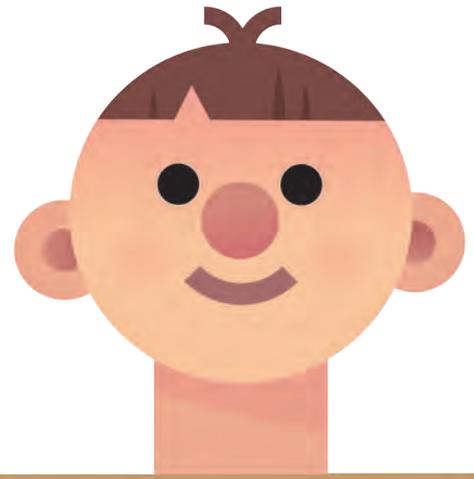


# GIANTS

IN MYTHS AND REALITY

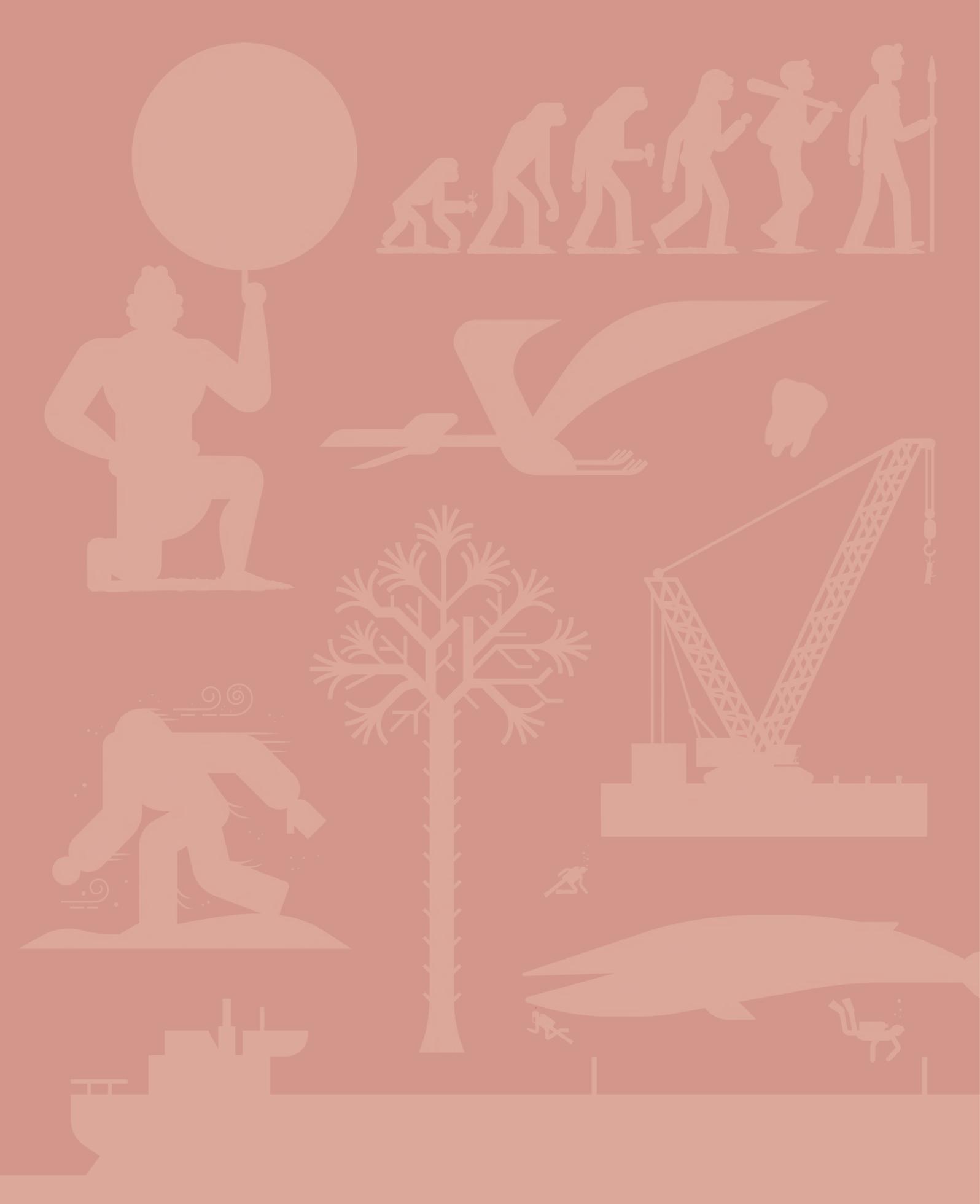


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Helena Haraštová • Diarmuid Ó Catháin

GIANTS IN MYTHS AND REALITY





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# GIANTS

IN MYTHS AND REALITY



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# WHO ARE GIANTS?



Have you ever seen a giant? Probably not. You're no longer a small child to believe in them, you say? Wait, wait, wait, back up— I do believe in them. Yes, I, a renowned professor of giantology who has seen plenty of giants over the course of his life. Don't worry, I'll take you along for my travels ...

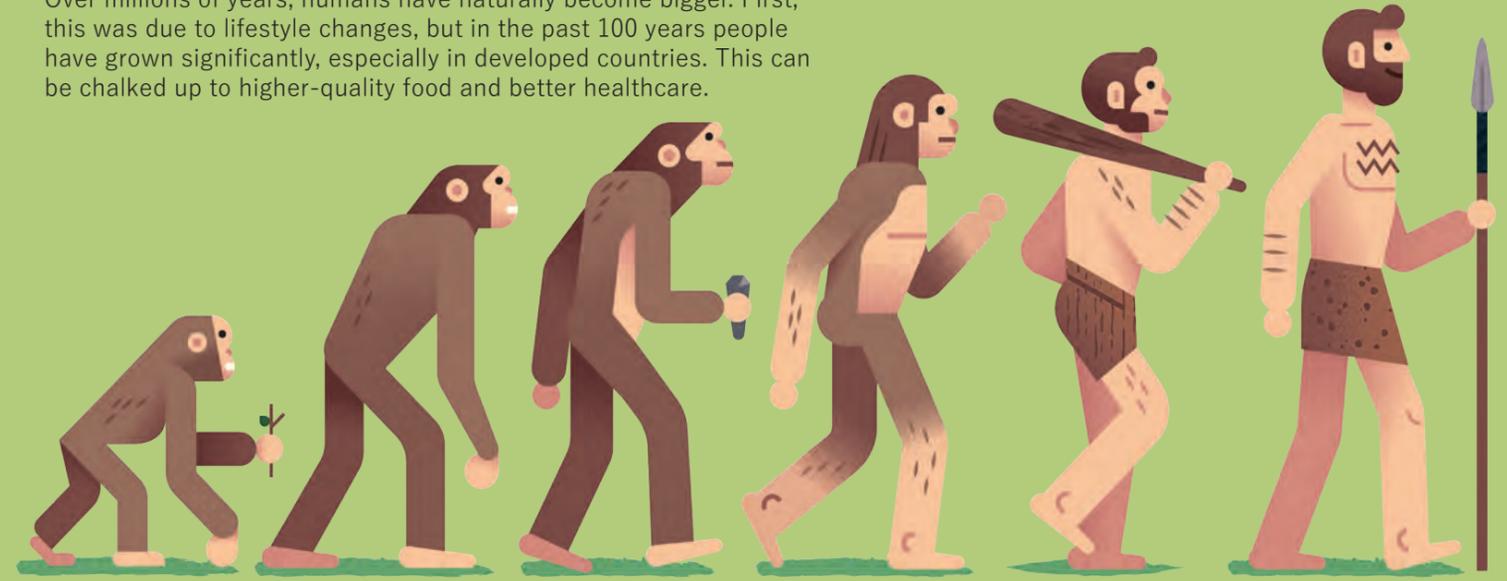
I'll tell you a secret—giants aren't always the scary, thick creatures of children's stories and ancient legends. They're rather huge animals, gigantic plants, structures that touch the sky, or enormous machines with wheels that are larger than an adult man ... Seeing them will take your breath away.

*This is an example of an ordinary giant.*

There are even people who can be sort of considered giants themselves. Their unusual height is caused by a hormonal disorder known as **gigantism**. They can be over 2.7 meters tall which is almost as much as the Indian elephant! The tallest man on the planet is **Sultan Kösen**, going up at 2.51 meters.



Over millions of years, humans have naturally become bigger. First, this was due to lifestyle changes, but in the past 100 years people have grown significantly, especially in developed countries. This can be chalked up to higher-quality food and better healthcare.



*Do your parents tell you you'll soon be taller than them?*

People of certain nations are much taller than others. The **Tutsis**, **Dinka**, and **Maasai**, Africans whose traditional lifestyle revolves around cattle, are among the tallest, with an average man over 190 cm tall.



All over the world, huge strange footprints can be found, which seem to have been created by giant feet. What size of shoes do you think giants would wear?

# GIANTS AMONG US

Myths and legends about giants are popular all over the world. Where do they come from? Let's find out!



Science confirms that there was at least one giant roaming the Earth during prehistoric times – **Gigantopithecus blacki**. A long-ago ancestor of orangutans, this species lived in Asia and was almost 3 meters tall!

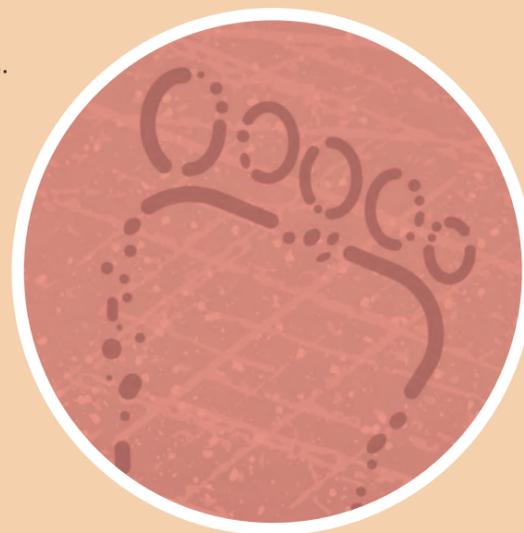
But sometimes, archaeology can genuinely make us scratch our heads. For example, who built the gigantic, incredibly heavy stone **menhirs** on Orkney or Easter Island? We're still looking for the answer.



Some believe the descendants of the gigantopithecus have survived to this day as the famous **Yeti** or other feared creatures that can allegedly be spotted in rainforests and mountains from time to time.



A prehistoric mine from the Welsh **Llandudno** produced a gigantic 29 kg hammer, with a handle that was over 2.7 meters long. Someone made it 3500 years ago. Maybe for giants?



*Giant footprints from Matsieng, Botswana, really niggle at the back of my mind.*

Certain archaeological finds of supposed giant remains have turned out to be errors or even forgeries. In 1869, USA was stunned to learn about the so-called **Cardiff Giant** – a hoax perpetrated by an oddball named George Hull who wanted to prove people would fall for pretty much anything.



# IN MYTHS

Before we take a look at giants from flesh and blood, let's talk a bit about ancient stories which are full of huge boisterous creatures.

**Goliath**, perhaps the best-known giant in history, mentioned both in the Bible and Quran, was strong, powerful, but also smug and a hated oppressor. He was beaten by a small but brave young man called David.

In the ancient Mesopotamia, people would breathlessly tell the story of a terrible giant called **Humbaba** (or Huwawa) who guarded the seat of gods in a cedar forest.



Myths about giants are common in Ireland and Great Britain as well. For example, the coast of Northern Ireland is a remnant of an ancient pathway built by the giant **Fionn mac Cumhaill** and leading all the way to Scotland. Only boring tourists who were never blessed with imagination claim these are natural basalt columns created by volcanic activity...

According to ancient Greeks, the sky and all the planets are actually resting on the shoulders of a giant named **Atlas**.



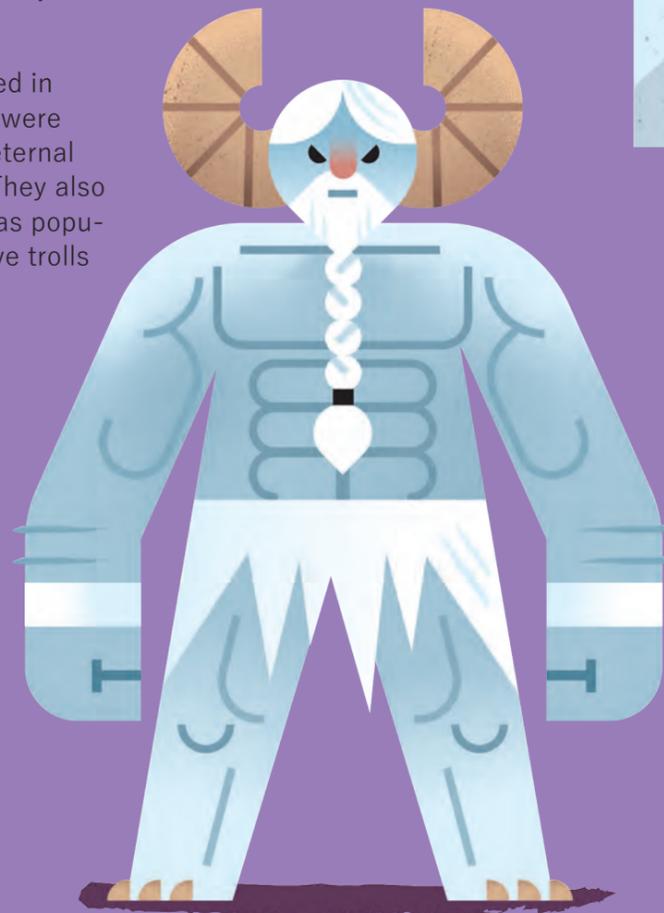
*Would a giant go to see a dentist, or an excavator operator?*



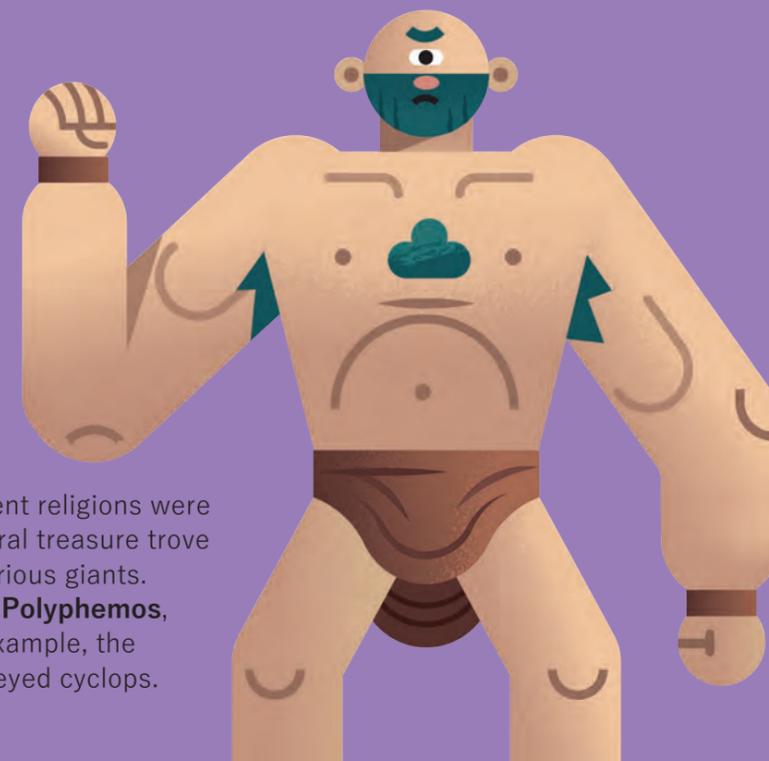
*To be the largest doesn't mean to be the best, Goliath ...*



Northmen believed in **frost giants** who were embroiled in an eternal fight with gods. They also believed Earth was populated by huge cave trolls or forest giants.



Ancient religions were a literal treasure trove of various giants. Take **Polyphemos**, for example, the one-eyed cyclops.



*What a guy!*



# AND STILL IN MYTHS

Stories about giants aren't exactly uncommon in other parts of the world either...

The huge Japanese demon **Oni** is one of the scarier ones. It's an evil spirit who eats human souls.

What do you think about my snapshot?



In the United States he is known as the **Bigfoot** or **Sasquatch**, in Japan he's called **Hibagon**, in Indonesia **Mande Barung**. He's a giant hairy creature related to Yeti. His existence has never been proven but who knows...

The **Quinametzin** were giants who according to the Aztecs populated the world before the humans. They even founded several cities and built the famous pyramid in Cholula, Mexico.



The Chinese giant **Kuafu** made his name by trying to steal the sun from the sky. As you can probably tell, he didn't succeed even though he tried repeatedly and for a long time, overcoming many obstacles.



The indigenous population of Australia used to be haunted by the man-eating giant **Thardid Jimbo** until he was eventually overcome by two brave young women.



Some central African tribes believe the world was created by a divine giant called **Mbombo**. Well, created... One day he was so sick he vomited up the whole planet and everything which inhabits it!

# PREHISTORIC LIZARDS

Welcome to the prehistoric times when our planet was ruled by veritable giants: dinosaurs and other gigantic lizards.

Learning to fly came quite in handy for the **Pterosaurs!** These giants were able to reach the sky.

The **Patagotitan mayorum** was so tall it could easily chew leaves off the tallest prehistoric trees. It was likely the largest herbivorous giant of the prehistoric era.

Scientists aren't sure which prehistoric lizard was the biggest, but the **Supersaurus vivianae** is a likely candidate.

The **Tyrannosaurus rex** may have had short front limbs but otherwise it was likely the most massive carnivorous lizard of all time.

The **Spinosaurus** could easily rival the tyrannosaurus. It's considered to be the longest carnivorous dinosaur in history.

Waters were ruled by the **Mosasaurus** who snacked on sharks.

# GIANT EXTINCT ANIMALS

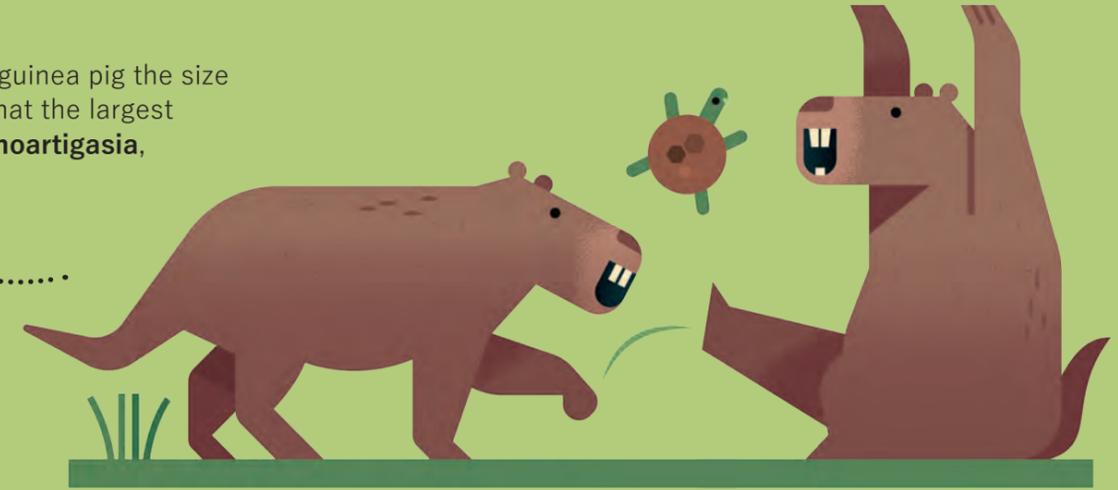
When dinosaurs died out giants didn't disappear from the world. For a long time, the Earth was full of animals larger than their modern descendants ...

The **Paraceratherium**, a hornless ancestor of modern rhinos, was the largest terrestrial animal to ever inhabit the planet. Its head was over 1 meter!



The **Aepyornis maximus**, a Madagascan giant ostrich, went extinct only about 1000 years ago. It was roughly 3 meters large but couldn't adapt to the arrival of humans or the loss of its natural food.

Would you enjoy meeting a guinea pig the size of a bison? That's sort of what the largest rodent in history, the **Josephoartigasia**, looked like.



*The smaller the body, the less food you need and logically, the bigger your chance of survival. Which is why animals gradually became smaller until they started looking like they do today.*

Can you imagine a hungry shark approaching you in the sea, one that's up to 40 meters long and whose huge mouth is full of sharp teeth? Now you know what fish felt like when a **Megalodon** was attacking them.



The heaviest animal to ever fly was likely the **Argentavis magnificens**. Consider its length of 3.5 meters and then add the 6 meters of wingspan...



The **Titanoboa**, a prehistoric boa constrictor that was almost 15 meters long, would cut quite the figure in any suspenseful story but you definitely wouldn't enjoy seeing it with your own eyes ...





# GIANTS IN MYTHS AND REALITY

Helena Haraštová • Diarmuid Ó Catháin

Since time immemorial, giants have been going through human narratives and stories. Evil, violent, and lazy, or wise, kind, and industrious, they are without exception strangely irresistible to humans. You might wonder if you could actually meet giants somewhere, or if they existed at least in the past. In this book, you'll find out, and you'll discover that if you look carefully, you'll suddenly see different giants around you yourself! The truth is, a giant may not look like a clumsy hulk, but perhaps like an animal, a flower, a machine or a house. On the pages of this book, you'll meet them all ...



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