



The Dinosaur Expert

Margaret McNamara , G. Brian Karas (Illustrator)

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Dinosaurs, girl power, and science combine in the newest addition to the Mr. Tiffin's Classroom series.

Mr. Tiffin and his students are back in another picture book, and this time the focus is on dinosaur-loving Kimmy. During a field trip to the natural history museum, Kimmy is thrilled to share what she knows about the Stegosaurus and the Archaeopteryx and even the ginormous Titanosaurus. That changes when one of her classmates questions whether girls can be paleontologists. Kimmy starts to feel shy. What if they can't? What if no one wants to hear what she has to say? It will take some help from Mr. Tiffin—and from a famous scientist—for Kimmy to find her voice again.

Join Mr. Tiffin's class as they learn about dinosaurs big and small, feathered and scaly, winged and ocean-dwelling. And root for Kimmy, the dinosaur expert . . . who might just learn something about herself.

The Dinosaur Expert Details

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From Reader Review *The Dinosaur Expert* for online ebook

Jana says

This would be a great picture book to share with budding scientists that enjoy learning about dinosaurs. It's also a nice book to show that girls can be scientists and they shouldn't let anyone discourage them from pursuing their dreams. Little Kimmy loves collecting all sorts of scientific specimens to observe, but she is really into dinosaurs. When the class goes on a field trip to the natural history museum, she is eager to share what she knows. But a careless comment from a classmate leads her to doubt whether or not anyone is interested in what she has to say. As the field trip continues, though, Mr. Tiffin shows Kimmy some great contributions to the field of paleontology made by women. The last page of the book also highlights some prominent paleontologists that are also women. Within the narrative of this book, the author includes some terrific facts about dinosaurs. This could make this a good mentor text for young writers looking for ways to include true facts into narrative writing.

Abigail says

Mr. Tiffin's class, who first appeared in author Margaret McNamara and illustrator G. Brian Karas' [How Many Seeds in a Pumpkin?](#), and then in [The Apple Orchard Riddle](#) and [A Poem in Your Pocket](#), return in this fourth picture-book devoted to their academic adventures. In this installment of the series, the class heads to the Natural History Museum for a dinosaur-related field trip. Kimmy, an expert on all things dinosaur-related, can't wait to share her knowledge with her classmates. When Jake says girls can't be scientists however, she finds herself clamming up. Fortunately, Mr. Tiffin notices something is amiss, and manages to point her to a display about a woman paleontologist who discovered a new species of dinosaur, thereby restoring her confidence...

I have seen [The Dinosaur Expert](#) criticized for the fact that Jake, the pupil who makes the sexist remark about women not being scientists, is never called out directly in the narrative, nor chastised by Mr. Tiffin for his behavior. For my part, I actually really appreciated that aspect of the story. Although it might have been a good idea for Mr. Tiffin to pull Jake aside and speak to him, this was Kimmy's story, and that would have been a narrative distraction. This isn't a tale about a boy learning that girls can be scientists, although that clearly happens during the course of the story. This is the tale of a girl who loses confidence in herself temporarily, because of the thoughtless remarks of another, but who regains that confidence when shown a powerful example and role model, in the form of (real life) paleontologist, Dr. Zulma Brandoni de Gasparini. Zack clearly learns his lesson, through the subtler machinations of Mr. Tiffin, and by the end he is happily listening to the information that Kimmy has to share. What earthly purpose would publicly shaming a child have, other than to create hurt and resentment? Leaving that issue aside, I enjoyed this entry in the series about Mr. Tiffin's class. The narrative is engaging, involving the reader in Kimmy's emotional ups and downs, and the artwork is fun. Although it is the fourth book published about these characters, it is only the third I have read. I will have to try and track down the one I missed, [The Apple Orchard Riddle](#). Recommended to young would-be paleontologists, and to anyone looking for books that address girls being scientifically inclined.

Susan Morris says

Great picture book to share with kids about dinosaurs- especially to show that not all paleontologists are men! (Library)

Edward Sullivan says

Nurturing Kimmy's fascination with dinosaurs on a trip to the natural history museum.

Ro Menendez says

It is always lovely to see children who are passionate about a topic portrayed in a story. Kimmy is enthralled by many things, but dinosaurs are her absolute passion. She knows so much about them and is excited to share her knowledge at the class field trip. Although this story mainly centers around the absolute coolness of dinosaurs, it also sheds light on the profound effects an offhand demeaning comment can have. A classmate tells Tilly that girls can't be scientists, and from his demeanor and later on his change of heart, he was not intentionally putting Tilly down, but down is how she felt, silenced. Her teacher shows empathy and knows just what to do to gently make Tilly realize that what was said is not true, and it is a beautiful turning point in the story. Wonderful book because of the plot, the amazing dinosaur illustrations and facts, the author's note highlighting amazing modern women who dedicate their life to paleontology, and the opportunity to explore what our words are capable of doing.

La Coccinelle says

While I do appreciate the "girl power" message of letting girls know that it's fine to be interested in scientific pursuits, I think this book failed a little in that regard. Why? Because the sexist classmate was never called out for his remarks. He may have learned that he was wrong because of the events in the book, but the fact that even the teacher seemed to ignore his comments was a little disturbing. It's just another example of how our society lets males get away with things they really shouldn't get away with.

The synopsis isn't accurate in this regard, either. Jake doesn't just question whether girls can be paleontologists. He clearly says: "Girls aren't scientists." The immediate effect of this is that Kimmy stops talking, even though she knows more about dinosaurs than anyone in her class. I found that whole interaction chilling... and it gets even worse after the kids look at a display of male paleontologists. Jake saunters away from Kimmy with a smug, "See?"

I really wanted this little sexist pig to have some sense smacked into him. While the kids do eventually find out that there are female paleontologists, too, the earlier sexism is never addressed. It's just kind of swept out of the way as the kids continue their trip through the museum. In a book that's all about girls getting into a scientific field, I would've expected this part of the story to be handled a little better.

The illustrations are nice, and I liked the pages at the end where Kimmy shares with the reader information she's found about female paleontologists. That part of the book is great for encouraging girls who might be

interested in this subject. However, I found the unaddressed sexism disturbing, and I'm not sure I like the message this book gives. Yes, Kimmy finally finds her voice again. But does Jake really learn anything? It's not just about encouraging girls in the sciences; boys need to be taught to accept that girls can be scientists, too, or achieving more equality in the scientific fields is going to take longer than it needs to.

June says

Dinosaurs aren't just for boys. Kimmy is told by a boy that "Girls aren't scientists." A display at the museum proves women can be paleontologists. Kimmy's list of her favorite paleontologists is in the back.

Jaymie says

4.5 stars. I loved this book about dinosaurs and a girl who loves everything about them. One aspect of the story is whether girls can be scientists/paleontologists (and the answer is a resounding YES, no matter what one of the kids in the book says). Loved the message and the care the teacher shows to his student! I love the whole Mr. Tiffin's Classroom series.

Catherine Woodman says

I am on a search for good picture books that came out this year to get for our granddaughter. I get them out of the library, and then make a decision if this is a story that I think will resonate, or one that will be enjoyable to read again and again.

This book features Mr. Tiffin and his class (which have apparently appeared in other books as well. So same class, different featured student). Kimmy has been hunting for fossils and studying dinosaurs her whole life and her class is going to a natural history museum, which is like a dream come true. She experiences some momentary shyness when a classmate tells her that a girl cannot study dinosaurs. Mr. Tiffin shows her otherwise, and the end of the book concludes with real life women who have contributed to paleontology. One is Mary Anning, who was amongst the first fossil scientists, and the subject of Tracy Chevalier's book Remarkable Creatures.

There has never been a better time for dinosaur fans. New species are named at a dizzying rate, and refined techniques are telling us more about dinosaur lives than was ever possible before. So encouraging the study of our planet's past is timely.

Barbara says

I wish all students had a teacher just like Mr. Tiffin. Not only does he take his students on neat and informative field trips, but he pays attention to his young charges and notices when something seems wrong. On the class's field trip to a natural history museum, the students are fascinated by all the dinosaur fossils. Kimmy in particular is thrilled by the exposure to her favorite topic, and she shares some of her knowledge with others. But after a classmate makes fun of her and points out that girls can't be scientists and others

seem to be making fun of parts of the exhibit, she grows quieter and quieter and doesn't feel like sharing what she knows. Mr. Tiffin notices that she's become reticent and shows her something that makes her dreams of being a scientist, maybe even a paleontologist, come alive again. The message that girls can be scientists is supported in the back matter, which highlights some paleontologists who might inspire Kimmy and others just like her. This is a great picture book to share because it challenges assumptions about gender roles and jobs as well as reminding readers that their own dismissive, judgmental attitudes can cause others to doubt themselves. Why would anyone want to do that? The illustrations, created in gouache, matte medium, and pencil complement this important story perfectly. Youngsters will love seeing all those dinosaur fossils, some small and some extremely large. Gosh! I wish picture books such as this one had been around when I was growing up.

Kelly says

A little girl who loves dinosaurs is told by a male classmate (on a trip to a museum) that girls can't be scientists. The story is pretty gentle with the declaration by the classmate, but the strength in the story lies in the teacher bringing the little girl out of her shell.

Danielle says

While ostensibly about a trip to the natural history museum and a tour through a dinosaur exhibit, this one goes straight to the heart as Kimmy, the main character, discovers that girls can be dinosaur experts (and owns that she already is one). Lovely voice as well as back matter about female paleontologists, including Kimmy's new hero, Zulma Brandoni de Gasparini from Argentina, who is still alive.

Marti says

This is a book for me, I was Kimmy decades ago. Everyone laughed at Herman, my paper mache triceratops. Dinosaurs are a subject you never out grow, Still check ing out all the books and exhibits. This book is a great starting point, especially for girls, cute illustrations and just enough information to stir up interest. Love the notes about women paleontologists in the back. Oh ! to be young again.

Calvin Read says

I loved this! As positive representation of girls in STEM itself, the book also points out how few opportunities girls have to see themselves as notable scientists. The appendix was also wonderful, because it featured LIVING paleontologists (many of whom are women of color) young and old that girls can connect with.

Aeicha says

Combining the exciting world of dinosaurs, the fascinating realm of science, and the powerful message of female empowerment, Margaret McNamara's *The Dinosaur Expert* is a heartfelt and uplifting delight! Young readers will enjoy all the factual and fun dinosaur information throughout the book, while eagerly rooting for scientist in the making Kimmy as she finds her voice. I especially appreciated the back section that features past and present female scientists.
