



Published on NCSE (<https://ncse.com>)

[Home](#) > Explore Evolution as creationist nostalgia

SHARE TWEET EMAIL [PRINT](#) [1]

[Glenn Branch](#) [2]

01.24.2009

[Explore Evolution as creationist nostalgia](#) [3]



Even as the Discovery Institute's Stephen C. Meyer was trying to convince the Texas state board of education of his scientific bona fides, the antievolution textbook he coauthored was receiving a scathing review in a top scientific journal. Reviewing *Explore Evolution for Evolution & Development* (2009; 11 [1]: 124-125), Brian D. Metscher of the University of Vienna [described](#) [4] it as "159 glossy pages of color-illustrated creationist nostalgia," adding, "All the old favorites are here — fossils saying no, all the Icons, flightless *Ubx* flies, irreducible flagella, even that irritating homology-is-circular thing. There are no new arguments, no improved understanding of evolution, just a remastered scrapbook of the old ideas patched together in a high-gloss package pre-adapted to survive the post-Dover legal environment. The whole effort would be merely pathetic if it did not actually represent a serious and insidious threat to education."

Unimpressed by *Explore Evolution's* advertised "inquiry-based approach," Metscher remarked, "The point-counterpoint organization is used to give the appearance of a comprehensive treatment, but the substance is thin, fragmented, and demonstrably biased. ... All of the topics are treated in a manner much more appropriate to discussions of theological contentions or political positions rather than to scientific discourse." (Similarly, reporting on a Biola University event to train teachers to use the textbook, NCSE's Louise S. Mead [concluded](#) [5], "*Explore Evolution* fails on every front with respect to claims of being an 'inquiry-based' curriculum.") Metscher further observed that "the 'evidence' given in this book is almost all in the form of inappropriate examples, inept analogies, unattributed intimations, and credibility-enhancing quotes from mostly nonrelevant scientific works (carefully referenced, in case you want to look up the context they're being taken out of)."

As a specialist in evolutionary developmental biology, Metscher took particular exception to *Explore Evolution's* misrepresentations of his field, writing, "More or less everything we call 'evo-devo' is meant to augment evolutionary theory to include factors other than the coding genome, and so these authors cite evo-devo works by real scientists as 'critiques' of 'neo-Darwinism.'" In one particularly egregious case he discussed, a claim in *Explore Evolution* about the evolution of the four-chambered heart "is supported by citing a single article ... which does not mention heart development, but does discuss developmental (non-neo-Darwinian) sources of evolutionary novelty. The next paragraph refers to it as a 'critique of neo-Darwinism.' And this after giving an explicit warning against the logical fallacy of equivocation." He also complained of the book's "outright abuse" when it comes to its citation of the scientific literature.

Metscher's review thus confirms John Timmer's [assessment](#) [6] of *Explore Evolution*: "anyone using this as a source of information about science in the classroom will leave their students with a picture of modern biology that is essentially unrelated to the way that science is actually practiced within the biological science community." Citing Nick Matzke's 2006 [discussion](#) [7] in *Reports of the NCSE* of the impending debut of *Explore Evolution*, Metscher expressed concern that "Together with new state education bills allowing local groups to push this stuff into classrooms, it will help dilute and weaken the already thin preparation students receive for dealing with a world full of information they need to be able to think about." Louisiana, where the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education recently [adopted](#) [8] a policy about what types of supplementary classroom materials will, and will not, be allowable under the Louisiana Science Education Act, is the most salient case in point.

[Anti-Evolution](#) [9]

[2009](#) [10]

[+ read](#) [3]

Source URL: <https://ncse.com/news/2009/01/explore-evolution-as-creationist-nostalgia-004233#comment-0>

Links

[1] <https://ncse.com/printpdf/13339>

[2] <https://ncse.com/users/glenn>

[3] <https://ncse.com/news/2009/01/explore-evolution-as-creationist-nostalgia-004233>

[4] <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/121641680/HTMLSTART>

[5] <https://ncse.com/rncse/28/1/explore-evolution-notes-from-field>

[6] <http://arstechnica.com/reviews/other/discovery-textbook-review.ars>

[7] <https://ncse.com/rncse/26/6/new-creationist-textbook-way-again>

[8] <https://ncse.com/news/2009/01/mixed-result-louisiana-003733>

[9] <https://ncse.com/news/anti-evolution>

[10] <https://ncse.com/news/2009>