

10-Minute Puppets



Written by Noel MacNeal
Illustrated by Susan Hunt Yule
Photography by Evan Sklar
Workman Publications £7.99
ISBN: 978-0761157144

If you like puppets, this book is for you. Could you resist the envelope bird, (just an envelope, a few crayons and your hand), Herb the plant (don't ask), or Palmer the mouse? Noel shows us how to make puppets out of the ordinary things we have around the house. Just a hand and a marker perhaps, or slightly more elaborate creations using cardboard, coloured paper, fur, feathers, socks or gloves. There is a section on shadow puppets and cut outs that move. He shows us how to put on a puppet show, first making a theatre from an arm and a cloth, a cardboard box or even a handy doorway. The appendix contains templates for some of the puppets, including an apple for Wrigglin' Worm. This is a lovely book full of ideas to set any child's imagination going.

(4+) *Pat Jenkins*

First Book of Birds

ISBN: 978-1408137185

First Book of Mammals

ISBN: 978-1408137161

First Book of Minibeasts

ISBN: 978-1408137154

First Book of Flowers

ISBN: 978-1408137178

Written by Anita Ganeri and David Chandler
A&C Black £4.99

These are four nice little books which are just exactly what their titles say. There is a different flower, creature or bird on each page, beautifully and clearly illustrated and described. There is information about their lives and where they might be found. Each has a spotter's chart at the end for the child to tick.

(4+) *Pat Jenkins*



How Does My Garden Grow

Dorling Kindersley £9.99 ISBN: 978-1405362627

Published in association with the RHS, this handsome book aims to get children outside, growing some of their own food and having fun at the same time. It starts with questions and answers, "What is a plant?" "How do they grow?" "Why do



we need them?" and carries on from there. There are nice ideas for decorating pots and making plant labels. (At last, a use for an old CD.) None of the projects actually needs a garden, almost any container will do. Potatoes and carrots will grow happily in sacks lined with plastic. Herbs do well in juice containers, and how about growing wheat in a wooden box? What about a pond in a tub, with room for a goldfish? Of course we want to eat the things we grow and there are recipes for bread, muffins and cakes. There is a section on edible flowers and making vegetable crisps. This is a good practical book. The projects are all clearly explained with step-by-step instructions and photographs and there is a glossary and an index.

(6+) *Pat Jenkins*

Kings and Queens

Usborne £6.99
ISBN: 978-1409507475

Not a book but a pack of cards with pictures and information about the monarchs of England, from Saxon Alfred to Elizabeth II. Scotland has its own cards, from Kenneth I to James VI and I. Each card has a portrait of the king or queen on one side and information about them and their times on the other. There is not much space for writing, especially when the reign was a long one but what is there is interesting and gives a flavour of the age. It would be easy to invent games using the cards and I recommend them for family use.

(7+) *Pat Jenkins*



The Romans

Written by Jillian Powell
Illustrated by Matt Buckingham
Wayland *The Gruesome Truth About* £7.99
ISBN: 978-0750264259

Everyone knows "What the Romans did for us" but was it all true? How did they worship, rule, and raise children? This dynamic book shows a



warts and all view of their lives both positive and negative. For example the Romans appreciated theatre but allowed torture and executions on the same public stage. They enjoyed fine dining but gluttony was seen as a virtue and not a vice. Even their personal hygiene can make us cringe, using goat's fat and wood ash to gel their hair, a urine mixed paste to clean their teeth and shared a communal sponge and stick as their equivalent of a toilet roll. Children will love reading all these facts including grisly punishments and gladiatorial games. There are 'true and false' statements to be sorted out, amusing illustrations and items to be guessed at. A light hearted view of Roman life but the facts are there.

(7+)

Anne Munro

Snakes

Written by Jen Green
Franklin Watts *Amazing Animals*
£12.99 ISBN: 978-1445100043

Snakes have a bad press. If we cannot love them we must still protect them from their enemy - man. They are marvellous hunters, using stealth, poison or brute strength to kill their prey. They have no claws to grab, no legs to run and only backwards facing teeth which grip but do not cut or tear. They live virtually anywhere on our planet except Antarctica. (The absence of snakes in Ireland is not mentioned.) Snakes can survive in the sea, deserts, forests, rivers and heaths. Some give birth to 'live' young, others lay eggs. The King Cobra makes a nest, guarding her eggs for two months, not eating until they hatch. In some countries snakes are welcomed as great rodent catchers, but mostly they are feared by man, and certainly some snakes do pose serious problems if they are disturbed by us. The photographs are amazing if occasionally off-putting. Don't judge a snake by its picture.

(7+)

Anne Munro



Putting Your Carbon Foot In It!

Written by Paul Mason Illustrated by Mike Gordon
Wayland £13.99 ISBN: 978-0750260992

How can you make a difference to global warming and its inherent problems by slightly altering your carbon footprint? This vital and informative book gives you plenty of accessible ideas. Its quirky illustrations may seem light hearted but you are shown that global dilemmas are part of all our lives and that everyone needs to change in order to help solve them. There are extracts from Eco Teen's



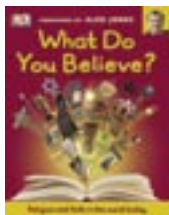
diary, quizzes to try and lots of information to assimilate. Practical ideas include the recycling of clothes, walking or cycling if possible, turning off electrical goods, internet shopping, eating less meat and more organic food stuffs - and

why not wear an extra sweater when it gets cold? If every reader acted on these suggestions then our collective carbon footprint could certainly be reduced. Give it a try - it's your planet! (8+)

Anne Munro

What Do You Believe?

Senior Editor Fleur Star
Dorling Kindersley £10.99
ISBN: 978-1405362856



A complex book, introduced by Aled Jones, providing access and information on some of the most difficult questions humans ask themselves. 'Why are we here on Earth?' 'Does something bigger than us influence our lives?' 'Where does faith come from?' 'Is spirituality the same as religion?' 'Is respecting others and leading a good life enough?' The thoughts and teachings of philosophers, religious thinkers, atheists and scientists are presented giving full and unbiased views for discussion. The tenets of some of the world's religions are studied and compared. Morality issues are shown to be complex with no simple right or wrong answers, each subject needing to be related to the reader's personal views and experiences. A difficult subject presented in a clear way, useful in promoting lively discussion with others in the family and/or school.

(10 +)

Anne Munro

Internet Crime

Written by Sarah Levete
Wayland *Talk About* £7.99 ISBN: 978-0750265157

We are used to deferring to our children when it comes to understanding the most recent internet

developments but these same young people often prove to be naive when it comes to the damage that can be inflicted by what seem to be innocent encounters. This book speaks directly to these young readers, making clear where the dangers lie. It is condensed but comprehensive for this purpose and is clear about there being both crimes against the user and perpetrated by the user. So, alongside the dangers of crimes like identity theft, are issues like cyber bullying. It addresses those issues which seem harmless, like sites which in fact are encouraging anorexia or identification of the individual. There is a timely warning that the news you 'share with friends' can be read by your prospective University Admissions Officer or employer. The "Dos and Don'ts" are unequivocal and the "Further Information" section includes sources of help. There are plenty of suggestions for "Talk About" sessions. The book should help to make sure that these are informed and not just based on popular myth.

(12+)

Pat Thomson



Earthquakes

Written by Helen Dwyer
Franklin Watts *Eyewitness Disaster* £12.99
ISBN: 978-1445100586



As earthquakes are cruelly topical, the questions "What are they exactly?" and even "Who is vulnerable?" are likely to be asked. The first question is answered in several formats (text, photographs, diagrams and personal accounts)

and as descriptions of particular events are given from all round the world, we can read an implied answer to the second. The processes which lead to an earthquake are summarised and we pass on to

the results: landslides, tsunamis and fires. Especially in earthquake zones, we see that we live on land that is constantly in motion. A series of case studies follows from particular locations and it is in these brief accounts that we see the physical and social effects on people. The final section deals with measurement and prediction and the preparation of inhabitants. This will not be adequate for students of geology but provides a clear account for studies of natural disasters.

(12+)

Pat Thomson

J. K. Rowling

Written by Lindsey Fraser
Argyll Publishing *Inspiration*
£5.99 ISBN: 978-1906134693

Rowling is very careful of her privacy so this is an unauthorised biography but written by someone who has seen her writing career develop at close quarters. The sources that are available have been carefully researched. This is not, however, a 'fan' tome but one which tells us how the phenomenon of Harry Potter was set into the publishing world and how the very new author dealt with it. Most personal information comes from the early period when Rowling was less guarded and it makes clear that she was astonished by what must have been a tidal wave of attention and fast developments. It concentrates on her encounters in the book world but also describes the unwelcome attentions of the popular press and the reader is left with some admiration for her good sense and her strength of character which protects herself and her family. Some able younger readers will, no doubt, devour this to glean any detail about their favourite author but it will prove most useful to older students and teachers for its clear setting of the writer as part of the (less glamorous than often imagined) machinery of publishing.

(14+)

Pat Thomson



Christmas always puts a bit of showbiz into information books. These two come firmly into that category.

Sounds of the Past: Knights



Written by Clint Twist
(Templar £12.99 ISBN: 978-1848774490)
... literally opens to the sound of battle as a band of pop-up knights attack an invading army. Each colourful pop-up scene is accompanied by lots of sound - merry laughter and music at the feast, fanfares and cheers at the tournament and cries and weaponry at the fall of a castle. (Someone told me to ssh! at my second reading.) There is real information on decorated pages between the pop-up scenes.

Similarly, Dragons and Monsters



by Matthew Reinhart and Robert Sabuda
(Walker, £19.99, ISBN: 978-1406327793)

also has quite a lot of information around spectacular pop-ups. It is international in scope so we get both the Chinese and

western dragons, Medusa, the Kraken and the Yeti as well as smaller pop-ups with yet more creatures. These are truly spectacular pieces of paper engineering.

(All ages)

Pat Thomson

