

who need extra encouragement to pick up a book.

Nicola's Floating Home is an engaging and interesting look into the life of a ten-year-old girl who lives on an 18-metre sailboat. Girls of similar age may particularly delight in both the similarities and differences between their lives and Nicola's. Family photos showing Nicola growing up on board the *Kirtonia* help the reader feel they have gotten to know this girl and her "floating home." All is not excitement and exotic adventures, however, like swimming with dolphins and diving in coral reefs. The dangers of such a lifestyle are recognized in the example of an accident where Nicola's mother's arms were caught in an automatic winch. One gets a real sense of the *Kirtonia* as a family home, and of a family that works together to maintain and enjoy their floating home. This book will widen horizons on what a home is and how people's lifestyles can be very different, yet very similar, to one's own.

Homes Around the World was a disappointment. It might have been better as a picture book, since the photographs are largely left to stand on their own. Captions in a listing at the back, rather than with the photographs, are largely wasted; many children may not bother looking them up. In addition, the existing captions offer little information. For example, there is a photo in the section on Country Homes of a girl holding a pumpkin. The related caption reads, "Some farmers grow pumpkins." Where? An alternative caption might read, "This girl lives in Place X, where some farmers grow pumpkins." Similarly, a beautiful full-page photograph has the description, "A tropical home in Thailand." Not only would more information about the house, for example its building material, be a helpful and useful addition, but so would some indication of where Thailand is in the world — perhaps a map on the inside cover as in the previous series reviewed? In fact, considering the topic covered, the omission of a map is a serious one. Rather than referring children to a globe or atlas, why not superimpose the photographs of children from around the world on pages 28 and 29 onto a simple world map? This book was frustrating in its over-simplification and limited information on children and their homes around the world.

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The Questions a Child Asks: Scientific Answers

Who Needs to Sleep Anyway? How Animals Sleep. Dr. Colin Shapiro. Illus. Sari O'Sullivan. Black Moss Press, 1996. 32 pp. \$6.95 paper. ISBN 0-88753-281-0. *Why Do Stars Twinkle? And Other Nighttime Questions.* Catherine Ripley. Illus. Scot Ritchie. Owl Books, 1996. Unpag. \$6.95 paper. ISBN 1-895688-42-6.

As with many a child's book, *Who Needs to Sleep Anyway?* — mainly about sleep and a little about dreaming — resulted from a bed-time story which became a conversation between a professionally knowledgeable Dad and his energetic, inquisitive daughter. The events reported here will be overly familiar to anyone who has ever tried to read a youngster to sleep. Judging by the vocabulary the recipient of the story is much in advance of the delightful illustrations (by Sari O'Sullivan)

accompanying the text. In this sense they are a little redundant and some of the space could have been used to greater effect, with more pertinent illustrations employed. The daughter's age is not given, although a somewhat older girl, inappropriately clutching a stuffed toy, appears in one illustration. She is deemed old enough to be introduced to such terms as "rest-activity cycle" and "polyphasic (polyphasic?) sleeping." She asks such major questions as "Why do I need to go to sleep?", "Who needs sleep anyway?" (a point readily answerable by Dad, I am sure), "Do all animals dream?" and "Who sleeps the most?" Several of these questions are admirably answered, and a few, including the first sentence in the book, are not, although a number of most interesting answers might be suggested — for example, to quote the Bard, "To sleep perchance to dream." Such answers would be assimilated with ease by such a daughter. Eye and brain activity related to dreaming and sleep are touched upon, while the answer to "What do animals dream about?" is surmise, and inadequate — did the daughter inquire "How do you know that?"

However, the book is worthwhile and reasonably priced and given that this is the author's first book for children, hopefully not his last. But he had better write the next one soon since by the looks of it his daughter, if she still demands bed-time stories, will want to read some of the material her father writes professionally.

Why Do Stars Twinkle? is a competently written book with an apt balance between good pictures and text, designed for the quite young — no age being specified — reader or to-be-read-to readership. Obviously the author and illustrator have been careful in collaboration. The former has the experience of writing three other books of a similar nature to this, the current title addressing fourteen common questions (each with a picture) which a child might ask. "Is there a man on the moon?", "Will I dream tonight?", and, of course, the title question. There is the odd mistake and a few missed opportunities. "Why can't I see just after the lights go out?" is primarily due to the lack of sensitivity of chemicals in the eye, rather than due to pupil size, which, incidentally, changes faster than described. An opportunity is missed in answering "Why do a cat's eyes shine in the dark?". The answer given is correct, but the reason given for it is ambiguous. "This gives the cat more light to see by" almost implies that the eye is acting like a torch, whereas it is reflected light from the eye which enables chemicals in the eye to react to light if they did not do so when light first entered it. In answering the book's title, light is mentioned as being deflected by the "humps and bumps" in the atmosphere, without describing what these are or how they continually change the position of light beams arriving from stars — the phenomenon has little to do with "weak" light. Such remarks as these can sound a little precious. However, a reasonably inquisitive child is likely to comment upon some answers as given in the book.

Errors of omission and commission notwithstanding, most posed questions are briefly and credibly answered. "Is there a man in the moon?", for example, is answered correctly both from a physical and perceptual viewpoint. Nicely put, presented and priced.

David Piggins and Barbara Guy Long are an experimental psychologist, and artist and weaver of willow wattle respectively. They would like to thank their young collaborators Dillon Guy (aged six) and Marlee Guy (aged four) for their help in reviewing both of the above books.