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Alexander Fleming

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Media type:

Book

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In the summer of 1942, a man suffering from meningitis was successfully treated with penicillin - and a new era in medical science began. In a dramatic opening scenario, the days chronicling the patient's progress from almost certain death to near miraculous recovery are vividly recounted. Having gained the reader's attention in such a compelling fashion, Beverley Birch then proceeds to interweave skilfully all the strands of her narrative - the pioneering work of the early bacteriologists, the life of Fleming, the discovery of penicillin, and its development by the Oxford Team led by Florey and Chain, the two scientists with whom Fleming shared the Nobel prize and whose contribution is often overlooked. The text reads almost like a thriller yet not only does the author explain the scientific methodology clearly and succinctly, she also manages to convey something of the sheer hard grind and dedication involved in being a research scientist - the disappointment of failure and the joy of success. The text is enhanced by the use of quotations and by the detailed captioning of the well-chosen illustrations (including some high quality colour photographs) which appear on almost every page. So often science biographies for young people are too superficial or appear in uninviting formats with uninspiring texts. This attractively produced new series from Exley certainly promises to remedy the situation. Other titles so far published include Thomas Edison and Charles Darwin - both written by Anna Sproule whose 'colourful' prose style is sometimes guilty of overshadowing her subject matter.

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