

## ALPHABET OF DINOSAURS

Reviewed by Erin Leckey and Dillon Leckey

Barbie Heit Schwaeber (Author)

Thomas Buchs, Karen Carr, Adrian Chesterman and Trevor Reaveley (Illustrators)

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Dillon and I reviewed the Smithsonian's *Alphabet of Dinosaurs*. I thought this book would be a hit with Dillon (3.25 years old) since he is just starting to enjoy books with more realistic illustrations and more complex ideas. Dillon likes dinosaurs, but not necessarily more than any other animals and his book interests are pretty broad. He was immediately drawn to this book because of the dinosaur illustrations on the cover and the shine of the CD peeking through its little window. I was immediately drawn to it being a sturdy book that could probably hold its own against Dillon.

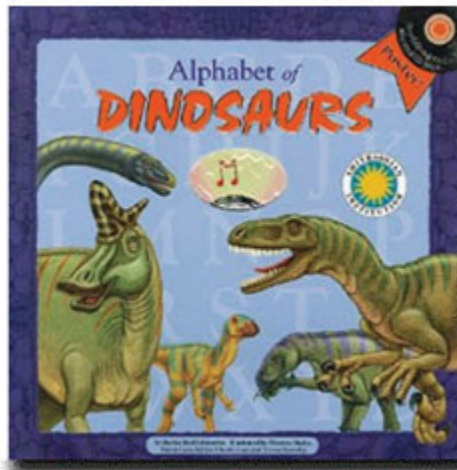
The book has a nice layout, and the style of the illustrations was a welcome change from the cartoon creatures that usually accompany ABC books. The author does a fair job balancing the interest levels of the ABC-crowd with those of the factual-dinosaur-book-crowd. It seems to work here, and probably serves to keep the book interesting to a wide range of beginning readers. Also, it's nice to have realistic illustrations without overt violence. Dillon especially liked the illustrations that included the landscape and other animals (in particular he liked the turtle in the Jurassic Period illustration), and it gave me a

chance to put the dinosaurs into a more familiar context for him.

My one gripe with this book was with the choice to add little poems to accompany each dinosaur. The author's efforts to create rhymes that were factually accurate, made the text a little cumbersome, and some of the rhymes were real groaners. Dillon didn't seem bothered at all. He did have trouble making it all the way through the book in one sitting, but we could easily pick up and begin at any point the next time. We never made it to the glossary, but it was nice to have it, and would probably help the book's popularity with more advanced dino-enthusiasts.

Dillon's favorite part about this book was the accompanying CD. The CD only had four tracks, and the

same song was on three of them. It's a good song, though, and we listened to it repeatedly, both with and without the book. The song goes through the alphabetical list of dinosaurs that are given in the book, but without the accompanying text. This felt like the right pace for Dillon, as he could still enjoy flipping along in the book, but it held his interest all the way to *Zigongosaurus*. Dillon also really liked being about to turn the pages himself with the



read-along section of the CD. The CD reader had the same problem I had when reading to him, though, that Dillon's attention-span for non-story books is about three minutes, which gets you to about S, if you're speedy. Dillon gave up on both of our renditions and asked me to please just play the song again.

Dillon's not much of an abstract thinker yet, so he didn't have much advice for other kids who might be interested in a dinosaur ABC book like this one. He said that he liked the book and would recommend it to his friends. When asked "If your friend Jack wanted to get this book and asked you about it, what would you say?" he answered, "I'd tell him we could share this one."