

Dr. Paul Brinkman

Assistant Director of Paleontology & Geology
North Carolina Museum of Natural Science

Podcast length: 16:55



LESSON PLAN

SYNOPSIS

The Walking Classroom's Laura Fenn talks with Dr. Paul Brinkman, Assistant Director of Paleontology and Geology at the [North Carolina Museum of Natural Science](#), as well as an historian of science. He explains how we can learn much about science through the study of the lives and work of scientists throughout history.

VOCABULARY

- **context:** (noun) the circumstances in which something exists or occurs
- **extinct:** (adjective) no longer in existence; has ended or died out
- **historian:** (noun) a person who writes or studies history, especially one who is an authority on it
- **correspondence:** (noun) communication, especially by exchanging letters with someone

QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

1. Paul Brinkman's role at the museum is unique in that he's more involved in history than science. To use his words, he "writes about the people that write books about dinosaurs". Why do you think it is important for us to understand the history and people behind scientific discoveries?
2. Why is it important to have context when learning about something new? How does it help to understand what a time or place was like when we learn about the past?

3. Paul Brinkman started out thinking he might become a paleontologist, but after some volunteering, found he didn't really love paleontology. Is it ok to change your mind about things? Dr. Brinkman explained that it can take time to figure out your true interests. What can are some things you can do to discover your likes and dislikes?

Book Suggestions

[Lives of Scientists](#) by Kathleen Krull

It's easy to assume that scientists are boring individuals that simply work all the time. But what you might not know is that Albert Einstein loved joke books and Isaac Newton loved soap bubbles! Learn about these creative and bright individuals in this fact-filled book.

[The Griffin and the Dinosaur](#) by Marc Aronson

Read about how Adrienne Mayor, a curious and driven woman, matched a myth with fossils to reveal the connection between the mythical griffin and actual dinosaurs.

Extension Activities

[The History of Museums](#)

Video from Ted-Ed (5:43)

Students learn how museums started around 2,000 years ago and how they have changed over time.

[What is a Paleontologist?](#) *Wonderopolis.org*

Students will learn key vocabulary and the primary job of a paleontologist when they explore this Wonder.

[The Secret Life of Scientists & Engineers](#)

Video Series from PBS

This series of video clips shows what scientists are like when "the lab coats come off". This would pair nicely with the book "Lives of Scientists" by Kathleen Krull.