

## DBP Book Review

<b>Name of Book:</b> What Do People Do All Day?	<b>Author:</b> Richard Scarry
<b>Publisher:</b> Random-House	<b>Date of Publication:</b> 1968
<b>Name of Reviewer:</b> Lee Hampton	<b>Date of Review:</b> February 24, 2008
<b>Intended Audience:</b> Children	
<b>Purpose of the book:</b> Introduce children to common occupations and industries, common vehicles and tools, and features of a money based economy.	
<b>Theoretical Basis:</b> Scarry combines a number of techniques that help keep books interesting for young children and improve children's comprehension. <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The illustrations uniformly use bright colors and show up well on a white background. According to the findings of Brookshire, Scharff, and Moses in their paper "The Influence of Illustrations on Children's Book Preferences and Comprehension" (Reading Psychology 2002; 23: 323-339), children prefer brightly colored illustrations to darker ones. Although their research was based on tests of reading preferences and comprehension of 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders who read variants of a book designed by the authors, their findings were probably applicable to many younger children as well.</li><li>2. The illustrations of objects and buildings are generally realistic although the workers are drawn as animals dressed as people. Again, Brookshire et al found that children generally prefer realistic drawings, although this finding was not as strong as the one for bright colors.</li><li>3. The book extensively combines illustrations and text. Almost all objects and workers are labeled, and accompanying text paragraphs describe what is going on in each picture. Brookshire et al found that children understand books that used either only text or combined text and illustrations better than illustration only books. They also found that children tend to better comprehend stories that they find more interesting. Generally, the children studied liked the stories that combined text and illustrations best and therefore did somewhat better on comprehension questions after reading those stories compared with stories with only text or illustrations.</li><li>4. The objects shown in the book are very common, very distinctive ones that children in developed countries will probably come into contact with every day whether in rural or urban areas. The objects and animals shown also often make well-known specific noises. As noted by Margaret Marshall in <u>An Introduction to the World of Children's Books</u>, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Gower: Brookfield; 1988), young children are often very interested in books portraying things they are familiar with, particularly if the things make particular sounds that can be imitated. For example, once a child has learned to identify and say "dump truck," he or she can point one out in the book, say the name, and/or and make a whirring sound to imitate the emptying of the truck bed.</li></ol>	

**Strengths:** In addition to the features mentioned above that help to enhance a young child's interest in and comprehension of the book, it has a number of other attractive characteristics.

1. The book is broken down into several short stories that generally accurately describe how different parts of the economy work. These stories really do explain what exactly the workers and things that children see on a daily basis do. The stories also put these workers and objects into a broader context and show their interactions with other things and people.
2. The stories cover a wide range of different industries and topics. For example, one story describes a voyage of a passenger ship, another narrates a young girl's trip to a hospital for an operation, and another shows how different workers use money to buy things from and sell things to each other.
3. The text and pictures contain humor that should appeal to a wide range of ages. Younger readers will probably enjoy physical humor, e.g. pancakes being repeatedly flipped out of a moving train or firemen using kitchen cooking gear for helmets, while older readers will probably laugh at a cat captaining a ship full of mice.
4. The use of animals to portray the book's people renders the book entirely neutral in terms of race and ethnicity.
5. The labeling of most objects and characters and the accompanying story text make it useful for a variety of reading levels. The picture labels can be used to teach vocabulary while the story text can help with reading sentences and paragraphs.
6. The stories and pictures illustrate many virtues, e.g. teamwork, foresight, and helping others.
7. Many stories show children interacting correctly with adults, e.g. firemen, giving young readers some idea how to work with these people in real life.

**Weaknesses:** Some parts of the book are beginning to show their age since the machinery, objects, and procedures portrayed do not quite match the current state of the art. For example, many of the car models shown are rarely seen on the roads anymore, and current US hospital equipment looks very different from what is shown. Also, the use of animals to portray the different workers in the book may be slightly confusing to younger readers who value realism and may have trouble understanding that animals really cannot perform the tasks they are shown doing.

**Recommendation of Reviewer** (please choose one and put "X" in box next to selection):

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Highly recommend for all parents
<input type="checkbox"/>	Highly recommend for parents with specific problems/issues
<input type="checkbox"/>	May be useful to some parents
<input type="checkbox"/>	Would not recommend

**Additional Comments:** Scarry also produced a large number of books illustrating cars, trucks, and other vehicles and a number of illustrated dictionaries. Children who find this book interesting would probably like his other books and vice versa. Currently available copies of the book are usually the abridged edition since Scarry's original story text could be quite long.