

Britannica 5-Minute Really True Stories for Bedtime

Britannica Books

What On Earth Books

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This collection of short and true stories, compiled by the Encyclopædia Britannica team, is a clever, engaging bedtime alternative that is literal when it comes to approaching the Land of Nod, sleep rituals, nature at night, and the graveyard shift.

The book's logical opening explains why sleep is important, how it happens, and about the mysteries of dreaming. Questions arise to invite the audience to think further, while enthusiastic lessons make the introduced concepts fun. Here, the human brain is likened to pink sausages, and the limbic system is distilled through a clear definition. Articles gather around types of beds, including a Chinese kang bed-stove and King Tut's Z-shaped cot, to cover both culture and human ingenuity. A quirky section about record breaking beds is amusing—ever heard of a four-poster bed that's big enough to fit eight?—while other shared records, like that of the world's loudest snorer, are funny additions.

Entries for outer space buffs cover how astronauts sleep, the features of the moon, and the life cycles of stars. Labelled diagrams convey their information well, while eye-catching art freshens the book's diverse layouts. Descriptions of nocturnal jobs paint the nighttime world as a bustling one of maternity wards, sewers, and bread bakeries. Animal features include hunting owls and hopping jerboas, and animal hibernation gets plenty of space, too, with focus on weird animal habits, including those of frozen "frogsicles" and lungfish as "snotty snoozers." The result is an appealing blend of familiar and wondrous facts, brought together by the book's after dark theme.

The entries of *Britannica 5-Minute Really True Stories for Bedtime* brim with science, history, and human creativity to leave audiences begging for more.

KAREN RIGBY (November / December 2020)

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