

Edexcel 360 Additional Science. Series editor: Brian Arnold. Collins. ISBN 0-00-721640-8

Science lessons are not what were.

Clearly communicated learning objectives, starters, plenaries, differentiation, peer and self-assessment are all features of modern Science lessons alongside the familiar backdrop of Bunsens, glassware and dynamics trolleys. Full marks to Collins then for producing texts that seek to encompass this modernity whilst retaining a sound coverage of 'Science.'

The 'read this double page spread then answer the questions' approach to book design has served traditional, content-driven Science courses well for many years. However, the statutory content of Core Science now fits quite easily onto one side of A4. Science lessons are different and publishers need to take notice if they are to produce texts that support them well.

So how does this book differ from the rest of the pack juggling for position on school benches?

Each section begins with a double page photograph with a few interesting facts to serve as discussion points at the introduction of the topic. The book sticks to the double page spread format but with a difference: the information and questions are grouped into Low, Standard and High demand to aid differentiation; there are helpful 'You will find out' boxes at the top of the page and key words along the bottom; occasionally we also get a 'Wow factor' bubble with a key snippet of information.

Half way through each topic is a 'Self check' activity with a unique feature – peer and self assessment are facilitated by the inclusion of a box which describes the differences between grades F, C and A; this is not something that is easy to communicate to GCSE students and is really welcome. At the end of each chapter there's a concept map to aid revision, a unit quiz and a numeracy activity.

Having digested all of this we arrive at the end of the book to find a guide to the course, databank and glossary.

There are features here that I have not seen elsewhere, which fit in well with a modern view of teaching, so well done Collins. No book is perfect of course and I would like to see the questions in Low, Standard and High demand phrased in a manner which reflects this; 'State, Describe, Explain, Analyse, Link' are stems in everyday use in our classrooms and should be appearing in the texts in use in those classrooms. How Science Works is not addressed overtly – surely the section on Cloning and Selective Breeding is an ideal candidate for this. The numeracy activities are a welcome inclusion, but I would like to see some 'Writing for Science' activities alongside them.

The new GCSE courses are not just about books any more than the teaching of Science has ever been just about books. However, where books are used we need them to encompass a modern view of what happens in classrooms. This book is well on the way and probably worth a look if you're deciding what to buy for next year.

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