

Extinction of the Dinosaurs

Paleontologists have argued for a long time that the demise of the dinosaurs was caused by climatic alterations associated with slow changes in the positions of continents and seas resulting from plate tectonics. Off and on throughout the Cretaceous (the last period of the Mesozoic era, during which dinosaurs flourished), large shallow seas covered extensive areas of the continents. Data from diverse sources, including geochemical evidence preserved in seafloor sediments, indicate that the Late Cretaceous climate was milder than today's. The days were not too hot, nor the nights too cold. The summers were not too warm, nor the winters too frigid. The shallow seas on the continents probably buffered the temperature of the nearby air, keeping it relatively constant.

At the end of the Cretaceous, the geological record shows that these seaways retreated from the continents back into the major ocean basins. No one knows why. Over a period of about 100,000 years, while the seas pulled back, climates around the world became dramatically more extreme: warmer days, cooler nights; hotter summers, colder winters. Perhaps dinosaurs could not tolerate these extreme temperature changes and became extinct.

If true, though, why did cold-blooded animals such as snakes, lizards, turtles, and crocodiles survive the freezing winters and torrid summers? These animals are at the mercy of the climate to maintain a livable body temperature. It's hard to understand why they would not be affected, whereas dinosaurs were left too crippled to cope, especially if, as some scientists believe, dinosaurs were warm-blooded. Critics also point out that the shallow seaways had retreated from and advanced on the continents numerous times during the Mesozoic, so why did the dinosaurs survive the climatic changes associated with the earlier fluctuations but not with this one? Although initially appealing, the hypothesis of a simple climatic change related to sea levels is insufficient to explain all the data.

Dissatisfaction with conventional explanations for dinosaur extinctions led to a surprising observation that, in turn, has suggested a new hypothesis. **Many plants and animals disappear abruptly from the fossil record as one moves from layers of rock documenting the end of the Cretaceous up into rocks representing the beginning of the Cenozoic (the era after the Mesozoic).** Between the last layer of Cretaceous rock and the first layer of Cenozoic rock, there is often a thin layer of clay. Scientists felt that they could get an idea of how long the extinctions took by determining how long it took to deposit this one centimeter of clay and they thought they could determine the time it took to deposit the clay by determining the amount of the element iridium (Ir) it contained.

Ir has not been common at Earth's since the very beginning of the planet's history. Because it usually exists in a metallic state, it was preferentially incorporated in Earth's core as the planet cooled and consolidated. Ir is found in high concentrations in some meteorites, in which the solar system's original chemical composition is preserved. Even today, microscopic meteorites continually bombard Earth, falling on both land and sea. By measuring how many of these meteorites fall to Earth over a given period of time, scientists can estimate how long it might have taken to deposit the observed amount of Ir in the boundary clay. ■ These calculations suggest that a period of about one million years would have been required. ■ However, other reliable evidence suggests that the deposition of the boundary clay could not have taken one million years. ■ So the unusually high concentration of Ir seems to require a special explanation. ■

In view of these facts, scientists hypothesized that a single large asteroid, about 10 to 15 kilometers across, collided with Earth, and the resulting fallout created the boundary clay. Their calculations show that the impact kicked up a dust cloud that cut off sunlight for several months, inhibiting photosynthesis in plants; decreased surface temperatures on continents to below freezing; caused extreme episodes of acid rain; and significantly raised long-term global temperatures through the greenhouse effect. This disruption of food chain and climate would have eradicated the dinosaurs and other organisms in less than fifty years.

- 1. According to paragraph 1, which of the following is true of the Late Cretaceous climate?**
 - (A) Summers were very warm and winters were very cold.
 - (B) Shallow seas on the continents caused frequent temperature changes.
 - (C) The climate was very similar to today's climate.
 - (D) The climate did not change dramatically from season to season.
- 2. Which of the following reasons is suggested in paragraph 2 for the extinction of the dinosaurs?**
 - (A) Changes in the lengths of the days and nights during the late Cretaceous period
 - (B) Droughts caused by the movement of seaways back into the oceans
 - (C) The change from mild to severe climates during the Late Cretaceous period
 - (D) An extreme decrease in the average yearly temperature over 10,000 years
- 3. Why does the author mention the survival of "snakes, lizards, turtles, and crocodiles" in paragraph 3?**
 - (A) To argue that dinosaurs may have become extinct because they were not cold-blooded animals
 - (B) To question the adequacy of the hypothesis that climatic change related to sea levels caused the extinction of the dinosaurs
 - (C) To present examples of animals that could maintain a livable body temperature more easily than dinosaurs
 - (D) To support a hypothesis that these animals were not as sensitive to climate changes in the Cretaceous period as they are today
- 4. The word "cope" in the passage is closest in meaning to**
 - (A) adapt
 - (B) move
 - (C) continue
 - (D) compete
- 5. According to paragraph 3, which of the following is true of changes in climate before the Cretaceous period and the effect of these changes on dinosaurs?**
 - (A) Climate changes associated with the movement of seaways before the Cretaceous period did not cause dinosaurs to become extinct.
 - (B) Changes in climate before the Cretaceous period caused severe fluctuations in sea level, resulting in the extinction of the dinosaurs.
 - (C) Frequent changes in climate before the Cretaceous period made dinosaurs better able to maintain a livable body temperature.
 - (D) Before the Cretaceous period there were few changes in climate, and dinosaurs flourished.
- 6. The word "fluctuations" in the passage is closest in meaning to**
 - (A) extremes
 - (B) retreats
 - (C) periods
 - (D) variations
- 7. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in the passage? In correct choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information.**
 - (A) The fossil record suggests that there was an abrupt extinction of many plants and animals at the end of the Mesozoic era.
 - (B) Few fossils of the Mesozoic era have survived in the rocks that mark the end of the Cretaceous.
 - (C) Fossils from the Cretaceous period of the Mesozoic up to the beginning of the Cenozoic era have been removed from the layers of rock that surrounded them.
 - (D) Plants and animals from the Mesozoic era were unable to survive in the Cenozoic era.
- 8. In paragraph 4, all the following questions are answered EXCEPT**
 - (A) Why is there a layer of clay between the rocks of the Cretaceous and Cenozoic?
 - (B) Why were scientists interested in determining how long it took to deposit the layer of clay at the end of the Cretaceous?
 - (C) What was the effect of the surprising observation scientists made?

参考答案与解析

1. 选 **D**。以 Late Cretaceous climate 做关键词定位至倒数第四句，说比现在更温和，所以 D 是答案。C 说跟现在 similar，错；后面 blabla 说了一堆，A 与倒数第二句相反，错；B 与最后一句相反，错。
2. 选 **C**。以 extinction of the dinosaurs 做关键词定位至最后一句，原句说不能忍受这些极端温度的恐龙灭绝了，因为有个 these，所以往上看一句，说冬天很冷夏天很热，所以 C 是答案。ABD 没说。
3. 选 **B**。先读所在句，说为什么诸如 blabla 之类的动物能耐得住这种极端气候呢，而且这句一开始就来了个 if true，所以应该是作者在质疑上端所提出的结论的正确性，而且最后一句是本段的中心句，说将气候变化的原因归于 sea level 是不对的，所以答案是 B。
4. 选 **A**。cope 应付，所以 A 的 adapt 适应正确。
5. 选 **A**。以 before the Cretaceous period 定位，但注意原文中与之对应的是倒数第二句的 earlier，问为什么恐龙在之前的动荡中生存了下来而这次没有，所以 A 是答案，说之前的变化没有引起恐龙灭绝。B 说反了；C 的恐龙 better able to maintain 原文没说；D 的恐龙 flourish 繁盛没说。
6. 选 **D**。fluctuation 波动，D 的 variation 正确。
7. 选 **A**。原文的结构是 blabla 的时候 plants and animals 从化石中消失了。A 正确；B 错，原文没说 few fossil；C 把非主干部分变成了主干，而且 remove 也没说；D 选项缺了原文里化石这个很重要的信息，错。
8. 选 **A**。EXCEPT 题，排除法。A 的 layer of clay 定位至倒数第二句，但原文只是说有 layer，没说为什么有，所以 A 的问题没得到回答，选；B 的 how long 和 deposit 定位至最后一句，正确，不选；C 的 surprising observation 对应第一句和第二句，正确，不选；D 对应第一句，说对传统理论的不满导致了一个 observation 和相应的假说，所以 D 正确，不选。
9. 选 **B**。bombard 炮轰，所以 B 的 strike 正确。
10. 选 **D**。以 special explanation 做关键词定位至最后一句，问题问的是需要解释的原因，所以看前一句，说 boundary clay 的沉积不要花一百万年。前面说沉积那么多 Ir 需要一百万年，所以答案是 D，boundary clay 的沉积时间和 Ir 的沉积时间对不上；A 和 C 原文都没说；B 说反了。
11. 选 **B**。disruption 打断，所以 B 的 disturbance 正确。
12. 选 **C**。EXCEPT 题，排除法。A 的 dust cloud，B 的 drop in the surface temperatures 和 D 的 increase in global temperatures 都能定位至第二句，都正确，不选；C 的 rainfall 原文没说，错，选。
13. 选 **C**。三个过渡点，boundary clay，Ir 和 consequently，根据 boundary clay 的话 A/B/C 可能是答案，根据 Ir 的话 C 或者 D 可能是答案，所以初定答案是 C。A 点之后说需要一百万年，B 点之后的句子说没有一百万年，所以 B 前后的转折过渡紧密，B 排除；而且既然没有一百万年，说明前面的理论不成立，所以待插入句中的 consequently 插入 C 的时候因果关系成立，所以 C 是答案。
14. 选 **ACE**。A 选项对应原文第三段最后一句，正确；B 选项对应原文第二段第一句，但这句是气候变化原因的一部分，细节，不选；C 选项对应原文第四段第一句，正确；D 选项原文没说，不选；E 选项对应原文第六段第一句，正确；F 选项原文没说，不选。

(D) Why did scientists want more information about the dinosaur extinctions at the end of the Cretaceous?

9. The word "bombard" in the passage is closest in meaning to

- (A) approach
- (B) strike
- (C) pass
- (D) circle

10. Paragraph 5 implies that a special explanation of Ir in the boundary clay is needed because

- (A) the Ir in microscopic meteorites reaching Earth during the Cretaceous period would have been incorporated into Earth's core
- (B) the Ir in the boundary clay was deposited much more than a million years ago
- (C) the concentration of Ir in the boundary clay is higher than in microscopic meteorites
- (D) the amount of Ir in the boundary clay is too great to have come from microscopic meteorites during the time the boundary clay was deposited

11. The word "disruption" in the passage is closest in meaning to

- (A) exhaustion
- (B) disturbance
- (C) modification
- (D) disappearance

12. Paragraph 6 mentions all of the following effects of the hypothesized asteroid collision EXCEPT

- (A) a large dust cloud that blocked sunlight
- (B) an immediate drop in the surface temperatures of the continents
- (C) an extreme decrease in rainfall on the continents
- (D) a long-term increase in global temperatures

13. Look at the four squares [■] that indicate where the following sentence could be added to the passage.

Consequently, the idea that the Ir in the boundary clay came from microscopic meteorites cannot be accepted.

Where would the sentence best fit?

14. Directions: An introductory sentence for a brief summary of the passage is provided below. Complete the summary by selecting the THREE answer choices that express the most important ideas in the passage. Some sentences do not belong in the summary because they express ideas that are not presented in the passage or are minor ideas in the passage. This question is worth 2 points.

For a long time scientists have argued that the extinction of the dinosaurs was related to climate change.

Answer choices

- (A) A simple climate change does not explain some important data related to the extinction of the dinosaurs at the end of the Cretaceous.
- (B) The retreat of the seaways at the end of the Cretaceous has not been fully explained.
- (C) The abruptness of extinctions at the end of the Cretaceous and the high concentration of Ir found in clay deposited at that time have fueled the development of a new hypothesis.
- (D) Extreme changes in daily and seasonal climates preceded the retreat of the seas back into the major ocean basins.
- (E) Some scientists hypothesize that the extinction of the dinosaurs resulted from the effects of an asteroid collision with Earth.
- (F) Boundary clay layers like the one between the Mesozoic and Cenozoic are used by scientists to determine the rate at which an extinct species declined.