



ROCKET SCIENCE

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TEXT TYPE: Fiction: Narrative—Science Fiction Story
GUIDED READING LEVEL: U/V

SUMMARY: Javier is not like other kids. Born on Mars, and now living on Earth after his Martian outpost was destroyed by sandstorms, he has trouble adjusting to his new planet. He has a crippling fear of water, gravity slows his movement, and he misses the beauty of the home of his birth. Longing to return to the planet he loves, Javier spends his time building a rocket ship. When his hopes of returning to Mars are dashed, Javier sets his sights on a new dream: space cadet school on an international space station.

TEXT FEATURES

- italics
- highlighted and enlarged text quotes

VISUAL LITERACY

- illustrations

TEXT SUPPORTS

- traditional narrative structure
- descriptive language
- illustrations

POSSIBLE TEXT CHALLENGES

- science fiction text form
- technical content related to building a rocket

FOCUS COMPREHENSION STRATEGY

- making connections: text to self, text to world, text to text

FURTHER COMPREHENSION STRATEGY

- synthesizing

ORAL LANGUAGE OPPORTUNITIES

- 'I' Message strategy
- discussing with a group
- commercial for space cadet school (option 3 in Focused Rereading)

WORKING WITH WORDS

- language predictability: developing awareness of how metaphors convey meaning

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Observe each student's ability to:

- connect ideas to self, other texts, and the world
- compare and contrast ideas
- cite reasons for using italics
- identify and discuss metaphor use

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Select from the following:

- Making Connections Strategy Checklist
- Comprehension Strategies Anecdotal Record

BEFORE READING

Making Connections: Text to Self

Activate and build prior knowledge

- Begin the session with an ‘I’ Message activity (see Oral Language Strategies in the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide*). Explain that everyone gets upset or angry but there are appropriate and inappropriate ways to deal with anger. Tell students that the main character, Javier, gets very upset and acts in an inappropriate way; by destroying something. Ask students to think of times when they were angry. Remind them that at some point everyone has reacted in a regretful way when angry. Ask them to share any examples of unacceptable behaviour they expressed when angered, e.g., throwing things or screaming at someone. Turn these examples into an ‘I’ statement. For example, *I can count to 10 when I get angry*. As a group, continue to come up with more acceptable ways of dealing with anger.

Making Connections: Text to Text

Introduce supports and challenges

- Tell students the story they are about to read is science fiction. Allow them to discuss elements and features of science fiction writing, and any examples they may have read previously. Explain that science fiction explores fantasy and advancement in science, but also looks at human and ethical issues. Ask, *Do readers think about and engage this type of text differently than with other forms of fiction?*

Text Features

- Direct students’ attention to the highlighted and enlarged text quote on page 2: ‘His shoe made a sucking noise and the terrifying wet leaked in, soaking his foot.’ Ask them what they think the purpose of this sort of feature is. Ask students why they think the author chose to highlight this particular text from the story. Encourage them to pay attention to such quotes as they read, thinking about their purposes, and a possible reason for their selection.
- Highlight the italicized text in the second column on page 2 (third paragraph): *Just focus on the porch...* Ask, *Why do authors use italics?* Provide students with the opportunity to discuss and share their ideas. Write the title ‘Italics’ on chart paper and list all the appropriate responses offered by students, including additional ideas if they are not mentioned. The list should include:
 - to cite titles of books, magazines, newspapers, articles, television shows, plays, and stories within a sentence
 - to emphasize a word
 - to show speech or thoughts of a character
 - to highlight words or phrases in another language
 - to signify sound, e.g., ‘grrrrrrr’
 - to introduce new terms, e.g., ‘He had to make an appropriate *hypothesis*.’

Language Predictability

Making Connections: Text to Self, Text to World, and Text to Text

- Ask students what a metaphor is (a direct comparison of two things that are seemingly unlike, without the use of ‘like’ or ‘as’). Provide an example (‘All the world’s a stage’). Direct students to the third paragraph in the first column of page 2 and ask them to identify a metaphor, e.g., ‘Outside, the rain fell in sheets...’ Ask, *Why do writers sometimes use metaphors like this? Does using this kind of descriptive language add something to the story?*

Set a purpose for reading

- Tell students that Javier, the main character in the story, is afraid of a lot of different things. As they read, ask students to identify his fears and to think about their own fears or the fears of someone they know personally (being careful not to compromise identity), have read about, seen on TV, and so on. Provide students with a copy of the *Comparison Organizer* BLM (found in the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide*) and ask them to list Javier’s fears and their own examples of fear, and compare. Students should also think about positive ways of overcoming fear as they read.

TEACHING TIP:

It is important to be sensitive to the fears of students. By allowing them the opportunity to list fears of someone they know, it helps alleviate anxiety of admitting fears that are personal.

Provide for early finishers

- Any students who finish early can share their *Comparison Organizer* work with a partner.

DURING READING

Monitor reading

- Remind students of their purpose for reading. Are they identifying Javier’s fears and making appropriate connections to their own knowledge of fear?

Observe

- Make observations on your assessment tools. (See the *Making Connections Strategy Checklist* and the *Comprehension Strategies Anecdotal Record* in the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide*.)

AFTER READING

Revisit the purpose for reading

- Have students share their *Comparison Organizer* work with the reading group. As a group, discuss positive methods Javier can use to overcome fears identified by the group. Do the same with the personal fears listed by students.

Making Connections: Text to Self, Text to World, and Text to Text

Check on outstanding challenges

- As a group, discuss any challenges students experienced. Are all students able to identify and discuss the aspects of this story that make it science fiction (as opposed to, for example, realistic fiction)?

Note successful strategy use

- Highlight a student that has used a reading strategy effectively, e.g., *Heidi used context to figure out the meaning of the word ‘reprimanding’ (page 3). She noted that Javier had finally come in from the barn, through the rain, despite his fear of water. Heidi didn’t think Gran was exceptionally angry with him, but noted that the text revealed there was ‘tension in her voice,’ which showed she was upset. From this information Heidi figured out that ‘reprimanding’ was probably not a good thing. By considering its context within the text, she figured out that it means to scold someone for doing something wrong.*

FOCUSED REREADING

Three options are provided for focused rereading in the next Guided Reading lesson. Choose an activity that meets the needs of your students, or you might select a Reader Response activity from the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide*.

Written

- Invite students to imagine they are Javier. Ask them to write a journal entry explaining how they feel about living on Earth and what the idea of home means to them.

Making Connections: Text to Self

ESL NOTE: You may wish to encourage your ESL students to think about their own experience of living in a new country when composing their journal entry.

Synthesizing

Artistic

- Ask students to create a design for a rocket ship they could use to travel to Mars. The diagram should outline the different parts of the rocket and their functions, with labels. Students can refer to the first-page illustration and text discussing the rocket parts as starting points of reference.

Synthesizing

Oral/dramatic

- Invite students to form groups and create a commercial for the cadet school on the International Space Station Orbital. The commercial should include the overall objective and need for cadet training. Commercials might also include information on what kinds of young people might be well suited for this kind of education and training. They should also include details such as cost, special events and activities at school, former graduates’ testimonials, and so on.