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Microscopic Life

Betsy Spackman

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Walker, Richard. *Microscopic Life*. Kingfisher, 2004. ISBN 0753457784. \$11.95. 63 pp.

Reviewer: Betsy Spackman

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Microbiology--Juvenile literature;

A new addition to the Kingfisher Knowledge series, *Microscopic Life*, introduces readers to organisms in the microscopic world. The first chapter explains how microscopes are used to examine tiny organisms and discusses with the concepts of scale and magnification. In the second chapter, readers learn about different types of organisms, including viruses, bacteria, protists, fungi, and mini animals. The third and last chapter discusses the value of microbes and the role they play in the living world. Several pages are devoted to the negative effects of microbes but most of the book emphasizes the beneficial aspects of microscopic organisms.

This book's great strength is its eye-catching photographs and illustrations. Most images, several of which appear on each page, are actual micrographs of organisms, magnified and artificially colored to show the details of the organism. Captions include the type of micrograph and the magnification of the organisms. Other images are computer-generated illustrations or artists' interpretations of organisms or related topics. Abbreviations are used in the captions before they are explained in the text, which might confuse attentive readers. The text is clearly written and well organized, with subheadings on each page. It is disappointing that the author described viruses as nonliving, because scientists still debate whether viruses are indeed alive. Despite these small faults, this book is an excellent resource for older students interested in the microscopic world.