



**Think Footprint** –a creative writing competition for primary schools, promoted by children’s author Jo Earlam, Sidmouth Science Festival, Sidmouth Museum and supported by the Word Forest Organisation

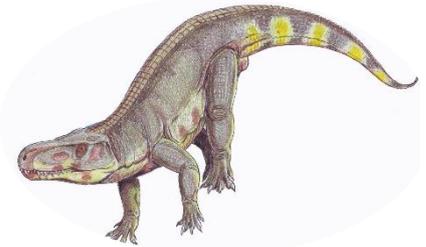
To be launched at Sidmouth Science Festival, October 2020

A long time ago, 240 million years – before the age of dinosaurs – huge crocodile like reptiles, that were as tall as a double-decker bus lived and walked on the land where Sidmouth is now.

These big, scary looking creatures were called rausuchians – you say it like this, raa-soo-shi-an. They roamed in large groups, in what was then mostly hot, desert like land-locked surroundings.

This was called ‘Pangea’ and centred near the equator in one big land mass, long before the world had formed into the separate continents we know today.

Rausuchians were reptiles, and a bit like crocodiles. They could grow to five metres tall. They mostly walked on all fours but had strong hind legs and could stand upright. They were meat-eaters (carnivores), with razor sharp teeth, and ate smaller reptiles.



As they looked for food in patches of swampy mud, they left footprints that dried out in the sun. Over time the footprints got covered by layers of plants and earth, called sediment, and the swampy mud turned into solid rock, preserving the footprint in the stone.

Experts, known as palaeontologists, not only study the bones of extinct creatures, which are abundant in parts of East Devon’s Jurassic Coast, they also look for footprints, which are called trace fossils.

One place to see the footprints, if conditions are right, is during low tide and when exposed by erosion. It was on the shoreline near Sidmouth in the winter of 2012/13 that fossil expert Dr Rob Coram uncovered the first rausuchian footprint ever to be found in this area.



Dr Coram donated the footprint to Sidmouth Museum, where it’s on display. It inspired my story “Rosa’s Footprint” and I hope you’ll be inspired to write a story about it too.

## Competition Theme

This piece of creative writing should be about the world around us and the impact we as people have on our planet, its plants and wildlife.

We wear clothes, live in houses, use many forms of energy, drive cars, fly in planes, use lots of technology. And much of the way we live, creates waste...a baby uses around 4,000 nappies before being toilet trained, and the average household throws away a tonne of rubbish every year.

The use of these man-made products and the way we live our lives causes greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide, to be released into the atmosphere. Each of us has our own carbon footprint, the impact we have on earth. It's estimated we need one and a half earths to cope with our current lifestyle.

We have choices about how big our "footprint" is – we can walk or cycle more to reduce our travel footprint, we can use environmentally friendly sources like wind and solar power to reduce our energy footprint, and we can buy less single-use packaging like plastic bottles to cut down on our waste footprint.

We can choose to take care of our planet, think about the footprint we're leaving as Rosa does and try to make it positive, protecting the natural world, or like the people who had a barbecue on the beach we can waste resources, discard uneaten food and packaging, leave it as a mess for others like Colin to find.



*What trace do we leave to say that we were here?*

*Reach across time with a message that's clear,*

*About "who" we were, how we spent our day –*

*By our actions in life, what will our footprint say?*

## Competition details

Competition to be launched during Sidmouth Science Festival 2020 – sessions to be made available to schools during the week October 12 to 16, over-running to the following week if necessary.

Author Jo Earlam, in liaison with Jon Ball, of Sidmouth Science Festival, available to speak in person (Covid-19 distancing restrictions permitting) or via Zoom. The session, 45 minutes approximately, will include a reading of Jo's story "Rosa's Footprint" and a PowerPoint with wider context.

### Two levels of entry – KS1 and KS2

KS1 entries may be combined work, i.e. involving more than one pupil.

KS1 entries up to a maximum of 300 words

KS2 entries up to a maximum of 500 words

Artwork/illustration can be included, but is not essential

Timing for children to work on submissions from the launch date through to autumn term end. Schools to be responsible for collecting entries.

Entries must:

\*Include a reference to the specific footprint held by Sidmouth Museum that inspired the project.

\*Demonstrate environmental awareness.

But can be flexible over setting, geological timing, use of fantasy, range of characters included. Teachers can adapt/refine delivery as long as it follows the overall theme.

Judges consideration – understanding and relevance to the topic, originality, and creative writing ability.

Schools to pre-judge and select the best three entries in each key stage, for submission to the Word Forest Organisation for overall judging. Schools may award own prizes as wished. Shortlisted entries to be available for collection/submission by Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February, in liaison with Jo or Jon, who will forward to Word Forest ([www.wordforest.org](http://www.wordforest.org)).

There will be six overall prize winners in each key stage, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and three highly commended, to be announced and awarded during British Science Week, March 5 to 14. Timing and details of prizes to be confirmed.

*NB: Due to Covid-19, Sidmouth Museum is currently closed and not due to open until spring 2021. The Think Footprint website [www.thinkfootprint.org](http://www.thinkfootprint.org) has detail about the project and the story 'Rosa's Footprint', due to be published at Sidmouth Science Festival, Kennaway House event, Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> October. Updates on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/thinkfootprint>*

