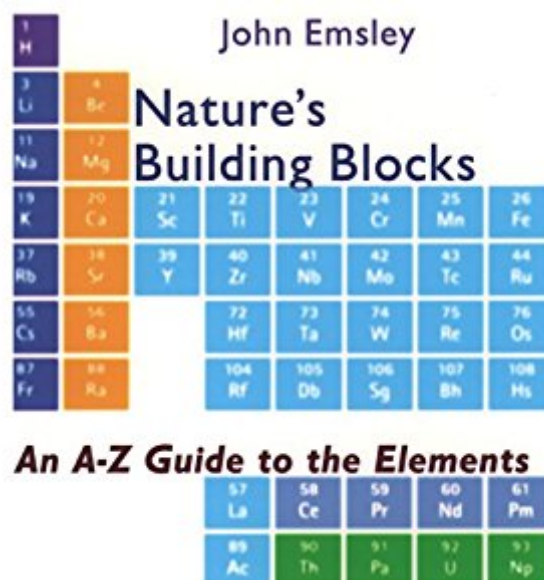


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Nature's Building Blocks : An A-Z Guide To The Elements



Synopsis

Written by award-winning science writer John Emsley, this informative and highly enjoyable book explains the what, the why and the wherefore of the elements. Arranged alphabetically, from Actinium to Zirconium, it is a complete guide to all the elements that are currently known, with more extensive coverage of those we encounter in our everyday life. The entry on each element reveals where it came from, what role it may have in the human body, the foods that contain it, how it was discovered, its role in human health, the uses and misuses to which it is put, and its environmental role. The new edition includes the three chemical elements discovered since the first edition - Darmstadtium, Roetgenium, and Copernicium - and the section on "transfermium elements" has now been incorporated into the main part of the book. In addition, Emsley has added new information on the economic uses of elements such as Scandium and Gold. Praised by Nature as "amusing and finely crafted," Nature's Building Blocks offers a pleasurable tour of the very essence of our material world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I enjoyed reading this book but I'm not going to repeat what others have already written and eulogize the book's organization and content. You can also "Look Inside" and get a pretty good idea of what the book has to offer. My criticisms are as follows. As some reviewers have stated, the book needs an index. Much could be gained from being able to cross-reference names of elements and compounds. Since index-generating software has been around since the computer stone age, there is no good excuse for not providing one. The table of contents is also too pithy. There is a major section called "The Lanthanides" that isn't even in the table of contents. While it is true, that

someone who reads the whole book will eventually stumble across it, it is also true that it isn't an element A-Z and someone who uses this book only as a reference may never discover it. Another gripe is that while the section called "The Periodic Table" may be a fairly good historical discussion, it is a terrible technical discussion. It offers a disorganized and almost scatterbrained explanation of what a "group" or a "period" is. Readers may also want to know what a "transition element" is and why the lanthanides and actinides are in detached rows. And, why not have a section called "Actinides" since the astute reader may wonder why there is a Lanthanide section but not one for the Actinides? Emsley's discussion of orbitals is so poorly done and mostly confusing to the point that its very existence is irritating. A good discussion of orbitals should have been a core part of the book. Few readers will care about the history of the Periodic Table but a good discussion of orbitals is not easy to find--look elsewhere.

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