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# Book Reviews

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## Biochemistry

### UNDERSTANDING ENZYMES

by Trevor Palmer. 1981. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. (One Wiley Dr., Somerset, NJ 08873). 405 p. \$80.95 hardback.

This is intended as a textbook in biochemistry for undergraduate applied biology or medical laboratory sciences, though I believe it to be wholly appropriate for students in non-applied curricula. Palmer's claim in the preface that it assumes little knowledge of chemistry is invalid, but he does introduce the necessary principles of biochemistry.

As opposed to merely describing the state of knowledge, Palmer emphasizes the laboratory techniques of enzymology and some historical development of theory. True to his audience, he added applications in medicine and industry, including coverage of the technologies seldom present in competing textbooks. Furthermore, he also offers a reasonably rigorous mathematical treatment of kinetics. Compared with the popular short books on enzymes, this treatment is more erudite and thorough.

Some of the illustrations are a bit amateurish, but they convey meaning effectively. Nevertheless, I believe that the addition of a few photographs could have enhanced the descriptions of some instruments and methods.

At the end of each chapter is found a short list of problems, with answers and some explanations supplied, and lists of further readings. The citations are sparse for most chapters, and they are mostly derived from reviews and treatises.

Considering the key role of enzymes in metabolism, physiology, medical diagnosis, and biochemical analysis and the growing understanding of the centrality of enzymes in regulation of living systems, more students should be exposed to textbooks such as this. However, its price may preclude this.

Howard Stein  
Grand Valley State Colleges  
Allendale, Michigan

Emmett Wright is NABT's book review editor. Dr. Wright is Associate Professor of Science Education, and Director of the Science Teaching Center, at the University of Maryland. He also holds a joint appointment at the University's College of Agriculture in Environmental Science.

Readers interested in becoming book reviewers should contact Dr. Wright directly. Inquiries on this feature should be directed to him at:

Science Teaching Center  
University of Maryland  
College Park, MD 20742

## Educational and Professional Concerns

### DON'T BLAME THE KIDS

by Gene I. Maeroff. 1982. McGraw-Hill Book Co. (1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020). 260 p. \$14.95 hardback.

Gene Maeroff, an experienced *New York Times* reporter, traces the major problems of the public schools to their sources. He does this in a succinct manner, draped in a "painless" literary style. His chapters are sequentially arranged, beginning with "Why Not Blame The Kids?" and concluding with a chapter entitled "Parents."

The author doesn't let anyone "off the hook" when he discusses the failures of the public school system. He blames equally judges, who are unfamiliar with the school system; public officials, only concerned with their own images; teachers, unfit to teach; principals without leadership skills; superintendents, who ignore problems; and parents, who should be more involved and concerned but who have their own problems.

This book suggests how adults have foisted many of their problems off onto the schools and have made public schools "dumping grounds" of our society. Maeroff points out that schools

have been asked to assume the responsibility for the rest of society in such areas as integration, food programs, immunization, bilingual and career education, and literacy programs. He doesn't discount the importance of these activities, but he points out that, at the same time, students are being permitted to graduate without having gained the appropriate skills to function in society.

The success of this book rests upon Maeroff's experiences as a traveler in and through the nation's educational institutions. He is able to discuss what works and what doesn't work in inner city schools. He shows how the "back-to-basics" movement can often be nothing more than an excuse to provide students with a "denuded" curriculum because "there's no money!"

Educators may not necessarily agree with some of Maeroff's conclusions in the chapters entitled "Teachers" and "Parents." He supports the tenure laws, but only so long as the basis for teacher employment rests upon the ability to teach and conduct a classroom. His discussion of parents is somewhat weak in that his chief suggestion is that parents need to become involved in advisory councils. However, he more than makes up for this in the "Epilogue," when he states that his "plea for greater parental involvement is not meant to add a special interest group. . . , but to strengthen the one body of adults who have the greatest stake" in the success of students.

This book will be easily read and well accepted by the concerned educator because it presents realistic problems and offers viable alternative solutions to most of these problems.

Jerry Resnick  
NABT  
Brooklyn, New York

## Evolution

### MAN'S PLACE IN EVOLUTION

by the Staff of the British Museum of Natural History. 1980. Cambridge University Press (32 East 57th St., New York, NY 10022). 108 p. Price not given. Hardback and softback.