



Here's a theme that lets young imaginations blast off into space! The possibilities are as vast as the universe. Celebrate what has been, what is, and what might be as you "Book to the Future."

SETTING THE SCENE

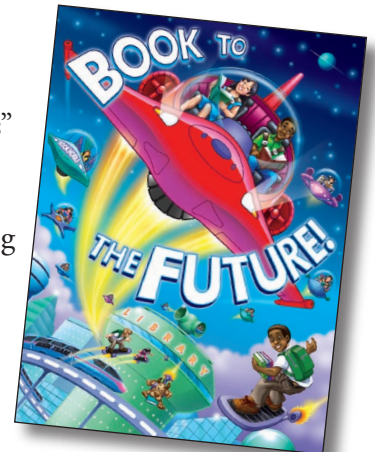
Spaceship. Create a spaceship reading room. You might use a very large box, such as a refrigerator box, or hang black curtains in a corner of the room. Place a small desk chair, with arms and a "safety belt" (a long fabric strip attached to the bottom cushion) inside. Add a poster board control panel with lots of dials, screens, and buttons to an inside wall, and perhaps a window showing black, starry sky on another wall. Include a labeled box or basket with a hinged, latched top to hold a selection of appropriate books. Post a sign reminding readers to fasten their seat belt and keep the book container latched so things won't float around in zero gravity!

Map of the Universe. Mount a star map on the wall with a large arrow and "You Are Here" caption marking planet Earth's location in the Milky Way.

NASA Book Display. Set up a display of books about the history of space exploration in general, and of NASA in particular. Add a telescope, a model of the solar system, and models of spacecraft. On the wall above the display, mount a time line of important events since the establishment of NASA. You'll find the resources you need for such a time line at this NASA Web site: www.hq.nasa.gov/office/pao/History/Defining-chron.htm.

Aliens Among Us? Book Display. Display books about close encounters with beings from outer space, like *Close Encounters with Aliens*, *Club Earth*, or *Robbie Packford*—

Alien Monster, and movies like *Zathura*, *ET*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the *Star Wars* movies, etc. Cover the table with a black cloth. On the front of the cloth, attach a large picture of a "flying saucer," and show a couple of "grays" (stereotypical gray alien beings with large heads, big eyes, and long arms) peeking out from behind the cloth. Or be creative and let your aliens take more original, colorful forms.



Is There Intelligent Life

Out There? Use the "Intelligent Life" survey ([link](#)) to gather opinions about whether we will discover intelligent beings in other parts of our solar system or the universe. Compile and post the results. This survey would fit well as part of the "Aliens Among Us?" book display above.

Starry Reading Logs. Create reading logs for children to keep a record of theme-related reading. They'll start out as protostars, and proceed through different stages in the life cycle of a star: blue-whites, yellow stars, and red giants. Use progressively larger circles, starting with small white stickers, then blue, yellow, and large red stickers. You can track the number of books read (for example, 3 for blue-whites,

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6 for yellow stars, 9 for red giants), or minutes spent reading (perhaps 90 for blue-whites, 180 for yellow, 360 for red). Have each child decorate the front with his/her name and appropriate images.

GAMES

Space Lingo Bingo. Choose 25 space-related words—the names of planets or other heavenly bodies, NASA, alien, light-year, etc. The Teach-nology Web site has an online bingo card creator (www.teach-nology.com/web_tools/materials/bingo/) that lets you type in your words and make sets of cards with several shuffled versions. Or make your own, using a combination of words and drawn images or stickers from the “Book to the Future” theme. Then show each of your words or images on a separate index card for the caller, shuffle, and play.



RECIPES

Space Shuttle Snacks. Serve snacks that could be eaten in zero gravity on a space shuttle. Or have kids make Astronaut’s Pudding: Give each child a quart-sized plastic freezer bag with $\frac{1}{4}$ of a package of instant pudding mix in it. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of milk and seal the bags tightly. Let children shake, squeeze (gently), and knead the bags until the pudding thickens. Then clip a corner off each bag and have them squeeze out their snack like the astronauts do. Serve with juice pouches or boxes.

Heavenly Body Cookies. Serve sugar cookies that look like heavenly bodies. Use refrigerated cookie dough, cut into star shapes, circles, or free-form shapes like Saturn with rings. Decorate with colored frosting, sparkly sugar, etc., for the desired effects. Or make baking and/or decorating the cookies a group project.

Edible Flying Saucers. Spread a bagel or rice cake with cream cheese. Place a large strawberry, half kiwi, or other soft, rounded fruit on top. Use small bits of fruit or fruit leather and more cream cheese to make windows, lights, etc. Or you could use small tomatoes and other vegetables. Quicker than you can say Jupiter, you have a delicious flying saucer!

ARTS/CRAFTS

Create a Space Alien. Provide many colors of modeling clay and invite children to create fantastic space aliens. Their creatures might be big or small (depending on the size and gravity of their home planets, of course), muted “grays” or wild colors, friendly or scary. Have children name their creations and introduce them to the group, with a little background about their home planets.

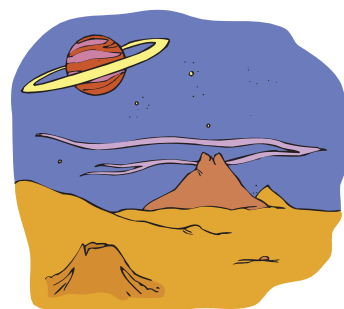
The Sky through Your Window. Use the directions for “Smudge Art” in *Space & Art Activities* to create beautiful pictures of the sky as you might see it from the window of your spacecraft as you travel through deep space.

My Space Craft. Provide a craft table with paper plates and cups in a variety of colors, drinking straws with bendable joints, plastic bottles, colored card stock, aluminum foil, glue, scissors, markers, etc., and challenge children to create spaceships to take them on adventures through the stars. Display their work in the library or classroom.

Milky Way Map. This one’s messy, but fun. Start with black construction paper. Have children use white crayon to draw an outline picture of the Milky Way—a seven-armed spiral with a thick, round center. *The Way the Universe Works* has a good illustration to work from. Trace over the white lines with craft glue. Then sprinkle glitter liberally over the glue. When your maps have had some time to dry, hold them up and tap off the extra glitter. Then use a picture from a good astronomy book to help label the arms and show the location of our solar system.

MATH/SCIENCE ACTIVITIES

Your Weight on Mars. Body weight is a function of gravity. Space travelers must prepare to deal with varying gravity as they visit different destinations. For example, the moon’s gravity is not nearly as strong as that of the earth, so if you weigh 60 pounds

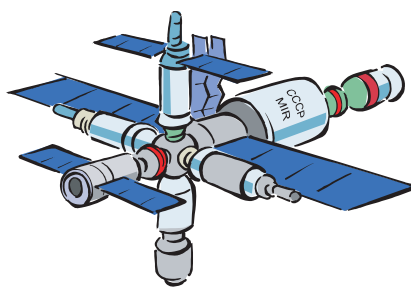


on Earth, you'd only weigh 10 pounds on the moon! Challenge children to figure out their weight on each of the planets in our solar system using the relative gravity on each planet. You'll find the different gravity multiples at this Web site: www.teachervision.fen.com/astronomy/lesson-plan/353.html.

Intergalactic Space Station. Show pictures of the space stations created to date: the Russian Salyut stations, Skylab, Mir, and the International Space Station. Use Branley's *The International Space Station* to explain that many countries work together to design, build, and use the ISS. Then invite children to think bigger! Imagine it's the year 2507, and scientists from many different planets are working together to design an intergalactic space station where beings from their different planets can live and work together. Have each child or small group of children represent a different planet, which they can name and think of any way they choose. Then give each child or group craft materials and have them design and build their part of the space station. They might want to make living quarters, laboratories, solar panels for power, libraries, transport areas for spaceships to come and go, greenhouses for growing food, etc. Provide different kinds of materials for each group, and a common table with tape, glue, scissors, markers, and other decorating materials for all the groups to use, such as:

- empty spools, yarn, pipe cleaners, and wooden beads
- cardboard tubes and boxes
- plastic bottles of different sizes and colors
- Styrofoam shapes and toothpicks
- Legos
- Tinkertoys
- colored modeling clay

See the "Space Station" page of *Space & Art Activities* for more ideas. Once each group has created its portion of the space station, have them describe their creations and find a way to put all the pieces together for display!



SPECIAL EVENTS

Workshop and Performance. Use *Earthdance* as inspiration for your own performance. You might assign roles; create sets, props, and costumes; add music and choreography; and present the book as written. Or you might make up a whole new planet and celebrate its place in the universe in an original story, presented in the style of *Earthdance*.

A Real Live Astronomer. Is there someone in your community who makes his or her living studying the heavens? Or a real live astronaut? Invite an appropriate resource person to talk about exploring space in the past, present, and future.

Starry Story Time. Share your favorite stories about space exploration. Use the soundtrack from *Zathura* for dramatic effect, or sing appropriate songs ("Flying Purple People-Eater" or "Good Morning Starshine" are good choices). Serve cookies shaped and decorated like heavenly bodies or spacecraft. Make or buy space alien finger puppets and sing "One little, two little, three little aliens ..." Send kids home with stickers from Upstart's "Book to the Future" theme.



Intergalactic Gala. Imagine this: It's the year 2507. The design for a new intergalactic space station is complete. Specialists from many planets have been working on it for a long time, and it's time to celebrate by unveiling the plans and displaying a model. Invite children (and families, if you can) to come in costume as beings from other planets. If you use the "Intergalactic Space Station" activity on page 3, you could showcase your creation at this event. Share a story or two, show an appropriate short video or feature film (*Zathura* or one of the Star Wars series would work well), use the soundtrack from *Zathura* as background music, and serve snacks from the recipes section above.

WRITING PROJECTS

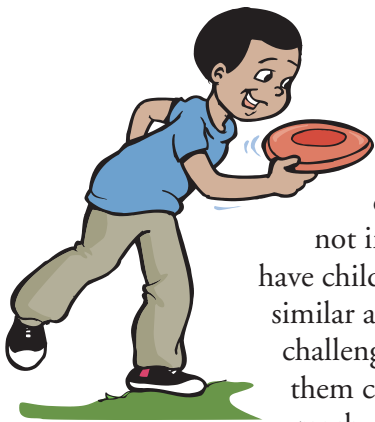
Spacegram. Have children imagine they are space explorers, sent to visit newly discovered planets. They will write one-page “spacegrams” to send as reports of their first impressions. They should describe the planet, along with any signs of life or civilization they see from their starships.

Alien Explanations. Present this scenario: You have a new friend who is a space alien! Your friend knows nothing about life on Earth. You’re taking the alien on a walk around your neighborhood. Write the conversation you might have with him or her (it?) as you try to explain what you’re seeing and doing. Have fun and be creative!

You’re the Space Tourist! Read or display the book *Dennis Tito: The First Space Tourist*. Then invite children to imagine themselves as space tourists. Where will they go? What do they hope to see or do? What will they take with them? How much would they pay for the trip? Have them write and illustrate stories about their space vacations.

CONTEST

Flying Frisbee Saucers. How far will your flying saucer take you? You’ll need space for this contest—outdoors is best, but you could use a large meeting room or a long hallway. Mark on the ground (with chalk or rope) or on the floor (with masking tape) the “orbits” of planets in our solar system beyond Earth (Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune), getting progressively farther from your earthly starting point. Provide small Frisbee flying saucers and see who can make theirs fly the farthest. You’ll want to test this out in advance, to be sure your distances are challenging but not impossible. And you might have children compete with others of similar age or skill. To increase the challenge for older children, have them choose a planet they intend to reach, and throw accordingly. They



win if their saucer lands in the area between the chosen planet and the next one out. Give “Book to the Future” stickers or book bags as prizes for the winners.

INTERNET ACTIVITIES

NASA Space Place. Make a computer station available and invite children to visit the NASA Space Place Web site at spaceplace.jpl.nasa.gov/en/kids. They can check out games, projects, animations ... including a fun board game called “Falling into a Black Hole.”

Design a Planet. NASA’s Astro-Venture site, quest.arc.nasa.gov/projects/astrobiology/astroventure/DAP/DAP.html, invites kids to design a planet that would support human life. Fun and educational!

Amazing Space. Visit www.amazing-space.stsci.edu. This site, from the Formal Education Group of the Space Telescope Science Institute’s Office of Public Outreach, covers science, math, folklore, and more through easy-to-use, image-rich, entertaining games and activities. Excellent.

SPACE/SCIENCE FICTION RESOURCES



- ***Close Encounters with Aliens*** by Janna Silverstein. Rosen Publishing Group, 2002. ISBN 0823935620.
- ***Club Earth*** by Gail Gauthier. Putnam, 2002. ISBN 0786244135.
- ***Commander Toad and the Intergalactic Spy*** by Jane Yolen. Penguin, 1997. ISBN 0698114183.
- ***Dennis Tito: The First Space Tourist*** by Heather Feldman. PowerKids Press, 2003. ISBN 0823962490.
- ***Earthdance*** by Lynn Reiser. Greenwillow Books, 1999. ISBN 0688163270.
- ***Faraway Worlds: Planets beyond Our Solar System*** by Paul Halpern. Charlesbridge Publishing, 2004. ISBN 1570916160.
- ***If You Decide to Go to the Moon*** by Faith McNulty. Scholastic, 2005. ISBN 0590483595.
- ***The International Space Station*** by Franklyn M. Branley. HarperCollins, 2000. ISBN 0060287039.

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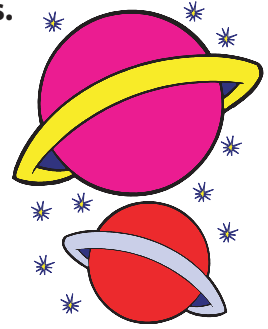
- ***I Was a Sixth Grade Alien*** by Bruce Coville. Pocket Books, 1999. ISBN 067102650X.
- ***The Magic School Bus: Space Adventures***. Atlantic/WEA, 2003 (Interactive DVD video collection). UPC: 085365816329.
- ***Messages from Mars*** by Loreen Leedy and Andrew Schuerger. Holiday House, 2006. ISBN 0823419541.
- ***Midnight on the Moon*** by Will Osborne and Mary Pope Osborne. Random House, 1996. ISBN 0679863745.
- ***NASA*** by Jon Hakkila and Adele D. Richardson. Smart Apple Media, 2000. ISBN 1583400508.
- ***Night Wonders*** by Jane Peddicord. Charlesbridge Publishing, 2005. ISBN 1570918775.
- ***One Giant Leap: The Story of Neil Armstrong*** by Don Brown. Houghton Mifflin, 1998. ISBN 0395884012.
- ***Princess Neptune*** by Quentin Dodd. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2004. ISBN 0374361193.
- ***Ricky Ricotta's Mighty Robot vs. the Mecha-Monkeys from Mars*** by Dav Pilkey. Scholastic, 2002. ISBN 0439252962.
- ***Robbie Packford—Alien Monster*** by Heather Sander. Orca Book Publishers, 2003. ISBN 1441432595.
- ***Space*** by Will Osborne and Mary Pope Osborne. Random House, 2002. ISBN 037581356X.
- ***Space & Art Activities*** by Polly Goodman. Crabtree Publishing, 2002. ISBN 0778711129.
- ***Ultimate Field Trip 5: Blasting off to Space Academy*** by Susan E. Goodman. Atheneum, 2001. ISBN 0689830440.
- ***The Way the Universe Works*** by Robin Kerrod and Files Sparrow. Dorling Kindersley, 2002. ISBN 0789488906.
- ***The Worst Band in the Universe*** by Graeme Base. H. N. Abrams, 1999 (Book and music CD). ISBN 0810939983.
- ***Zathura Motion Picture Soundtrack*** by John Debny. Varese Sarabande, 2005 (Music CD). ASIN: B0000BRD72A.
- ***Zoo in the Sky*** by Jacqueline Mitton. National Geographic Society, 2006. ISBN 0792259351.



Is There Intelligent Life Out There?



What do you think? Take a minute to answer these questions.
You don't need to sign your name.



Yes **No**

- Is there intelligent life out there anywhere in the universe?
- In our solar system?
- If you answered "yes" above, do you think we'll find it?
- If "yes" to the last question, will we find it in the next century?

If you answered "yes" to any of the questions above, continue:

- Do you think we will meet beings that are less advanced than ourselves?
- More advanced?
- Some of each?
- If we find other intelligent life out there, will we relate to other beings in peaceful ways?
- Will we have war with intelligent aliens from other parts of the universe?
- Do you think we should continue to fund and support the search for life on other worlds?

Additional Comments:



THANK YOU FOR YOUR OPINION!

