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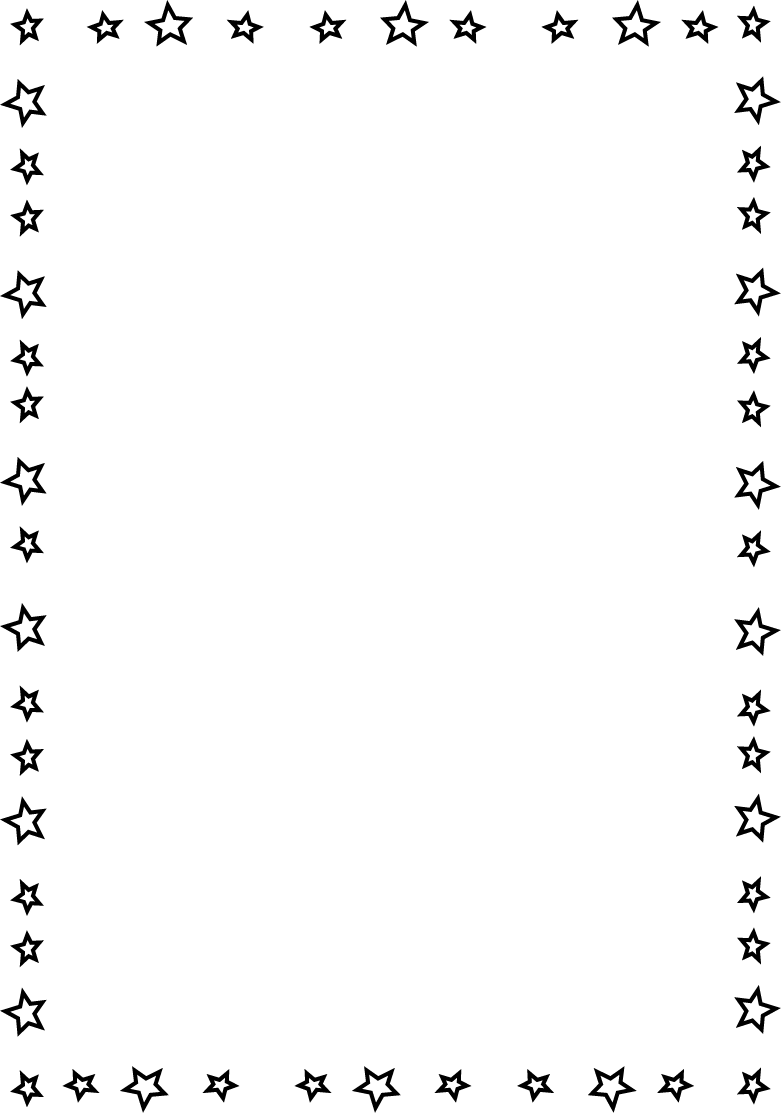
**Why Bigger is Not Always Better?**

People are still arguing about the reason why dinosaurs went extinct. Was it because of the huge asteroid? Or was it because their population was already decreasing before the asteroid hit the Earth? BUT, did you know that dinosaurs actually aren’t completely extinct? You just know them by a different name: birds.

Dinosaurs began appearing around 220 million years ago! However, while more dinosaurs were coming into existence many more were shrinking at a steady rate. The natural process of organisms adapting to the environment is called *adaptive radiation*.

Not all dinosaurs became smaller. Most were big and stayed big, but birds were the only “dinosaurs” that kept shrinking. So thanks to birds and their ability to adapt, you can say that you have seen a dinosaur before! Because the rest of the dinosaurs were not able to adapt to the environment and stayed in their tiny *niches*, they eventually went *extinct*.

Roger Benson from Oxford University said that “there are about 10,000 species [of dinosaurs] alive today in the form of birds.” This is because birds adapted really fast and kept becoming smaller and smaller over the years. So think about it! Every bird that you’ve ever seen has dinosaur blood in them!

Questions:

1. What dinosaurs are still alive?

Birds are dinosaurs that are still alive.

1. What is adaptive radiation?

Adaptive radiation is the natural process of organisms adapting to the environment.

1. Why did the rest of the big dinosaurs go extinct?

The rest of the big dinosaurs went extinct because they didn’t adapt to the environment fast enough and they stayed in their narrow niches.

1. What did birds do that allowed them to stick around?

They adapted to the environment by becoming smaller.

1. What’s your favorite bird? Can you believe that it is related to dinosaurs?

Answers may vary.