


CHILDREN'S SCIENCE

Under The Microscope: Insects. By Tamara Green. 2000. Grolier Educational (Sherman Turnpike, Danbury, CT 06816). 384 pp. (Each of 8 volumes—48 pp.) Hardback \$235.00.

 **Under The Microscope: Insects** is an eight-volume set of books for children ages 8 to 12. Each volume in the series consists of 48 pages of text, illustrations and photographs devoted to explaining and describing some aspect of insect life. The first three volumes, **Lifecycles**, **Bodywork** (focusing on anatomy and physiology) and **On the Move** (focus-

ing on means of locomotion) were examined for this review. Additional volumes include **Habitats**, **Record-Breakers**, **Behavior**, **Homes and Around People**.


The illustrations are very well done and the photography is excellent, resulting in an attractively presented set of books that will stimulate a young scientist's interest and curiosity. Each volume contains a glossary specific to that volume and an index to the entire set. The reading level of the text is generally suitable for the intended age level; however, occasionally technical terms are used without definition, thus detracting from the flow of the text. As an aid to interpretation of the text,

it would also be helpful if insect structures shown in the illustrations were labeled in greater detail. For example, in the context of a discussion of digestive systems in the *Bodyworks* volume the author writes, "The main organs of excretion in insects are the *malpighian tubules*. They are long, thin tubes that grow from the wall of the digestive system, usually in the abdomen" (p. 24). While the location of the "malpighian tubules" is clearly described in the text, "excretion" is used without definition and is not listed in the glossary or the index. Furthermore, a nearby illustration shows the digestive system with associated malpighian tubules, but the tubules themselves are not labeled. Such flaws are few and far between, however, and they do not detract significantly from the overall high quality of these books.

The cost of this series is prohibitive for individual purchase; however, it would be a wonderful addition to the catalog of an elementary or middle school library. Students with an interest in the natural world will find much to motivate their curiosity and expand their knowledge of the lives of insects.

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A Book of Flies, Real or Otherwise. By Richard Michelson. 1999. Marshall Cavendish (99 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, NY 10591). 56 pp. Hardback, heavy stock paper \$18.95. (ages 9–12).

 This whimsical, delightfully illustrated children's book will tell you all kinds of fun, interesting and occasionally ghoulish information about various kinds of insects. For each insect, there is a poem, followed by a page of scientific information. Opposite the poem is a colorful, imaginative illustration by renowned artist Leonard Baskin. Opposite the page of scientific information is an artistic black and white illustration. Often, the poems and illustrations are take-offs on the fly's name (dragonfly, fruit fly, coffin fly, latrine fly, fairy fly, etc.). The information is often fascinating. Did you know that the fairy fly lays its eggs *inside* dragonfly eggs? I can imagine having a lot of fun and many laughs reading this attractive book to a curious young person with a sense of whimsy and humor. This would make a nice holiday or birthday present for some favorite child in your life.

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