

BBC



DOCTOR WHO

ROLEPLAYING GAME



THE SILURIAN AGE
DINOSAURS AND SPACESHIPS

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INTRODUCTION

'I KNOW. DINOSAURS! ON A SPACESHIP!'

The Doctor and his companions often venture forwards in time, into the far future of humanity, where spaceships ply the stars and adventure can be found on even the smallest moon. But what about... backwards? To a time before there was any humanity, to a time when dinosaurs roamed Earth and another species laid claim to it: the Silurians.

The Silurian Age is about those adventures: adventures set in space, adventures set in the distant past and adventures featuring Silurians and dinosaurs – and sometimes all of those things at once!

The Silurian Age is divided into four distinct chapters:

PREHISTORY REPEATING ITSELF

This chapter contains all the background and rules you need for venturing back into the farthest reaches of Earth's history. It includes an overview of the various geological epochs and eras and the sorts of things a time traveller might find there. It also includes advice for what to do if you get stuck in the distant past, and even rules for playing a primitive character. Finally this chapter is packed full of loads and loads of dinosaurs, and advice for using them in other settings other than prehistory. There's also a selection of new traits and gadgets too, so you can be properly equipped when you go dinosaur hunting.

THE SILURIANS

This chapter is all about the Silurian Age itself, covering the history of the Silurian race, the end of their civilisation and what happened to them next. A complete Silurian city – Deep Crag – is described, ready for your characters to discover. It also describes the vast Silurian Arks, complete with several unusual vessels that might serve as the inspiration for an entire adventure. The chapter also includes rules for playing a Silurian as well as ready-made Silurian NPCs to encounter, including several famous Silurians. Finally, a selection of plot hooks offer ready-made adventures featuring the Silurians.

SPACESHIPS

This chapter contains a complete set of rules for handling spaceships in your game, including spaceship combat and chases. It's also packed full of spaceships from *Doctor Who* too, from Dalek Saucers to Cybermen Warships, as well as rules for designing your own spaceship.

ASTEROID DAY

Operation Ticktock has been experimenting with time travel and the first explorers have gone missing into the distant past. The characters have to go after them, finding themselves in the midst of a Silurian coup. With a rogue planetoid threatening to destroy Earth, time is running out!





Sample

PREHISTORY
REPEATING ITSELF

PREHISTORY REPEATING ITSELF



'A giant dinosaur from the distant past has just vomited a blue box from outer space. This is not a day for jumping to conclusions.'

WE GO WAY BACK

Although the Doctor tends to travel about within human history – with a few notable exceptions – a time traveller might decide to turn the dial on their TARDIS way back into the past, hundreds of millions of years before humanity's ancestors began to evolve, let alone humans themselves. So what can you expect to find when you fling open the door in the dim and distant past?

Well, being able to identify when you are is vital – for one thing, *when* you are determines what sort of creatures you're likely to meet. Luckily the TARDIS has an app for that. Over the 4.5 billion years of our planet's history, Earth has cycled through climatic states. Ice ages and greenhouse eras have come and gone. The continental plates move continuously, creating and then destroying vast supercontinents, raising up mountains then grinding them down again. The continents affect oceanic currents and wind patterns.

Life, too, changes the world; when CO2 levels are high, plants thrive, while the available oxygen

dictates the size and activity cycles of animals. Evolution selects for creatures that can survive in the ever-changing conditions of planet Earth.

STUCK IN THE PAST!

If you find yourself stuck in the past without a working time machine (hey, it happens to the best of us, the Doctor included) you're trapped there. Welcome to your new life.

If you're in a time period before the appearance of humanity (more than 200,000 years ago), then you are utterly, utterly alone as no other human has ever been before. If you were trapped on a desert island in the middle of the Pacific, you would at least know that there was someone else on the planet. If you're trapped in prehistory, then you are the only human being in existence, divided from the rest of your kind by the span of millions of years.

Assuming you don't go mad from loneliness, you'll need to survive. The Survival skill lets you find food and water, but depending on when and where you're stuck, you may be able to forage for food easily, or starve to death. Surviving in the wilderness of the past is more difficult than living off the land in the modern day, as plants and animals may be unexpectedly poisonous. Having the Science skill, especially with

a useful Area of Expertise like Biology or Botany can help. Surviving in the prehistoric wilderness is Hard (Difficulty 18).

If you're lucky enough to be stuck somewhere with other humans, then you have a choice. You can either stay in the wilderness and avoid contact with historic or prehistoric humans (and maybe become a myth yourself), or you can try to integrate yourself into their society. Humans are social animals; we work best when part of a tribe. It's a lot easier to survive if you have other people around you. However, you have to convince the local humans to accept you. That takes a very good Convince roll; you must beat a Difficulty of Very Difficult (24) at least. Skills like Knowledge of the relevant historical period can make that Convince roll much easier. Giving the locals a reason to trust or fear you can also help you join a community. A character who is part of a community may still have to make Survival rolls, but only if the whole community is in trouble.

Using improvised tools is covered on pg. 40. If you're lucky enough to end up in a period where humans have invented tools, you can use those, but at a penalty. Craft checks can have a -4 or more penalty when using basic tools, and Technology is really useless as a skill for most of human history.

Science (and Medicine) for that matter, measure a character's understanding of two things: the

fundamental concepts underlying the topic, and their grasp of current knowledge. Leonardo da Vinci, for example, had Science 6 (and probably Ingenuity 7!), meaning he was one of the greatest scientists of his day, and that he had an intuitive understanding of physics. That doesn't mean he could whip up a Sonic Screwdriver, however – the whole concept of electromagnetism has yet to be discovered. Da Vinci would have a huge penalty to making Science checks pertaining to modern science. However, if a time traveller from the present day tutored Da Vinci, he would rapidly get up to speed on 500 years of science thanks to his innate genius and existing training. In short, Science, Knowledge and Medicine are a mix of talent and learning, and while talent is universal, knowledge is tied to a specific time period, and the Gamemaster should apply penalties on characters trying to use their skill outside their home Tech Level as normal (see the **Doctor Who Roleplaying Game**).

All of this goes without mention of the Silurians, of course – if you find yourself far enough back in time (65 million to 100 million years ago), you might have a whole other different set of problems to contend with.

TELLING YOUR ERAS FROM YOUR EPOCHS

Geologists divide Earth's history into aeons, then eras, then periods and epochs. There are four aeons, each lasting billions of years. Eras are many



hundreds of millions of years long, periods several hundred million years long, and epochs are tens of millions of years long. These vast, vast stretches of time are geological time, Deep Time, so long we really can't comprehend them.

Just to put it in perspective, humans as we know them have been around for only 200,000 years at most... or less than a twentieth of a percent of the full span of Earth's time. We're an eyeblink, geologically speaking. All of human history barely registers on a geological time scale, even if our effects on the climate and environment are disproportionate to our time on Earth. Even the Silurians, who ruled Earth for millions of years, have been in hibernation for far longer than they ever walked it.

One thing to remember when playing the **Doctor Who Roleplaying Game** is not to get too hung up on the historic details; this is a prehistory populated not just by dinosaurs but also by aliens (well, Earth-liers) and in which a crashed spaceship wiped out the dinosaurs, not an asteroid. Those points alone should give you enough freedom to mess about with history as you see fit.

That said, it'll still prove useful to have some sort of grasp on the real prehistory, if only to use as a backdrop to your time-travelling shenanigans. This book uses periods and epochs to break time into different sections, in the same way we do with different centuries or decades in more recent history. Each section's entry describes the terrain, the state of the planet and the notable flora and fauna, but remember that these time periods are millions of years long. Conditions change radically from one point in a section to another. Summing up 50 million years of geology and zoology in a single paragraph is about as accurate as trying to describe the entire modern world in a single sentence – and the Doctor has certainly tried!

PRECAMBRIAN

(4.5 billion-542 million years ago)

The Precambrian covers a vast span of time, from the formation of Earth 4.5 billion years ago (around the hull of a Racnoss Webstar, if you recall) to 542 million years ago, when animals first evolved. 87% of Earth's history falls into the Precambrian. Life evolved during the Precambrian, but consisted of only single-celled organisms and bacteria for billions of years. There were no plants, no animals, nothing but microscopic creatures. These tiny organisms were responsible for the biggest change in Earth's atmosphere; through photosynthesis, they added oxygen to the

planet's atmosphere, making it possible for larger, more complex life to evolve. The 'oxygen catastrophe' wiped out much of the existing life on Earth that could not tolerate the new oxygen-rich conditions. A creature or disease from the Precambrian would be as incomprehensible and bizarre – and possibly as dangerous – as an alien.

Signs you're in the Precambrian:

- Atmosphere is heavy in sulphur and low in oxygen.
- No visible life, or the life is utterly unknown to modern science.
- No oxidised minerals — there isn't enough oxygen for iron to rust.

Alien Encounters:

- The Racnoss hid away in the middle of the embryonic Earth, but perhaps at the dawn of the planet the Empress returns to check on her brood (see *The Runaway Bride* in **The Tenth Doctor Sourcebook**).
- Hila Tacorien travelled back in time to the very beginning of Earth's history, becoming trapped in a pocket dimension (see *Hide* in **The Eleventh Doctor Sourcebook**).
- Scaroth's ship explodes in this epoch, the radiation causing the first life to evolve (see *City of Death* in **The Fourth Doctor Sourcebook**).



CAMBRIAN

(542 million to 488 million years ago)

The start of the Cambrian period is known as the 'Cambrian Explosion' of life; after billions of years of single-celled organisms, evolution now gave rise to thousands of species of hard-shelled multicellular creatures, most of which lived on the floor of the warm shallow seas that dominated the globe. There were three main continental groups: Laurentia and Baltica in the north and Gondwana in the south, but the only life on the surface consisted of lichen and algae; plants would not evolve for millions more years.

Signs you're in the Cambrian:

- Oxygen 60% of present-day levels, CO2 1600% of present-day levels.
- Temperature 7° above present day.
- The landscape is a rocky wilderness.
- No plants, no land animals.

Alien Encounters:

- A character keeps falling victim to a Weeping Angel, ending up further and further back in time each time until they arrive in the Cambrian. Can they survive in this geologically distant age long enough to be rescued, and why is this Weeping Angel intent on pursuing them back through time?

ORDOVICIAN

(488 million to 443 million years ago)

This period begins and ends with extinctions. The Cambrian-Ordovician extinction event was likely due to a change in sea level, flooding portions of the two super-continents.

The cause of the second set of extinctions is less clear, with hypotheses ranging from more glaciation to a change in carbon dioxide levels, or even a gamma ray burst from a dying star that destroyed the ozone layer. It could even have been the result of alien meddling... sounds like a mystery worth hopping back in time to check out.

The dominant lifeforms throughout the Ordovician are hard-shelled sea creatures such as trilobites, brachiopods, sea stars and corals. Between ice ages, the atmosphere is hot and heavy in carbon dioxide, together with plenty of sulphur. During the glaciated periods, the temperature drops radically.

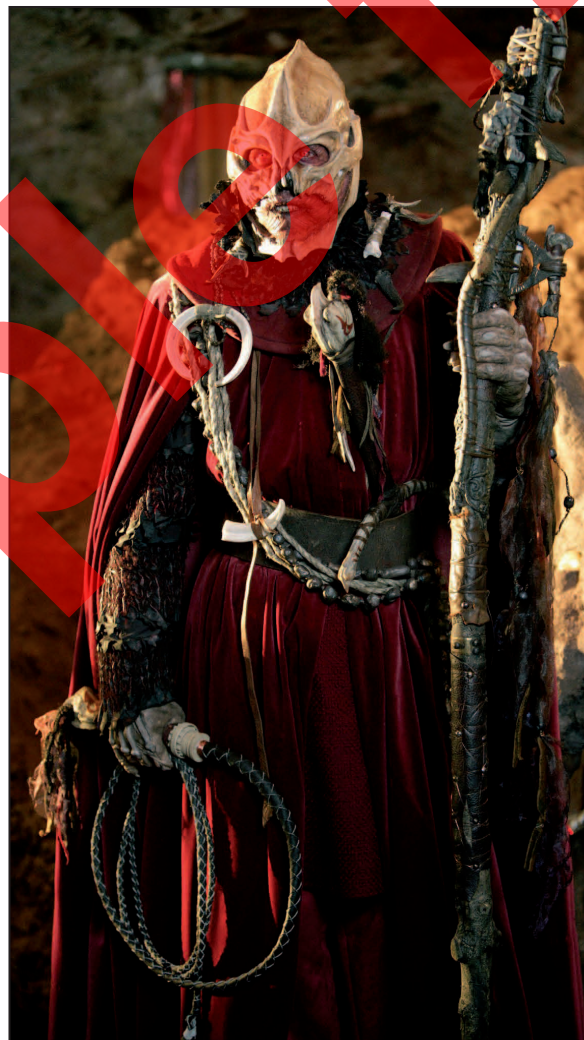
Signs you're in the Ordovician:

- Oxygen 68% of present-day levels, CO2 1500% of present-day levels.

- Temperature 2° above present day.
- Surface plants may include fungi and algae.
- You're in an icy landscape without visible fauna.

Alien Encounters:

- A mysterious pair of mass extinction events sounds like it might have its origins with aliens, doesn't it? Perhaps a Tritovore scientist unwittingly causes a gamma ray burst that wipes out all life on Earth.
- Or maybe the mass die off is the result of a very early alien invasion – the Sycorax, for example, have a tendency to take what they need from a planet with little heed for the consequences.



SILURIAN

(443 million to 416 million years ago)

The Silurian Age was a period of comparative stability; the first true plants migrated onto land, as did the first insects. In the oceans, the first bony fish evolved, to be preyed on by primitive squid and huge

sea scorpions. There was a single large continent in the south, which was mostly desert. The atmosphere had only 70% as much oxygen as the present day and had a much higher carbon dioxide content. You could breathe in the Silurian, but you wouldn't enjoy it.

Signs you're in the Silurian:

- Oxygen 70% of present-day levels, CO2 1600% of present-day levels.
- Temperature 3° above present day.
- Lots of flat deserts and bare rocks.
- Mossy forests by freshwater lakes and rivers.

Notable creatures: Arthropleurid (see pg. 24).

Alien Encounters:

- Fun fact! Contrary to expectations, there are no Silurians in the Silurian Period! They come a few hundred million years later.

DEVONIAN

(416-359 million years ago)

Named after the rocks of Devon, this period is notable for the sheer variety of aquatic species (it's also, excitingly, called the 'Age of Fish') and the migration of lobe-finned fish onto the land. These amphibious creatures were the first terrestrial vertebrates. Huge sharks evolved in the oceans of Panthalassa; seed-bearing plants evolved on the land, giving rise to the first forests.

The Devonian climate was warm and arid for the most part, but became more temperate over the course of time. The smaller continent of Euramerica crashed into Gondwana, forcing up huge mountain ranges.

Signs you're in the Devonian:

- Oxygen 75% of present-day levels, CO2 800% of present-day levels
- Temperature 6° above present day
- Huge forests
- Volcanic activity and earthquakes

Signs you're in Devon:

- Clotted cream

Alien Encounters:

- There are Saturnynians swimming about the Devonian seas, survivors who escaped through the Crack in Time and plan to build a new world in Earth's distant past (see *The Vampires of Venice* in *The Eleventh Doctor Sourcebook*).

CARBONIFEROUS

(359-299 million years ago)

Carboniferous means 'coal-bearing'; it was during this period that the great coal beds of the world were laid down. Coal is made from the compressed remains of the vast forests that dominated the supercontinent of Pangaea. The huge forests boosted the oxygen content of the atmosphere, allowing larger animals to thrive. Insects and arthropods grew to tremendous sizes, as did the descendants of the lobe-finned fish, which evolved into four-legged amphibians like Hylonomus and Archaothyris.

Signs you're in the Carboniferous:

- Oxygen 160% of present-day levels, CO2 300% of present-day levels.
- Temperature roughly equivalent to present day.
- Huge forests, giant insects.

