

Dr. Brainchild & Radar: A Popcorn Discovery

Cole W. Williams

Laura Acosta, Illustrator

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Dr. Brainchild and Radar is an enjoyable and boldly illustrated story of scientific discovery.

Cole W. Williams's clever picture book of discovery, *Dr. Brainchild and Radar*, follows a scientist, a dog, and the microwave.

Dr. Brainchild is an inventor who has a dog named Radar. Each day the duo head into the lab, where Dr. Brainchild is working on a machine called a Magnetron. One day, a chocolate bar in Dr. Brainchild's pocket melts, triggering a eureka moment that leads to the invention of the microwave.

The story is clear and easy to follow. Dr. Brainchild's choice of popcorn kernels to test a theory about radiation waves heating food has entertaining consequences, as the lab is quickly filled with popcorn. Dr. Brainchild's remark on the need to invent a bag for the popcorn is amusing, as is Radar's delight in having something new to eat.

Dr. Brainchild is never identified by their gender. This seems to be a deliberate choice, and it is a powerful one, allowing children to draw their own conclusions and attach any gender identity to the character while also subtly demonstrating that science is for everyone.

Dr. Brainchild and Radar do not exhibit a great deal of personality, however—no emotion in relation to the scientific discovery, either. Radar expresses hunger, but also without emotion. No plot thread makes Radar significant in the story. The discovery is exciting, but the characters are easily forgotten.

Laura Acosta's illustrations are highly appealing. Dr. Brainchild is androgynous; crazy hair, a lab coat, and long, striped socks evoke a sense of the mad scientist. The layouts are interesting with a lot of energy and movement. The text is written in a dark orange color that is difficult to read when the background is dark.

The final page of the book provides some factual information about the invention of the microwave and a website where kids can go for further information. This is a wonderful inclusion for those who are interested in the science behind the story.

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CATHERINE THURESON (August 16, 2018)

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