

It Started with a Big Bang: The Origin of Earth, You and Everything Else

By Floor Bal, Illustrated by Sebastiaan Van Doninck

Published by Kids Can Press (2019)

34 pages

Ages: 5 to 8

The children's book *It Started with a Big Bang* is a beautifully illustrated guide to understanding the origins of the universe and our place in it. The book's cover is intriguing: we see Cro-Magnon man (although this term is never used to describe primitive man), the planet Earth, an astronaut, a primitive-looking fish, the moon, and a dinosaur.

It is told from a scientific point of view, namely the Big Bang theory along with Darwin's theory of the evolution of mankind from primates, or apes, as the author depicts. All of this is described without any specific scientific terminology.

At the beginning of the book, we read that from a blank page of nothingness that the universe was previously, a tiny dot expanded and exploded (the Big Bang), creating planets, the sun, stars, asteroids. Eventually Earth was created, and became a "tangled web" of life forms competing for food, and killing other life forms for food and in order to survive. As life forms adapted in their quest for survival, some fish developing legs and transforming into land-based creatures, the "Earth kept changing, too" the book tells us.

Instead of describing the theory of evolution with the correct term, the author states, "It's time for some-

thing different." The dinosaurs came into creation, but were wiped out by a "big rock" that hit the Earth, blotting out the sun.

Eventually apes start walking on two feet instead of four, human beings evolve to the point of inventing fire, creating tools and weapons, harvesting crops, inventing the wheel, and developing more complex language patterns and the written language.

The strange analogy of Earth being a "tangled web" of life forms struggling for survival appears again at the end of the book. A web conjures up an image of a sticky trap one can't escape from, with the ever-present danger of a predator – a spider – lurking nearby, about to claim its prey. This analogy might confuse and even frighten children if they think of the planet they live on in this way.

The lack of scientific terminology in the book is puzzling as well. If the book is aimed towards an age group of 5 to 8 years, scientific terminology could be helpful for the children to learn from. A glossary of terminology related to the creation of the universe and the evolution of mankind would have been useful as well.

Another factor is that the book presents the Big Bang as fact, and not a scientific theory – one of the more popular ones, but still a theory.

The book is engaging, with colourful illustrations on every page. Children are certain to be intrigued by the depiction of the various stages of Earth's evolution,



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but could benefit from being reminded that this is one theory of several about the mysterious universe we live in.

Reviewed by
Caroline Lacombe

Owls Read book Club welcomes author Sheila Goldbloom

THE SCOOP

By Mable Hastings

When Murielle Parkes, a member of the Owls Read Book Club in Potton found herself seated next to Sheila Goldbloom at an event last November, little did she know that eight months later she'd be happily introducing this most interesting lady to her local book club.

"Even though I had only recently heard about Building Bridges, I was thinking of suggesting it as a book for my Owls Read Book Club, and I told her so. Her reply was spontaneous, 'Let me know and maybe I can help you!'

"While my reaction was something like, 'Oh my goodness, wouldn't it be great if she'd actually come to Mansonville?' I suspect a trip to Mansonville was the last thing she was thinking about."

Now, eight months later, Parkes was finding herself introducing Goldbloom to a double header. Not only to share a few thoughts about her late husband's memoirs, "Building Bridges," but also to talk about "Opening Doors," her own first book and memoir launched this past June, a few weeks before her 94th birthday.

"Opening Doors," is a companion book that reflects her own amazing life and devotion to health issues, to the disadvantaged and to seniors, culture and community. Goldbloom has made it her goal to get people talking together and while small in stature, her message is mighty and she is not shy to speak about her passions in life.

"Building Bridges," is a memoir written by Victor Goldbloom, pediatrician-turned politician whose book was released a year before he died at 92 in 2016. In it he shares his thoughts about various topics: the Canadian health care system, interreligious relations, English and French, gender equality and Quebec and Canada.

For this event the book club opened its meeting to guests, two of whom were forced to send regrets; one – Sue Alward – a graduate student of Goldbloom's Community Organization classes at McGill School of Social Work in the 60s, who had penned a personal letter to Goldbloom, and another, a fellow pediatrician of her husband's from 1967-2014 who, at the last minutes, was unable to attend. His wife, however, was present and she took notes.

It seems Alward's very successful Community Wellness Center at North



PHOTO BY DEBRA HARDING

Country Hospital in Newport, Vermont was so popular it prompted the Vermont Department of Transportation to ask her what kind of training she had in order to be able to organize it. Her reply: "The Community Organizing classes at the McGill School of Social Work given by Sheila Goldbloom." While Alward could not be present to hear Goldbloom speak, she wanted her to know how great an impact her teachings had upon her life.

"After so many years of rewarding work helping to bring positive change in

the lives of people I remain very thankful to you for being such a wonderful role model and for your dedication in imparting your wealth of knowledge to your students, of which I am happy to be one," wrote Alward.

Potton librarian Ann Colgan assured that copies of both Goldbloom books were available for purchase, which Goldbloom cheerfully signed.

Parkes was happy. "All comments have been positive," she noted. "She's a true inspiration!"