



Fiction

Oxford Level 10

# Captain Comet and the Dog Star

Author: Jonathan Emmett

Range: Humorous/Science fiction story

Theme: Being afraid

Teaching Notes authors: Gill Howell and Vicki Yates

## Synopsis

Captain Comet, Captain Stella and Spanner the robot go off to investigate a spaceship that seems to be empty. It turns out to be a trap set by space pirates. It seems that the pirates will steal everything from the Stardust Space Station, but Spanner saves the day.

## Group or guided reading

### Introducing the book

- Read the title and the blurb on the back cover.
- Look through the pictures and identify the main characters.
- Identify the space pirates in the illustrations.
- Find and read all the chapter headings. Ask the children to use them to predict what might happen in the story.
- Notice that the print changes on pages 5, 16 and 17. Find out why this is.

### Strategy check

- Remind the children that syllables help us to read and write longer words.
- On page 3, find 'midnight'. Ask the children to explain how breaking down the word into syllables can help us to remember how to spell it.
- On page 5, find 'spaceship'. Break it into syllables and read the separate words. Ask a volunteer to spell 'spaceship'.
- Find more words with two syllables on this page. Read and spell 'looking', 'drifting', 'Captain', 'scanner', 'Stardust', 'Station' and 'reply'.

## Independent reading

Focus: Explain to the children that you want them to think about this question when they are reading:  
*How is Spanner feeling at different times in the story?*

- Listen as the children read, and praise them for coping with new words confidently.
- Notice how the pictures show the action, e.g. on page 7, ask: *How does the picture show us what each character is doing?*
- Ask the children to say what they think the characters are feeling at different stages of the story.
- Notice whether the children are engaged with the text and are keen to find out what happens next.



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### Returning and responding to the text

- Ask the children to say what they know about Spanner.
- Go to page 4. *Why was Spanner hiding?*
- Turn to page 6 and find the word 'gasped'. *Why did Spanner gasp?*
- *Why did Spanner hide under the bedclothes?* (page 9)
- Turn to page 16. *What does wailing sound like? Why was Spanner wailing?*
- Ask the children to explain how the fact that Spanner was frightened saved the space station from the pirates.

### Speaking and listening activities

- Use a Circle Time to discuss scary films and television programmes.
- Ask the children, in turn, to name a film or a programme that they found scary, either recently, or when they were younger.
- Go around the circle again, and ask the children to say the worst thing about the programme they named. *What was the best thing? What did the characters in the programme do?*
- Ask the children to say what they do if they are frightened. *Who do they tell about their fears? Are things less scary when you have told someone about them?*
- In the group, decide what is the best thing to do after watching a scary programme.
- Ask the children to say why they like to watch scary programmes sometimes.

### Further reading activities

- Ask the children to work in pairs to scan the text to make a list of words with double consonants, e.g. 'spanner', 'rubbish', etc.
- Encourage the children to make a list of the chapter headings and write one sentence about that chapter.
- Working with a partner, ask the children to choose a chapter to read aloud, taking turns to read alternate pages. Remind them to read with expression to hold their partner's interest.

### Suggestions for using ICT

- Type 'spaceship' into an Internet search engine to find pictures of real spaceships.
- Ask the children to find the video-link text in the story on pages 5, 16, 17 and 27, copy one of the messages, then experiment with other fonts to make the message look appropriate for a spaceship.
- Encourage the children to use an art software programme to design a flag for the Stardust Space Station.

### Writing activities

- Remind the children that adjectives tell us about things by describing their attributes.
- Ask the children to suggest some adjectives for a familiar object.
- Read about the Dog Star on pages 10 and 11. Ask the children to find some adjectives on page 11, e.g. 'scruffy', 'dirty', 'spooky'.



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- Ask the children to imagine an old, deserted spaceship, and to think of some adjectives that might describe it, e.g. 'rusty', 'eerie', 'cluttered', etc.
- Ask the children to write two or three sentences about walking around the Dog Star, using adjectives to describe its condition.
- Ask the children to read their sentences aloud to the group. List all the adjectives that the children have used. Praise them for thinking of strong adjectives.

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