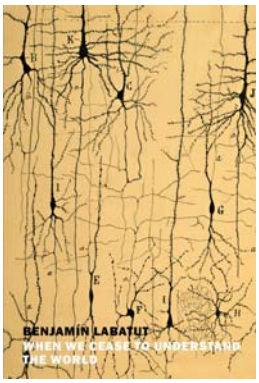
NEW BOOKS & MEDIA



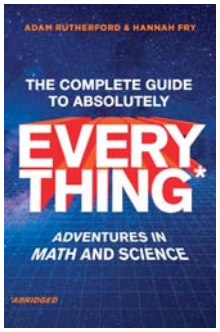
When We Cease to Understand the World

Benjamín Labatut; trans. Adrian Nathan West
New York Review Books, 2021. $17.95 (paper)

In his new book, Benjamín Labatut weaves together the scientific work and personal lives of legendary 20th-century scientific figures like Karl Schwarzschild, Erwin Schrödinger, Werner Heisenberg, and Fritz Haber into a meditation on both the meaning of life and the destructive potential of modern science. Labatut clearly did his homework on the figures he writes about, which makes it slightly disappointing that he repeats the common error of crediting the development of matrix mechanics solely to Heisenberg. In fact, Heisenberg had never heard of matrices when he began developing his theory; it was Max Born and Pascual Jordan who recognized that Heisenberg's initial work could be represented mathematically with that formalism. Historical quibbles aside, Labatut's truly unique blend of fact and fiction can only be described as a literary tour de force. It should not be missed. —RD

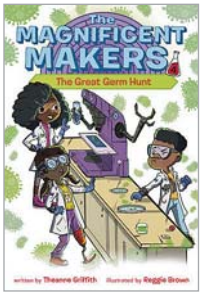
The Complete Guide to Absolutely Everything (Abridged)

Adventures in Math and Science



Adam Rutherford and Hannah Fry
W. W. Norton, 2022. $24.00

Obviously, no single book could possibly cover absolutely everything. The word "abridged" in the title is key: It hints at both the authors' curation of their subject matter and the tongue-in-cheek nature of the narrative. Over the course of some 300 pages, Adam Rutherford, a geneticist, and Hannah Fry, a mathematician, discuss such broad topics as the origin of the universe and life itself, what time is and how it is measured, and the strangeness of quantum behavior. Pooling their extensive knowledge in math and science, the authors explain not only what we know but how we know it. Through the use of pop-culture references, anecdotes, and humor, *The Complete Guide to Absolutely Everything (Abridged)* aims to be accessible and appealing to the general reader. —CC



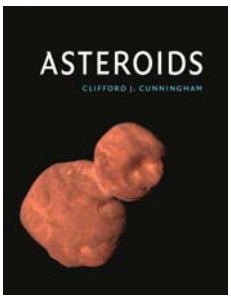
The Magnificent Makers #4

The Great Germ Hunt

Theanne Griffith; ill. Reggie Brown
Random House Books for Young Readers, 2021. $5.99 (paper)

The Magnificent Makers is a science adventure series aimed at readers in elementary school. It features a magical portal that leads to the Maker Maze, a laboratory that is run by the rainbow-haired Dr. Crisp and is filled with robots, purple microscopes, and other cool equipment. In *The Great Germ Hunt*, the fourth book in the series, Newburg Elementary third graders Violet, Pablo, and Aria complete a science worksheet, which opens the portal. They are whisked off to the Maker Maze, where they learn about bacteria, viruses, and fungi through a series of fun challenges. Like the Magic School Bus book series, the Magnificent Makers turns the study of science into an adventure while teaching the importance of such values as teamwork and intellectual curiosity. Each book in the series includes two science activities. —CC

Asteroids

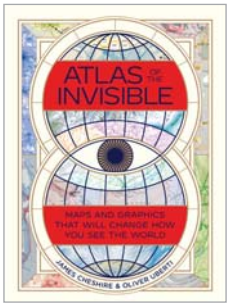


Clifford J. Cunningham
Reaktion Books, 2021. $40.00

This new book by astronomer and asteroid fanatic Clifford Cunningham is an all-in-one reference work about the unique heavenly bodies. Cunningham begins *Asteroids* with a lengthy description of the 1801 discovery of the first asteroid to be located by astronomers, Ceres, which is now considered a dwarf planet. He describes how other larger asteroids were soon found and how researchers gradually began to understand that the newly discovered objects were different from planets. An extensive overview of the various types of asteroids leads into a chapter on asteroid impacts. Particularly interesting are the last two chapters, which describe asteroids in popular culture and recent unmanned missions that have returned asteroid samples to Earth. —RD

Atlas of the Invisible

Maps and Graphics That Will Change How You See the World



James Cheshire and Oliver Uberti
W. W. Norton, 2021. $40.00

Patterns, not places, are the theme of this coffee-table book that authors James Cheshire and Oliver Uberti hope will not only entertain readers but also make them more aware of some of the problems facing humanity and inspire them to act. Be it the deportation paths of two Holocaust survivors, the geographic spread of disease, or the effects of climate change, they have found a way to visually depict them. Using information gleaned from written and computer records and from satellites, cell phones, and other sources, Cheshire and Uberti have created a plethora of colorful maps, diagrams, graphs, and more that reveal some surprising—and some not-so-surprising—insights. —CC PT