

Book Review

Elaine S. Wiener

Twisted True Tales from Science: Medical Mayhem

Stephanie Bearce

Prufrock Press Inc.

paperback, \$8.95, 151pp.

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Another Stephanie Bearce book has arrived. This magazine has reviewed many of her "Top Secret Files" books which are always unique and fun...and, especially, informative. But this time, it is scary!

These books are written for kids, but they are also perfect for adults and can be read first by that adult. "Twisted True Tales from Science: Medical Mayhem" will be loved by kids because it is scary and icky and full of blood-curdling science. Grownups will say "Eeeooooo," but kids will say "Ahhhhhhhhh."

In chapter one, Stephanie Bearce states that "It sounds like the scene in a horror movie, but this was medicine in prehistoric days. Sickness was a mystery. No one understood why a person was fine one day and throwing up the next....The notion that tiny organisms living in soil, air, and water could make a person sick seemed more unbelievable than the idea of evil spirits."

Caveman Cures talks about "trepanation" or skull drilling. (How about that for a new word?) The chapter, *Pharaoh's Fix* takes us back to Ancient Egypt with a baldness cure. We also learn about "eating dirt." And in Bearce style, we have materials for our own experiments like a heart pump!

One chapter talks about "The Black Death." This one is bad enough to make one visit the bathroom:

They called it Black Death because of the black pustules or buboes that popped out on the victim's neck, armpits, and groin. The egg-sized tumors oozed pus and sometimes grew to the size of an apple. They were accompanied by high fever and vomiting blood. It was a horrible disease that killed 80% of the people who caught it. And in the mid 1340s, it killed more than a third of the world's population. It was bubonic plague.

The rest of this book "oozes" facts that are just as fascinating. And Prufrock illustrates with its usual style of fascinating pictures which bleed to the edges and are always full of humor.

The Table of Contents is divided into *Ancient Days, Medieval Maladies, and Modern Marvels*. The bibliography is as gripping as the book. And although Prufrock publishes books for gifted,

this book is not written specifically for gifted. However, with all the science background, “Twisted True Tales from Science: Medical Mayhem” is perfect for our science oriented gifted children.

The paragraph about Stephanie Bearce is so delightful that it is reproduced here:

“Stephanie Bearce is a writer, teacher, and science nerd. She likes teaching kids how to blow up toothpaste and dissect worms. She also loves collecting rocks and keeps a huge collection of fossilized bones in her basement. When she is not exploding experiments in her kitchen or researching strange science facts in the library, Stephanie likes to explore catacombs and museums with her husband, Darrell.”

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