



2017

SMASH! Exploring the Mysteries of the Universe with the Large Hadron Collider

Ariel Woodbury

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Woodbury, Ariel (2017) "SMASH! Exploring the Mysteries of the Universe with the Large Hadron Collider," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 38 : Iss. 7 , Article 62.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol38/iss7/62>

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Book Review

Title: SMASH! Exploring the Mysteries of the Universe with the Large Hadron Collider

Author: Dan Gemeinhart

Illustrator: Jeff Weigel

Reviewer: Ariel Woodbury

Publisher: Graphic Universe

Publication Year: 2017

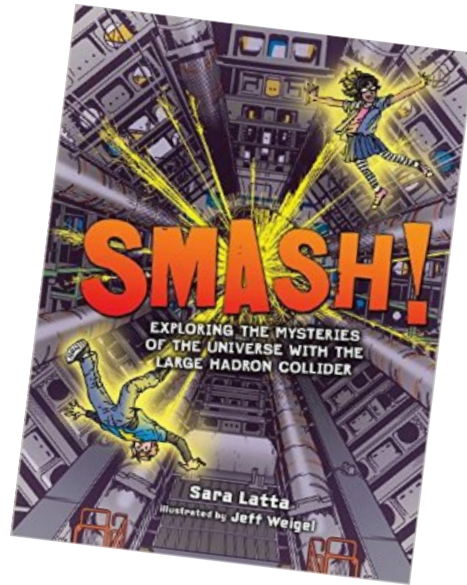
ISBN: 9781467785518

Number of Pages: 72

Interest Level: Young Adult

Rating: Dependable

Review



Sophie takes her cousin Nick on a tour of CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, to explore the mysteries of the subatomic universe. Nick is looking for ideas for a comic strip he is writing and Sophie helps him by teaching him about the fundamental particles and forces. They also learn about the Large Hadron Collider, Dark Matter, and the Big Bang with the help of some graduate students who work there. Science is amazing and Nick gets lots of ideas for his comic book superheroes.

Formatting this story as a graphic novel gave the author an additional platform to convey some complex physics concepts. The black and white illustrations helped to clarify and support many of her explanations. On the other hand, the graphic format also creates a lot of empty dialogue that dries out the book and adds volume. The first half of the book is dedicated to understanding the different fundamental particles (quarks, leptons, bosons) and fundamental forces (strong, weak, gravitational, electromagnetic). Each is explained in a simple and concise way which makes them easier to understand. Easier, but not easy. There are still some very complicated concepts to grasp, such as the Higgs boson. The second half of the book is all about the Large Hadron Collider (LHC): how it works, what it is used for, and how it was built. The second half is very interesting and well written, unlike the formulaic string of definitions of the first half which serve as a knowledge base for readers so they can understand the LHC better.