

Exploring Life

THE PRINCIPLES OF BIOLOGY

John Blamire

City University of New York, Brooklyn College

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Preface

This book is intended for use in introductory level courses, in short general biology courses (one quarter or one semester), and possibly in those courses that require an overview of biology before specializing in other majors.

Biology is the science of life, but for many students, the principles of science are so mysterious and threatening, they never get past their fears and on to the fascinating realm of living creatures that inhabit every good biology course. Between the pages of this book, therefore, the two themes of science and of life are brought together in a way that makes the biology accessible and the science much less intimidating. Any student who is interested in biology, but who has little experience with the process of science, will find it possible to learn the principles of biology by following this text. Science is presented as a living process carried out by living scientists in a true context. We see how their work reveals a little more each day about how life works.

The Student and the Author

As you will learn in Chapter 1, I am a scientist who carries out research and teaches introductory biology. The dual nature of my work has given me an insight into how people approach the study of biology. Almost without exception, I have found that students come to their first college biology class wanting to know more about this phenomenon we call life. They ask questions like: "How does it work?" and "How do we know?" But they are quickly turned off by vague answers or by answers filled with jargon and assumptions. From my experience introducing these students to the world of biological science, and from my many attempts to answer their questions (without having their eyes glaze over), I have written this book.

More than any other factor, I have tried to keep the vision of my very first biology class in mind as I prepared each chapter. As a freshly minted Ph.D. with several published research papers to my credit, I stood before my first class and plunged right into the latest findings and awesome significance of DNA replication. My very polite audience waited half an hour before one student had the courage to raise her hand and ask me the first question. To my surprise, the question concerned a point I thought I had made abundantly clear in the second sentence. I spent the rest of that class going backward through my presentation trying to make each point clear *in reverse order*. With this in mind, whenever I sat before my word processor and began a new chapter, I always pictured that class and was careful to think of their needs as I laid down my sequence of ideas.

I hope you find that I have succeeded. Although there are many ways to use a textbook like this one, remember the advice the Queen of Hearts gave to Alice in Wonderland. Alice asked, "How shall I tell my story?" and she was told, "Begin at the beginning, go on to the end, and then stop." If you read this book in the order it is written, you will find that the ideas and themes of biology flow easily and that the concepts are explained and illustrated in a logical sequence that makes them easier to understand. For example, in Chapter 3 the property of atoms is explained. With this knowledge, you can follow the structure and function of DNA in Chapter 4. . . . Knowing about the role of DNA makes the understanding of genetics much simpler in Chapters 9 and 10. A grounding in genetic principles makes it a snap to follow the mechanisms of evolution found in Chapters 20 and 21 and the arrival of humans in Chapter 22. You can even learn how a small change in a DNA molecule was instrumental in bringing about the Russian Revolution!

However, because there is no one way of learning biology, you are certainly at liberty to turn to page 366, find out about the evolution of the human species, and then work your way back to the atoms on page 31; but just remember my first biology class.

A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words

Publishers like words. As any prospective author quickly learns, editors who are responsible for producing expensive textbooks like to see a "manuscript." These written words are sent out for review. and after all the necessary changes are made, the errors eliminated, and the final revisions completed, then a publisher begins to discuss the art program for a textbook. As a result, the two most important parts of the work, the words and the pictures, are created separately and, very often, independently of one another. No matter how dedicated and clever the artist or the art director, the final book often looks like the work of two different sets of people, and the student may be left wondering if the author and the artist ever talked with one another. As a teacher, I found this very frustrating because the image that accompanies an idea in life science is often better at explaining a concept than 1,000 words.

Wm. C. Brown Publishers are probably unique in that they have allowed me to develop the art program that accompanies this textbook as the manuscript was produced. Not only that, all the drawings in this book were produced by the same artist. Art and words are woven together in a way that is additive, not independent. As you read about plant structure on page 223, you meet the "up and down" nature of basic plant shapes. Then, as you turn the page to find out about plant cells and tissues, exactly the same drawing is seen again, but with some extra added features. On the next page, you learn about roots, and once again the drawing is consistent and the new information is added seamlessly to the old. You will not have to reinterpret each drawing every time you meet a new fact or face a new concept.

Such an art program is expensive and labor intensive. It requires close collaboration between the author and the artist. With considerable patience, the artist on this project revised and revised a figure until it was just what was needed. Sometimes a figure was simplified because the original tried to do too much. Other times, when something more dramatic was needed, a simple drawing grew until the message it carried was unavoidable. In just one or two places, a touch of humor escapes, like Redi's flies on page 10, all to enhance the ability of the book to transfer knowledge and understanding to its reader.

The Hook

Any good story, and the story of life is certainly one of the best stories, needs a hook. This is a literary device in which authors "hook" your interest in what they have to say. Very often, they do this using a dramatic, unusual, or especially intriguing opening

sentence, paragraph, or page. Once you are hooked, you want to read on.

Throughout this book, you will find a similar concept at work. Complex ideas, such as the evidence for the beginning of life or the time scale for evolution, are presented within a context familiar from everyday life. This makes the science readily accessible and much more comprehensible. A famous detective helps us unravel the mystery of how life got started on this planet in Chapter 3, and in Chapter 22 a very boring movie helps us understand the amount of time it took for the various forms of life to evolve on earth. Each of these themes gently moves the reader from an easily recognizable concept (such as a detective story) to the scientific principle (such as atomic structure).

Long after you have closed this book, finished the biology course, and moved on to other phases of your education, you will remember the peccaries and their gene pool on page 350. This is important because science is *not* just a collection of facts that you have to learn to pass exams, it is also a way of understanding.

Science is a process of discovery and understanding of the world around us. In learning about biology, therefore, it is just as critical to understand why living cells use ribosomes as it is to memorize the component parts of a ribosome itself. Consequently, much effort has gone into showing you how biological facts fit together. Carried along by the themes, the art work, and the "hooks," the facts of life become less intimidating and easier to learn as you begin to understand the important overarching principles at work.

For me, as a scientist, a teacher, and an author, this is the ultimate reward. I enjoy biology very much and I want to pass some of that pleasure on to you. From the understanding of biology that you take away from this course, you will find that the many important decisions you make every day become easier, more reasoned, and, hopefully, more correct. You will be able to read the list of ingredients on a food packet with more comprehension. In the voting booth, you will be able to cast your ballot on environmental issues from an informed position rather than from a hunch or "gut feeling." Your conversations with your doctor about what medicines to take will have more depth, and you will certainly know why you should avoid certain types of pollution. This is real empowerment in your life-and all from one biology course!

John Blamire Brooklyn, N.Y. 1993

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Ancillaries

A Student Study Guide is available in which the key elements in each chapter are laid out in an easy to follow sequence. "Along-the-way" tests help students to see how far their comprehension of each topic has progressed, and key concepts are highlighted.

An *Instructor's Manual* puts together some ideas from one teacher to another as well as provides outlines, chapter to chapter interleaving, concepts, pivot points, and suggested use of the visuals within this book. The manual also includes a Test Item File, which the instructor can receive in Apple, IBM, and Macintosh disk format.

Instructors and adopters may also request a pack of "clean" images selected from the unique art work within this book that they may customize and use for overhead transparencies.

Acknowledgments

The list of people to thank on a project like this one is long, but the space available is short, so I hope that anyone who feels that I have left out their names will forgive me. I have listed a few of the absolutely key people who at one time or another played vital roles in either the moral, physical, or intellectual production of this book, but special thanks should also go to my parents, who gave me my first spark of interest in science (that is another story for another time), and to my first science teachers who fanned that spark into a flame.

No doubt one or two errors will have persisted and made it into the final version of this manuscript, but that will not be the fault of the following excellent reviewers who helped me in more ways than they will never know.

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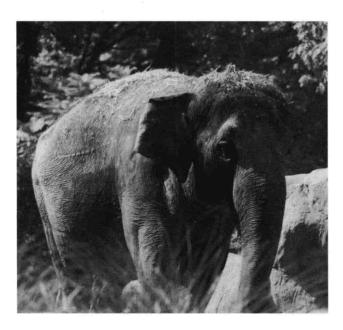
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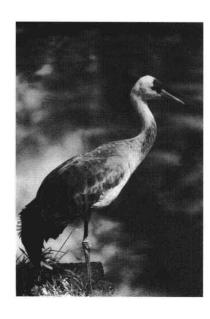
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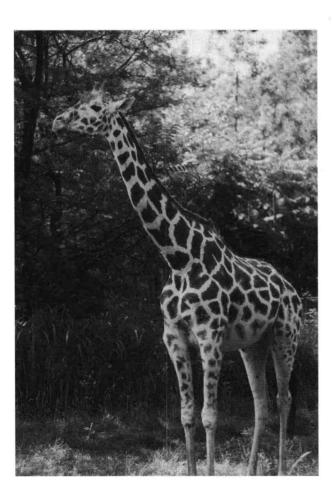
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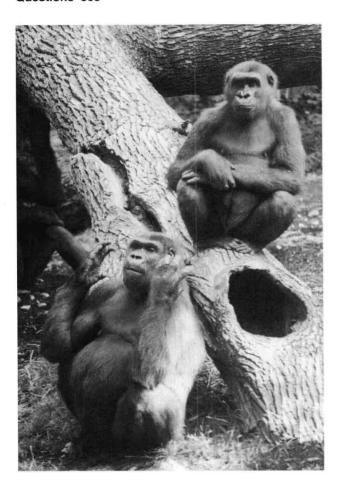
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