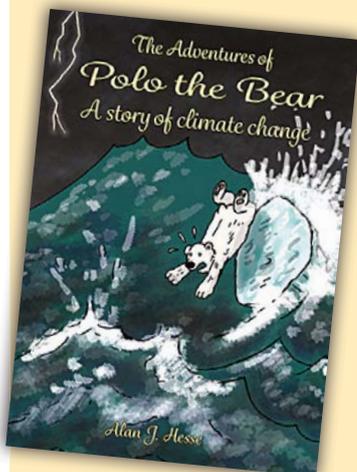


The adventures of Polo the Bear: a story of climate change

Alan J. Hesse
Millgate House, 2019
88 pp. £10.00
ISBN 978 0 86357 463 4

Fantastic way of tying together the wide-ranging issues of climate change, for ages 9+



I have read a lot of graphic novels in my life but I never thought I would come across one about climate change. Early on, we are introduced to our lead protagonist who comes across a huge problem with his habitat. Following a chance encounter, the bear's amazing travels begin. We find him in all corners of the globe, meeting people of all cultures. The journey is a fantastic way of tying together the wide-ranging issues that are causing

the steady warming of our planet and the subsequent catastrophic problems. The book does not shy away from issues that are affecting the Earth, but presents them in a palatable manner.

One child in my year 5 (ages 9–10) class told me how informative they found it. I echo these sentiments: the complicated subject of climate change is clearly covered and well explained without becoming too burdensome. Footnotes throughout help to explain the more complicated issues and the epilogue gives more information on some of the basic science behind global warming and climate change.

This book would be accessible for year 5 and upwards and is cross-curricular: it could be used in a science topic about how the world is changing or perhaps as an alternative narrative-text type to focus on in literacy. The choice of the iconic polar bear as the main character is a strong one to which children will be able to relate. My class really enjoyed the main character and told me that they felt sorry for him. The book has the feel of an authentic graphic novel. Indeed, a child told me that he loved the way the illustrations were done and that the colours used brought the story to life. It certainly is eye-catching and the way the comic strip has been designed means that it is easy to access and allows the story to move quickly without scrimping on any detail.

More useful information can be found on the accompanying blog: <https://climatebear.com>

James Mepsted
Teacher, Victoria Park Primary School

Awesome engineering: Fairground rides

Sally Spray
London: Franklin Watts, 2017
32 pp. £12.99
ISBN 978 1 4451 5527 2

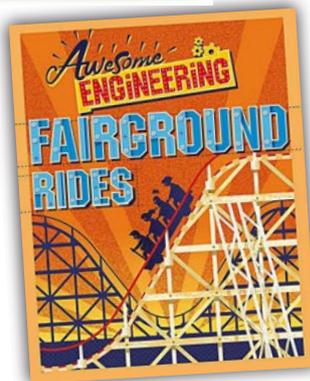
A closer look at the engineering of fairground structures and how they work, for age 9 upwards

Fairground rides is one of a series of six books; the other titles are: *Bridges;*

Skyscrapers; Spacecraft; Trains, Planes and Ships; and Tunnels.

The subject matter definitely attracts children, relating as it does to the thrilling emotions (exciting or scary!) felt by children when visiting theme parks. The series aims to help children 'get to grips with the nuts and bolts of awesome engineering', fitting in perfectly with building their STEM knowledge and science capital.

The book is arranged into 13 attractive double-page spreads, beginning with the history of fairs and rides over the years, from swingboats



and carousels to the big dipper and the modern rollercoaster. At the end of the book there are 'Fascinating facts', 'Further information' and a much-needed glossary.

Although the engineering content is challenging, the author has made it as accessible as possible through the use of labelled diagrams, photographs and short clear explanations of the engineering and forces involved.

As fairground rides 'have become more and more terrifying as designers and engineers seek to create the ultimate experience', it is inevitable that some of the facts are already out of date; for example, an addendum states that the fastest wooden rollercoaster is no longer 'the Goliath in Illinois, USA, built in 2004, but the Lightning Rod at Dollywood as of 2016' and this may well have been superseded since then by another! However, curious children will enjoy a quick check on the internet to see whether the facts are still true so I don't think this detracts from the usefulness/interest of the book.

As the content is quite technical in places, I think that this book is best suited to ages 9–14; it would make a great addition to the school library and support the teaching of forces at year 5 (ages 9–10).

Carol Sampey
PSTT Area Mentor for Wessex and South Wales

Dogs in space: the amazing true story of Belka and Strelka

Vix Southgate and Iris Deppe
32 pp. £12.99
London: Wren & Rook, 2018
ISBN 978 1 5263 6057 1

An attractive picture book looking at challenges of space travel through the eyes of dogs

This is an attractive book that children will find engaging. Children will of course have opinions on the ethics of sending dogs into space and on what is gained through doing so – a good starting point for a debate.

This book would be an excellent starting point for looking at space travel with a class. It neatly stimulates lots of questions that the children could later research: What other animals went into space? Did all the animals survive? Which countries were involved? All of these questions can be answered by referring to the information pages at the back of the book.

Although the book focuses on the experiences of the dogs, at the back of the book timelines are very clearly displayed, which will help the children contextualise the experience of the dogs.

The book is clear, easy to understand and attractive. It makes a great introduction to space, but should be followed by the very useful timelines at the back of the book; otherwise there is the chance that children come away thinking that the purpose of space travel is to put dogs into orbit. The timelines



show how the use of animals was part of a scheme that culminated in humans in space.

The children may be surprised to learn that Tim Peake was not the first British astronaut in space! It may also be interesting to discuss America's future plans to put astronauts on the south pole of the Moon. Space travel is still of interest, and the timeline does not end here. The inspirational message at the end of the story may help to inspire the next generation of astronauts!

Charlotte Thomas
Science Lead, Ashton Gate Primary School and SLE for the Bristol Primary School Teaching Alliance

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