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The Beetle Book



Synopsis

Beetles squeak and beetles glow. Beetles stink, beetles sprint, beetles walk on water. With legs, antennae, horns, beautiful shells, knobs, and other odditiesâ "whatâ™s not to like about beetles? The beetle world is vast: one out of every four living things on earth is a beetle. There are over 350,000 different species named so far and scientists suspect there may be as many as a million. From the goliath beetle that weighs one fourth of a pound to the nine inch long titan beetle, award-winning author-illustrator Steve Jenkins presents a fascinating array of these intriguing insects and the many amazing adaptations they have made to survive.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (34 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 4 - 7 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

Customer Reviews

I knew a guy in Los Angeles who created original artwork using photographs of beetles. They were really gorgeous, so it's no surprise to me that the beetle art in Jenkins' latest nature book is, too. The cover alone is worth the price of admission! I will admit I was a little put off when I first opened the book and saw how small the font size is, but I quickly got used to it and realized that its size means the text doesn't compete with the illustrations. Beetle names are in boldface in the text, which is helpful. Another nice touch is that the author-illustrator gives us many of the beetles in black silhouette to show their actual sizes. Jenkins lets the stark white backgrounds set off the

beetles' strong colors and shapes, taking full advantage of negative space and the beetles' symmetry to create graphic art-influenced illustrations. Many of the beetles are static, portrait-style, but some are shown in action, most notably two rhinoceros beetles dueling to win a mate. The illustrations are all the more breathtaking when you realize that they were done entirely using "torn- and cut-paper collage." Jenkins has joined the rarified ranks of Eric Carle and Lois Ehlert in his use of the technique. The science content may remind you of an Eyewitness book. The Beetle Book is filled with fun facts. For example, have you ever heard of the forest fire beetle? "[It] has special heat-sensing spots on its body. It can detect a fire from more than 20 miles (32 kilometers) away. These beetles fly to the site of the forest fire and lay their eggs in charred wood--wood that is now free of predators." I thought he was going to say the beetles sensed the fire and flew away from it, but instead the beetles fly to the fire!

If you don't know much about beetles, you will after reading this book, regardless of your age. The most remarkable facts, with wonderful illustrations, torn- and cut-paper collages created by the author (colorful, clear, even beautiful; the reader views an enlarged version of the beetles, as well as life-size). Steve Jenkins does not talk down to children, nor does he speak up to adults. He writes in a forthright, intelligent and simple manner that should appeal to all ages, I would say beginning from the age of four (I cannot put an age cap on this book since it can be equally enjoyed by all). It's an interesting size - not too large and not too small (my measurements are circa 10-1/4" by 10-1/4"). I got curious about beetles when I saw one in my kitchen. I've always taken them for granted as disposable (I don't like to kill lone insects so I usually find a way to transport them outdoors). But this time I said "Wait! What is the story of this beetle? What it is really like? What is the history of the species?" And that's what led me to read this book. After reading it, I have a tremendous respect for a beetle when I see one. Truly amazing facts are presented. For instance, there are more than 350,000 kinds of beetles that have been named. Many more are discovered each year. Some topics covered are the construction of the beetle, their senses, their habits, even how they grow up. What do they eat? It depends on the type of beetle. Some are plant eaters, some carry on their backs and eat dung, cleaning up the world's grasslands to provide food for their families. There are beetles that live off fungi; some are hunters and scavengers. These facts don't even begin to cover the abundance of astounding information provided.

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