

REVIEWS

SuperQuesters

Lisa Moss and Dr Thomas Bernard
Amsterdam: QuestFriendz, 2022/23
32 pp. £7.99 each

The case of the stolen sun

ISBN 978 90 829940 5 6

The case of the missing memory

ISBN 978 90 829940 4 9

Unique adventure stories and interactive play, designed to develop children's STEM skills; ages 4-8



These two SuperQuesters books develop STEM skills in children between 4 and 8 years old, through a fictional story, following three characters named Bea, Lilly and Leo.

Both stories start with the same introductory paragraph but cleverly introduce different settings, such as in a classroom after school and on a science school trip, alluding to 'the real waking world'. This is an important part, as the characters go into a 'dream world' to solve the quests by closing their eyes and saying, 'Close your eyes, squeeze them tight ... stars will light the way so bright!'. This chant is a double-page spread, which is very brightly coloured and beautifully illustrated; you can imagine younger children joining in. You can see how the author could develop more in the series and children do love a repeated phrase! The characters are met by the Queen of Questland and she renames all three (Bea Bumble, Lillicorn and Leo Zoom). The quests then begin.

Each book starts with instructions for parents or educators on how to use the sticker system, how to use the reward chart and how to apply the sticker sets' eight quests. The answers and a glossary of STEM skills are also provided.

The story, characters and challenges all work for children aged 4-8 years, but the glossary is more for parents/

educators as it would not be easily understood by this age of child. The website is very good and has a more varied array of resources to support STEM skills, which are closely linked to the book, so there is adaptability. A competent teacher could use these resources across the curriculum, for example for character descriptions in English.



The children in a class would love the story; you could develop the characters more and it introduces early skills in problem-solving, spatial perception, trial and error, coding and mental rotation.

A great story, with great potential!

Kathryn Jagger

Assistant Headteacher and Chartered Science Teacher, Spotland Primary School, Rochdale

Utterly jarvellous: 50 primary science activities you can do in a jar

Sai Pathmanathan
London: Bloomsbury, 2021
132 pp, £22.49
ISBN 978 1 4729 8483 8

How to use only sustainable resources in your science teaching with 7- to 11-year-olds



The activities in this book are primarily aimed at fostering children's curiosity about the world, while encouraging them to work scientifically and ask questions

that link into everyday situations. All the activities, as you would expect from the title, are linked to using jam jars; therefore, trying to support

sustainable teaching rather than using plastic beakers or pipettes.

The book is set out in sections: plants, rocks, properties and changes and materials. There is even a section on evolution and inheritance! – superb for year 6 children. You may wonder, as I did, how can I use a jam jar to teach evolution? Buy the book and find out!

The number of activities presented in each section varies. There are only three activities for plants, whereas for materials there are 13. Each activity is laid out in the same way: curriculum links, resources required, how to run the activity, the background science understanding, extension ideas and a recording template for the pupils to use.

Some of the activities are well known, with a slight twist to incorporate the use of a jam jar, such as the floating needle activity. A few of the others are more unusual, such as creating a barometer.

The book is aimed at teachers, or possibly even parents, of 7- to 11-year-olds. The curriculum links are purely focused on the National Curriculum in England, although the activities could be used, where relevant, in any curriculum. Many of the activities would also be fantastic for use in a science or STEM club.

I have changed my planning for this term to allow me to try out the activity 'Utterly gene-ius' and am looking forward to seeing the children's reactions to what they discover!

Jane Banham

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Round and round goes mother nature: 48 stories of life cycles around the world

Gabby Dawnay
London: Wide Eyed Editions, 2023
107 pp. £20.00
ISBN 978 0 7112 7976 6

Introduces the reader to an array of life cycles of creatures, plants, and natural phenomena that they may have not come across before; suitable for age 9+ depending on reading ability



This is a fantastic collection of life cycles throughout the realms of mother nature, depicting not just the life cycles of animals,

but of space and the stars – even carbon and sand. The life cycles are portrayed through beautifully crafted illustrations by Margaux Samson-Abadie, which bring these incredible life cycles to life. It is as if you could step into the book and be surrounded by the wonders of nature!

This book introduces the reader to an array of creatures, plants, and natural phenomena that they may not have come across before, including, for example, the luna moth, the baobab tree, the squirting cucumber and the black hole. These are just a few of the life cycles covered within the book that are potentially less well known. However, the book also allows its readers to discover the natural processes of more familiar creatures and concepts, to which younger readers may find it easier to relate. These include the chicken, dandelion, the four seasons and the stars – to name but a few. The book opens up the incredible wonders all around them from the sunflower to the Moon and everything in between.

Each life cycle is explained in a clear and detailed step-by-step manner, giving the reader real insight into the processes involved. The bright and colourful illustrations make the content very accessible, although the terminology used is still scientifically accurate and, depending on reading ability, quite advanced. Therefore, I would recommend this book for ages 9-plus or to be read to younger readers, enabling them to access the vast range of scientific vocabulary throughout the book.

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Evie: The small garden

Giovanna Cicero
London: Bumblebee Books, 2022
14 pp. £7.99
ISBN 978 1 83934 533 3

Evie, a curious 2-year-old, describes all the different things she can see as she walks around her garden; ages 3–7



Evie: The small garden is a beautifully put-together book by writer Giovanna Cicero and illustrator Alfonso Aimerio. The illustrations on the front cover unlock a quaint yet quite wonderfully

constructive narrative, that delights at every turn. Evie, the protagonist of this 14-page instalment, is a 2-year-old girl who absolutely adores the outdoors. Her routine on the first two pages is akin to any normal 2-year-old but it is her love for the outdoors that really makes the reader smile!

As she ventures into the garden, we are catapulted into the descriptive mindset of a child experiencing an extremely wholesome garden. Evie describes her garden as 'small' but the way she 'sees' the olive, apple and pear trees is entirely endearing. The repetitive language is excellent and is used to ingrain the narrative into the minds of the young audience – I could see this text being used in any early years or year 1 or 2 classroom. As we move through the text, Evie sees the birdbath, the plum tree, the shed, the lavender flower and the garden mirror. Evie states: 'I can see me in the mirror looking at me', an utterly brilliant introspective view showing how we should allow children to experience the outdoors – superb.

The text is short but this is a real positive – it is ideal for teaching young children about the importance of gardening and more generally about plants and trees. This book could quite easily be incorporated into continuous provision in the outdoor area of an early years unit or into a science lesson in key stage 1 focusing on plants.

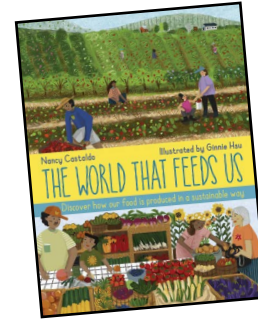
I have read this book to my daughter and she loved it; I am looking forward to any future instalments of Evie!

Michael Good
Y6 Teacher and Science Coordinator,
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member of Primary Science Editorial
Board

The world that feeds us

Nancy Castaldo
London: Quarto, 2023
80 pp. £12.99
ISBN 978 0 7112 7769 4

A beautifully illustrated, factual book that gives children an opportunity to understand what sustainable farming is and how they can become involved



If like me, you find it difficult to teach about sustainability, then this is definitely the book for you. It takes the viewpoint of sustainability from different types of farmers. From

the introduction, which explains what sustainable and green farming is, you can gain a solid basic insight into this topic. The book is then split into four sections, taking you through each of the four seasons and visiting a plethora of countries along the way, such as Italy, England, Hawaii and New York, to name but a few. The book culminates with advice on how we can 'do our bit' through knowing your farmer, shopping local, growing your own and not wasting food. There is something that everyone can do.

A great feature of the book is the amount of vocabulary it shares; it does this through the most inventive presentation techniques, all accompanied with illustrations, which is good for learners with English as an additional language (EAL). I learnt about different types of heritage cows, chicken breeds, floodplain crops, no-till machinery and different ways to preserve fruit. I particularly liked the sections: *Spring: Free-range; Summer: High tech on the farm; Autumn: Harvest help* and *Winter: Urban indoor farms*.

This book is not limited to learning about science, but features information on traditions, technology, countries and festivals, making it a thoroughly enjoyable and educational read. The glossary gives easy-to-understand definitions suitable for children. In short, it offers 80 pages of fact-filled joy! Great as a library book, gift and teaching tool.

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