

Skeptical Books for Children and Young Adults

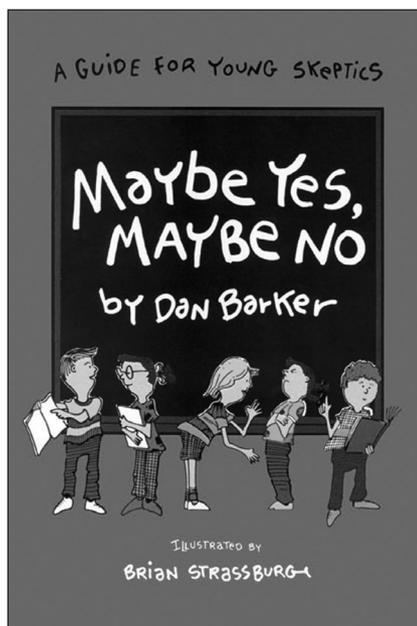
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I was asked to write a bibliography of youth-oriented skeptical books not only because I am the director of libraries at the Center for Inquiry but also because I am beginning to look at these books for use in my private life (I have a four-year-old adopted daughter). When I began looking for these materials, I thought it would be relatively easy, but the task was more difficult than expected.

One of the challenges I encountered was finding current materials that teach critical-thinking skills or books that are specifically skeptical in nature. Another problem was that there are so few publishers of this type of material. Prometheus Books published most of the books listed here but has published little of this kind recently. Annick Press has published a few more recent works.

As a skeptical community, we need to work together to find publishers who will continue to publish these types of books. We need to supply our local libraries with these titles so they can buy them or even donate copies ourselves. We need to create a marketplace for skeptical and critical-thinking materials so publishers will see their educational importance and publish more. And, of course, we should buy the books for our children or as gifts for friends. Both authors and publishers of these skeptical books need our support.

In this bibliography, I tried to supply the most appropriate ages for these works. Young adult usually means from nine to fourteen years old; unless noted otherwise, these books are meant for that age range.

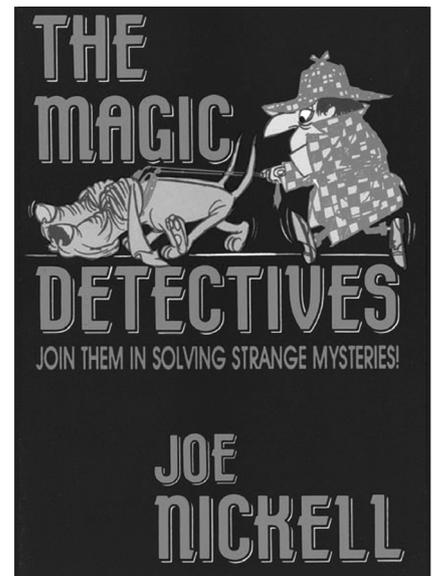
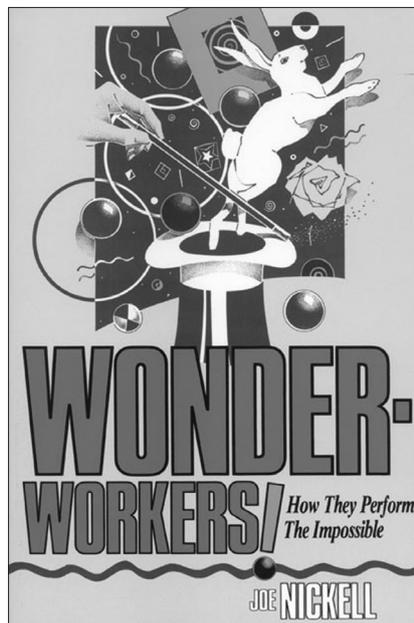


Maybe Yes, Maybe No: A Guide for Young Skeptics. Dan Barker and Brian Strassburg (Illustrator). Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990. This book teaches critical-thinking skills and is intended for six- to ten-year-olds.

How Do You Know It's True? Discovering the Difference between Science and Superstition. Hyman Ruchlis. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1991. Aimed at young adults, this book explains the dif-

ferences between science and superstition and the basics of the scientific method.

Wonder-Workers! How They Perform the Impossible. Joe Nickell. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1991. This book, by the venerable Joe Nickell, gives a biographical treatise on those who apparently were "Wonder-Workers." Houdini, Robert-Houdin, Edgar Cayce, Lulu Hurst, and Peter Hurkos are a few who appear in this work written for young



adults.

The Magic Detectives: Join Them in Solving Strange Mysteries. Joe Nickell. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1989. This book is similar to those "minute-mystery" style books in which the reader is encouraged to solve the mystery, and the answer is provided upside-down following the story. It includes many actual mysteries investigated by Nickell and is best for young adults.

Sasquatches from Outer Space: Explor-

Skepticism 2.0 What's Next?

ing the Weirdest Mysteries Ever. Tim Yule and Keith Baxter (Illustrator). Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000. In the introduction, author Yule says that he is looking at many of the world's best-known mysteries—Bigfoot, aliens, and many other types of paranormal and supernatural phenomena—and applying science to them. This book is intended for nine- to twelve-year-olds.

Alexander Fox and the Amazing Mind Reader. John C. Clayton and Emily Egan (Illustrator). Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998. Sixth grader Alexander Fox investigates Mr. Mystikos, who helps people find lost objects. Recommended for eight- and nine-year-olds.

Bringing UFOs Down to Earth. Philip J. Klass. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1997. This book is meant for ages nine to twelve. It describes what Klass looked for when investigating UFO claims and gives a history of some well-known alleged UFO sightings.

Flat Earth? Round Earth? Theresa Martin. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002. This work is best for children ages four to eight. A student steadfastly refuses to

believe the Earth is round and is given examples why it is so. The theme here is to think on your own and to question common knowledge or belief.

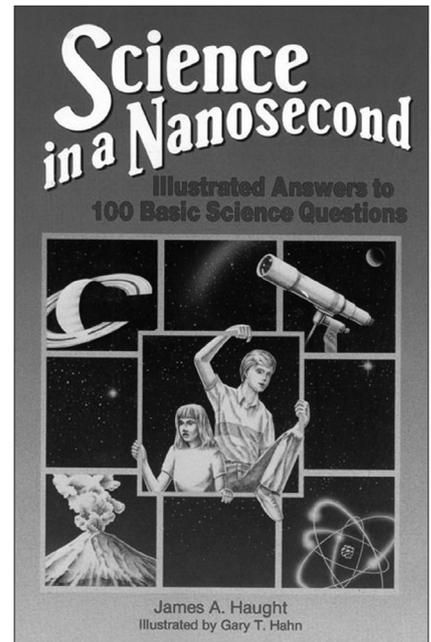
The Evolution Book. Sara Stein. New York: Workman Publishing, 1999. Stein gives a scientific overview of life on Earth using biology and natural history. Suggested for ages ten to fourteen; based on some of the activities used to help illustrate the concepts, you might want to be at the older end of the range.

How Come? Every Kid's Science Questions Explained. Kathy Wollard and Debra Solomon (Illustrator). New York: Workman Publishing, 1993. This work is recommended for young adults and is a compilation of columns from the "How Come?" series that appears in *Newsday* and the *Los Angeles Times*. It covers many questions, including the favorite of parents and children everywhere: "Why is the sky blue?" I also recommend their other books (like *How Come? Planet Earth*).

Nibbling on Einstein's Brain: The Good, the Bad and the Bogus in Science. Diane Swanson and Francis Blake (Illustrator). Toronto, ON: Annick Press, 2009. This is an updated work for nine- to twelve-year-olds. It's an excellent book about

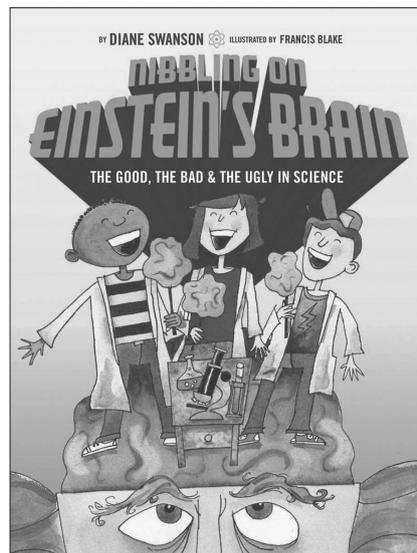
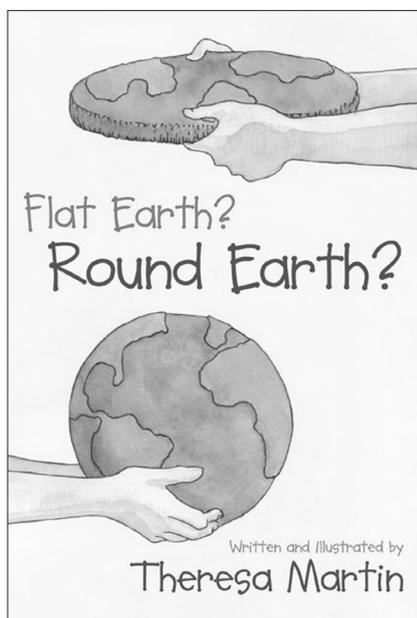
critically examining claims that illuminates the differences between good and bad science.

Science in a Nanosecond: Illustrated



Answers to 100 Basic Science Questions. James A. Haught. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1991. Best for young adults, this book gives basic science answers similar to the *How Come?* books mentioned above.

The Little Book of Big Questions. Jackie French and Martha Newbigging (Illustrator). Toronto, ON: Annick Press, 2000. This book is suited for ages nine to twelve and covers a wide range of areas, including morality and life and death, as well as topics like extraterrestrials. □



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