
Did you ever wonder how birds sleep? Or why we have eyebrows? Or why, when someone in the room yawns, pretty soon everyone is yawning? This new book by Kathy Wollard is aimed at the inquisitive late elementary and middle school population of kids. It’s a great book to both incite curiosity and answer those reoccurring science questions.

What is the back story on this creatively titled book? The questions in the book were asked by real kids in Newsday’s “How Come?” column. In 1993, the first How Come? book was published; since then, Wollard has continued answering those questions that science teachers and parents alike cannot escape. This latest volume has the most up-to-date explanations.

The book is divided into several themed sections based on the question content, including “Tricks of Light and Sound,” “Unseen Forces,” “Invisible Particles,” “The Great Beyond,” “Home Planet,” “How’s the Weather,” “Animal (and Plant) World,” and “All About Me (And You).” The latter section addresses a common issue, namely “Can you explain why you get a headache when eating ice cream quickly?” We often refer to this as a “brain freeze.” As it turns out, it is not the brain freezing—rather, there is a rush of blood to the brain. Thus, the pain is caused by an excess of blood flooding an artery in the brain. When the flood recedes, so does the pain.

Also featured in the same section: “Why do songs get stuck in your head?” This is one that has certainly troubled me at times. All day long, I can remember the song I heard on the radio on the way into work; but I cannot remember my lunch or that I have a noon dentist appointment that day. Why can I recall “Pour Some Sugar on Me” all day long and forget the dentist (whom I really should go see if I am in fact pouring sugar)? It appears the reason has to do with the brain’s love of patterns. It turns out that there is an official name for those little snippets of songs we remember—“earworms”! I wouldn’t be thorough unless I told you how to best extract an earworm from your brain. Research has shown that an attention-grabbing activity, like working out, can get the earworm out—at least temporarily. Of course, you could turn the radio back on and get a new earworm stuck in your head, but that doesn’t seem like a solution to me.

Science classrooms from the late elementary level all the way up to high school could benefit from this book. And for parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents: this is also a great gift for that curious kid in your life who likes to learn unique things.

Kay Pedretti
Winona State University, Biology Department
Winona, MN 55987
kpedretti@winona.edu