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Materials for Youth
28 April 2009

Comparing Frogs

When I was a child, I wanted more than anything to be a scientist. I had all sorts of science-at-home kits, but my favorite tools were my magnifying glass and my identification books that helped me observe and categorize the animals, rocks, trees, and insects around me. I lectured my family on conservation techniques and even rode around my neighborhood on my bike picking up litter. But most of all, I read countless informational titles about animals and ecology. And I was not alone: children love animals and science and they need a strong collection of non-fiction titles available to them to feed this interest and this love for exploring the world around them. Librarians must help develop this collection by the careful evaluation of their non-fiction collection. *Charlotte Huck's Children's Literature* provides five major evaluation criteria for children's non-fiction: accuracy and authenticity, content and perspective, style, organization, and illustrations and format (Kiefer 591).

Two recent non-fiction titles for children are Mark W. Moffett's *Face to Face With Frogs* and *Nic Bishop Frogs* by Nic Bishop. National Geographic's *Face to Face* series brings children to the animal's world with close-up pictures and interesting stories about a specific animal or insect such as dolphins, lions, or caterpillars. Published in 2008, Moffett's survey book *Face to Face With Frogs* covers the lifecycle, habitats, diet, and interesting stories of many different kinds of frogs. It contains lots of text; lots of photographs; and sidebars, diagrams, and charts. Writer and photographer of science books for children Nic Bishop created *Nic Bishop Frogs*, also published in 2008. While not part of a publisher's series, it is part of the Scholastic Nonfiction lineup,

and Bishop has written and photographed for many other titles about animals, science, and the outdoors. Colorful text on a variety of topics provides interesting facts rather than a comprehensive overview in this survey book. Bishop's photographs are what really stand out, though, portraying amazing behaviors and stunning close-ups.

Two major components of accuracy and authenticity in science books are the author's qualifications and the factual accuracy of the information presented in the books. Both Moffett and Bishop earned doctoral degrees—Moffett in conservation and Bishop in biology—and both have published articles in peer-reviewed journals (Moffett, Bishop). Moffett has won additional accolades for his conservation work and exploration. Furthermore, *Face to Face With Frogs* lists a curriculum and reading consultant and scientists from various institutions in its acknowledgments section. But degrees and accolades and even external consultation only count for so much; the content within the books must also be accurate. The information in both books was very similar, and they even both told the same story about dart frog mothers bringing their tadpoles high up into the pools of water that form in bromeliads to keep them safe from predators. Most of the information provided was fairly basic (for example, frogs must keep their skin wet to be able to respire), and none of it stood out as untrue. Moffett did resort to anthropomorphizing when he described the dart frog tadpoles on the return of their mother: “And were they happy to see her! When she arrived, each tadpole wiggled its tail in the air as if to say, ‘Hi, mom!’” (25). Frogs do not have feelings and do not perceive mothers as humans do. As Kiefer says, “Such a description has a certain poetic effect, but it also conveys a basically unscientific attitude” (595).

One must also consider the content and perspective of a non-fiction title in evaluating it. Bishop and Moffett have slightly different purposes in writing these books:

Nic Bishop Frogs contains less text but more magnificent photographs, and the text he does include focuses primarily on especially wild facts about frogs. The combined effect seems to be to get kids excited about how awe-inspiring and “awesome” frogs can be. Moffett, on the other hand, while conveying his own passion for animals and the adventures he goes on to photograph them, focuses more on the informational aspect of his book. Diagrams are included as well as sidebars with additional information and longer explanations of frog behavior. Perhaps because of his conservation background, his book seems to aim to instill a love and scientific respect for nature. The lengthier text in his book makes it more suited to slightly older audiences—older elementary students, perhaps—compared to Bishop’s book, which will welcome younger readers who just want to marvel at the photographs and perhaps attempt to tackle the few accompanying sentences. Overall Moffett’s is a more scientific book and includes information on interrelationships between frogs and other scientific subjects: he hints at the scientific method when he writes, “No one thought a frog was smart enough to do such a thing until biologists started to watch the dart frogs very carefully. It was then we discovered that a dart frog can be a great parent.” (25), and the book concludes with sections giving facts at a glance, how children can help preserve frogs’ habitats, and how they can observe frogs themselves. Moffett’s book is better suited to young scientists, but Bishop’s book will draw in a larger crowd for the “wow” factor.

The two books vary widely in style. Nic Bishop’s writing is more concise, with shorter sentences and more colorful language. Moffett still conveys excitement, but he also uses more complex sentences and his book contains more text overall. Both authors have a direct style, though, and both employ some more advanced words such as “bromeliad,” “antifreeze,” and “metamorphosis.” While both books include a glossary,

Kiefer points out that “[a] glossary is helpful, but youngsters who are intent on a book’s content might not take time to look in the back” (599). Moffett uses more “big words,” but his writing involves the reader more, using pronouns such as “you” and “I” and engaging in a little creative non-fiction when he describes frogs escaping from predators and jumping from trees. Moffett’s text is more challenging than Bishop’s, but it is more personally engaging for the reader.

The organization of a book is also important. While *Face to Face With Frogs* has a little more structure, the section headings are not necessarily indicative of the content they introduce. The “not your average frog” section does contain information on particularly unusual frog behavior, but while the “deadly frogs” section is about dart frogs, it focuses primarily on the way female dart frogs care for their young, not on the poisonous nature or capabilities of the frog. *Nic Bishop Frogs* is not divided into titled sections, but it does progress thematically from basic information about frog anatomy and reproduction to how they survive in extreme environments and among predators and then to unusual frog behavior. The varying text size of Bishop’s book also highlight the especially interesting fact on the page, provide additional information about that fact, and captions explain the photographs. Moffett’s book has captions, but the photographs are occasionally on the page before or after the one with the main body text describing the species or behavior in the photographs. Both books contain a short glossary and an index, and *Face to Face With Frogs* contains a list of additional resources in print and on the web.

Finally, the illustrations and format of a non-fiction title can make a book shine or doom it to poor circulation statistics. *Face to Face With Frogs* has accompanying diagrams of a frog’s lifecycle and a map of where his photographs were taken. Moffett’s

photographs are impressive considered on their own, but in comparison, Bishop's are astounding. They are fewer in number than Moffett's, but they are bright and glossy, take up the entire page, are well framed, and perfectly capture an incredible moment, such as a frog's tongue extended to retrieve a caterpillar. There is also one spread where the pages fold out to give a four-page view of a frog's body in various stages of a jump across a pond. Kiefer mentions books in which "[t]he text functions [...] to clarify and extend the pictures rather than the other way around" and emphasizes the importance of "substantive content, high-quality reproduction, and a logical presentation or layout;" Bishop's is such a book, and the book delivers these things. Their text is also well-matched to the purpose of each of these books: Moffett's book is more text-heavy with sidebars and detailed photograph captions to inform young scientists, whereas Bishop's text is colorful and is presented in varying sizes and an unusual font to capture the interest of readers looking for some new ammunition in their arsenal of "did you know" facts ("Did you know a glass frog has see-through skin? Did you know frogs use their eyes to swallow? Did you know some frogs freeze in the winter and are still alive?").

In her parallel review of *Face to Face With Frogs* and *Nic Bishop Frogs*, Deborah Stevenson asserts that "this duo is a both/and rather than an either/or," and she is right. The books will appeal to slightly different audiences (Moffett's to those with a scientific bent and a need for detailed information and Bishop's to the more visually-oriented or those just looking for some far-out facts), but they are both fantastic offerings in the landscape of children's non-fiction.

Works Compared

Bishop, Nic. Nic Bishop Frogs. New York: Scholastic Nonfiction, 2008.

Moffett, Mark W. Face to Face With Frogs. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2008.

Works Cited

Bishop, Nic. "Nic Bishop – About Me." Nic Bishop. 25 April 2009.
<http://www.nicbishop.com/nic_bishop_home_page_002.htm>.

Kiefer, Barbara, Susan Hepler, and Janet Hickman. Charlotte Huck's Children's Literature. 9th ed. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2007.

Moffett, Mark W. "Mark W. Moffett: The Ecologist Explorer Photojournalist." Doctor Bugs Web. 25 April 2009. <http://www.doctorbugs.com/Dr._Bugs_Web.html>.

Stevenson, Deborah. "Nic Bishop Frogs; Face to Face With Frogs." *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* 61.7 (Mar 2008): 283.

The show started and imagine my surprise when, completely_(*expect*), the first model was wearing clothes just like I was! unexpectedly. Everyone saw the _(*similar*) and a couple of people asked me who my _(*style*) was! similarity, stylist. This designer's clothes are really quite_(*like*) anything I've ever seen before.Â Rarely have I _ so much valuable experience in such a short space of time. gained. I was working as an IT manager for a small publishing company (in fact, I was standing _ for the actual manager while she was away on maternity leave) when the company was taken _ by a large multinational media organisation. in over. I have always wondered why many people believe that youth is the most wonderful period in a person's life. From the psychological angle, youth is a very complicated period when young people are undergoing the painful transition from childhood to independence. They are facing psychological problems that may cause aggression and lead to the rejection of adult values and experience. Socially, many young people suffer from such problems as poverty, unemployment, low incomes, or breakdown of the family. So alcohol and drugs may become a kind of psychological or emotional escape for young peopl Nowadays, parents are more accepting of their children, and society is more accepting of different people. There is less of a need to act out, so there are fewer sub-cultures as a result. B. There are still a few youth sub-cultures these days. One phenomenon is haul girls - teenage girls who shop till they drop, then come home with a big â€˜haulâ€™™, usually several bags of clothes. Then they make a video of what they bought, and not just any old video, either.Â D. There are fewer differences between youth sub-cultures than there used to be.Â You have to admit, those sorts of pictures are hilarious, and if they make someone laugh, whereâ€™s the harm in that? 12 The author refers to Mark Zuckerberg as a man who is