



Fiction

Oxford Level 9

# Captain Comet and the Purple Planet

Author: Jonathan Emmett

Range: Humorous/Science fiction story

Theme: Overcoming problems

Teaching Notes authors: Gill Howell and Vicki Yates

## Synopsis

When Spanner and Captain Comet investigate a new purple planet, they discover it is a space monster. Captain Comet helps them to escape by flying through an asteroid belt to safety.

## Group or guided reading

### Introducing the book

- Look together at the cover. Ask the children to suggest where the story takes place.
- Read the title and ask the children who they think the main character will be.
- Read the blurb on the back cover. Were the children right about the main character?
- Look at the pictures on the front and back covers. Ask the children what they think will happen in this story.
- Read the author's name and ask the children if they have read other books by this author.

### Strategy check

- Ask the children to tell you which strategies they can use to work out new words.
- Remind the children to break any longer words into syllables to help them read it, e.g. find the word 'Gravity' on page 5 line 2, and ask a volunteer to break it into syllables.
- Ask a volunteer to read the spoken words on page 7. Remind the children to use the punctuation to help them read with expression.

### Independent reading

Focus: Explain to the children that you want them to think about this question while they are reading:  
*Can you find three places in the story where the author uses humour?*

- Observe the strategies the children use when they meet new vocabulary, and prompt them as needed.
- Praise the children for responding to the humour.

### Returning and responding to the text

- When the children have read the whole story, ask them to describe three parts that they think are funny and find the relevant pages.
- Ask the children to comment on each other's choices.
- Ask: *What sort of character is Spanner? What was the first silly thing he did?*
- Ask the children to turn to page 8. Ask them to find the word written in upper case letters.  
*What effect do the capital letters have on the way you read this page?*

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- Ask the children to turn to page 21 and read the dialogue between Comet and Spanner. Ask them to find the beginning and end of each character's spoken words. Ask them who is saying 'We've got to get away!' and to explain why these words do not begin on a new line.
- Ask the children to say what they liked or disliked about the story.

## Speaking and listening activities

- Discuss the actions of Spanner and ask the children to suggest reasons for his actions. Encourage the children to think of words to describe Spanner's character.
- Ask the children to take turns to sit in the 'hot seat' in the role of Spanner.
- Ask 'Spanner' to retell the events of the story.
- Encourage the other children to ask 'Spanner' questions about the reasons for his actions.
- Remind the children to ask questions using 'how' and 'why'.
- Praise children for putting themselves into the role of the character.

## Further reading activities

- Ask the children to write a paragraph to summarise each chapter.
- Ask them to look through the text and collect words and phrases that describe the space monster.
- Ask the children to look through the story again and write down any verbs other than 'said' that the author uses to describe speech (i.e. reporting clauses).
- Read the book in pairs, each taking turns to read the dialogue using an appropriately expressive tone.

## Suggestions for using ICT

- Prepare a paragraph from the story on a word processor, omitting the punctuation. Ask the children to add the punctuation so that the paragraph makes sense.
- Ask them to use a word processing package to rewrite the dialogue in Chapter 4 as a playscript.
- Prepare the dialogue from page 21 as a word file, changing the verbs used to describe speech to 'said'.
- Ask the children to choose new verbs to replace 'said'.
- Encourage the children to look up information on the author, Jonathan Emmett, and his other writing on the internet. Ensure that they only have access to child-friendly sites.

## Writing activities

- Remind the children how to set out written dialogue, using a new paragraph for each new speaker.
- Ask the children to imagine they were on the space ship, have now returned to earth and are going to describe the events of the story to a friend.
- Ask them to suggest what reaction their friend might have and what statements or questions they would use.
- Ask them to write the conversation between themselves and their friend.
- Ask some of the children to work with a partner to read their dialogues aloud.

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