



Horrible Science: The Body Owner's Handbook

Author: Nick Arnold
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Ever suspected that babies aren't actually delivered by a bird, or that chocolate isn't as bad as the 'boffins' claim? If so, or you just like an enjoyable read, you're in the right place.

'Science with the squishy bits left in!' Not the most mature blurb to find on the back of a book; yet as an adult of some 36 years I can happily report that Nick Arnold's effort - as one might expect from the people who brought us the *Horrible Histories* series - is a 'proper' book on human biology, and an interesting one too.

Augmented by Tony De Saulles' excellent illustrations, the *Handbook* is a humours parody of that popular range of motor manuals used by tinkerers of cars nationwide for decades. As such, 'Monster' the main character and indeed many of his contemporaries are referred to throughout as 'bodies', i.e. inanimate objects that require maintenance, an approach particularly prevalent in the earlier stages of the book. This being the case, the dimensions, capabilities and systems of the human body are detailed like the specifications of a car, an ingenious and fun way of conveying interesting facts about human physiology. Of particular note is Arnold's explanation of how the various senses of the human body actually work, again delivered as would be a list of functions for an inanimate machine, with the 'maintenance' section then continuing to explain the physiological consequences of smoking and drinking. This is particularly pertinent when one considers the main market for this book: children in the late Primary/early Secondary school stage(s) of their education. That said, though, the scientific explanation of what happens when one drinks/smokes will probably be of just as much interest to their parents or other adults. The *Handbook* closes in a similar vein, moving on from the disadvantages of drinking/smoking to give a full explanation of the process of human reproduction. The various stages of pregnancy are particularly detailed and inform the younger reader as to the seriousness of bringing a new life into the world.

Overall, then, I really like this book. It explains how the body works along with listing what is good for it - and indeed what is bad - all in a way that both young and old readers alike will understand and enjoy. I personally am taking a Biology GCSE at the moment (as a mature student) and have found this a very useful (and accurate) afternoon's reading; it is not a long book.

9 sausages out of 10

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