Superhero scientists

David Allen and Alex Sinclair, illustrated by Richard Spencer
Hatfield, Herts: Millgate House Education, 2021
108 pp. £15.00
ISBN 978 0863 57472 6

Children will absolutely love reading this book and teachers will undoubtedly use it to inspire the next generation of scientists

Superhero scientists would be an excellent addition to any primary school classroom. The front cover appears to come straight out of a comic book, giving the immediate impression that learning about science is fun and engaging. The epically and delightfully illustrated front cover paves the way for an illuminating and insightful venture into science in the real world.

There are 21 chapters of awe and wonder. The 21 real-life scientists are explored excellently, their lives magnified and opened eloquently to the reader in a really engaging way. The authors uncover scientific discoveries, remarkable facts and unique life stories. What resonates most is the way in which the authors ground the scientists' stories, which could even inspire a budding youngster to follow a similar career path in the future!

From inventors to marine biologists, crime-scene specialists to museum curators, vets to epidemiologists, this book looks at people in real-life roles. This is what is so important to the reader: to see the diversity of vocations on offer and the range of people that occupy these roles. What is wonderful is that there is no pigeonholing or categorising by gender or ethnicity in this book: the science community and its multiculturalism is wholeheartedly celebrated.

Children will absolutely love reading this book and teachers will undoubtedly use it to inspire the next generation of scientists, opening their minds to 'anything is possible'. At the end of every chapter, there is a wonderfully creative touch: an opportunity for children to explore their understanding of the scientists they have read about through engaging and accessible tasks.

Michael Good
Stoneferry Primary School, Y1 teacher and science coordinator

The story of climate change

Catherine Barr and Steve Williams
London: Frances Lincoln, 2021
32 pp. £12.99
ISBN 978 0 711 25628 6

The story of our planet and how we have arrived at the current stage of climate change

This wonderfully illustrated children's book tells the story of our planet and how we have arrived at the current stage of climate change. It aims to give children a clear understanding of timelines and appropriate language for understanding the evolution of our planet, how climate change began and the impact of it on us and our wildlife.

The book is aimed at younger children and combines information with colourful, easy-to-understand images from 4.5 billion years ago to today. It takes readers on a clear, chronological journey from the earliest stages of life on Earth to a point where we can reflect on our own choices and the impact we are having on climate change.

The book begins with illustrations of dark skies, erupting volcanoes and poisonous gases, creating an eerie image of suspense and drama. It becomes clear from the outset that the book, although aimed at younger children, does not shy away from technical vocabulary. Through Catherine Barr's knowledge of ecology and Steve Williams's knowledge of marine biology and applied zoology, children are supported in developing their understanding of this complex subject matter.

'*Giant dragonflies rested on ferns, amphibians waded into water and huge scorpions and other bugs scuttled through slippery green forests*' is a wonderfully descriptive example of the language used throughout. Not only does it

encourage children to use the illustrations to search for information, but the technical language adds to the information the illustrations provide. Coupled with this are small tag arrows on the bottom of each page that indicate where you are on the timeline of the Earth (this particular page tells us it is 2.3–300 million years ago).

The book, however, is not simply about the planet's journey, but a cautionary tale aimed at children, which may worry them as well as educate them. With pages encouraging vegan foods and car-free journeys, which may not be an option for all families, although they are only ideas, this book is maybe more appropriate for older, primary-aged children. For older children, this book would be a good source to build science lessons on or develop cross-curricular links to geography and PSHE.

Sharon O'Brien
Teacher, Deeplish Primary Academy, Greater Manchester

50 reasons to love endangered animals

Catherine Barr
London: Frances Lincoln, 2020
39 pp. £11.99
ISBN 978 0 711 2 5244 8

Any child with a love of the animal kingdom or an appreciation of detailed illustrations will treasure this book

This is a visually appealing non-fiction book. The beautiful illustrations offer an alternative to the expected photographs of this type of text. The book devotes six pages to each of the six habitats it features, and the '50 reasons' range from funny (lobsters doing the conga) to fascinating (sunlight helps elks' antlers grow). It targets children aged 5–7 and would be a useful resource for the topic of 'Living things and their habitats', with the features of each habitat labelled (African pear tree, lake, coral, etc.) and plentiful examples of the creatures that live there. The font used is easy on the eye and the text is appropriate for independent readers aged 7–9 because of its mix of compound and complex sentences.

The introduction on each page contains scientific vocabulary about the habitats, life cycles, food chains and, most crucially, reasons why the animals living there are endangered: global warming, tangled fishing nets, palm oil plantations. This information is relevant and accurate and given in an age-appropriate manner: thought-provoking enough but paired with child/classroom-friendly suggestions about increasing awareness and tips about sustainability through

sections named '*Show you love a … sun bear, dolphin*', etc.

The only negative could be the illustrations. As detailed as the habitat illustrations are, all the animals have 'cutesy' cartoon eyes, which could upset true naturalists. To flip that opinion, however, that 'fun' style may draw in a previously uninterested audience, which could only be seen as a positive because of its ethical content. In short, any child with a love of the animal kingdom or an appreciation of detailed illustrations will treasure this book, and lovers of Attenborough's conservation efforts are sure to enjoy this, regardless of age!

Melanie Boyeson

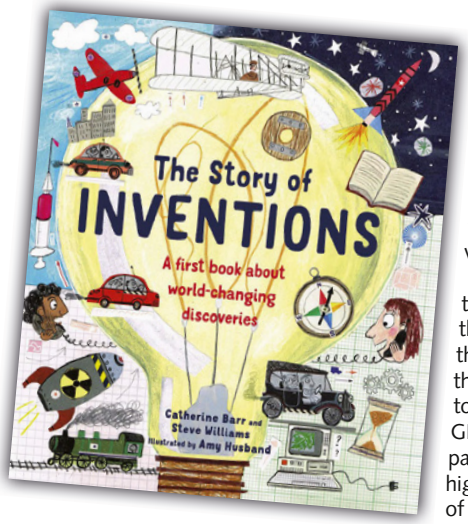
Class teacher/science lead, Newport Primary School, East Yorkshire

The story of inventions

Catherine Barr and Steve Williams
London: Frances Lincoln, 2020
32 pp. £12.99
ISBN 978 0 7112 4536 5

A first book about world-changing discoveries for primary age children

A beautifully illustrated journey from the Bronze Age (3500 BC)



and the invention of the wheel through to the modern day and the invention of the internet, this book catalogues some of science's most important inventions. It certainly encourages a reader to think about potential future inventions The book highlights just how much the human race has developed over time, including tackling some of the problems inventions have created. For example, it follows the invention of plastics in 1907 through to the current plastics crisis; these two pages alone could provide an excellent stimulus for discussion.

The chronology along the bottom of each page allows the reader to easily reference a period of time and picks out a prominent invention of the era; for example, for AD 850 the invention of gunpowder and for 1798 the invention of vaccinations.

The book focuses on the inventions more than the history, talking about the 270 BC invention of the compass, through to today's use of the GPS system, within two paragraphs, but this highlights the enormity of progression over time. Children would certainly finish this book with a clear understanding that things we take for granted today did not exist in the past, and, indeed, are still not a given in every part of the world. The 1832 invention of the electric motor, for example, showed how useful electricity can be, leading to humans 'stepping into the light', while highlighting that more than a billion people are still without electric light today.

Naming scientists alongside their inventions would have enhanced this book and exposed children to the names of some of the world's most prominent scientists, whose inventions have undoubtedly and clearly changed the world. On the other hand, the book could be used to spark curiosity and independent research around the inventions and their inventors.

The illustrations, speech bubbles and captions appeal to children of all ages. The book could be used throughout the primary age range, with adaptations in delivery to meet their needs. We would recommend it for use in whole-class guided-reading sessions, or as an independent research book.

Nicola Saporita-Clark and Hayley Collins

Head teacher and KS2 teacher/ leader, All Saints' CE Primary School

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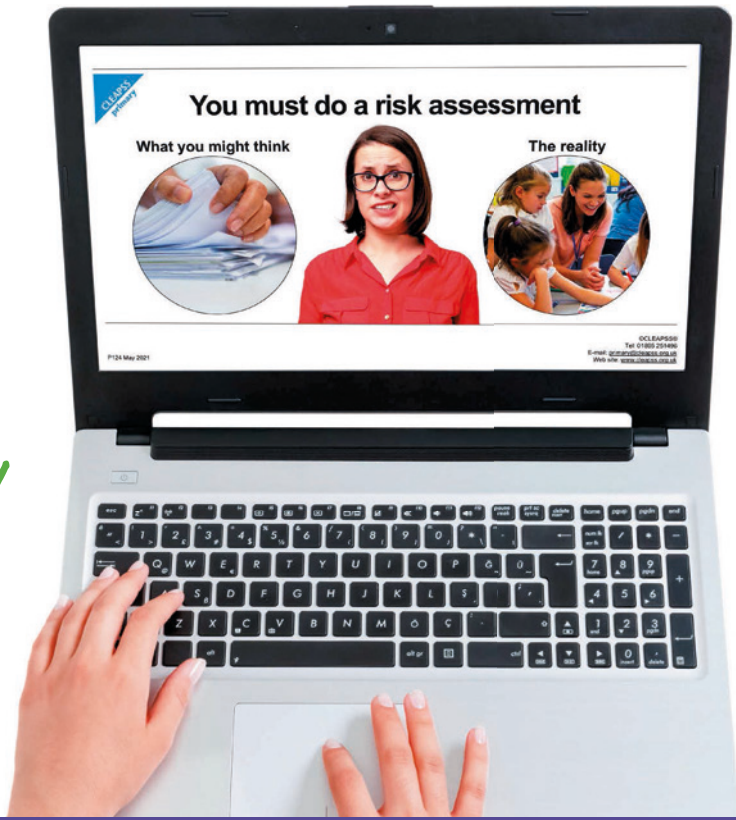

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