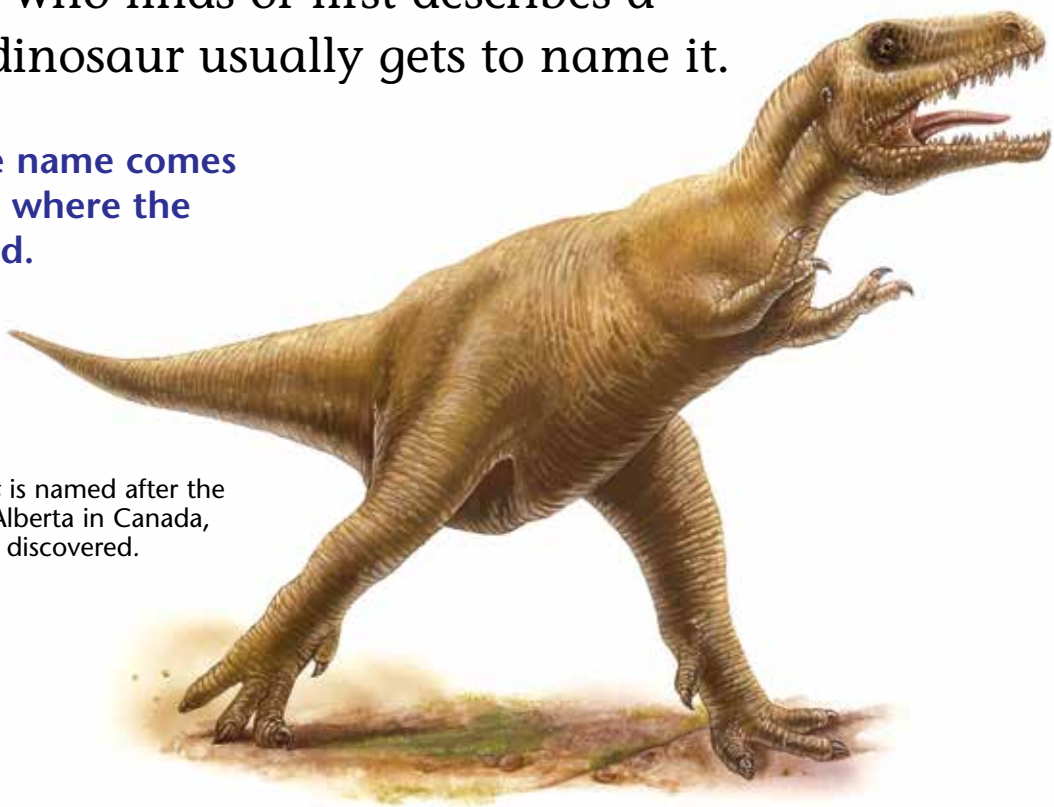
What's in a Name?

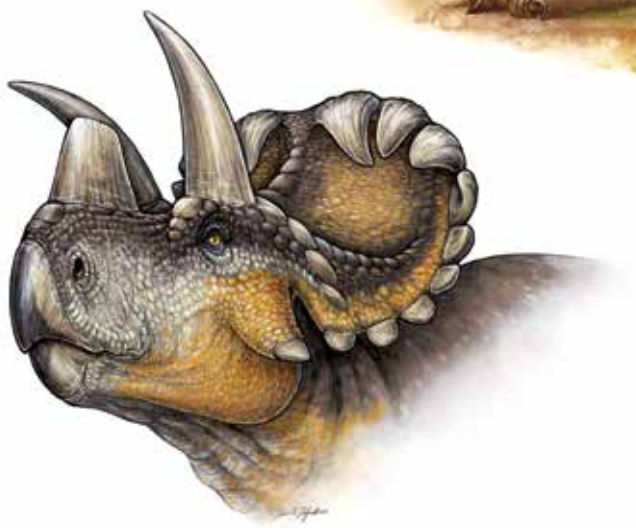
Corythosaurus, Deinonychus, Brachiosaurus—dinosaur names can be a mouthful. Where do they come from? Who gets to pick them?

The person who finds or first describes a new kind of dinosaur usually gets to name it.

Sometimes the name comes from the place where the fossil was found.



Albertosaurus is named after the province of Alberta in Canada, where it was discovered.



Some dinosaurs are named after a person.

The scientists who showed that *Wendiceratops* was a new type of dinosaur chose the name to honor the fossil hunter Wendy Sloboda.

bell = beautiful

oxy = sharp

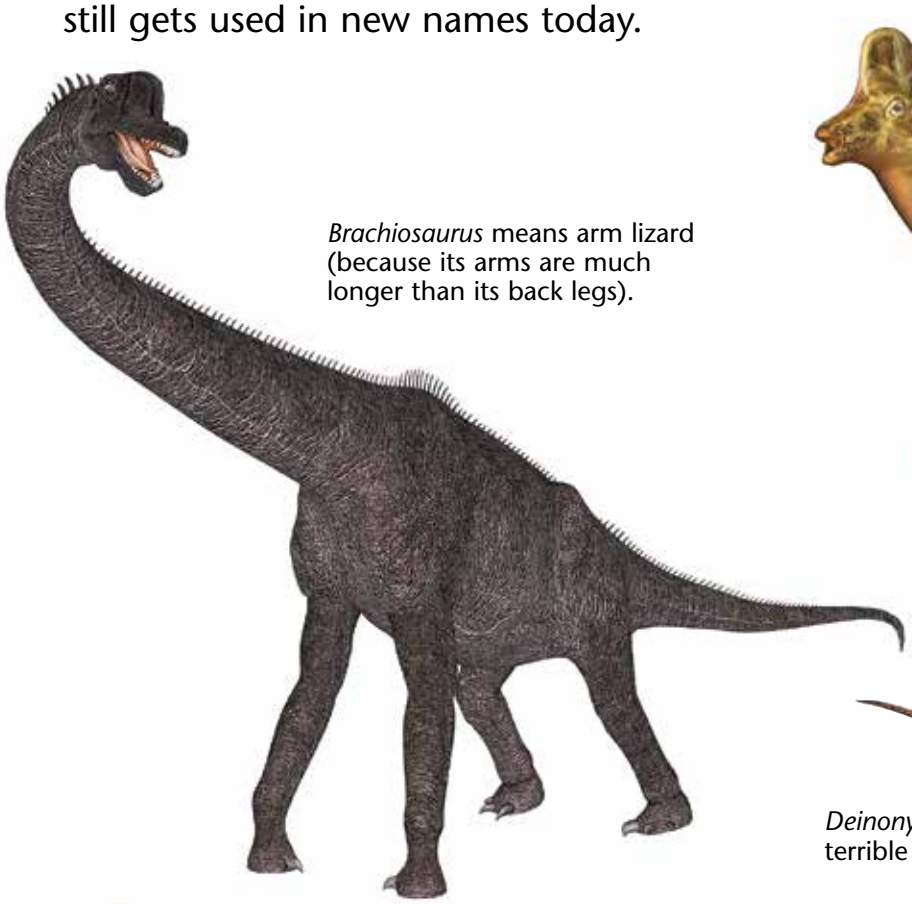
caudo = tail

cephalo = head

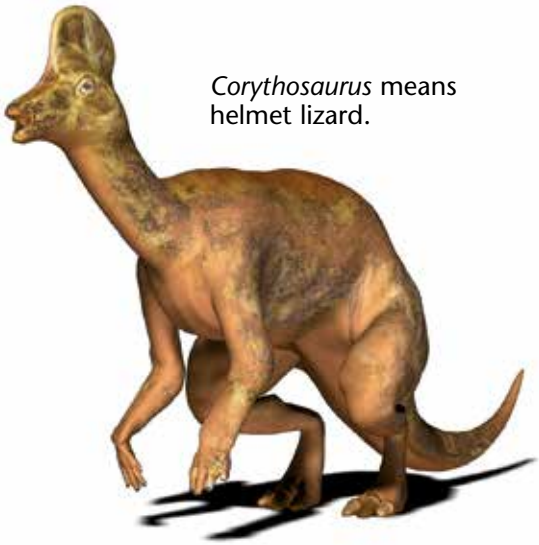
crispus = curly

But most dinosaur names combine Latin or Greek words to describe how the dinosaur looked or acted—even if we find out later that the description is wrong!

The word dinosaur itself was created in 1841 from the Greek words *deinos,* which means terrible, and *sauros,* which means lizard. We know now that dinosaurs aren't lizards, but the name stuck, and sauros or saurus still gets used in new names today.



Brachiosaurus means arm lizard (because its arms are much longer than its back legs).



Corythosaurus means helmet lizard.

Deinonychus means terrible claw.

Can you dream up your own brand-new dinosaur and name it? You can use the Greek and Latin words listed around these pages, or come up with your own ideas.