

1 *Mary Ann Anning was born in 1799 in the town of Lyme Regis on the southern coast of England. When she was growing up, she often went to hunt for the strange stone shells—curiosities, they called them—found in the cliffs and on the beach near Lyme Regis. Sometimes Mary's brother Joseph went with her.*

2 The year was 1811. Mary woke early, picked up her basket, hammer, and chisel, and proceeded to the cliffs near her home. Her dog, Tray, scampered ahead of her.

3 Mary hunted all that day and all the next. Slowly her collection of curiosities grew larger and more interesting. Among them was a peculiar skull over two feet long, its mouth full of sharp teeth. Mary thought the skull was that of a crocodile. Her brother Joseph found it by accident and gave it to her. "I think the rest of it is somewhere in the cliffs near Charmouth," he said.

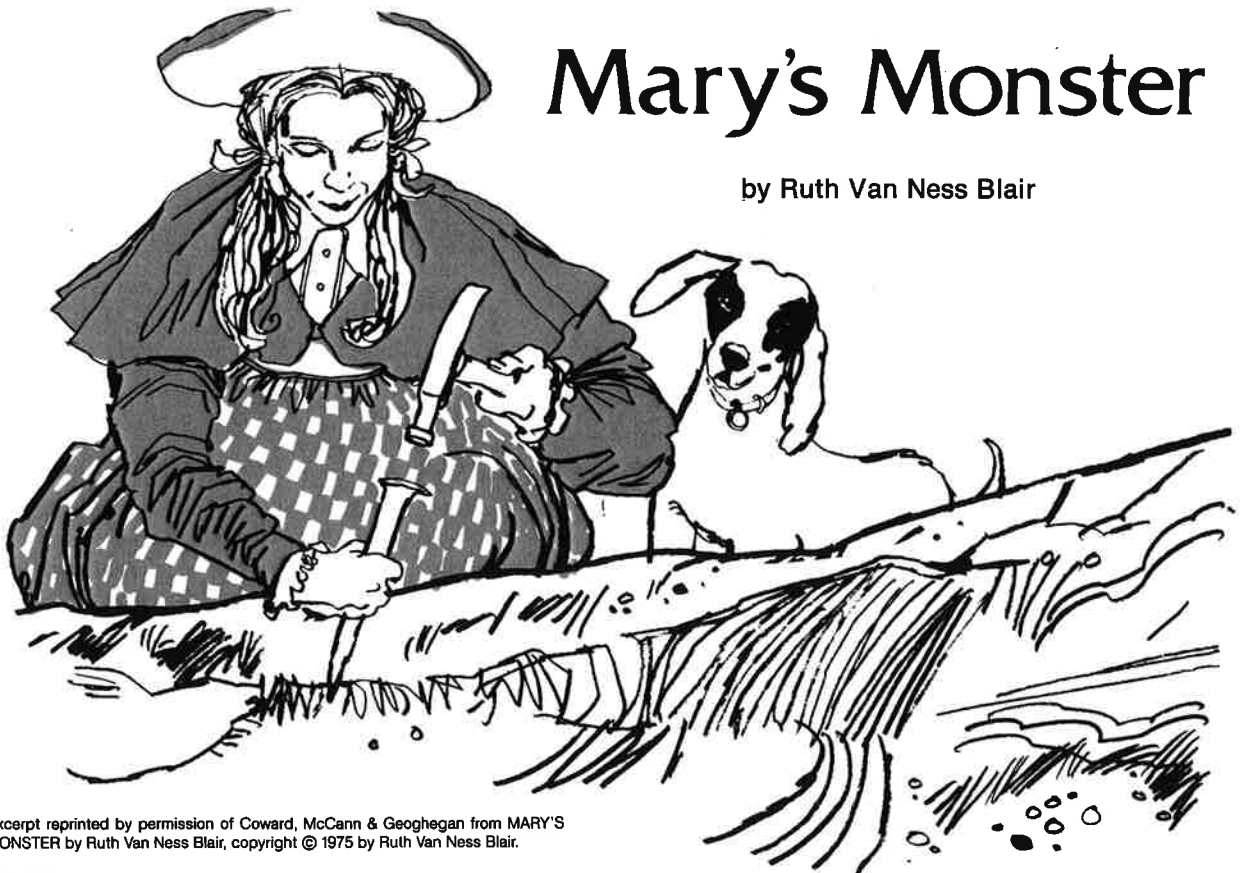
4 Not long after that, Mary set out for those cliffs, about three kilometers away. A violent storm the previous night had left the beach littered with debris and overturned fishing boats. Tray ran this way and that, sniffing at the strange new objects the storm had left behind.

5 The cliffs had lost great chunks of soil and rock, which now lay in piles at their base. As Mary peered at the cliffs, she saw what seemed to be bones lying in the rock in front of her. She tapped the crumbling rock with her hammer. Chunks of it fell away, and more bones appeared. What could this be? she thought.

6 With her chisel Mary carefully lifted away pieces of the splintered rock. Underneath lay other bones. Finally, a huge backbone with large, curving ribs attached stood out as the rock continued to fall away.

Mary's Monster

by Ruth Van Ness Blair



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- 7 Mary became very excited about her discovery. She walked along the cliff face a short distance, tapping as she went. At every tap, more bones emerged, until the skeleton of a mysterious, unknown animal began to take shape. Only its head was missing.
- 8 "It's a *monster* curiosity—trapped in the rock exactly like the smaller curiosities!" Mary exclaimed. "But where's its head?" Then Mary remembered the skull that Joseph had given her. Could that head belong to this creature? She would find out as soon as she could remove this huge skeleton from the cliff. But how in the world did a person handle a mammoth curiosity like this one? Then she thought, I'll ask the quarrymen to cut it out of the cliff for me.
- 9 Just then her friend Henry happened to wander by. She asked him to fetch the quarrymen, and she began to peck out an outline around the skeleton.
- 10 The quarrymen arrived an hour later. Joseph was with them and carried the "crocodile" skull in his arms. As soon as he saw the bones in the cliff, he shouted, "You found it, Mary. You found the rest of it." He ran to the monstrous skeleton and held the skull up to the end where the head should have been.
- 11 With the head in place, the skeleton was twice as long as Joseph was tall. Its bone structure indicated that it once had had short flippers, or feet. Its sharp teeth looked ready to bite, and its enormous eye socket seemed to glare at those who stared at it.
- 12 It took most of the afternoon for the quarrymen to remove the monster from its resting place. Tray stood guard and Mary gave directions as the skeleton was carefully cut into pieces small enough to lift.
- 13 What could it have been? she wondered. Was it a fat crocodile or a thin whale? Or was it something different—something from another world?
- 14 By the time the skeleton was removed from the cliff, people had gathered from everywhere to see what was going on. But no one could identify the strange creature.
- 15 As soon as scientists heard about Mary's fantastic discovery, they flocked to Lyme Regis. Some had seen petrified bones of similar creatures before, but not assembled in an almost perfect skeleton.
- 16 The bones came out of the Lias layer of the cliff. The Lias is the oldest layer, or stratum, of the Jurassic period of earth. This period began about one hundred eighty million years ago. It was an age when great dinosaurs roamed the earth, and flying reptiles and bird-like creatures began to appear. Mary's monster had lived then, at the same time the giant brontosaurus, stegosaurus, and allosaurus were tromping about the earth.
- 17 As time passed, Mary began to study geology. She learned more about the earth's strata and could recognize other forms of fossils, such as footprints in rocks. But even seven years after its discovery, Mary's monster still had no name.
- 18 Finally, in 1818, George Koenig of the British Museum said, "Everyone agrees the creature is a sea-going reptile with a fishlike shape, so why not call it ichthyosaurus after the Greek words *ichthyo*, meaning 'fish,' and *sauros*, meaning 'lizard.'" And so, ichthyosaurus became its name.
- 19 In 1821 Mary discovered the bones of another sea reptile, which was named plesiosaurus. It had a short, wide body with four large paddles and a long, long neck.
- 20 Seven years later Mary discovered the skeleton of a very different creature. It was a flying reptile—the remote ancestor of the first bird. Because of the long finger that edged the wing, it was called pterodactyl, which in Greek means "wing finger."
- 21 By this time, Mary had become famous. The creatures she discovered were remarkable. And so was Mary, for no other woman of her day made the study and selling of fossils her full-time profession.
- 22 Mary died in 1847 and a stained-glass window was placed in memory of her in the church on the cliffs of Lyme Regis.
- 23 Many of Mary's monsters are on display at the British Museum of Natural History in London, where there is also a picture of Mary with her old dog Tray.

How Well Did You Read?

The sentences below describe events in the story. Put the four events in the correct order by lettering each one *a*, *b*, *c*, or *d*.

- 1 Mary discovered the skeleton of a flying reptile.
- 2 Mary's brother Joseph gave her a skull over two feet long.
- 3 A violent storm broke chunks of rock and soil off the cliffs.
- 4 Mary's first "monster" was named ichthyosaurus.

Write *T* if the sentence is true according to the story. Write *F* if the sentence is false.

- 5 Mary thought that the skull Joseph gave her was the skull of a whale.
- 6 A violent storm was partially responsible for Mary's finding her first "monster."
- 7 Scientists were able to identify the age of the skeleton because they knew the age of the cliff's layers.
- 8 Mary's first monster was given its name because it resembled both a reptile and a fish.
- 9 In pursuing her profession, Mary was like many other women of her day.

Learn about Words

Vocabulary

- A** You can often tell the meaning of a word by reading the words around it.

Look at each number in parentheses. Find the paragraph in the story with the same number. Then find the word that fits the given meaning. Write the word.

- 1 ran playfully (2)
- 2 odd (3)
- 3 covered in a disorderly manner (4)
- 4 type of cutting tool (6)
- 5 came into view (7)
- 6 unbelievably outstanding; very unusual (15)
- 7 turned into stone (15)
- 8 science that deals with the earth's crust (17)

- B** A word may have more than one meaning.

Look at each number in parentheses. Find the paragraph in the story with the same number. See how the word in **heavy type** below is used in the paragraph. Decide whether it has meaning **a**, **b**, or **c**. Write *a*, *b*, or *c*.

- 9 **objects** (4)
a things to be seen or touched
b goals or aims
c persons or things towards which feeling is directed

- 10 **tap** (7)
a light blow
b stopper put into a bottle or keg
c spout

Word Study

C Lurlene **should have come** with us.

The words in **heavy type** are a verb phrase. A verb phrase consists of the main verb of a sentence and any helping verbs that help the main verb express action or make a statement. Read the sentences below. If the words in **heavy type** make up a verb phrase, write *Yes*. If they do not make up a verb phrase, write *No*.

- 11 I heard **a tap** at the door.
- 12 Tim **is wiping** the table.
- 13 I **should work** until two o'clock.
- 14 We gathered the wheat **from the field**.
- 15 Don't waste **my time!**
- 16 Connie and Rick **are loading** the truck.
- 17 I **must cook** dinner.
- 18 They **are having** lunch by the lake.

D Betty **does read** fast.
Joe **has gone** away.
Maisie **won't be coming** today.

The words in **heavy type** are verb phrases (verbs of more than one word). Each verb phrase is made up of one or more *helping verbs* and a *main verb*. The helping verbs come first. The main verb is the last word in the verb phrase. Thus the main verbs above are *read*, *gone*, and *coming*. The verb phrases in the sentences below are in **heavy type**. If the underlined words are helping verbs, write *HV*. If they are main verbs, write *MV*.

- 19 I am **listening** to you.
- 20 Nina has **lost** the race.
- 21 John is **leaving** now.
- 22 Lana is **parking** the car.
- 23 I will **hold** the baby now.
- 24 Fred is **mixing** the cake batter.
- 25 I will **seal** the letter with wax.
- 26 Lorraine has **saddled** the horse.

E Sentences have patterns. Here are sentences in four different patterns:

- 1. **N-V:** John ran.
(Noun) (Verb)
- 2. **N-V-N:** Sarah has shoes.
(Noun) (Verb) (Noun)
- 3. **N-LV-N:** Susan is a doctor.
(Noun) (Linking Verb) (Noun)
- 4. **N-LV-Adj:** Melvin is tall.
(Noun) (Linking Verb) (Adjective)

Compare the sentences below with the examples. Decide which pattern is used in each sentence. (Remember that *am*, *are*, *is*, *was*, and *were* are linking verbs.) Write *N-V*, *N-V-N*, *N-LV-N*, or *N-LV-Adj*.

- 27 The mice scurried.
- 28 David saves stamps.
- 29 The beach is sandy.
- 30 That boat is a sailboat.
- 31 Berta bought a parakeet.
- 32 My sister is a magician.
- 33 That melon is ripe.

Use Your Imagination

Try to imagine what it was like back in the days of the prehistoric monster. What did the ichthyosaurus do during the day? Where did it roam? How did it get along with the other animals? Discuss your ideas with a classmate or friend.