

# Atj13's Awesome Aussie Apex Predator: Meet Thylacoleo!

Welcome, Atj13, to an exciting adventure back in time to prehistoric Australia! Today, we're going on a safari to find one of the most fascinating and fearsome creatures that ever lived: **Thylacoleo carnifex**, the marsupial lion! It wasn't really a lion, but it was definitely an apex predator. Let's find out why!

## Phase 1: Thylacoleo Investigator - Uncover the Facts! (Approx. 60-90 minutes)

Your first mission is to become an expert on Thylacoleo. Use the internet (with adult supervision/help if needed) or any books you have about prehistoric mammals to find answers to these questions. Write down your findings!

- **What did Thylacoleo look like?** Think about its size, its most famous teeth (those massive slicing premolars!), its claws (were they retractable like a cat's?), its tail, and did it have a pouch?
- **How big was it?** Compare it to an animal you know today.
- **What did Thylacoleo eat?** Was it a picky eater or did it enjoy a variety of prey? What kind of animals lived alongside it that it might have hunted?
- **Where and when did Thylacoleo live?** What was its habitat like in ancient Australia?
- **How did it hunt?** Was it a stealthy ambusher or a speedy chaser? How did its special features help it?
- **Any other super cool or mysterious facts?**

*Helpful keywords for your search: 'Thylacoleo carnifex', 'marsupial lion facts', 'Australian megafauna Thylacoleo'. Look for reliable sources like museum websites (e.g., Australian Museum) or educational sites.*

## Phase 2: Creative Construction - Build Your Own Thylacoleo! (Approx. 60-120 minutes)

Now that you're a Thylacoleo expert, it's time to bring one to life! Using your research, design and build your very own model of Thylacoleo.

- **Focus on its key features:** Make sure your model clearly shows off its powerful jaw and teeth, its strong build, and any other adaptations you learned about (like its thumb claw!).
- **Be creative with materials!** You can use modeling clay, or get inventive with recycled materials like cardboard boxes, tubes, paper, and tape. Think about how you can shape these items to represent Thylacoleo's body.
- **Think about its pose:** Will your Thylacoleo be stalking prey, roaring, or resting?

Have fun with this! There's no single 'right' way to make your model, as long as it's inspired by your research.

## Phase 3: Storytelling Safari - A Day in the Life of Thylacoleo (Approx. 45-60 minutes)

Imagine you are Thylacoleo, or you're a scientist observing one. Write a short, creative story (about a page or so) titled 'A Day in the Life of Thylacoleo'.

- **Use your research:** Weave in details about its habitat, what it eats, how it might have moved or hunted, and its unique features.
- **Be descriptive:** What does Thylacoleo see, hear, and smell? What challenges does it face?
- **Show, don't just tell:** Instead of saying 'Thylacoleo was a good hunter,' describe a hunt!

## Phase 4: Atj13's Thylacoleo Showcase! (Approx. 15-30 minutes)

This is your chance to shine! Present your Thylacoleo model and read your 'Day in the Life' story.

- **Explain your model:** Point out the specific features you included and why they were important for Thylacoleo. For example, 'I made the teeth really big because Thylacoleo had bone-crushing premolars for...'
- **Share your story:** Read it with expression!
- **Discuss what you learned:** What was the most interesting thing you discovered about Thylacoleo? What part of this project did you enjoy the most?

## Optional Extension Activities (If you're hungry for more!):

- **Megafauna Mystery:** Research why Thylacoleo and other Australian megafauna went extinct.
- **Modern Match-up:** Compare Thylacoleo to a modern predator (like a lion or a Tasmanian devil). What's similar? What's different?
- **Ancient Australia Diorama:** Expand your Thylacoleo model into a diorama showing its habitat and maybe some other megafauna!
- **Draw Thylacoleo:** Create a scientific illustration or a comic strip featuring your Thylacoleo.

Great job on your prehistoric journey, Atj13! You've used your research skills, creativity, and critical thinking to bring an amazing ancient creature to life!