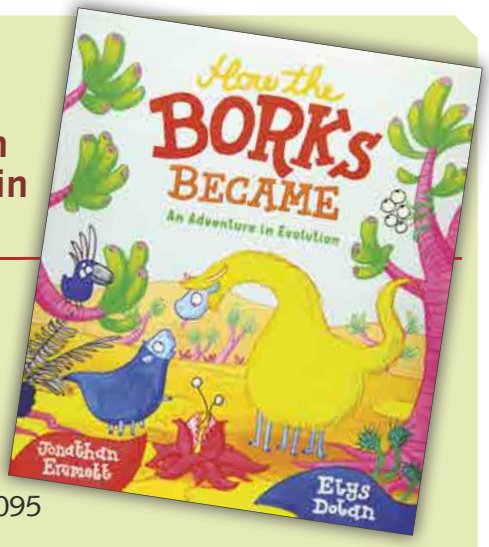
How the Borks became: an adventure in evolution



Jonathan Emmett and Elys Dolan
Hereford: Otter-Barry Books, 2018
30 pp. £6.99
ISBN 978 1 91095 966 4

Fascinating book that will get any reader, adult or child, hooked from the very first line

This is now by far one of my favourite science books for children. Not only is it an amazing story, it rhymes beautifully too. The fantastic illustrations by Elys Dolan enhance and bring the book to life. The story starts right at the beginning, when the amusing Borks first existed, and tells how some of their physical characteristics enabled them to survive and thrive, developing and changing over time through adaptation. There are fictitious explorer notes at the beginning, with the factual science stages of evolution coming at the end of the book.

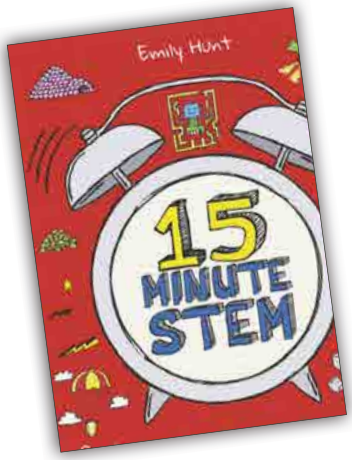
I will be sharing this book with both key stages 1 and 2 children, and I would certainly encourage every primary school to have at least one copy. It is great for reading aloud and enjoying the story with the younger years, exploring the illustrations and 'reading the pictures'. Older children will gain appreciation of Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection in a light-hearted but well-illustrated way and they too will get great pleasure and learning from the book.

At just £6.99, this is a book all schools and children can access and enjoy. A truly fabulous, magically engaging and scientifically fascinating book that will get any reader, adult or child, hooked from the very first line.

Janet Morris

Science Leader, Hollyfield Primary School, Sutton Coldfield

15 minute STEM



Emily Hunt
Camarthen: Crown House Publishing, 2018
59 pp. £16.99
ISBN 978 1 78583 335 9

Does what it says on the tin! For ages 5–11

Pupils will love this short, colourful and eye-catching A4-sized handbook with a pool of practical ideas for 40 quick and easy-to-resource STEM activities that take just 15 minutes!

Pupils and adults will enjoy and be excited by the hands on, fun, practical ideas that lead learners (young and old) to explore at their own pace and inspire longer-term engagement and participation. This easy-to-use collection of 40 imaginative interactive practical STEM activities encourages children to question, deduce and hypothesise as they think about new concepts. The activities are wide ranging, from *Arctic engineering*, *Fireworks in a jar* and *Rock rummage* to *Water colour carnival*. They are not necessarily original, but having them all in the same place saves lots of hunting on the internet, so learners can use their time to explore and have fun.

Every activity has step-by-step instructions resourced from everyday materials. Each page has a similar format, starting with a title to engage pupils and a photo hook, there are sections entitled: *You will need*, *Investigate*, *What we are learning* and *How to do it*, and a coloured tab with matching graphic for related STEM careers.

There is a short health-and-safety advice section at the front of the book and some notes pages at the back to record findings. No specific health and safety advice is given for each activity so some may need checking with the CLEAPSS recommendations. There is a STEM glossary of jobs at the end of the book that will be of use for children wanting to find out more. There are also more ideas for nurturing an interest in STEM at the end of the book, which will be useful for teachers considering how to build science capital.

15 minute STEM is a useful bank of short STEM activities that will enrich any STEM club or encourage STEM at home. It will help children to understand how their learning is relevant to their future, as the activities link to STEM-related careers.

Mandy Hodgskinson

School Improvement Officer (Science), East Riding of Yorkshire

Next time you see a bee

Emily Morgan
32 pp. £13.95
Arlington, VA: National Science Teachers Association, 2019
ISBN 9781 681406510

An interesting and informative read on the importance of these little insects

This book is aimed at primary-school-aged children and explains the fascination of bees and their importance for the world's ecosystem. The author describes the accidental role of bees as pollinators in their search for nectar, how they are physically equipped for pollination and the threats they face. In the text, the book advises children on how and where to observe bees and creates a certain magic around the topic. Beautiful photographs support the text and the book is full of interesting and amazing facts. Did you know that bees unhinge their wings and buzz to release pollen from a tomato plant through the vibrations of the buzz, or that there are more than 200,000 species of bees in the world?

The book is predominantly geared to the North American market as it focuses on their native bee species, but the information is still relevant to everyone.

The mention of concepts such as colony collapse disorder, intensive farming and pesticides make the book more appropriate for older children, perhaps 9–11-year-olds, and the text could be organised more effectively. The author talks about 'pollination' before explaining the concept, and the role of pollen and nectar is not always clearly defined. She also revisits pollination at several stages, which makes the principle harder to understand as it feels disjointed.

Towards the end, children are encouraged to help bees by building a bee house and planting plants that attract bees. This could have been developed further by naming suitable plants and providing more detail on how different bee houses can be constructed.

Overall an enjoyable read, which can be highly recommended.

Katja Rudden

Associate Lecturer in Primary Education (The Open University)

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