



Dinotopia: The World Beneath

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After they are shipwrecked on a mysterious island called Dinotopia, Professor Arthur Denison and his son, Will, discover an awe-inspiring new world where dinosaurs and humans have lived together peacefully for centuries. They have only begun to adjust to this remarkable civilization before heading off on separate quests. Will takes to the sky as the pilot of a giant pterosaur known as a skybax, while Arthur leads an excavation deep underground to discover the origins of the world beneath Dinotopia. Little does either of them know of the dangers they are about to face ...

Dinotopia: The World Beneath Details

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From Reader Review Dinotopia: The World Beneath for online ebook

Tiffany Lynn Kramer says

Once again Gurney's illustrations prove breathtaking but the writing felt a little clunky this time around.

Adam says

The art and world building is brilliant.

David says

The World Beneath, sequel to the first beloved Dinotopia, has many of the things that made the first book so spectacular--namely amazing art, and an interesting world. This time around it even has a plot, unlike the first one which was essentially plot-less, although I would argue that it was to the book's benefit and that the plot here is to this book's detriment. More on that later.

It's a simple adventure story that steals heavily from the Atlantis myth. There's a labyrinth of caves underneath Dinotopia, where the dinosaurs sheltered themselves from the meteor that killed the rest of their kind billions of years ago. Nobody has really been down there since, as much cultural and religious mystery surrounds the place. That is, until Arthur Denison came along. Arthur went into the caves alone near the end of the first book, and was later joined by his dinosaur friend Bix who went in after him. They made some interesting discoveries during their very brief time in the world beneath, including a power source called sunstones, and wish to go back on a longer and better financed expedition.

So, why two fewer stars than the first book? The first Dinotopia was written in first-person in the style of journal entries, first from Arthur and then, while Arthur was in the world beneath, by his son. This worked very well, especially for a book where so much more space is taken up by pictures than by words. You could have a character tell us exactly how they were feeling without it seeming too forced, because that's what people do in journals, and you save a lot of space by doing so. It also added a feeling of authenticity to a story where the world-building, and your faith in it, was so important to its success. It made sense for Arthur to be writing down and drawing all the things he was seeing, because of who he is. It felt natural. Not only was every word imparting character by being through Arthur's viewpoint, but so was every picture, because they were also drawn by him. This is what's called *good writing*. Having your words do more than one thing--impart narrative, character, and world-building all at the same time.

This book is written in third-person, which has no such advantages or shortcuts. It only does one of the above things at a time, and 90% of the time it's just the narrative aspect. There's very little character, and very little world-building, and what world-building there is is terrible.

The narrative is not coming from any particular character's viewpoint, since it's written in omniscient, and there's so little mention of anyone's internal thoughts or feelings that it's a hair's breath away from being third-person objective. What I'm trying to say, ultimately, is that the chosen viewpoint and how it's utilized is

a problem that undermines my suspension of disbelief. It all just feels a lot more fake, and more forced. It feels more like I'm just reading a kid's book with a clear agenda for its story (which is none too impressive) rather than organically stepping into a world without any agenda, which is the feeling the first book went for and absolutely nailed. Again, having a narrative as opposed to not having one is not always the right decision. Plot-less stories can be great, just like the first Dinotopia was. It's a good fit for the series, so it's a shame it was abandoned in favor of something more traditional.

Another *huge* suspension of disbelief problem is that the book jumps the shark on the technology and world-building front. Arthur and friends discover dinosaur mechs in the world beneath. I'll say that once more in case you missed it. They discover *dinosaur mechs*.

Giant steel contraptions, modeled after dinosaurs and other real creatures, that walk and move like the real thing, and are powered by sunstones. Now, even if you accept that sunstones are essentially a limitless power source, it's silly to think that these things could have been created without similar advancements anywhere else. They would require things like steel smelting using molds, differential gears, extremely complex hydraulics, and, apparently, computers complex enough not only to control their fine motor movements (the driver only has levers to choose which direction to go, and all the complexity of actually getting there is done by the robot's programming) but also to impart personality and to fulfill basic needs on its own, such as drinking water for internal cooling when it needs to.

Why are these component technologies not evident anywhere else? The only similarly advanced technology we see is a camera from, I assume, the same time period, since the pictures show the same robots in them. But the pictures look like they are from the 1840s when photography first started being a thing, and there are gas lamps in the same photo. Considering we, in modern times, still don't have complex walking tanks it's a bit silly that these two technologies are so far removed from each other in complexity, and that there's a distinct lack of any other technology from that time. There's no consistency whatsoever.

It would make far more sense to find those pictures on an ancient computer in high definition. I mean, they had computers. There's computers in the dino robots. Why aren't they using them to store their pictures? It's obviously playing into the Atlantis myth of ancient but advanced technology that barely makes sense, but a book that succeeded so much on solid world-building is an odd place for it, and feels like a total misstep to me. The narrative it adds is *fine* but it's also cliché and does nothing to impress. More importantly though, it's taking away from what *was* good about the first book in the process, and totally undermining the history of the very world Gurney crafted in such loving detail, which impacts the believability and logic of said world in the present.

How did a man with a degree in anthropology and such attention to detail the first time around mess this up so badly? I hate to think that he was simply doing it to appeal to a wider audience. Maybe he just wanted to draw some cool sci-fi imagery and to hell with logic. There's no way to know, but the book definitely suffers from these poor decisions no matter the original intent. Such a shame.

Andrew Long says

Gurney's sophomore effort falls short of his first owing principally to a break from the first-person narrative of a found journal that worked so well in the first book. The third-person omniscient narrator draws us deeper into the mythology but greatly hurts suspension of disbelief. Illustrations are as strong as always.

Paul says

The art in this book is incredible, almost mindblowing. Unfortunately the writing and story lets it down-maybe that's beside the point but I wanted to like it more than I did. Actually, the story here is quite good, but it was so fast based that any potential moment of tension was glossed over, and told in a very matter of fact way. I think it's shift from first person diary in the first book to third person POV here hurt it a little. It's still an amazing book to put on a shelf, and like I said the art is just out of this world (literally). The world of dinotopia is so clever, and so well thought out. It's not simply a world with humans and dinosaurs, it's far deeper than that.

Peacegal says

The astounding fantasy artwork speaks for itself, as the text can be rather flat and listless for such fantastic imagery. However, those who love dinosaurs, sci-fi, and steampunk will really enjoy it.

Danielle Palmer says

This one got a little too strange for my taste...

Alec Longstreth says

I liked the first Dinotopia book so much, I decided to read the rest of the series. This one has more of the same stunning illustrations, but, uh... the writing really takes a left turn! The gentle pace of the first book and its themes of nature and sustainable living are traded in for lots of robot dinosaurs(!?!!) I was still able to roll with this, but I had a harder time forgiving the interplay of words and pictures here, which lacked the nuance of the first book. Often there is "duo-specific" overlap where the words are simply describing what is in the picture.

Nicole Haan says

Loved these as a child. Rich illustrations, beautifully imagined world, swashbuckling adventure.

Joel K says

My 5 and 3-year-old children are definitely young for the vocabulary and subtext in this book. But the illustrations make ALL the difference. There are so many of them, they are so elaborate, and they interact with the text in an unusual way. My 3-year-old would give this book five stars eagerly, but both children

loved it and looked forward to the few pages we would read at a time.

Mitch says

Once in awhile, I like to review classic books of the 90s, the stuff that first got me into reading. High up on that list is 1992's *Dinotopia*, but very near the top is its 1996 sequel, *The World Beneath*. I don't use amazing, magical, pure genius, or any of those adjectives much at all, but this is the rare book that I don't hesitate to lavish with praise.

First of all, this is the only time I'll ever recommend getting the hardcover - don't waste time with the paperback, there's a huge difference. The illustrations are gorgeous, incredible, breathtaking, the kind of thing you just want to lay out on your coffee table and stare at while you're sitting on the couch, especially if you're absolutely fascinated by dinosaurs or landscapes (or both like me). Incredible work. Book should get five stars just based on the art alone.

But the reason I like this book so much, far over *First Flight* or *Journey to Chandara* or even the original, is the story. The original *Dinotopia* is already one of the most fascinating books I've ever read, incredible places of mystery, scenery, and lore, but the *World Beneath* was always the place that caught my imagination the most, where a river plunges into a hole in the ground, a place guarded by pteranodons where dinosaurs went to die. I absolutely hated *Dinotopia* for following Will's story instead of his father's, staying aboveground and leaving that mysterious place to my imagination.

And then this book came out, and, wow, I was not disappointed. Gurney's ideas for the *World Beneath* were amazing, better than anything I could ever come up with, part archeological lost window to the past, part mysterious subterranean environment, one hundred percent fascinating scientific expedition. And add in sunstones, the ending with Lee Crabb, I was not disappointed. Ok, maybe a little, but only because the underground scenes left me wanting more.

I think I've run out of words to use, but, yeah, awesome, plus there's steampunk in this book before steampunk was cool. I have two full bookshelves and this is one of the books I absolutely always look for first.

Seth Noorzad says

fucking awesome

Ethan Hulbert says

The *World Beneath* was almost even better than the first *Dinotopia* in my opinion. It delved more into the interesting parts of the world and had a much better story. Well worth checking this one out too.

Mady says

First read of 2018

"Breath deep, seek peace"

'The World Beneath' is an amazing sequel to the first Dinotopia book 'A Land Apart from Time' with even better illustrations of the beautiful world and its inhabitants. There is one thing that really bothered me though. It's not written in Arthur Denison's journal perspective anymore. Now it's just like a regular book without the personal view that made the first one so special. I wish James Gurney would have stuck to the way he started to write but this sequel is nonetheless amazing.

GoldGato says

I am always amazed at anyone who can illustrate their visions, which is one reason I purchased this book. Children are not the only ones who will enjoy this as the artwork is lavish and incredibly logical. Sure, why couldn't dinosaurs and humans work and live together in one harmonious community? I certainly bought it. The writing doesn't match the art, but that's okay, as the pictures tell the story. The page showing 'Stinktooth', a Giganotosaurus, with its stinky mouth wide open is alone worth the look. I swear I could smell the dino breath.

Book Season = Year Round
