

the end of the book. The illustrations are clear and complement the text nicely.

For those readers who thrive on evolutionary arguments, there is plenty in this book, except for evolutionary neuroscience. For instance, Linden covers considerable ground on mammalian brain evolution and insists that the design of the brain is 'unintelligent' but does not cite any recent evidence to support his thesis. On the other hand, he spends a considerable amount of text discussing sleeping and dreaming (chapter 7) but concludes by saying that there is not a definite argument regarding a brain mechanism to explain different dreaming patterns. In the chapter dealing with sexual selection Linden explains some of the best-known experiments regarding sexual selection and a possible genetic and neurological basis for homosexuality. He points out some of the flaws in the experimental work and concludes that sexual orientation might be the result of sociocultural and biological determinants (p. 183).

Finally, Linden concludes (once again) that brains are flawed in their design. He leaves the reader well aware that the brain is not the 'computer-like' machine we always imagined. We are also left with the sense that much more needs to be discovered about the functioning of the brain. After finishing the book, I wished the author had spent more time focusing on further arguments to support his central thesis about the imperfection of brain design and less time on poorly explained topics such as a connection between brain and religion. However, **The Accidental Mind** fulfills its mission of providing a provocative reading on many unanswered questions about our brain.



José Vázquez
General Studies Program
New York University
New York, NY 10003
jrv2@nyu.edu

SCIENCE WRITING

The Best American Science and Nature Writing 2007. Edited and Introduction by Richard Preston. Series Editor, Tim Folger. 2007. Houghton Mifflin Company. (ISBN 0618722319). 300 pp. Paperback. \$14.00.

Do you want to grab your students' attention with some startling facts? Add some interesting stories to your direct instruction? Are you looking for a way to integrate your biology content with other content areas in your high school? Or instruct the students on good science writing techniques? If your answer to any one of these questions is yes, then this book is for you.

This book is a collection of 28 essays written for such magazines as *Discover*, *Smithsonian*, *National Geographic*, and *The New York Times Magazine*. Some of the authors are writers: Michael D. Lemonick and Bonnie J. Rough; others are scientists: Lynn Margulis, Stephen W. Pacala, and Robert Socolow. One author is a middle and high school teacher, Emily Case. The topics vary from archeology and biology to the environment and space travel. Some of the selections are short and to the point, some belabor the idea being presented. However, all of them present a view of science content that is more personal – a story rather than a report.

Richard Preston, the editor, describes his selection as "pieces in which the author displays a hint of obsession, especially if it involves a topic that's fresh, little known, or offbeat." That certainly describes the first selection, *In Rome's Basement* by Paul Bennett. This account of an archeologist's work in the sewers of Rome has many interesting pieces of information. The "Great Drain" known as the Cloaca Maxima beneath the Roman Forum is amazing. I will be sharing this one with my Latin teacher friend.

The characteristic of an author with an obsession is clearly represented in *Cooking for Eggheads* by Patricia Gadsby and *In the Company of Bears* by Bill Sherwonit. Each of these pieces shows that what seems commonplace requires more patience to develop an understanding of a process in the case of the cooking article and a behavior in the bear article. I will be sharing the cooking article with my friends: one a cooking teacher, the other a chemistry teacher.

The environmental selections are powerful. *Plastic Ocean* by Susan Casey and *The Rape of Appalachia* by Michael Shnayerson will generate class discussion and a more critical evaluation of our current use of materials. *Plastic Ocean* gives the reader an idea of the size of the impact of plastics not only on the ocean but to humans as well. *The Rape*

of Appalachia shows how politics, the need for energy, and human lives are intertwined.

In *The Flu Hunter*, Michael Rosenwald describes the work of Robert Webster, a world-renowned virologist, as he tracks down the pathway of the flu H5N1. In one paragraph, Rosenwald describes a stained-glass window in Webster's house. This window is the portrait of how Webster thinks about the evolution of flu pandemics: "At the top of the glass, birds fly. Below them, a pig grazes. Man stands off to the left. Below all of them are circles that represent viruses and seem to be in motion. They are set in a backdrop of fever red."

The final selection, *DNA is Not Destiny* by Ethan Watters, revisits the argument "nature or nurture." His description of some of the research in epigenetics indicates that our environment plays a role in our own gene expression and can influence the gene expression for several generations to follow. This article can be used to introduce epigenetics, the impact of behaviors on biology, and how scientists learn about this new field. Although only 12 pages in length, there is a vast amount of "food for thought" for both the teacher and the students.

This review would be incomplete if I did not strongly recommend that you read the *Introduction* by Richard Preston. On page xvi, Preston describes the difference between the scientist writing and the writer writing about science. "A scientist uses the language of mathematics and the precision of technical language...to construct a formalized and communicable model of nature." A writer of science "must grasp the methods of storytelling...using language-to get across to general readers the immense mystery of Other in nature." Preston, on page xix, offers advice to aspiring writers. I will share these with my students who enjoy learning the science but do not want to do science. We need to encourage good writers who have a solid understanding of science to become the authors of selections that could appear in **The Best American Science and Nature Writings** in the future. We need a citizenry that appreciates the work of scientists.



Pat Waller
NABT President-2007
National Association of Biology Teachers
Reston, VA
pwaller@nabt.org