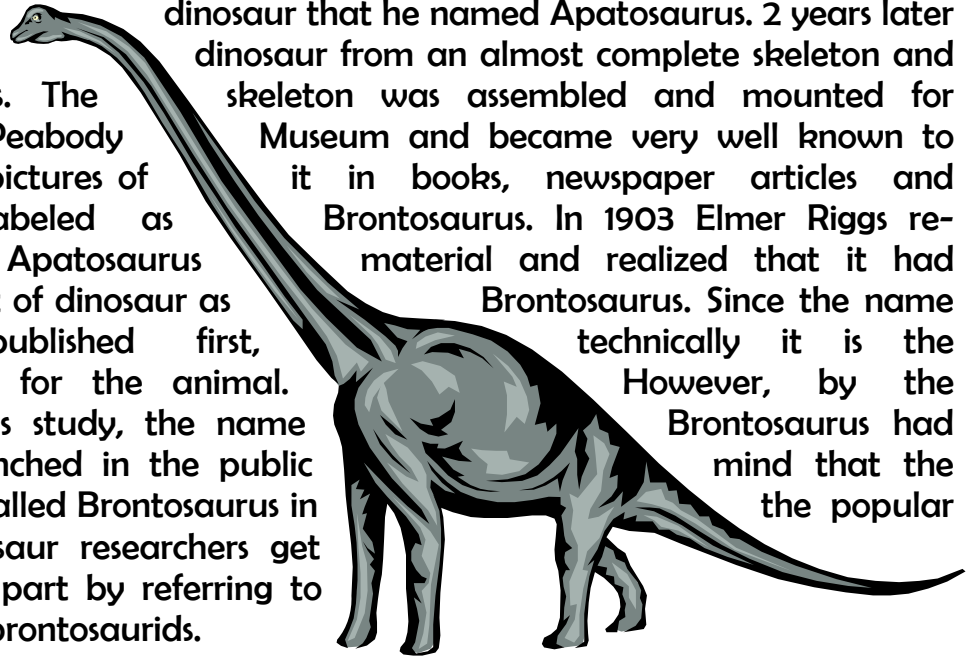


Why did they change the name of Brontosaurus to Apatosaurus? Is it because they had the wrong head on it?

No.

Here's the story: In 1877, Othniel Charles Marsh described a dinosaur on the basis of very incomplete remains, a dinosaur that he named Apatosaurus. 2 years later he described another dinosaur from an almost complete skeleton and named it Brontosaurus. The skeleton was assembled and mounted for display in the Yale Peabody Museum and became very well known to the public. There were pictures of it in books, newspaper articles and magazines, always labeled as Brontosaurus. In 1903 Elmer Riggs re-examined the original Apatosaurus material and realized that it had come from the same sort of dinosaur as Brontosaurus. Since the name Apatosaurus was published first, technically it is the proper scientific name for the animal. However, by the time Riggs published his study, the name Brontosaurus had become so firmly entrenched in the public mind that the animal continues to be called Brontosaurus in the press even today. Dinosaur researchers get around this problem in part by referring to the group as a whole as brontosaurids.



As for the head, Marsh didn't find one with the skeleton, although he did find a couple of partial skulls quite some distance away. He chose one to go with his skeleton but, as it turns out, he chose the wrong one. The mistake was spotted and corrected by Dr. John McIntosh in 1979 – long after the name had already been changed.

