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Student Reviews

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Student Reviews


Have you ever seen a rabbit as big as a dog or a monkey as small as a banana? This book highlights twenty unusual animals through realistic, detailed paintings, accompanied by informative descriptions and interesting facts.

Each animal is shown in its own habitat in the life-size, action-packed illustrations, making it easy to visualize the size of the animal. The colorful paintings are so detailed you can almost feel the Chinchilla's soft, thick fur or the Giant Toad's warty skin.

The accompanying text brings each animal to life, telling where it lives, what it eats, and interesting facts or habits. For example, the Little Blue Penguin lives "on the beaches of Australia, not at the South Pole." The Greater Indian Fruit Bat "flies from tree to tree, plucking fruit. It squeezes out the juice and pulp in its mouth and swallows, then spits out the seeds as it flies."

Eight pages of "Nature Notes" are included at the end of the book. The scientific name of each animal is given, as well as a more detailed description of its features and habits. Small black and white illustrations give a different view of each animal.

The detailed paintings and fun, easy-reading text make this book a gem for all ages to enjoy.

—Karin Patrick


Ms. Lavies' book takes the reader close to a subject from which she suggests we maintain our distance—the timber rattlesnake. The authoritative, yet flowing text serves to enhance the powerful messages of the photographs. In the short picture book format, Ms. Lavies' manages to introduce the snake's behavior, reproduction (in notably clear, straightforward language), shedding, rattle development, and keen sensory organs. The climactic moment occurs when the snake senses the heat of a small field mouse, instantly pouncing on it. Four marvelous pages are dedicated to the portrayal of this meal.
Facts presented in this work are neither overwhelming nor trivial, all supporting its basic objectives. An interesting example is the fact presented after the mouse meal. Timber rattlesnakes may eat only twenty or more times a year, but can eat as few as SIX TIMES A YEAR. Another strength of this book is its use of simple, and at the same time eloquent, language. Descriptive phrases such as "The scales are dry, not slimy, and they overlap like shingles on a roof" add greater depth and dimension to the already fabulous photographs, the book's most salient feature.

Ms. Lavies has fused her talents (which she utilized as a photographer with National Geographic) and her ample literary skills to create another fine nature essay.

—Tracy Gittins


Rogers answers the titular question in poetic form. He portrays windy, warm, snowy, frosty, and stormy days. The lizard likes dry days, the frog likes rainy days, the cockatoo likes steamy and hot days, and the duck likes wet days. The mole under the ground and the fish under the sea do not know what the weather is like, and the bee does not care; he works all the time anyway. Kayuko's illustrations support the plot faithfully.

Although I recommend the book, I cannot give it a superior rating. The text, while concise and essential to the plot, is often mundane and predictable in its rhyme scheme, as the lines,

You can hear all the birds and the animals say
What will the weather be like today?

demonstrate. The illustrations are careful, colorful, and reasonably imaginative, but they sometimes lack a sense of proportion, as the girl jumping rope on page seven demonstrates. She has either jumped far too high or is too high on the hill to be jumping at all. Still, the subject treated holds intrinsic appeal for children, and the storyline is rather amiable and easily followed. I recommend the book for children.

—Tracy Wright
In this book, Parker uses a simple but ingenious organizational format to encourage and allow both the youngest readers of the first or second grades, as well as the older students of the fifth and sixth grades, to read, learn from, and enjoy this book. She uses large type, simple rhyming lines for the youngsters on the left page and a more detailed description of the special animals on the right page in smaller print for the more advanced readers. Always included on the right page is a full-color, labeled illustration of the animal described. Though it is far from being a comprehensive coverage of these animals (even on a beginning level), this book provides a good deal of excellent information and enjoyable learning for its readers. The way it is written will encourage and challenge the youngest readers to read the more difficult text on the right pages. It will also encourage all its readers to study and learn more about the animals described.

This book also includes information on a frog’s life cycle, illustrated internal anatomy, details about scale patterns of lizards, scientific names, a glossary, distribution maps of the U.S., classification chart, and a bibliography and index.

Readers of all ages will enjoy reading and learning from this book!

—Kay Hamblin


When a child, especially a girl, really wants something, has her heart set on having it, she doesn’t give up. Parents’ logic and arguments will not, can not make her drop her plea. Judith Viorst captures the energy and commitment of a girl who wants something: Earrings!

A ten-year-old girl wants to have her ears pierced. Her parents are not ready for her to take this step. In first person narrative, she gives the reasons why she wants pierced ears, the reasons her parents give to justify their refusal, and the frustration she experiences while she endures the situation.

Persistence is the theme and it is emphasized with the use of repetition. "I want them. I need them. I love them" is written five times in the book and a variation of "Beautiful earrings" is repeated.
seven times. Persistence is not in simply enduring and wishing, but in presenting arguments for her cause. She gives nine reasons why she should have them, i.e., "I'm the only girl in the solar system whose mom and dad won't let her have pierced ears." And, to be fair, she gives five reasons her parents say she can't, i.e., "I'm too young." She even makes six promises she'll keep if only she can have her ears pierced, i.e., "read a book once a week." Each reason, argument, and promise is illustrated with expressive caricature drawings by Nola Langner Malone. She does a masterful job of showing emotion in her drawings ("My parents went to Tahiti and all they brought me back was this T-shirt."). The heroine is the center of each illustration which adds to the emphasis of her persistence.

The author had an interesting way of building the story. She began with short sentences. Gradually the sentences became longer, with more details, the book ending with short sentences again. This fits well with the theme. One thing confusing to the reader, initially, was the question (because of the placement on the page) was should I start on the left or at the top? A second reading clarified the problem.

Any girl could identify with this book even if she never wanted pierced ears. All girls want something they have to wait for. Parents would also do well to read Earrings! It would help them understand all children's ability to persist!

—Cindy Lynn Chilcoat


Nicola Fairbrother trains six days out of the week to be the best Judoka (Jud-OH-Ka) or Judo player she can be. She wants to be in the 1992 Olympics and win a medal in Judo. Judo is a "behind the scenes" look at Nicola's training and the sport of Judo. It describes the different techniques that can be employed to score points in a Judo match. At the end of the book is a fact section and a glossary giving definitions and explanations about the sport of Judo, among which we learn that "President Theodore Roosevelt was one of the first Americans to learn Judo." I liked the fact that it is told in first person "A proper warmup like this keeps us from straining our muscles." Because it is told this way, it doesn't come off as a textbook approach, and becomes more personal to the reader. I also found that the use of large color photographs with large bold print made the book simple to read and
easy to understand. The text corresponded with what was happening in
the pictures.

I enjoyed this book because it got me interested and curious to learn
more about Judo. It used a good combination of text and pictures to
create a strong book, worthy of the age group specified to read it.

—Jeffery L. Hart

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