present in a cell or organism	"And we can reconstruct an extinct animal's genome, piece by piece, if we have enough fragments of DNA."
Inevitable	certain to happen; unavoidable	"But he knew it was inevitable."
Inquisitive	curious or inquiring	"Tim, who was very inquisitive, began asking questions about everything."
Intact	not damaged or impaired in any way; complete	"The egg was intact, unbroken, and the same colour as the others."



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Jurisdiction	the official power to make legal decisions and judgments	"The story of Biosyn, they said, had been picked up by the legal section of the Environmental Protection Agency, which claimed jurisdiction over the matter."
Palaeobotany	the branch of palaeontology dealing with the study of fossil plants	"The palaeobotany report is complete, the palaeontology report is complete, and the biochemistry report is almost complete."
Palaeontologist	a scientist who studies fossils	"Alan Grant was a palaeontologist, and so he knew more about fossil bones than almost anyone else in the world."
Paleozoology	the branch of palaeontology dealing with the study of fossil animals	"She had published over a hundred papers in paleozoology and had become a world authority in the study of ancient animals."
Prehistoric	relating to or denoting the period before written records	"They've always been extinct, because they were prehistoric animals."
Protein	a biomolecule consisting of one or more long chains of amino acid residues	"We take the recovered DNA, cut it into manageable fragments, sequence it, and from the sequence information, we can synthesize the proteins."
Radiocarbon dating	a method for determining the age of an object containing organic material by using the properties of radiocarbon	"Radiocarbon dating on the bones put them at about two thousand years old."
Recombinant DNA	a molecule that has been formed by joining fragments of DNA from different sources	"The important thing is that we are using recombinant DNA techniques to do it."
Resilient	able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions	"But they are resilient creatures, and with proper care and feeding they are quite capable of survival."
Reverse transcriptase	an enzyme that catalyses the formation of DNA from RNA	"We used reverse transcriptase to make a DNA copy of the RNA, and then amplified that DNA so we had enough to work with."
Topography	the arrangement of the natural and artificial physical features of an area	"He had the topographic map of the island spread out before him."
Trilobite	an extinct marine arthropod that lived during the Palaeozoic era	"The bones of the baby Triceratops looked as if they were about to collapse, like a trilobite fossil."

Note: In the book, Chaos Theory is discussed in the context of analysing complex systems, such as the behaviour of living organisms, and predicting their outcomes. It is a central concept in the book and is often used to explain the unpredictable nature of the dinosaurs in Jurassic Park.



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Historical and political context for the book

"Jurassic Park" was published in 1990, and its historical and political context is important to understanding the themes and ideas explored in the book. Here are some key events and movements that were happening at the time:

1. Genetic Engineering: In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a lot of excitement and concern about the possibilities of genetic engineering. Scientists were making rapid progress in mapping the human genome and manipulating DNA, which raised both hopes and fears about the future of biotechnology.
2. Environmentalism: The 1980s saw a surge in environmental activism, as concerns about pollution, habitat destruction, and climate change came to the forefront of public consciousness. This movement influenced Crichton's portrayal of the reckless and short-sighted approach taken by the scientists and entrepreneurs in "Jurassic Park."
3. Cold War: Although the Cold War officially ended in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union, it still cast a long shadow over the world in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The threat of nuclear war and the fear of global conflict loomed large in the public imagination.
4. Neoliberalism: The 1980s and 1990s were a time of rising neoliberal ideology, which emphasized free markets, deregulation, and privatization. This political climate is reflected in the character of John Hammond, the entrepreneur who creates Jurassic Park as a for-profit venture.
5. Technological Innovation: The 1990s saw a rapid acceleration in technological innovation, with the rise of personal computers, the internet, and other digital technologies. Crichton was prescient in his portrayal of the potential dangers of new technologies, and "Jurassic Park" can be seen as a cautionary tale about the limits of human knowledge and control.

Overall, the historical and political context of the time helps to explain why "Jurassic Park" struck such a chord with readers and viewers, and why its themes continue to resonate today.