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By Colleen Belk, Virginia Borden Maier

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Borden Maier Bibliography**

- Rank: #65453 in Books
- Published on: 2015-01-08
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 10.70" h x .60" w x 8.50" l, 2.00 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 480 pages

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Colleen Belk and **Virginia Borden Maier** collaborated on teaching biology to nonmajors for over a decade together at the University of Minnesota—Duluth. This collaboration has continued through Virginia's move to St. John Fisher College in Rochester, New York, and has been enhanced by their differing but complementary areas of expertise. In addition to the non-majors course, Colleen Belk teaches general biology for majors, genetics, cell biology, and molecular biology courses. Virginia Borden Maier teaches general biology for majors, evolutionary biology, zoology, plant biology, ecology, and conservation biology courses.

After several somewhat painful attempts at teaching the breadth of biology to non-majors in a single semester, the two authors came to the conclusion that they needed to find a better way. They realized that their students were more engaged when they understood how biology directly affected their lives. Colleen and Virginia began to structure their lectures around stories they knew would interest students. When they began letting the story drive the science, they immediately noticed a difference in student interest, energy, and willingness to work harder at learning biology. Not only has this approach increased student understanding, but it has also increased the authors' enjoyment in teaching the course—presenting students with fascinating stories infused with biological concepts is simply a lot more fun. This approach served to invigorate their teaching. Knowing that their students are learning the biology that they will need now and in the future gives the authors a deep and abiding satisfaction.

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