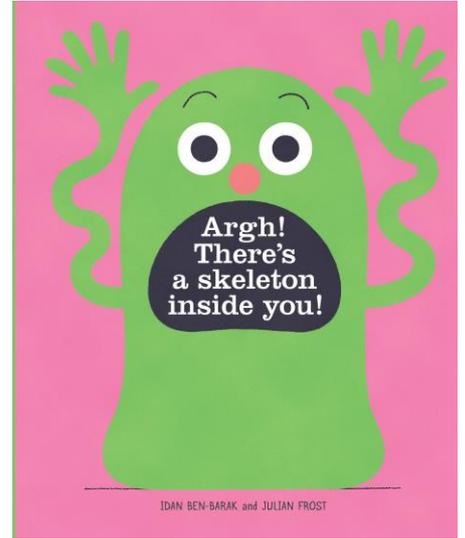


Argh! There's a Skeleton Inside You!



By Idan Ben-Barak and Julian Frost

August 2019 ISBN 9781760631635
Hardback picture book
Recommended for 4-6-year-olds

Summary

Quog and Oort are on their way to Kevin's birthday party. Unfortunately, their spaceship has crashed. Pick up this book to lend them a hand!

An interstellar exploration of hands and what's inside them, from the award-winning creators of the internationally successful *Do Not Lick This Book*.



This book is about functional anatomy – how the things inside our body combine to make it work. It takes the relatively simple example of a hand and shows what its component parts contribute towards its actions.

Argh! There's a skeleton inside you! describes this using an additive, bottom-up method – starting out with an alien who has no hands at all, and gradually adding systems until the alien can perform all the tasks she needs from a hand.

Vibrant colour combines with relatively scientific illustrations of bones, muscles and nerves to create a visually exciting design that will thoroughly engage young readers. Added to this is a hands-on (pardon the pun) component – think Hervé Tullet's *Press Here* – plus funny but informative text that never talks down to the reader. The result is a highly entertaining and educational picture book.

The authors' inspiration

'*Argh! There's a Skeleton Inside You!* reminds us that things we've carried around all our lives – our hands – are actually strange and fascinating. When you place your hand on a book so a three-eyed alien gas cloud can scan it to see why the squishy meat inside makes you strong, suddenly your hand doesn't seem so normal anymore!

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'The choice to write about hands in this way began with three questions:

1. What's something mind-blowing about a child's world? (A: your body is full of amazing bony, meaty, stringy stuff and it's all there for a reason!)
2. What's a subject that a picture book is uniquely suited to tell you about? (A: what do you need to touch a book, pick it up, turn the pages, and high five it? Your hands!)
3. What's a story that makes you really want to ask "what" and "why"? (A: funny handless aliens need to look inside your hands to see the magic ingredients and grow their own.)

'At school I loved teachers who prompted me with questions, rather than just giving the answers to questions I didn't care about.

'That's what this book tries to do – prompt you with questions like "what would happen if you didn't have bones?", "what do your muscles look like right now?" and "how can you get these silly aliens to the birthday party?" – so you can't help but want to find out about those wiggly miracles on the ends of your arms.

'Our bodies are hilarious, weird, gross, beautiful and amazing. If we forget, sometimes alien blob friends are here to remind us!'

— Idan Ben-Barak and Julian Frost

Themes

- humour
- human body
- space
- aliens
- biology
- friendship
- birthday parties

Use in the curriculum

English Foundation Year – and older students, too!

This is an 'interactive' text, requiring children to play with the characters in the book, who speak directly to the reader. Readers must place their hands on the book in certain places, or perform other actions with the book, to show the alien characters what is inside our hands (bones, muscles, nerves). It is a clever text, making not just science enjoyable but also reading.

There is a hidden 'story' of a small blue creature that appears throughout the book. Working out Quog's perfect birthday present for Kevin (a hug - which needs arms that can move and squeeze) gives students an 'aha!' moment of insight.

The final 'high five' joke relies on children being able to count the number of fingers and know that we usually have five fingers on our hands.

The book uses humour and a framing story to convey science. To do so, some aspects of imaginative fictional texts are employed along with the basic informational aspects of the text e.g. diagrams and exposition. So there is some 'genre-bending' going on.

Science

The book supports study of the human body.



Discussion questions and activities

1. Before opening *Argh! There's a skeleton inside you!* look at the title and cover design. Discuss what students think the book might be about and the clues in the cover that make them think that. Ask questions such as:
 - Do you think the creature on the cover is happy, sad, bored or surprised? What things in the illustration and title suggest that it might feel that way?
 - Do you think this book is going to be funny or sad?
 - What is a skeleton?
 - Do you have a skeleton?
 - Why are skeletons useful to humans and animals?
2. Turn to the book's front endpapers (the double-page spread on the inside of the front cover) and read the conversation to very young students or have older students read it alone. It may help to trace your finger along the dotted path as you read out loud to younger students. Now ask students if they can tell what is happening here? Ask questions such as:
 - Who is speaking? [*Oort and Quog*]
 - What might Oort and Quog be? [*Aliens*]
 - What are Oort and Quog doing? [*Travelling through space*]
 - What is happening to Oort and Quog as they approach the planet [*They have lost control of their spaceship and are about to crash land*]
3. Read through the book once (if reading to the class choose a student to come to the front and 'act out' the interactive aspects). When finished close the book and ask your class to put their hands on their heads. Ask what three things inside our hands enables us to put our hands on our heads. [*A: bones, muscles and nerves*]. Ask how bones helped them to raise their hands. How did muscles help? How do nerves tell them the shape and feeling of their head?
4. Re-open the book and allow students to read it again. This time point out that Quog and Oort are not the only aliens in the story and ask students to find their tiny blue friend on as many pages as possible. [*Hint: it appears for the first time at the bottom of the page (tucked in near the spine) where Quog says, 'Wow, you have hands!'*]
5. Turn to the page where Quog says, 'Give me a high five!' and have the class count out loud how many fingers she really has. Now turn the page and ask the class to guess what Quog thought might be the perfect present for Kevin.
6. For older students: turn to the last double-page spread and ask them to name eight other things that help our hands do all the things they do.
7. Create your own skeletons in class. There are many free activity ideas on the web but this resource is suitable for 3–8 year olds: <https://activity-box.com/easy-halloween-diy-earbud-skeleton>.

The authors

Idan Ben-Barak holds a BSc in medical science, an MSc in microbiology, and a PhD in the history and philosophy of science. His first book, *Small Wonders: How Microbes Rule Our World* has been published around the world and won the 2010 American Association for the Advancement of Science/Subaru SB&F (Science Books and Films) Prize for Excellence in Science Books, Young Adult category. An excerpt from his most recent book, *Why Aren't We Dead Yet? The Survivor's Guide to the Immune System*, was runner-up in the 2015 Bragg UNSW Press Prize for Science Writing. Idan lives in Melbourne with his wife and two children.

Julian Frost is an illustrator, designer and animator. Julian received worldwide acclaim for his animation 'Dumb Ways to Die', which has had close to 150 million views since it was uploaded on YouTube in 2012. With his illustration work for kids, Julian loves using likeable silliness in the service of communicating serious information. He lives in Melbourne.



Julian Frost (left), Linnea Rundgren and Idan Ben-Barak (right) celebrating their first book with Allen & Unwin, *Do Not Lick This Book*, the 2018 CBCA Book of the Year, Eve Pownall Information Book Award.