

Why Study Science?

In the May, 1997 issue of Discover, Jared Diamond suggested five reasons why it is so important for the public (or read that non-science majors) to understand science.

1. Science isn't something arcane, intended only for the few. Everyone of us - whether a poet, janitor, or nuclear physicist - has to be able to think scientifically, and to understand some science, to get through with our lives. Every day we face decisions that hinge on science, such as whether to smoke, what to eat, with whom to have sex, and what protection to use (if any). Even for decisions that don't depend on specific scientific facts, science remains the proven set of best methods for acquiring accurate information about the world.
2. Some of you will end up as policy-makers in government or business. Individuals such as these make decisions that fundamentally affect the well-being of everyone, and most of them know no more about science than does the rest of the general public. Yet they are called upon to decide what to do about (and how much money to spend on) nuclear reactors, global warming, environmental toxins, expensive space programs, biomedical research, and applications of biotechnology. It's nonscientists, not scientists, who have the last word on whether the milk we drink can safely come from cows treated with hormones. To make such decisions wisely, the decision makers have to be drawn from a scientifically educated public.
3. As voters, we all bear the ultimate responsibility for those decisions, because we are the ones who decide which candidates and which ballot measures will prevail. We need enough sense about science to select the decision makers who will make good choices when faced with scientific questions.
4. Even if science were irrelevant to the lives of ordinary Americans, a strong scientific enterprise is essential to our economy, educational system, and society. That requires lots of young people to become excited enough by science that they resolve to become professional scientists. This requires, to some extent, the nurturing support and understanding of the general public.
5. Scientists are not always able to communicate their findings in an easy to understand manner. Although the scientific community should do a better job of explaining what they have discovered, members of the general public have to expend some energy in making an attempt to understand what is being said. Familiarity with the vernacular of science, knowledge of some of the basic principles, and confidence in one's ability to fit the new findings into one's ever-expanding lode of scientific knowledge are valuable qualities of an informed citizen.

"The scientist does not study nature because it is useful; he studies it because he delights in it, and he delights in it because it is beautiful. If nature were not beautiful, it would not be worth knowing, and if nature were not worth knowing, life would not be worth living." - Henri Poincaré.

Science in the News #1

Name:

Period:

1. Read and 'talk' with the text on the back of this page

2. Complete all of the sentences below



The article that I just read is about _____

To 'talk' with the text on back:

- underline : important facts
- ☆ : interesting ideas
- : vocabulary
- ? : What you want to know more/ don't



I think I am reading this article because in _____ class(s) we are/were studying _____



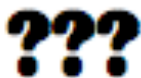
One word from the article I would like to know more about is _____. When I looked this word up in the dictionary I find out it meant _____



The most important sentence in the article to me is " _____ "

because _____

If I wanted to tweet about this article, my 120 characters (or less) would be _____



After reading the article I wonder _____ ?

Another question I still have after reading the article is _____

_____ ?



summarizing



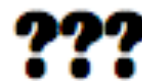
making connections



Research



Important details



questionin

