

Jarassic park: the
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Jarassic Park: The Dinosaurs Were Not To Blame For The Destruction of Jurassic Park 'Nature won't be stopped or blamed for what happens'(Ian Malcolm , Jurassic Park by Michael Crichton). Jurassic Park mystifies its critique even as it makes it; or rather, to be more precise, it offers us contradictory messages about whom to blame for what goes wrong. Science finally takes the blame. Near the end of the book, while the humans are fighting off the velociraptors, Malcolm (the mathematician) delivers a long and didactic speech about how science is to blame for messing up the world because it has no morality; science tells us how to do things, not what things are worth doing and why. Malcolm talks about how the inventions of science, like Jurassic Park, are fated to exceed our control, just as his chaos theory predicts. According to Malcolm, chaos theory was developed in response to problems like predicting the weather, and the theory says it simply can't be predicted beyond the space of a few days, because the forces involved are too complex and unstable. If everything in a popular narrative like Jurassic Park really means something else, then so too does chaos theory. The basic plot of Jurassic Park is fairly simple. A Palo Alto corporation called International Genetics Technologies, Inc. (InGen) has become able -- through an entrepreneurial combination of audacity, technology, human ingenuity, and fantastic outlays of capital (mostly funded by Japanese investors, who are the only ones willing to wait years for uncertain results) -- to clone dinosaurs from the bits of their DNA recovered from dinosaur blood inside the bodies of insects that once bit the now-extinct animals and were then trapped and preserved in amber for millions of years. (This is, by the way, theoretically possible.) The project is the dream of John Hammond, a billionaire capitalist with a passionate interest in dinosaurs, who comes

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across in the novel as a bizarre combination of Ross Perot and Ronald Reagan -- part authoritarian martinet, part dissociated and childish old man. With the resources of his wealth and power, Hammond buys a rugged island a hundred or so miles off the coast of Costa Rica and turns it into Jurassic Park, 'the most advanced amusement park in the world,' with attractions 'so astonishing they would capture the imagination of the entire world': a population of living, breathing actual dinosaurs. With the park just a year away from opening to the public (those rich enough to pay, that is), the nervous investors insist on sending a team to the island to determine whether or not the park is as safe and under control as Hammond continually insists. It isn't, of course, and most of the novel tells the story of everything getting completely out of control, most especially the incredibly fast, vicious and intelligent dinosaurs known as 'velociraptors,' which are six-foot tall, bipedal and socially-organized pack hunters with teeth that can chew through steel bars, and whose only response to their human creators and captors is to attack and kill them. Velociraptors are the most dangerous dinosaurs because they are pack hunters -- they know how to work together. We also learn that in addition to their collectivism, they are characterized by bad attitudes and a talent for breaking out of their confinement (making them, I suppose, the bad subjects of the dinosaur population). The team of experts includes Alan Grant, a famous paleontologist known for his theories about dinosaur infant-rearing behavior, and his paleobotanist graduate student assistant, Ellie Sattler; and also John Malcolm, a brilliant and idiosyncratic mathematician whose field of expertise is chaos theory, which deals with turbulence and unpredictability -- complex 'real world' conditions that can only be described through non-linear equations. Malcolm, of course,

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predicts that the park is inherently unstable and its security precautions must inevitably break down. There are also Hammond's grandchildren, whose parents are getting a divorce: an eleven-year old boy, Tim, and his seven-year old, ceaselessly obnoxious sister Lex (if only the tyrannosaur had killed her halfway through, when it had the chance!). Hammond invites them for a 'fun weekend,' and to demonstrate the safety of his park. There are other characters, of course, but these are the principals, all of them our heroes except for the perversely blind and stupid Hammond, who, like all of the bad guys, eventually gets what he deserves. Much of the story is detail, and I won't give away any more of it than I need to in case you haven't read it and want to. It's enough to say that the park's control systems fail, the dinosaurs menace the humans, and some velociraptors almost make it to the mainland as stowaways on a supply ship. At the end, the Costa Rican government bombs the island's dinosaurs back into extinction... except for the ones that have somehow already escaped. But for the purposes of our analysis, the movements of the plot matter less than the role played by the dinosaurs themselves. In Crichton's novel the dinosaurs are literally a class of beings created in order to serve people. They are genetically-engineered, their DNA sequences altered just enough to make them patentable and thus private property; then they are held in captivity, where they must perform the labor of acting out their dinosaur identities for the benefit of wealthy tourists. Moreover, they are altered so that they are completely dependent upon their owners, the island's literal ruling class: they have been deprived of the ability to manufacture a particular amino acid and must receive it regularly in their food. 'These animals are genetically engineered to be unable to survive in the real world,' the dinosaurs' designer tells the visitors.

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'They can only live here in Jurassic Park. They are not free at all. They are essentially our prisoners.' To the extent that we feel sympathy for the dinosaurs, we wish that they could be set free to pursue their innate dinosaur identities and societies, free from human domination and exploitation. But the problem with this noble sentiment, as Jurassic Park repeatedly reminds us, is that the dinosaurs aren't really dinosaurs any more -- they are artificial reconstructions of dinosaurs, close copies or images of the originals. In order to reconstruct dinosaur DNA, the scientists had to paste in equivalent segments of DNA from other, later (more developed or evolved) species. This is what allows Hammond to 'own' the animals: it was his capital that brought them into being. There's still a lot of 'real dinosaur' to them, but they are the creations of their exploiters: they are definitely not authentic, but still live and breath just like real animals and as primitive vicious animals they can't be blamed for what happened.