Nanotyrannus fossil sold for $47.3m in New York

LEVEL B2


Photo: Dilip Poddar / Unsplash

I. WARM-UP

1. Have you ever visited a natural history museum? What stood out?
2. Why do people collect rare objects like art or fossils?
3. What is the most you would pay for something you love? Why?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

auction
A public sale where people compete by offering higher prices.

skeleton
All the bones of an animal or person, shown together in their shape.

genus
A scientific group that includes closely related species.

fossil
Preserved remains or traces of ancient life in rock.

disclose
To make information known to the public.

excavate
To dig something out of the ground carefully.

bidder
A person who offers money to buy something at an auction.

palaeontologist
A scientist who studies fossils and ancient life.

III. READING

A mounted Nanotyrannus skeleton, nicknamed Jodi, sold for $47.3m at a Sotheby's auction in New York. About 10 feet (3m) tall, it is now the second-most valuable dinosaur fossil, after a T. rex called Gus at $50.1m. A Stegosaurus named Apex sold for $44.6m in 2024.

The buyer was not disclosed after 12 minutes of offers from six bidders. Sotheby's called the specimen exhibition-ready and one of only three Nanotyrannus skeletons known to science. It had been expected to fetch $6m to $9m.

US researchers confirmed last October that Nanotyrannus is a distinct genus, ending decades of debate. Work by Lindsay Zanno and James Napoli used the "Dueling Dinosaurs" fossil to separate it from T. rex.

Jodi was found in Montana's Hell Creek Formation by rancher Jodi Pierson and later excavated by commercial palaeontologist Clayton Phipps. It was shown as a juvenile T. rex at London's Frieze Masters in 2023, before the genus was confirmed. The sale reignited a wider argument.

Prof Steve Brusatte warned that private sales could hide key fossils from research and public view. Megan Jacobs said sellers invest time and money, and added that many such specimens will end up in museums.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **BBC News***: "Nanotyrannus skeleton sells for $47.3m in New...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How much did Jodi sell for, and where was it sold?
2. What place does Jodi hold among the most valuable dinosaur fossils?
3. Who found Jodi, and who excavated it?
4. What helped scientists confirm Nanotyrannus as a distinct genus?
5. What are two views on selling fossils at auction?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Should rare fossils stay in public museums, or are private sales acceptable?
2. How could museums compete with ultra-rich buyers without auctions?
3. What rules should apply if a private owner buys a key fossil?
4. Do you think sales like Jodi's will become more common? Why?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Will vs going to (prediction)

Use will + base verb for general predictions or decisions made now. Use be going to + base for predictions based on present evidence or a plan already in place. Include the evidence in the sentence.

> *"Many such specimens* **will end up** *in museums."*
> *"With six bidders competing, the price is* **going to rise**.*"*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with will or be going to, as the context requires.

1. Many collectors (pay) ___ record sums next year. _____
2. The auctioneer is raising the hammer: bidding (stop) ___ soon. _____
3. Private sales (remain) ___ controversial, critics say. _____
4. Look at the crowd; phones (record) ___ the auction. _____
5. Workers are opening the crate; they (unpack) ___ the fossil. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


Photo: Dilip Poddar / Unsplash

I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 12–15 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach or elicit auction, fossil, skeleton, genus, disclose, excavate, bidder, palaeontologist; check pronunciation of palaeontologist and genus.
- Run a gist task first (price, place, why it matters), then scan for names and figures; for the debate, start in pairs so quieter students can form ideas before whole-class sharing.
- Differentiation: stronger students summarise both sides of the debate in 60 words; others highlight 3 facts and 1 opinion in the text before discussing.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. If answers split, pair students with the opposite view and ask for one reason each.
2. Elicit concrete ideas: grants, partnerships, sponsorships; note pros and cons on the board.
3. Prompt ideas like loan terms, access for researchers, and display requirements.
4. Take a quick poll first, then ask for reasons and one example from the text or elsewhere.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Debate: In teams, write and deliver a 90-second case for or against private fossil auctions.

Writing: In pairs, draft a 70-word museum statement reacting to Jodi's sale and asking for public support.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Will vs going to (prediction)

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

TEACHERS ONLY

These answers are for teachers only. Please do not share this page with students.


Photo: Dilip Poddar / Unsplash

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How much did Jodi sell for, and where was it sold?
   $47.3m at a Sotheby's auction in New York.
2. What place does Jodi hold among the most valuable dinosaur fossils?
   Second-most valuable, after the T. rex called Gus.
3. Who found Jodi, and who excavated it?
   It was found by Jodi Pierson and excavated by Clayton Phipps.
4. What helped scientists confirm Nanotyrannus as a distinct genus?
   Research by Zanno and Napoli using the "Dueling Dinosaurs" fossil.
5. What are two views on selling fossils at auction?
   Brusatte warns private sales could hide fossils from study and view; Jacobs says sellers invest time and money and many will end up in museums.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with will or be going to, as the context requires.

1. Many collectors ___ record sums next year. **will pay**
2. The auctioneer is raising the hammer: bidding ___ soon. **is going to stop**
3. Private sales ___ controversial, critics say. **will remain**
4. Look at the crowd; phones ___ the auction. **are going to record**
5. Workers are opening the crate; they ___ the fossil. **are going to unpack**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use will + base verb for general predictions or decisions made now. Use be going to + base for predictions based on present evidence or a plan already in place. Include the evidence in the sentence. (Example 2 constructed.)

> *"Many such specimens* **will end up** *in museums."*
>
> *"With six bidders competing, the price is* **going to rise**.*"*