

Book reviews



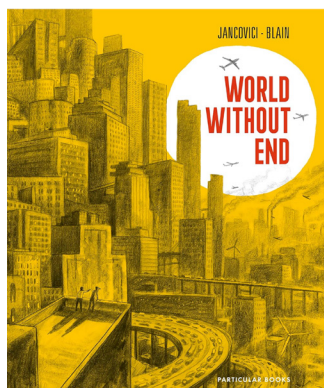
World Without End

Jean-Marc Jancovici and Christophe Blain

London: Particular Books, 2024

196 pp. £25.00

ISBN 978 0 241 66194 9



World Without End is deceptive. Marketed as a graphic novel, it reads more like the responses of an expert to the questions of an inquisitive child, roles filled by climate specialist Jean-Marc Jancovici and acclaimed illustrator Christophe Blain. Complex ideas are simplified with clarity and visual flair.

While its format suggests accessibility, this is not a children's book. It is best suited to sixth-formers, ambitious GCSE students, and teachers seeking fresh classroom material. The structure is ideal for discussion: the first half explores our dependence on energy, while the second addresses climate change and potential responses. Along the way, it touches on science, geography, psychology, and economics, making it an excellent cross-curricular resource.

Some ideas are disarming. It makes sense to exploit fossil fuels: one barrel of oil provides the energy equivalent of five years of mechanical labour by a fit and healthy human. Thanks to machines, each of us effectively commands 200 mechanical workers – the equivalent of a global population of 1.5 trillion people. This is clearly unsustainable. We rely on fossil fuels to maintain our lifestyles, yet they contribute to global warming and are depleting quickly. Jancovici argues forcefully for nuclear power and is sceptical of renewables such as wind and solar, which he sees as too diffuse and intermittent to reliably meet demand. This is one example of where he strays into polemic.

His scientific explanations are excellent. However, teachers used to discussing energy in terms of stores and transfers may find it jarring when he talks instead about energy transformations and conversions. While some claims are sound, such as divorce increasing resource use, others are more debatable. With no index or references, readers will need to conduct independent research, which might be a blessing in disguise.

The visual metaphors are powerful. One striking image shows a parachutist rejecting a working reserve chute (nuclear) while trying to knit new ones – each representing a different renewable – mid-fall. It is a fitting symbol of our current dilemma. The fact that human nature appears to work against a solution makes this a scary read.

This is a rich, engaging, and thought-provoking resource, and every school library should have a copy.

Mike Follows

Physics teacher, King Edward's School, Birmingham, and Foundation Leader for Physics Education

Your Life is Manufactured: How We Make Things, Why it Matters and How We Can Do it Better

Tim Minshall

London: Faber and Faber, 2025

316 pp. £20

ISBN 978 0 571 38101 2



Your Life is Manufactured is one of those books that catches your eye in a bookshop and, before you realise, you're hooked! Tim Minshall's expert writing takes us on a journey around the world, showing us the hidden world of manufacturing, how it is fragile and damaging the planet, but how an understanding of the processes can help us to 'deliver a more sustainable, more resilient and more equitable future for us all'.

Minshall's storytelling starts and ends in schools, when conducting outreach work about the importance of manufacturing to some of 'the toughest of audiences', which provided some of the inspiration for the book. Although I read the hardback version, it is also available as an audiobook and the style of writing reflects this. It is very much a story to be told without getting too technical for a general audience, and it is a fascinating read that uses lots of examples to which we can all relate. These include, for example, using the shortage of toilet

rolls during the COVID-19 crisis to show how manufacturing simple things is actually really complex, and how the wedging of the cargo ship *Ever Given* in the Suez Canal for a week in March 2021 revealed the fragility of the global logistics network. I particularly enjoyed finding out about the logistics involved in the manufacture of phones, planes and ice-cream, and how the processes are more similar to each other than you might at first realise.

There are two parts to the book, 'How things work in manufacturing' and 'How the world of manufacturing is transforming'. I found the footnotes in each chapter, along with the separate notes chapter, really useful. There was something new to learn on each page and the writing is forward-looking and optimistic about the future of manufacturing.

I highly recommend this book for anyone curious about the manufactured world in which we live, and how manufacturing can provide hope for a sustainable future. Recommended for teachers and students (secondary level), it would be a great addition to a school library.

Gill Clarke

Secondary science teacher, also studying for an EdD into why girls do study physics A-level

..... Eat Well and Feel Great: The Teenager's Guide to Nutrition and Health

Tina Lond-Caulk

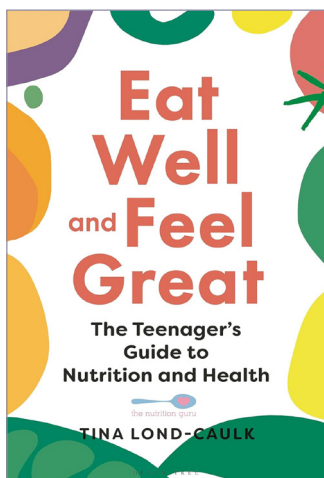
London: Green Tree, 2022

240 pp. £14.99

ISBN 978 1 399 40194 4

I wanted to love this book, but couldn't quite do so. It is an approachable guide written specifically for teenagers, aiming to help them take charge of their nutrition, mental health and overall wellbeing. With a warm, encouraging tone and accessible language, it will support teenagers in making healthy choices.

There is a lot to like about this book. It is structured into a comprehensive series of themed chapters, including *Set yourself up for success*, *Spot the signs of nutritional deficiency*, *Eat a rainbow and digestion 101*, *Balance your blood sugar for all-day energy*, *Good hydration*,



What you eat can make you happier and Going plant-based.

Each chapter focuses on a key aspect of health, blending explanations with accessible advice. Topics such as gut health, emotional eating, hydration, sleep and the impact of food on mental focus and mood are explored in a relatable, practical manner.

The book's layout is highly appealing for students: infographics, checklists, 'myth-busting' callouts and real-life scenarios help break down more technical concepts. It encourages teens to make small, sustainable changes and provides tips for everyday situations such as school lunches and social events. However, at times the advice can be overwhelming and it is challenging to see how to fit all the suggested portions into three meals a day.

Readers should be aware of some limitations. While the book is rooted in current nutritional thinking, certain areas veer into

oversimplified or slightly exaggerated territory. For example, the book makes a number of unreferenced claims, including the impact of the gut microbiome on neurological disorders and the 'doctrine of signatures'. In addition, claims about specific food types influencing hormones or mood could benefit from clearer sourcing or a more cautious, evidence-based tone. At times, the language leans toward wellness-industry phrasing, which may inadvertently oversimplify or exaggerate the effects of certain foods or habits. Educators may want to clarify these points or encourage students to think critically about the scientific accuracy of wellness trends.

Despite this, the book would be a valuable springboard for discussion and student-led enquiry. With some teacher guidance, it could support students in developing health literacy.

Helen Darlington

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Maria Kettle, Book Reviews Editor, worked as a physics teacher in sixth-form settings for 18 years, then for 11 years as Outreach Officer, Department of Engineering, University of Cambridge.

These reviews are the opinions of individual reviewers and are not an official ASE view or endorsement of the resource. Reviewers are selected on the basis of their experience and interests and are expected to draw attention to perceived weaknesses or limitations of a resource as well as strengths. Reviews are written from the standpoint of someone seeing the materials for the first time and considering how they would use them or think colleagues would be likely to use them.