

BOOK REVIEWS

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EVOLUTION/CREATIONISM CONTROVERSY

Critique of Intelligent Design: Materialism versus Creationism from Antiquity to the Present. By John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York. 2008. Monthly Review Press. (ISBN 9781583671733). 240 pp. Paperback. \$15.95.

With so much focus on Charles Darwin's 200th birthday this year, the topic of evolution and intelligent design has taken on a greater meaning in both science classrooms and school districts across the nation. ***Critique of Intelligent Design*** provides educators and policy makers alike with a historical background of "the intelligent design movement, which arose in the United States in the 1990s and quickly obtained headlines through its challenge to the teaching of evolution in public schools, as the outgrowth of a

2,500-year *critique of materialism* dating back to the ancient Greeks." John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York provide the reader with a "brief account of the 2,500-year materialist *critique of intelligent design* (creationism) out of which the modern scientific worldview emerged." Of special importance are the recent court decisions "viewing the intelligent design claims to science as little more than traditional creationist 'God of the gaps' arguments which violate the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution."

In ***Critique of Intelligent Design***, the reader is led on a path of discovery on the "evolution" of the materialist critique – the explanation of the world in terms of itself – from antiquity to the present through engaging in the works of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Lucretius, Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, David Hume, William Paley, Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Stephen Jay Gould, and numerous others (including modern-day advocates of intelligent design). The central thesis of the book deals with the "tension" between nature, science, history, morality, and knowledge. Along with addressing issues like the design debate in antiquity, the Enlightenment and natural theology, and current scientific debates over evolution and design, Foster, Clark, and York offer key components to understanding and defending critical and scientific reasoning in both the natural and social sciences. While other specialized books of this type exist for those in the fields of science, philosophy/theology, and law, this book clearly explains to the expert and layperson alike, the past and current debates on evolution and intelligent design and

their importance to society as a whole.

This is a fascinating and very well organized book which provides the reader with a contextual understanding and historical appreciation of the nature of science and its importance to past, current, and future debates on scientific pursuits such as evolution and those which are considered to be pseudoscientific; namely intelligent design (creationism). ***Critique of Intelligent Design*** is a wonderful resource which provides students and teachers of science alike the opportunity to appreciate the history and philosophy of scientific discourse. It would be an extremely welcome addition to a classroom or library bookshelf.



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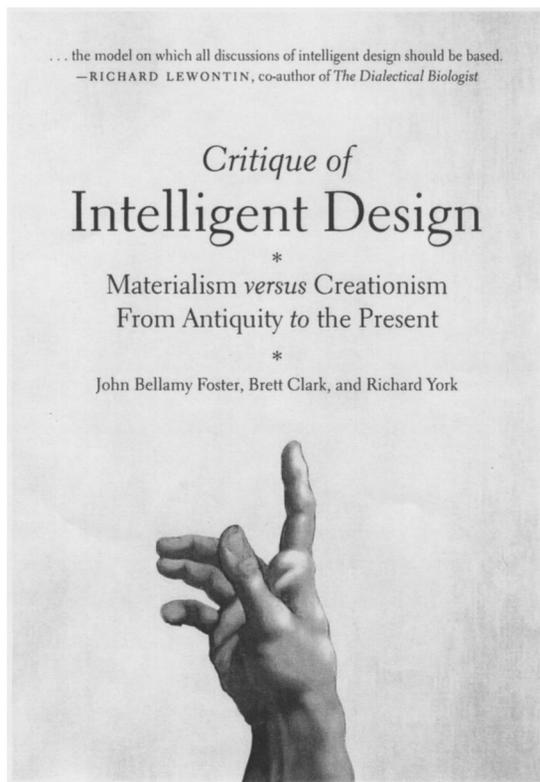
GIFT BOOKS

Bears: A Year in the Life. By Matthias Breiter. 2005. Firefly Books Ltd. (ISBN 13: 978-1-55407-461-7). 176 pp. Paperback. \$24.95

In the end we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught.

– Baba Dioum, Senegal

This quote found in the preface of Matthias Breiter's book sums things up for me pretty well. Whether you pick the book up for your class to explore, or from



your library for research, or just to thumb through on your own, you will find all you should need to know about North American bears. He effectively teaches you volumes about the three species found in North America: the black bear, the brown or grizzly bear, and the polar bear. You do come to understand much from the book and in the end, learn to appreciate them.

The first thing that dazzled me was the photography. The photos, all taken by Breiter, really capture some amazing moments as Breiter brings the reader along on his journey. One shot in particular shows a bear with jaws wide open – makes you feel like you are about to be lunch! Reading Breiter's words is more like sitting down to coffee with a wildlife biologist – easy to read and full of interesting facts. The book is arranged so as to give insight as to what is going on each month of the year for the North American bears.

The book opens where new life begins – in February with hibernation in full swing and the arrival of new cubs. According to Breiter, bears are the only mammals that give birth at this time, when winter is at its harshest. There is some excellent content on what exactly hibernation in the bear entails, and Breiter goes into great detail later in differentiating between hibernation in bears and in other animal species.

I particularly enjoyed Breiter dispelling some of the myths that have become “common belief” in bear lore. Their eyesight is nowhere near as poor as once thought, and their sense of smell is comparable to that of canines. In talking about polar bears, Breiter mentions that “the animals can detect the lair of a seal from over half a mile away, even if covered by 3 feet of snow.” Their sense of hearing is also much more highly developed than that of humans.

The book proceeds to cover in great depth such topics as bear physiology, mating behaviors, and the complex evolution of the bear species. Breiter addresses the challenges that occur as a result of expanding human populations – such as habitat destruction and increased interactions between humans and bears. An appendix at the end covers information on five bear species that do not inhabit North America.

At one point, Breiter was asked “What good is a bear?” I feel strongly that he has answered that question

well in *Bears: A Year in the Life*. If nothing else, one should take the time to read the book before creating a false impression of bears. I was anxious to get the book home to show my children and they spent over an hour just looking through the photographs. Since that day, they have returned to the book often, as would anyone who is open to learning more about these amazing creatures.

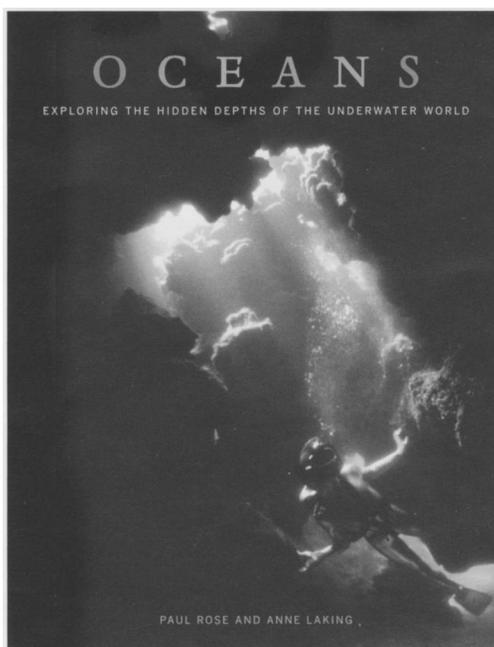
The text and photographs expertly give an honest overture of North American bears that would be welcome in any home, library, or classroom.



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Oceans: Exploring the Hidden Depths of the Underwater World. By Paul Rose and Anne Laking. 2009. University of California Press and BBC Books. (ISBN 978-0-520-26028-3) 240 pp. Hardcover. \$34.95

Gorgeous, clear, glossy pictures that cover a wide range of ocean views are scattered throughout this coffee table-style book that recounts the discoveries of four adventurers (a dive trainer to the U.S. Navy, a maritime archaeologist, a marine biologist/oceanographer, and conservationist Philippe Cousteau, grandson of



Jacques Cousteau) over a year-long ocean exploration. While there is a preponderance of marine mammals pictured, there are also sharks, fish, and a few (sadly few) invertebrates besides reef-forming corals, as well as interesting satellite-perspective images of various locales and some intertidal and terrestrial views. The schematic diagrams are clear and the figure legends accompanying the pictures and schematics are thorough and interesting. The book contains seven chapters, separated by geographic region: the Mediterranean, the Atlantic Ocean, the Sea of Cortez (in Mexico), the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, the Southern Ocean, and the Arctic Ocean, as well as an introduction and a foreword by Philippe Cousteau. On most pages, there is a highlighted quote that is pulled out from the text in larger font to catch your interest, and largely these quotes are tremendously effective.

The book does not expand our scientific knowledge much by exploring new areas. Most of the content has been documented elsewhere, and the photos presented are not unusual photographs, just very nice ones. This is a beautiful book for perusal by an ocean enthusiast (or even someone just discovering the wonders of the ocean), especially for the price, but it does not present scientifically many of the pressing issues and cutting-edge research being performed in the ocean today. There is, however, an interesting blend of biology, oceanography, and archaeology, historical and present-day information, interspersed with personal anticipation and reflective accounts of the adventure that occurred. I, as a life-long lover of the ocean, learned a number of new interesting facts, and certainly enjoyed the read. The authors make an effort to cover many of the pressing threats to the oceans (overharvesting, warming temperatures, trash) as well as the wonders, but typically the discussion of the problems is a simple outline of the issue and no citations for further, more concrete information or scientific work performed on the subject. The writing is clear, fluid, and interesting, effectively conveying the passion the writers have for their subject. The information is separated into logical sections so even a short perusal can be informative. But again, the real attraction of this book is the amazing pictures, which make it a steal for the price.

One irksome issue needs noting: There is an entire page extolling the