

### ***How to Drink from a Frog* by Michael Cox**

This book has all the information about food you will ever want to know, is written beautifully and is extremely funny. Start your PDHPE, HSIE or English lesson with The Fast and Furious Flavoursome Fun Food Quiz, including such delectable questions as: ‘Which one of the following isn’t offal? a) brain b) lips c) cornflakes. Next, run through the (hilarious) procedure for preparing shark meat in the Icelandic tradition (including suggestions about what to do while you’re waiting for the meat to cure, such as ‘teach your cat to read’), or teach your students how to prepare bird’s nest soup the South Asian way. Try to ignore the irreverent cartoons along the way – they are sooo distracting. So too are the numerous facts which are so hard to believe...for example, did you know that a very popular Korean health drink is made by dropping three baby mice (with their eyes still closed) into a bottle of rice wine?

Learn about food hygiene, with pithy, eloquent facts of history, including the stories of Typhoid Mary and Maggot Pete. Find out exactly what’s in chicken nuggets, and if that doesn’t shock your students, get them to read the section on the Chicago meat factories of the early 1900s. To give them an idea of how much food they will eat in a lifetime, draw six adult elephants on the board. Nutrients? Carbohydrates? Vitamins? How funny can nutrition be? Despite the prodigious wit of author, Micheal Cox, this book packs in a huge amount of useful information in ways I’m sure any student in the middle to upper primary will digest willingly. And if they can’t think of anything to write? Tell them about Mary Shelley – she ate rotten meat so she would have nightmares that she could write about in Frankenstein. Perhaps not...

**Sally Fitzgerald, NSW**

Laugh out loud at this hilarious take on food, how we eat it and why we eat as well as what we should eat, with the author taking us on a seriously bizarre meander through facts, stories and myths about food. From the first chapter, which outlines lots of facts about food (did you know that during the siege of Leningrad in 1942, people boiled up their shoes to make a sort of soup, and other information which you must read for yourself!!) while chapter three tells us about overindulgence (did you know that Elvis Presley in his last years, ate 94,000 calories a day!) or that we will eat up to 60,000 kilos of food in our lifetime (chapter four) Entitled *From spearing to rearing*, chapter five is not quite what I expected. The pages devoted to the Chicago Meat Works are most enlightening, almost enough to make me a vegetarian on the spot. And on it goes, with delicious snippets of information, details on what we should eat, and how we should eat it. It’s recent enough to talk about food miles, food labeling, and trans fat, so kids reading this will have the latest information to absorb. Teachers could have great fun with students reading a little to them just before recess or lunch, or doing some of the experiments detailed in the book, or using the quiz at the end. The book is multi purpose, readily offering lots of things for teachers and students to do in their pursuit of the truth behind advertising, fast food, and in particular what they really should eat for good health.

Bites of information loom large in this appealing book, which gives primary school readers lots to think about as they talk about health, diet, food and nutrition in class. Its alluring cover and loads of little illustrations scattered throughout the book will aid in its instant appeal.

**Fran Knight, SA**

*How to Drink From a Frog and other things you need to know about food* by Michael Cox is a fascinating, disgusting, repulsive, informative book about food. Students of all ages will love the cartoon illustrations and be totally engaged in the interesting facts this book provides. This text covers information about food throughout history, nutritional facts, and the range of strange foods that people in other cultures eat. The language is humorous and simply written in a ‘talkative style’. It is easy to read and the layout of the text presents small pieces of information in pictures. The fonts and graphics used in this book invites reluctant readers to pick it up and flick through

the pages to find information that they are interested in reading. I was personally fascinated with the array of food that other cultures eat such as: a vast variety of insects and the baby mice wine of Korea. There is a good table manners quiz for kids to do and a taste test to demonstrate how the tongue works. Children will also find out what actually *is in* chicken nuggets. I personally enjoyed reading this book and learnt a few repulsive facts about food. Students will also love this book and even if they struggle to read they will find lots of snippets of information that is easy to read, factual and fun. English, SOSE, Science and Home Economic teachers could all find uses for this book in their classrooms. It will certainly make some students think about what they eat!

**Charlotte Pyers, Dimboola Memorial Secondary College, VIC**

This book is full of food facts that really make you think about what you eat and at times make you not want to eat at all. Whilst reading this book I learnt a lot, laughed often, was amazed and shocked and at times wanted to cry. How could they do that? How could they put that in our food?

Kids will be amazed and want more. They will fly questions at you at a hundred miles an hour. You will be able to hear their brains ticking. Most of all they will think about what they eat before they put it into their mouths.

A great book to use when studying topics relating to food nutrition, our bodies, health or the history of food. This book is set out so that small pieces of interest can be used or it can be read from front to back. Be warned that once you read one fact they are sure to ask for more.

A book that is sure to become a well used resource and a valuable part of your teaching collection.

**Jennifer Deaves, NSW**

I was really looking forward to this book! Well, with a title like that, wouldn't everyone? Sadly, though, I must confess to disappointment at the actual product. Somewhere between concept and final development there seems to have been a glitch: I don't think this book, with its overly full pages and black and white illustrations, will be attractive to young readers. And that's a shame, because there's a lot of engrossing (and kid-appealingly gross) information on offer. An example of the catchy style: "Most cows have four teats. If you find that your cow has more than this number you may well be milking a wild boar ... or a spaniel" (p.75).

The "portions in proportion" (p.52) and the "tasty timeline of flavoursome food history" (p.68-71) are just a couple of the helpful gems that would be great reference material for a Stage 2 food unit.

The book, which is well indexed, concludes with a two-page glossary and a brilliant 35 item food quiz. It has strong binding with sewn sections: just as well, as the reader needs to force the pages apart to read to the central edges of the print. A clanger on page 30, "Ghandi", (7 lines from the bottom of the page) cements the impression of an unfortunately careless job in preparation of the material.

Perhaps this is a book best read to a class. That way many more would benefit from the author's wit and wisdom than by waiting for children to choose to persevere with it individually.

**Julie Davie, Sutherland Shire Christian School, NSW**

I found this book not only amusing and funny, but full of information about nutrition, food and other things, albeit written in a strangely gross way!

From the beginning, it gives you information of your tongue and other sensory items that enable you to not only to taste the food, but to tell good from bad. Then it goes into beautifully worded detail, of how one bite of food gets treated and where it goes to and the processes the poor thing has to endure along the way. You almost feel sorry for the food!

All through the book, there are Light Bites and Tasty Tidbits which give even more information. There is a great Timeline, and even some website addresses to go to.

It is packed with all this in a wonderfully and uniquely written book, which will have you rolling around the aisles in fits of laughter.

At the same time, it will make you stop and think about the food we choose to eat and why. It has given me food for thought!

This is a great book for all students and a fantastic resource for units on Food, Health, Nutrition and The Human Body.

Well done, Michael.

**Pauline Dunn, Mountain District Christian School, VIC**

This book contains a wealth of information about food. It uses great food terminology in a way that is fun for children. It is very factual covering a range of current health problems and general food information e.g. obesity, current food products, calories and the nutritional content of foods. The author uses anecdotal (sometimes gruesome) stories about the past to hold the readers attention e.g. making sausages with human fingers in them.

The format of the book could become a little too much for the young reader as it contains a lot of information. It is more suited for an independent reader of 12-15 years of age.

I believe teachers doing food HPE units could use selections from this book to read aloud. The humorous stories about food would hold the children's attention and encourage them to think more about the food they are eating.

**Anne Lewis, Mooloolaba State School, QLD**

With such an attention-grabbing cover and title, any child is going to pick it up and want to read further. The title, along with a picture of a worried looking frog being held by a boy with a dubious look on his face and holding a straw in his hand, is sure to spark the imagination and appeal to the 'Eww Yuk! How Gross!' factor. (And there is plenty of that in the book.)

The book is divided into ten chapters, each on a different aspect of food and with an interesting title. It is easy to read in chunks, well illustrated and filled with useful and not so useful but fascinating information. Tips on food safety such as washing hands and how to safely reheat food is included along with the story of Mr Mangetout, a man who eats anything and everything including bicycles and a whole aeroplane.

This book would be great to promote to reluctant readers as small portions can be read on their own and the reader can browse through the book till they find the next topic that grabs their attention.

**Claire Cheeseman, Summerland Primary School, New Zealand**