Campbell Essential Biology with Physiology

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Campbell Essential Biology with Physiology Details

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From Reader Review Campbell Essential Biology with Physiology for online ebook

Amy says

Finish Ch. 15-29. (never finished ch. 15-29.)

Lindsay Allison says

For a science textbook, this book was very easy to read. It was well structured, full of pictures and diagrams, and written in an easy, conversational tone that (for once) did NOT feel like it was talking down to me. Definitely was a great choice for a biology class geared towards students who are not science majors.

Laura Pamplona says

Read it for a class and helped me more than the actual professor... From there you can tell how helpful and good this book is.

Natalie Clare says

I am not good at sciences especially biology, but this book made it a lot more easy to understand the concepts behind biology and made parts rather interesting. It has a non-biology major feel to it which makes it less stressful for the student. I only got a B in the class but if it would have been any other text...I'd of probably failed.

Jamie says

Probably the best bio textbook I've ever had in the respect that it lists off the social perspective!

John says

I read this textbook as part of a biology class this summer.

Overall, one could make an argument that it deserves more than two stars because it's not really worse than typical college textbooks. I don't buy that.

First, the good points: its introduction, scientific method coverage, population, community, and ecosystem ecology sections were very good. The scientific method coverage, in particular, took pains to define the

scope of scientific discourse very precisely, and explicitly stated that other fields such as religion can also help us to know nature. I appreciated that.

The community and ecosystem sections, in particular, seemed well-written. They didn't just state ideas; they described the studies that supported them and actively encouraged critical thinking about those studies and their results. In my class, we read those sections first, so I had high hopes for the textbook as a whole.

The book covers a very broad set of topics, and some in surprisingly deep detail. It has a good index and glossary as well.

Unfortunately, most of the book follows this pattern:

Thing A performs function X. Thing B performs function Y. Thing C does Z. They fit together as A-B-C. See figure 8-23h.

(repeat over and over, with different values of ABC, XYZ.)

That is, very little explanation of why we believe this is the case, how we learned about it, how the scientific method was applied in the acquisition of this knowledge, or any disagreement among biologists as to the accuracy of the information. They did have very occasional sections on this, but entire chapters might be almost completely devoid of it. Almost never does the book cite its sources for facts either.

As I was reading the chapters on cells -- which have amazingly intricate chemical properties spelled out -- I kept wondering: when and how did we manage to figure THIS out? It was almost never explained. It would have been so fascinating if it had been.

Then there is the tendency to put out rather unsupportable statements, such as this little gem from page 595:

"Composed of up to 100 billion intricately organized neurons, with a much larger number of supporting cells, the human brain is more powerful than the most sophisticated computer." OK, thought-provoking, yes. But how can you scientifically evaluate the power of a computer and a brain on objective terms? I'm not sure I can evaluate the power of a computer on objective terms (the word "power" is just way too imprecise), let alone that of a brain. They cite no source of that, there is no discussion or background of it. It's just thrown out there, then discarded. I hate that. If you're going to say something that interesting, at least make a feeble attempt to back it up!

They also have a habit of saying things are "almost always" true, such as on p. 383, where they say "Solar energy powers nearly all ecosystems." But they rarely explain what the exceptions are, leaving you to wonder whether a given example is an exception or a rule. (OK, so it's more obvious here, but it happens elsewhere).

They do have a number of helpful figures in the book, though they've probably gone overboard on the photos of athletes and things. Yes, muscles make us run. I get it already.

This is an introductory textbook, so perhaps I am overly harsh here. But I've read other introductory textbooks that are more given to precise language, and don't have chapters that are just endless lists of definitions and functions, but explain how we got there. This book could have so easily been excellent.
