

Mini-Reviews

Ghosts and Other Scary Stories. Allan Gould and Pat Hancock. Illus. Allan and Deborah Drew-Brook-Cormack. Scholastic Canada, 1993 (The under cover book and light series). 128 pp., \$13.95 paperback book and light. ISBN 0-590-47162-7.

In this tantalizing and terrifying collection, Gould and Hancock have used a subtle technique to captivate their audience—mingle fact with fiction, until the reader can no longer differentiate between the two. This masterful collection screams to be read aloud. It is the type of book that any parent could read around a crowded campfire and come away from a weekend at the lake with youngsters begging for more.

Each of the nine eerie tales in this collection is enhanced by a full-page black-and-white depiction of the story, in which life-like figures appear in ghostly shapes. Each story in this collection is unique, its characters larger than life and its presentation flawless.

In one story, Michael Smithson, an aspiring inventor, explores the merits of his mother's new computer despite her warning. Michael's only concern is whether or not his mother will return before he has a chance to play a few games—that is, until a voice from "the other side" lights up the computer screen. The on-line ghost begins to tell his story. "I do not have a body. I can't make myself heard. That is why I need you." Michael tries everything imaginable to shut off the computer, but the ghostly messages continue to appear. He soon learns what the ghost has in mind for him and despite his fears, he decides that he must try to carry out the ghost's instructions. *If he doesn't, the ghost warns, a young woman will die.* Michael is the only one who can save her.

With this plausible setting, a contemporary theme and lively dialogue, *Weird Bytes* comes to life. This is the one common thread that runs through each of the stories in this collection—the feeling that this could *almost* be happening.

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The Random House SCIENCE Encyclopedia. Random House, 1993. 448 pp., \$60.00 cloth. ISBN 0-394-22341-1.

Imagine an encyclopedia for the TV and computer generation—the layout, the organization, and the writing style. What do you envision? Short passages with

plenty of pictures? A non-linear approach like a relational database with connections and cross references? An easy-to-read, down to layman's terms, style of writing? If so, you would be right.

Unlike encyclopedias for linear minds with alphabetical listings of topics, this volume is organized into twenty sections, including a How to Use This Book section and a unique Fact Finder section. Its alphabetical concessions are a Glossary and an Index. Organized by scientific content, its topics are grouped into three areas—physical science, earth and space science, and life science. Within each section, topics follow a stream of consciousness—one idea flowing to the next. For example, in the Space section it flows from Universe, to Origin of the Universe, to Galaxies, Stars, Life Cycle of Stars and so on until it reaches Humans in Space, and finally, Space Stations.

The SCIENCE Encyclopedia is a good read and will motivate an interest in science; however, it contains errors and misleading statements which blemish it. To name only a few:

Aluminum (page 53): One mole of aluminum, accurately stated as 27 grams, does not equal 1.6 ounces. One ounce is equal to 28.38 grams which would make one mole of aluminum less than an ounce.

Ethylene (page 406): Ethylene plus water yields ethanol not methylated spirits: methylated spirits is Methanol. As well, photographic film is made from polyester not polyethylene. The properties of the two are different. The required properties for photographic film are rigidity and dimensional stability which is possessed by polyester.

Copper (page 86): Matching irrelevant information to the explanation of copper results in misinformation. Copper is used for pipes because it is easy to form, not because it is a good conductor of heat or electricity.

Metallic bonds (page 29): Using an example of the metal in an electric light bulb as a good conductor of electricity is misleading. Tungsten glows because it has a high resistance to electricity not because it is a good conductor.

The SCIENCE Encyclopedia, meant to attract the unscientific reader with pleasing illustrations and a variety of brief information to whet the appetite, succeeds in its purpose. However, when any scientific volume is boiled down to make science more palatable, what often goes by the board is accuracy. Unfortunately, this volume is no exception.

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