

children's book of the week

Everyday science, from breakfast to bed.

By **Lucy Bannerman**

Why is breakfast cereal magnetic? How does sand help you to see? Why did that German guy try to turn wee into gold and what did he find instead?

Elements of the Day doesn't just blast off soon-to-be-forgotten facts about the periodic table. It tells the story of chemical elements in our everyday lives

by fusing them with the daily moments that will be familiar to every child.

It's a clever formula — and an effective one. From wake-up to bedtime, we are introduced to many of the scientific miracles that are happening all around us.

"Elements — and all the stuff you can build from them — make every part of your day possible in unexpected and fascinating ways, though most people don't give them much thought," the author Samantha Lewis says as she urges young readers to experiment with their breakfast. "If you have a very strong magnet, ask an adult if you can try using it to move your iron-rich



Elements of the Day

by *Samantha Lewis
and Hao Hao (7+)*

Red Shed
£12.99 pp48



cereal around as it floats on the milk. It'll look like you can do magic."

There's cobalt in your eggs, and carbon and fluorine on the non-stick pan, making it easier to flip your pancakes, and strontium in the glow-in-the-dark stars stuck to your ceiling. Arsenic, thankfully, is no longer used to colour toys and sweetie wrappers.

Lewis abandoned early ambitions to become a research scientist to work on a range of science documentaries for the BBC, Discovery Channel and Netflix on topics ranging from human evolution to "infinity".

Her debut non-fiction book for children will appeal to fans of Adam Kay's science books and the *Horrible Histories* series, buoyed by bright, clear illustrations by Hao Hao.

We learn that "amazingly, there are

three people who lay some claim to the oxygen discovery, and one of them had his head chopped off." (There are no gory details about the doomed Antoine Lavoisier, guillotined during the French revolution.)

The poo and wee pages will probably prove most popular. The German alchemist Hennig Brandt was convinced that the secret to turning any old metal into gold was to be found inside "bucketfuls of human wee". He didn't find gold, but discovered phosphorous.

The same "skatole" (carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen) that makes poo stink is also "widely used in perfumes. That's because, rather weirdly, it takes on a pleasant flowery fragrance in very tiny amounts, found naturally in orange blossom and jasmine." Remember that next time you dab on some Jo Malone.