

## The Land Before Time ★★½

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**Year of Release:** 1988

Review by Randy Parker

**Country:** USA

**Verdict:** Skip It

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Dinosaurs have fascinated me ever since I was a little boy. So naturally I got very excited when I heard about *The Land Before Time*, an animated feature set on prehistoric earth with dinosaur characters. After seeing the film, I'm sorry to report that I would have been better off getting my dinosaur fix from Dino on "The Flintstones."

*The Land Before Time* is a collaboration between Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, and animator Donald Bluth. The film follows five young dinosaurs that get separated from their parents during a big earthquake. The orphaned dinosaurs team up, each one from a different species. The group goes in search of the "Great Valley," a fabled land where food is plentiful and where the dinosaurs hope to reunite with their families. During their journey, a menacing and ferocious Tyrannosaurus Rex constantly threatens their lives.

The animation in *The Land Before Time* is superb and sometimes breathtaking; visually, the film is a feast for the eyes. The dinosaurs are well-drawn, but I was most impressed by the background landscapes, which beautifully recreate prehistoric earth. I also enjoyed the young dinosaurs in the film. Although the main character, Littlefoot (a

brontosaurus), is somewhat bland, his sidekicks are spunky and vivacious. My favorite was the pint-sized and adorable Ducky, who provides welcome comic relief throughout the film—as does Petrie, a Pterodactyl who can't fly.

Unfortunately, the animation and characters in *The Land Before Time* are all that the film has going for it. The movie has so little momentum and story development that it failed to hold my interest for even its short 70 minute duration. The lengthy build-up to the earthquake that sets the plot in motion is boring. Even after the quake hits and the orphaned dinosaurs join forces, the story drags more often than not. *The Land Before Time* also suffers from sappy dialogue and overly sentimental characters. Littlefoot's mother, for example, is full of saccharine sweetness and clichéd pearls of wisdom. Overall, the film struck me as extremely condescending towards its intended audience; children deserve stories, characters, and dialogue that are more sophisticated than this.

Despite my reservations about the film, I think most children will enjoy *The Land Before Time* for its spectacular animation and cute characters; it's you parents out there that I'm worried about.