

"...AND THE CORRECT ANSWER IS..."

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1. 1000 MEDICAL QUIZ, by CHITRA DATTA. RUPA & CO.(1991). Rs.40
2. 1000 ASTRONOMY & SPACE QUIZ, by DILIP M. SALWI. RUPA & CO. (1991). Rs. 40.
3. RIDDLES IN YOUR TEACUP, by PARTHA GHOSE & DIPANKAR HOME. RUPA & CO. (1990). Rs. 20.

'What is myosarcoma?', 'Who wrote the first text book on human anatomy in 1543?' or 'Which new immunosuppressive drug was discovered in Japan in 1984?'. If these are the kind of queries you have, then 1000 Medical Quiz by Chitra Datta is the book to look for answers. As the title (weird as it may sound) suggests, this has 1000 questions on Medicine and related subjects. The questions are arranged according to sections on Human Body, Common Ailments, Prevention of Disease etc. and are multiple choice type. One might say that the book is informative but with a caveat. The level of questions is very uneven i.e. they range from being almost trivial ('who wrote The Origin of Species?') to being so technical as to be useless ('the latest technique of performing biopsy with a syringe is known as the FNAB technique'). There are also some questions which seem to have been put for no other reason but to bring the number of questions to the advertised 1000. For eg., the relevance of a question like 'Researchers from which country have used FK 506 in liver transplants and reported their work in Lancet?' is doubtful at best. Possibly the growth of television has elevated this kind of mindless trivia to the level of intelligence and meaningful information! This book could possibly be useful for a prospective pre medical student. It is only mildly interesting from the lay-person's point of view.

On the other hand, Dilip Salwi's book on Astronomy and Space is far more interesting. Not only is the choice of topics good but the questions are also interesting. The author has tried to give some supplementary information with the answers which will be useful though one feels that the information is still not enough. If these kind of books have to serve any other purpose apart from being useful in preparing for examinations, it is important to have not only the answers to the questions but also related facts about the topic. This will not only enhance the book's value but also help in satisfying the reader's curiosity. Once again, this book too suffers from the inclusion of questions of doubtful value without any additional information about what makes these interesting. But on the whole, good visuals, interesting tit bits and a good collection of questions make this book enjoyable.

Have you ever wondered why the kettle sings or why birds sitting on power lines do not get electrocuted? 'Riddles in a teacup' is a short, charming book which explains some of these mysteries in an extremely enjoyable way. Written by two physicists, it is NOT your standard quiz book with lots of trivia. Instead, it discusses several everyday phenomenon and gives scientific explanations for them. These are things which happen around us everyday but we rarely seem to stop and ponder on them. The explanations are simple, non technical and accessible to the educated layperson. The choice of topics is excellent, including one section on exposing the blunders made in famous movies like 36 Chowringee Lane. As acknowledged by the authors, this book is in the same genre as 'The Flying Circus of Physics', a thoroughly enjoyable book which is now unfortunately out of print. With our education system and the media encouraging superficial trivial information rather than a critical and questioning attitude, this book is a welcome antidote. For students, it should provide a welcome change from boring and voluminous textbooks on science. On the other hand, for the lay reader, this book should help debunk the myth that science is only high technology. There is a lot of good science to be learnt from happenings in our everyday world.

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