

# Outstanding Science Read-Alouds

by Coleen Salley and Terrence E. Young Jr.

Preschool through elementary school

According to standards set by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), each state is required to create academic standards and proficiency levels in areas of math, reading, and science that all students must meet by 2014. Each state is also required to create a testing program to assess achievement. Science programs must institute required testing and measurements by the 2007–8 academic year.

One benefit of NCLB mandatory science testing is that science resources will become increasingly important to the curriculum. It is imperative that school library media centers have current science resources in a variety of formats to meet the varied learning styles of students. We can inspire an interest in science at an early age by reading aloud high-quality science books, helping build science literacy and encouraging the next generation of scientists and engineers, not just aiding students in passing NCLB-mandated tests.

Science read-alouds like those in the bibliography below can increase science vocabulary, lessen the abstract nature of science principles, and enrich students' overall science experi-

ences. When you read aloud a science book, be sure to use expression, give listeners a chance to study the illustrations, encourage prediction, and allow time for discussion at the end of the story.



## Bibliography

Bang, Molly. *My Light*. 2004. 32p. Scholastic, \$16.95 (0-439-48961-X).

Gr. 2–6. This most talented author-artist continues to surprise readers with her wide range of styles and subjects. Gorgeous graphic art and a lyrical first-person narrative depict the creation of energy in a hydroelectric dam, wind turbines, a coal-burning plant, and

solar cells. Four pages of detailed notes appear at the end of the book.

Barner, Bob. *Bug Safari*. 2004. 32p. Holiday, \$16.95 (0-8234-1707-7).

K–Gr. 2. In Barner's colorful celebration of bugs, a boy dramatically imagines himself lost in a jungle teeming with insects. To get back to "base camp," he decides to

**Jaunty text and art depict a boy's trek through the wilderness of his own backyard in *Bug Safari* by Bob Barner.**

follow an ant "safari" and learns many things about their behavior in the process. The end of the book features more interesting bug facts.

Berger, Melvin. *Spinning Spiders*. Illus. by S. D. Schindler. 2003. 40p. HarperCollins, \$15.99 (0-06-028696-2); HarperTrophy, paper, \$4.99 (0-06-445207-7).

K–Gr. 3. In this title in the Let's-Read-and-Find-Out Science series,

Schindler's colorful, naturalistic art and Berger's straightforward text describe how spiders are classified, how they grow, what they eat, how webs are spun, and more. An appendix includes additional facts, instructions for making a web, and related Web sites.

Bunting, Eve. *Whales Passing*. Illus. by Lambert Davis. 2003. 32p. Scholastic, \$15.95 (0-590-60358-2).

K-Gr. 2. In this picture book with a shifting narrative, a boy and his father watch a pod of killer whales that in turn is watching them. Both the humans and the whales wonder about each other in their brief encounter. Davis' lovely, clean pictures reflect the simplicity of Bunting's writing style. The book ends with factual information about orcas (killer whales).

Cole, Henry. *On the Way to the Beach*. 2003. 28p. Greenwillow, \$15.99 (0-688-17515-5).

K-Gr. 2. In this lovely introduction to nature that encourages visual literacy, a young narrator describes what she sees in the woods, the salt marsh, and the dunes on her way to the beach. Each environment is featured in a fold-out scene depicting the plants and creatures one might find there, with a list of labeled items included. Older students could choose a plant or animal to research and then report on it to the class.

Dahl, Michael. *Do Frogs Have Fur? A Book about Animal Coats and Coverings*. Illus. by Jeff Yesh. 2004. 24p. Picture Window, \$16.95 (1-4048-0292-4).

Preschool-Gr. 2. In this humorous book about animal fur and skin, a coat-clad frog beckons readers on the cover, and inside they find that while frogs don't have fur, polar bears do. A variety of other animals are introduced using the same format. The appendix includes a glossary, index, bibliography, and Web sites. Other titles in the Animals All Around series

include *Do Dogs Make Dessert? A Book about How Animals Help Humans* and *Do Salamanders Spit? A Book about How Animals Protect Themselves* (both Picture Window, 2004).

Dahl, Michael. *T. rex: The Adventure of Tyrannosaurus rex*. Illus. by Jeff Yesh. 2004. 24p. Picture Window, \$16.95 (1-4048-0139-1).

K-Gr. 2. This colorful presentation about dinosaur life reads like a story, featuring the characters *T. rex* and *Edmontosaurus*. Interesting information is included in the endnotes, such as the fact that *T. rex* was a cannibal.

Diffily, Deborah. *Jurassic Shark*. Illus. by Karen Carr. 2004. 32p. HarperCollins, \$17.99 (0-06-008249-6).

K-Gr. 4. With realistic computer-generated illustrations, this picture book personalizes the ferocious shark *Hybodus*, the prehistoric ancestor of white sharks, as she searches for a safe place to give birth. A school of ichthyosaurs, an *Elasmosaurus*, and a fierce *Liopleurodon* are all part of the action and appear on a "cast of characters" page at the end.

Doering, Amanda. *Rain Forests ABC: An Alphabet Book*. 2004. 32p. Capstone, \$16.95 (0-7368-2611-4).

Preschool-Gr. 1. Extraordinary close-up photos in vivid colors introduce animals and objects found in rain forests around the world. Fun facts, a glossary, bibliography, Web sites, and an index appear at the end of this book in the Alphabet Books series.

Dowson, Nick. *Tigress*. Illus. by Jane Chapman. 2004. 32p. Candlewick, \$15.99 (0-7636-2325-3).

K-Gr. 2. With Chapman's outstanding full-page acrylic illustrations, this picture book follows a mother tiger as she raises her two cubs and teaches them to be independent. Two-level text features both a lyrical storyline and fascinating tiger facts in smaller type.

## Web Connection

The Web site listed below can be accessed through the Book Links Web site at <http://www.ala.org/BookLinks>. It was verified at the time of publication, but please check that the site remains valid before using it in an educational setting.

- **Search It! Science from Heinemann at <http://searchit.heinemann.com> contains thousands of highly recommended children's science trade books from many different publishers. Users can search for titles by subject, type of book (genre, age level, difficulty), keyword, title, series, and author. Each entry includes a cover image, awards (if any), bibliographic information, keywords, difficulty level, and summarized reviews with sources. Multiple, individual, and short-term licenses are available for a fee.**

Ehrlich, Fred. *Does a Duck Have a Daddy?* Illus. by Emily Bolam. 2004. 32p. Blue Apple, \$10.95 (1-59354-032-9).

Preschool. This attractive title in the Early Experiences series uses simple facts about parenthood in the animal world as an entrée to introducing ideas about human parenting. Other titles in this series include *Does a Pig Flush?* (Blue Apple, 2002) and *Does a Yak Get a Haircut?* (Blue Apple, 2003).

Ewart, Claire. *Fossil*. 2004. 32p. Walker, \$16.95 (0-8027-8890-4).

K-Gr. 2. The narrative here is presented as a poem accompanied by vibrant watercolors. On the beach a child discovers ". . . a stone / that once was bone." Readers then go back 90 million years and witness the life of a pterosaur, "Until, one day, / old bone, / tired bone, cannot rise." An informative "Fossil Evidence" page

gives details about the process of fossilization, and an extensive bibliography concludes the book.

Florczak, Robert. *Yikes!!!* 2003. 32p. Scholastic/Blue Sky, \$15.95 (0-590-05043-5).

K–Gr. 2. Oversize pages with brilliant neon illustrations trace a child's exploration of islands, jungles, and deserts around the world. Each double-page spread features a snarling Bengal tiger, a Nile crocodile, and more, but only one word of exclamation: *Yippee! Whee! Oops! Eek!* A visual glossary gives a bit of information about each animal and its habitat and habits. This book lends itself to a multitude of learning experiences: descriptive writing, geography and mapmaking, visual literacy, or further research.

French, Vivian. *T. rex*. Illus. by Alison Bartlett. 2004. 32p. Candlewick, \$15.99 (0-7636-2184-6).

K–Gr. 2. A granddad and grandson attend a dinosaur exhibit and learn about the many mysteries surrounding the life and habits of *Tyrannosaurus rex*. Bartlett's cheerful art accompanies the bouncy text, which includes the refrain "It was millions and millions of years ago!" Known *T. rex* facts are included throughout in smaller type, and an index appears at the back of the book.

George, Twig C. *Seahorses*. 2003. 32p. Millbrook, \$24.90 (0-7613-2869-6).

K–Gr. 3. Following the format of George's *Jellies* (Millbrook, 2000),

*Seahorses* features cadenced text and extraordinary color photos. Various aspects of seahorse anatomy and behavior are discussed in this visually stimulating introduction to some truly unique creatures.

Graham-Barber, Lynda. *Spy Hops and Belly Flops: Curious Behaviors of Woodland Animals*. Illus. by Brian Lies. 2004. 32p. Houghton, \$15 (0-618-22291-X).

K–Gr. 2. This engaging approach to animal behavior invites young readers to mimic the motions of fa-



**Bats sleep upside down, but boys don't, in *Whose House?* by Barbara Seuling, illustrated by Kay Choraó.**

miliar forest creatures, from jumping like a fox to twist-turning like a bat. Each animal is shown in its natural habitat in Lies' lush artwork, and all creatures are identified in a white border at the bottom of the page.

Himmelman, John. *Frog in a Bog*. 2004. 32p. Charlesbridge, \$15.95 (1-57091-517-2).

K–Gr. 2. Bright, realistic illustrations accompany a loose narrative introducing the variety of plants and

creatures that live in bogs. Close-up views of the flora and fauna appear at the end of the book, along with a visual literacy "can you find it" challenge for readers. More information on bogs, suggestions for further reading, and related Web sites are also included.

Jacobs, Francine. *Lonesome George the Giant Tortoise*. Illus. by Jean Cassels. 2003. 32p. Walker, \$16.95 (0-8027-8864-5).

Gr. 1–5. The text in this intriguing true story is somewhat longer than this bibliography's other read-

aloud selections. Cassels' top-notch nature paintings depict a saddleback tortoise, George, who beat long odds to survive as possibly the last member of his distinctive species

found only on the Galápagos island of Pintas. If a compatible female tortoise is not found, Lonesome George will be the last of his kind. Additional resources about both George and the Galápagos are included.

Jenkins, Steve. *Actual Size*. 2004. 32p. Houghton, \$16 (0-618-37594-5).

All ages. Every animal (or part of an animal) in this oversize book appears at its actual size, from the tarantula pictured on this magazine's cover, to

the eye of a 59-foot-long giant squid. Distinguished by Jenkins' colorful cut-paper artwork and memorable gatefold illustrations, this title will appeal to readers of all ages. An appendix with thumbnails of each animal provides additional details. For more information, see "Steve Jenkins on Cut Paper and Science," on p.18.

Jenkins, Steve, and Robin Page. *What Do You Do with a Tail Like This?* 2003. 32p. Houghton, \$15 (0-618-25628-8).

K-Gr. 2. In this clever book, double-page spreads feature a question ("What do you do with a nose like this?") and illustrations of a particular body part from a group of "mystery" animals. Turn the page and a complete illustration of each animal is pictured, with descriptive notes. This format is repeated with ears, tails, eyes, feet, and mouths. An illustrated appendix at the end gives more details about the 30 animals pictured.

Lewin, Betsy. *Animal Snackers*. 2004. 32p. Holt, \$15.95 (0-8050-6748-5).

Preschool-Gr. 2. Lewin introduces 12 different animals and their eating habits in her hilarious poems and pictures. A page of animal facts at the end gives more information.

Pringle, Laurence. *Come to the Ocean's Edge: A Nature Cycle Book*. Illus. by Michael Chesworth. 2003. 32p. Boyds Mills, \$15.95 (1-56397-779-6).

Preschool-Gr. 1. Double-page watercolors and lyrical text lead the reader through a day and a night at the ocean's edge—a beautiful, mysterious place and a habitat for creatures such as birds, fish, and crustaceans. On the last page, smaller versions of the illustrations are paired with text offering additional information about the weather, animals, and plants in the scenes.

Ray, Mary Lyn. *Welcome, Brown Bird*. Illus. by Peter Sylvada. 2004. 32p. Harcourt, \$16 (0-15-292863-4).

K-Gr. 3. The miracle of the migra-

tion of the small wood thrush comes to life in the poetic text and beautiful art of this story. A boy who lives at the edge of the woods in New England waits and listens in the spring for the song of the wood thrush. Meanwhile, all summer, thousands of miles away in the steamy rain forests of Central America, another boy waits for the thrush to return. Ray's note at the end includes fascinating details about the thrush and its migratory flight as well as an impassioned plea for the preservation of this songbird's habitat.

Rose, Deborah Lee. *One Nighttime Sea*. Illus. by Steve Jenkins. 2003. 40p. Scholastic, \$16.95 (0-439-33906-5).

K-Gr. 2. "All night long, while you are asleep, / millions of sea creatures move through the deep!" This counting book about the sea at night features Jenkins' dramatic cut-paper collages and introduces 20 denizens of the deep, some familiar and others less so. A section at the end with additional information provides interesting details about each animal.

Sayre, April Pulley. *Trout, Trout, Trout! (A Fish Chant)*. Illus. by Trip Park. 2003. 32p. NorthWord, \$15.95 (1-55971-889-7).

Gr. 1-3. Wild and wacky, colorful caricatures of 46 different freshwater fish accompany Sayre's rollicking text: "Paddlefish, / Flagfish, / they're all real. / Mosquitofish, Sunfish, / Eel, Eel, Eel!" Despite the cartoonish depiction of fish engaged in human activities (a Freshwater Drum as a school crossing guard, for instance), the creatures are accurately drawn. An appendix gives further information about each species.

Schaefer, Lola M. *Pick, Pull, Snap! Where Once a Flower Bloomed*. Illus. by Lindsay Barrett George. 2003. 32p. Greenwillow, \$15.99 (0-688-17834-0).

K-Gr. 2. This lift-the-flap title offers a basic introduction to plant

## Series Connections

**These series are intended for the beginning reader to read on his or her own. However, certain individual titles make wonderful read-alouds for younger listeners.**

- **Let's-Read-and-Find-Out Science.** HarperCollins. Individual books, 32-40p., \$15.99; paper, \$4.99. This is the longest-lived picture-book science series in the industry, founded in 1960. The picture books provide focused exploration of science topics such as anatomy, space science, biology, physics, and paleontology. There are currently more than 90 titles in the series.
- **Rookie Read-About Science.** Children's Press. Individual books, 32p., \$19. Launched in 1990, this series now features more than 100 titles, each one explaining a fundamental science concept in a clear and concise way and generously illustrated with color photos. Topics are drawn mainly from physical and natural science disciplines.

Listed below are articles from past issues of *Book Links* about literature-based science. For information on how to obtain back issues, see p.3.

- "Story-Enhancing Your Science Lessons," January 1998, p.46
- "Science and Poetry: The Natural Connection," March 1999, p.42
- "Read-Aloud Science Books," March 2000, p.10 (Available on *Book Links* Web site at <http://www.ala.org/BookLinks> in the "Archive of Online Articles" section)
- "Discovering Science through Read-Alouds," October/November 2001, p.53

growth. On each spread, rhythmic text describes a plant's flower or husk and shows a cross section that reveals the seeds inside. A few lines of text explain a plant's growth, and then the page folds out to reveal the mature plant—peas, raspberries, corn, peanuts, and so on. Back matter gives gardening directions for the featured plants, and a final illustration counts through the months for preschoolers learning the seasons.

Schofield, Jennifer. *Animal Babies in Grasslands*. 2004. 32p. Kingfisher, \$7.95 (0-7534-5789-X).

Preschool. This entry in the Animal Baby series features crisp color photos of seven animal babies with first-person description such as "I am small and furry. When trouble is close by, I bark very loudly." And always the question, "Who is my mommy?" Turn the page and a photo of a mother and child together with another fact or two answers the

question. Other titles in the series are *Animal Babies in Polar Lands*, *Animal Babies in Ponds and Rivers*, and *Animal Babies in Rain Forests* (all Kingfisher, 2004).

Seuling, Barbara. *Whose House?* Illus. by Kay Choro. 2004. 32p. Harcourt, \$16 (0-15-216347-6).

Preschool–Gr. 2. In rhyming text a little boy considers the abodes of some familiar animals. After imagining a visit to each animal home (up in the tree with the chickadee, crawling through a beehive with honey splattered on his head), he decides that his house is just right. Choro's colorful, comforting art with its gentle humor makes this a satisfying book for young children.

Sill, Cathryn. *About Crustaceans: A Guide for Children*. Illus. by John Sill. 2004. 40p. Peachtree, \$15.95 (0-56145-301-3).

Preschool–Gr. 2. This title in the

Sills' About series is as interesting and informative as its companions (which cover birds, mammals, amphibians, and more). Here readers learn the physical characteristics of all crustaceans, as well as the special features of a few species. Realistic and often quite handsome, the watercolor paintings on the right-hand pages show lobsters, crabs, krill, barnacles, pill bugs, and others, while the facing pages carry large-print text, usually just one sentence per spread. An afterword refers back to each of the 15 color plates, with a paragraph of information on the species pictured.

Walsh, Ellen Stoll. *Dot and Jabber and the Big Bug Mystery*. 2003. 40p. Harcourt, \$15 (0-15-216518-5).

Preschool–Gr. 2. The mouse detectives are back, seeking answers to the mysteries of nature. "Bugs are all over. . . Then, *poof!* They're gone!" In their pursuit of clues, Dot and Jabber discover nature's gift of camouflage. This third title in the excellent series will turn very young children on to the science in the world around them. The other titles are *Dot and Jabber and the Great Acorn Mystery* (Harcourt, 2001) and *Dot and Jabber and the Mystery of the Missing Stream* (Harcourt, 2002).

Weeks, Sarah. *Without You*. Illus. by Suzanne Duranceau. 2003. 40p. HarperCollins/Laura Geringer, \$16.99 (0-06-027816-1).

Preschool–Gr. 2. A CD is included in this tribute to the male emperor penguin as he cares for his mate's egg, and, eventually, a baby penguin. The rhymed text, told from the chick's perspective, and the heartwarming, dramatic art make this good for sharing.

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John Himmelman  
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