

Insects and People - Entomology 101

Children's Literature Assignment

Over the week or through the break, visit your local library, the Education library on campus, the Book Store, or your little brother or sister. Select one book about insects that was written for children. Write an intelligent and informed review of the book. Address questions such as: does it portray insects in a good light; is the portrayal of insects accurate (from a scientific standpoint); does it stereotype certain insects (such as honey bees being very industrious or crickets singing the day away); would you want to read the book to your child; would a child want to read the book?

I want you to find a youngster of appropriate age, try one of your relatives (brother, sister, niece, nephew, child of a friend, etc.), and read the book to them. In your review, address how they viewed the book. If you do not know someone, go to the library and ask a young child if you can read a book to them, after you ask their parent or guardian – you will not be the first student that has done this!

Have fun with this. Your parents may just think that you are maturing into a fine young adult if you approach this assignment with enthusiasm and in the right frame of mind.

Assignment due date will be given in class.

Bizarre Bugs

Doug Wechsler
Cobblehill Books, New York, 1995
31 pp., \$14.95
ISBN 0-525-65181-0

If a picture is worth a thousand words, *Bizarre Bugs* is easily longer than *War and Peace*. Although this book is written at a level perfect for early to middle elementary school readers, as university students, we still found ourselves absorbed in the wealth of beautiful and bizarre photographs and enchanted by the clear and concise way Wechsler presents the concept of the amazing adaptations of insects.

Bizarre Bugs is presented in four chapters with the headings “Why Be Bizarre?,” “Avoiding the Enemy,” “Peculiar Parts,” and “Bizarre Life Cycles.” Each chapter is subdivided into a short number of paragraphs with descriptive headings. These divisions make the book easy for young people to read. In addition to these small and easily digested sections, the pronunciations for some of the longer words, as well as a glossary at the end of the book, are included to help young readers. Yet, one cannot help but be distracted from the text to examine the superb photographs, which are accompanied by concise descriptions. These photographs provide appropriate emphasis for the subject at hand. In truth, the photography is the greatest achievement of *Bizarre Bugs*!

An examination of why insects have developed the strange forms that are found so often in nature, from the “Spiny Katydid” to, our all-time favorite, the “Trash Carrier,” is explained in simple terms. Evolution and adaptation are discussed in Chapter 1. In subsequent chapters, bizarre defensive, strange morphological, and unusual life

cycle adaptations are shown, discussed, and photographed. Wechsler uses amusing analogies to explain such adaptations. For example, how the straw like mouthparts of an hemipteran would be perfect for someone who lived only on milkshake.

We would be hard pressed to find anything wrong with *Bizarre Bugs*. It met all of the criteria that we felt necessary for a good children’s book: an abundance of photographs, text that does not read like a textbook, and an interesting topic. The only thing we might have added to the book would have been a short section on the study of entomology and entomologists. Nonetheless, this book would be a perfect addition to classroom libraries or a great present for children who show an interest in nature and the world around them. It would be a perfect book to share with your children.

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This review, written by two WSU students, was published in *American Entomologist*.