

Pebbles and the Biggest Number

Joey Benun

Laura Watson, Illustrator

The Biggest Number (Jan 1, 2023)

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*In the exhilarating and informative picture book **Pebbles and the Biggest Number**, a butterfly's horizons expand as he learns about the environments of Earth and outer space.*

In Joey Benun's educational picture book *Pebbles and the Biggest Number*, a butterfly traverses the world in search of the highest number and learns about Earth and animals along the way.

Pebbles is a monarch butterfly with forty-two flowers in his garden; it's the biggest number he knows. He wonders how large numbers can get and embarks on a trip around the world to find out. As he travels, Pebbles encounters a diverse array of animals who educate him on numbers, biology, and ecology.

Pebbles asks animals in various climates, from a camel in a desert to a dolphin in the ocean to a human scientist in a lab, what the biggest number they know is. He learns how many volts of electricity are in a lightning bolt, how many grains of sand there are on Earth, and how many atoms make up a human body. As the biggest number he knows grows from forty-two to one nonillion, Pebbles becomes more awed by the universe. The expansion of his perspective culminates in his discovery of the concept of infinity.

The story progresses from the smallest to the largest number, with Pebbles being carried from one scene to the next via natural phenomena that correspond to his settings, including earthquakes, tsunamis, and avalanches. Fascinating facts align with each setting, with Pebbles learning about the world's tallest sandcastle and the weight of Earth's atmosphere as a gust of wind sends him tumbling from a beach into the sky. The repeated refrain of Pebbles asking the same question to an animal before being hurtled along is a reliable structural framework upon which the astounding amount of information provided hangs. Approachable language, a friendly voice, and an informative glossary make this book age appropriate and accessible, even in its discussions of mathematical and scientific concepts.

The illustrations are vibrant, bold, and colorful. The exhilarating facts about animals and environments are offset from Pebbles's story so as to add to, rather than distract from, his adventure. Organized into "science spots", "number notes," and "fun facts," this supplementary text is as attractive as the imagery that complements Pebbles's adventure. The tiniest cartoon insect and the vastest expanse of stars are given the same attention to detail. Expressive faces, wiggles to signify the vibrations of a trembling earthquake or a gust of wind, and the curls of ocean waves breathe life into the dynamic tale.

Pebbles and the Biggest Number is an informative picture book that packs an extraordinary amount of eye-opening information into the story of a curious butterfly.

AIMÉE JODOIN (March 22, 2023)

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