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My Surprise Book of Seasons; My Surprise Book of Senses; My Surprise Book of Pirates; My Surprise Book of Night and Day

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

What a pleasure to receive a package of books that children and adults fell upon on opening. The four-year-old has already claimed **Pirates** as his own; the seven-year-old wavers between **Seasons** and **Senses**; and the teacher wants to scoop up the lot!

French publisher Nathan are to be congratulated on producing such an inventive and refreshingly original non-fiction series, and Oxford for spotting their appeal and acquiring the UK rights. Don't be put off by the hackneyed series title or the bitty covers (although the spot lamination looks great), for inside you will discover a wealth of flaps, acetate panels, cut-out windows, tabs, wheels and other novelties that are not only fun but really help explain how things work. Turn a wheel to see how our planet turns on its axis; lift a series of flaps to see the seasons change through the year, or spin a wheel to discover how our eyes are tricked by optical illusions. **Senses** has raised indentations on its pages to introduce braille, while a little mouse on an elasticated string is included to test your reaction time. There are also little books within books - a pirate's recipe book, a mini newspaper to unfold, a letter to open, a trunk to be unpacked and its contents sorted into seasonal drawers of clothes - as well as practical activities, experiments and games.

Quirky, humorous artwork packed with detail and enlivened by hand lettering is sprinkled with busy enfants in chic attire, revealing the books' French origin, yet the illustrations work just as well for a British child. There is a wonderfully light touch in the witty approach, suggesting that author and illustrators were given free rein to be

inventive, while Anthea Bell's translations manage to retain the sound of an author's voice. One tiny quibble (pointed out in the hope that OUP will correct on a reprint) - a number of flaps have the text transposed, leading to some mysterious captioning.

Part of the appeal of the series is the quality of the production and the scale of the books - a neat square format, with thick matt board covers, and sturdy card pages to ensure that the flaps will survive repeated use. At £6.99 a book, these are good value and I would just as happily give these as birthday presents to a child between five and seven years (not something you can say with confidence about all non-fiction for this age group) as recommend them for classroom use.

Running Order:

44

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