ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

EDUCATION

Science & Math Rhymes 2 Help U
Alan Beech
Alan Beech
978-0-615-89569-7
Three Stars (out of Five)

Remember all your chromosomes / in this goofy, rhyming tome. / Mnemonic devices make science easy, / and soon mathematics will become breezy.

Learning complex math and science concepts, equations, and reactions can be frustrating. Alan Beech's book of rhyming mnemonic devices makes it easier to understand the basics of everything from evolution and Newton's second law to ideas about thunderstorms and quadratic equations.

Recalling important classifications becomes easier, thanks to rhymes. Beech helps students remember the essential nine amino acids by explaining how "Eight of them in the family 'ine' / (Pronounced in a way to rhyme with 'mean') / Phenylalan- then leucine, / Threon-, isoleuc- valine," and so on.

The chemistry section is strong; the rhymes make it easier to remember basic concepts about carboxylic acids or reactions like an acid with a base. In "Reaction of Acid with Alcohol," Beech explains, "When alcohol and acid react / H and OH ions interact / Alkyls with anions slowly bind / Products esters and water find."

Shorter pieces are easy to memorize because of sharp rhymes and short lines. In "Metric Measures of Liquids," Beech writes, "A cubic centimeter / Is also called a cc / Or else a milliliter / A mL to you and me." There are humorous asides in the devices as well, as in "The Sun as a Compass," which includes a note at the top to explain the information can be used "just in case you get lost in a desert."

Though some notes aid the rhymes, others weigh them down. For instance, the parenthetical at the start of "Chromosomes in Mitosis" is several lines longer than the piece itself. If such details had been incorporated into the rhyme, then the opening notes about the different types of chromosomes and the definition of mitosis would not be needed.

Some of the poems are not as specific as they could be. A piece about food fats includes

the lines, “Fried foods and ice cream / So yummy they seem / Eat too much of those / You wind up adipose.” No light is shed on how the body stores fat, nor is there an explanation given for the different types of fat. Similarly, a rhyme focused on explaining birds’ connection to dinosaurs is very basic, explaining how the speaker “never saw a dinosaur / Though I’ve been told / that they evolved / Into each bird / I’ve seen and heard.” It does not clarify which birds are linked to which prehistoric species.

Generally, Beech’s book demystifies science and math. The volume is perfect for anyone who wants to brush up on important facts or study for a test. These rhymes are, as Beech writes, grist for the mill and a chance to refine short- and long-term memory.

Lisa Bower