



TEACHERS' NOTES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Pre-prep and lower primary (ages 3+)

CONTENTS

1. Plot summary	1
2. About the author	1
3. Author's inspiration	2
4. Writing style	2
5. Key study topics	2
6. Further reading	4

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English, Science and SEL
- **General capabilities:** Literacy, critical and creative thinking, personal and social capability
- **Cross-curriculum priorities:** Sustainability

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Learn that observable changes occur in the sky and landscape and daily and seasonal changes affect everyday life
- Consider personal reactions to situations or problems
- Recognise that problems or challenges are a normal part of life and that there are actions that can be undertaken to manage problems
- Understand that imaginative and informative texts have different purposes
- Explore the different contribution of words and images to meaning in stories
- Identify, discuss and respond to features of texts including events and characters
- Use reading comprehension strategies
- Create short texts
- Explore ideas, experiences, observations and imagination to create visual artworks

THEMES

- Friendship, moving away, space and the Solar System, city/country living, seasons, distance

PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia

PUBLICATION DETAILS

ISBN: 9780143779186

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The Space Between Jess McGeachin

PLOT SUMMARY

The Space Between is a celebration of those special friendships that last, no matter what.

Max and Milo do everything together, every day, and in their rocket ship even the stars and planets don't seem too far to reach. But when Milo has to move away, the space between them seems too great . . . and Max must find another way to navigate the galaxy.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jess McGeachin is an author and illustrator living in Narm (Melbourne, Australia). His debut picture book, *Fly*, was published in 2019, and was shortlisted for the Children's Book Council of Australia and Queensland Literary Awards. Jess has since published fiction and non-fiction picture books, with more on the way.

Activity packs for his picture books are available at jessmcgeachin.com/activities

Jess draws quite literally from a day job at Melbourne Museum, where he's lucky enough to help design exhibitions and occasionally get lost in the basement.

jessmcgeachin.com

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

When I was growing up, we used to go camping in the country a lot. I remember unzipping the tent and poking my head out to look at the night sky. It dazzled with stars and planets, and I always wondered how long it would take to get to them.

This was the feeling I wanted to create when writing *The Space Between*.

The setting for *The Space Between* is a big country farm, with rolling hills and rusty cars. These look a lot like the farms that I see when I visit family in Gippsland, Victoria, and I often wonder who lives in the wobbly old houses. Perhaps two best friends that live next door to each other? What would happen if one of them moved away? Why does the distance between a loved one seem greater than the distance between stars?

I hope this book reminds you of friends, family and the giant galaxy that we share.

Questions

1. Have you ever been camping? Would you like to? What kind of country was it in? What was it like? Was it anything like the setting for *The Space Between*?
2. Can you see the stars from where you live? Sometimes in the city with all the lights it can be hard to see them. What's your experience of star gazing?
3. Do you and your friends imagine things and play games from your imagination? Did you like to do that when you were younger? What are your favourite things to imagine? Do you like to imagine things about space, dinosaurs, pets, fairies, toys or families?

Activities

1. Draw a picture of you and your family or friends camping in the countryside. It can be a real place or a place you would like to travel to.
2. Look up with your teacher how to find Australian constellations, planets or stars in the sky (like the Southern Cross or the planet Venus). Tonight, see if you can find them from your window.
3. Can you tell a story or draw a comic or piece of art to tell us something about your favourite imaginative play? It might be a trip to space with your friends like Milo and Max or a tea party with your dolls or a playground game where you pretend to be fun characters.

WRITING AND DRAWING

1. Find three words in the book that are new to you. Try to work out what they mean from the context (the way they are used and the words and pictures that surround them).

For example, Milo says 'We'll need navigation.' And he draws a map. How might the fact that he makes a map help you to understand what 'navigation' means?

2. How do the images in this book help you to understand what's happening? How has the text left room for the pictures to tell the story?

For example, look at the pages where Max runs to the front gate to find Milo. Or think about what the pictures tell us whenever the text says it's 'star night' - it's not just a night with stars, is it?

3. Look at the image of Max and Milo headed off in their spaceships at the end. Draw and script a comic or write a story with an illustration showing what might happen next!

4. Look at an informative map of the Solar System with your teacher. <https://science.nasa.gov/solar-system/planets/> How is it different to the map that Milo has drawn (in the back of the book)?

For example, 'tone' is how you write or say something. 'Vocabulary' are the words you choose. Compare these two sentences 'SUN TOO HOT AVOID' and 'The Sun's surface temperature is about 5800 Kelvin'.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

5. Read the writing on the back of the book (the blurb). What do you expect the book will be about? Do you have any questions? Are those questions answered in the story?
6. What can you tell about the book when you look at the cover? 'Characters' are the important people, animals or things in the story, 'setting' is the place where it happens and a 'theme' is the idea or subject. Can you guess at the characters, setting and theme?

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Social Emotional Learning

1. 'Dialogue' refers to the words characters say in books. Sometimes it is just as powerful when a character doesn't speak at all. How do you think Max is feeling when his grandma asks if he wants to say goodbye? Have you ever felt like that? If he did say something, which do you think it would be?



2. Sometimes when things are hard to say, we don't always communicate clearly. What do you think Milo was trying to say when he tells Max, 'Now we'll always know where we are, even if we're far apart. Even if one of us has to move away . . .' or when he says, 'Time to go.'?

How could he have communicated more clearly? What do you think he could have said? How could he have started the conversation with Max about it?

3. What emotions do you think Max felt when Milo didn't come to build a fort, or race down the dry, grassy hill, or come for star night? Can you make an infographic with that emotion at the centre and surround it with ten things that make you feel that way?
4. Do you think Milo's feeling would be different or the same as Max's? Write down what he would have felt when his best friend didn't come to say goodbye and surround the word with ten things that might make you feel that way.
5. Some books aim to leave you with a message as well as enjoy the story. What is the 'moral of the story' or the message here? If you wrote a book, what would be your message?
6. Milo and Max miss each other terribly and it makes Milo feel very sad and alone. They can't change the fact that Milo had to move away, but what can they do?

What does Max realise about friendship and distance when he finds Milo's map? In what ways do they solve the problem of distance and stay connected?

English

1. It can be hard to get our heads around the distances between the planets and the stars. Humans have only explored a tiny part of our galaxy, let alone the universe!
What do you think we will find when we do? Are there other living creatures out there? Can you write a (non-fiction) information text about what we do know. And a fiction piece about something wonderful that you think is out there?
1. Most people around the world now live in cities. Think about the differences. Which do you prefer? Write a persuasive text or a compare and contrast table explaining why.
2. Does your week have a structure like Max and Milo's? Write a diary of your week with drawings of things that always happen on each day?
3. A 'simile' is when we say something is like something else. A 'metaphor' is when we say

something IS something else to add meaning. You can't take it literally, but it adds feeling or symbolism or it links to something else in the text.

For example, the author says that '...the days grew hot and the trees dropped a *galaxy of fruit* to the ground'. Why do you think the author has put it like that? How is that better than just saying that 'a lot of fruit dropped to the ground'?

Science

4. What is different about the grass between the two times we see Max with his bike on the hill? What does this suggest to you? How does this show how much time has passed?

Not all cultures recognise four seasons (for example Kakadu's traditional owners recognise six seasons), but we often talk about Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. What are the characteristics of each season?

5. Are you used to buying fruit from the store or getting it from the tree? Did you know that fruit and some vegetables are part of plants that create more themselves?

Look at the plant lifecycle here and discuss with your class. <https://unicminds.com/plant-life-cycle-for-kids/>

What are some other foods that come from plants? What part of the plant do they come from?

6. On July 16 1969, the Apollo 11 Space Mission launched! The Apollo 11 crew would be the first humans to travel to the Moon and back. Watch the launch here and compare with Max and Milo's launch.

In pairs can you draw/design your own rocket, cut it out or craft it and create your own 'liftoff' with countdown and sound effects!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2sEK2Ur2bwI>

7. Look at the map at the beginning and end of the book. Can you re-draw it and add one more piece of information about each planet on the map?

You can find information about them here: <https://science.nasa.gov/solar-system/planets/>

8. Is there something about space that you know a lot about? If not, do some research, using the words in *The Space Between* as starting points (for example, the names of the planets or the words 'Kuiper Belt'). You can find information about them here: <https://science.nasa.gov/solar-system/>

Create a poster summarising what you know or find out. Find someone in class that has a similar interest and share.



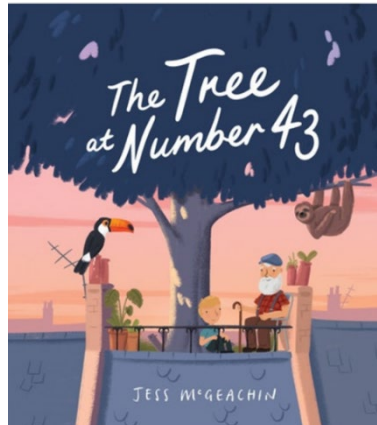
FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



Fly

Fly is a beautiful story of determination no matter the odds, and love in the face of loss.

Lucy had always been good at fixing things, and Dad needed a bit of help. It was just the two of them after all. So when Lucy finds a bird with a broken wing, she's sure she can fix him too. But not everything that's broken can be fixed.



The Tree at Number 43

A warm, inspirational story about determination, conservation, the magic of nature . . . and wonderful grandads.

In a noisy, grey city, Sam and his Grandpa long for the deep, dark wonderful jungle. But when their dream comes true and a tree magically grows from seeds that Grandpa brought home from his travels, can they find a way to protect it?



Frankie and the Fossil

Frankie and the Fossil is an irresistible story about being heard . . . and finding your herd. For anyone who loves dinosaur fossils, museums, new friends . . . and cheese sandwiches.

Frankie knows everything there is to know about dinosaurs. But when she ignores a sign at the museum and is followed home by a friendly fossil, Frankie finds there's more to dinosaurs than she ever imagined.

Teachers' notes available.



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	AGE	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
The Space Between	Jess McGeachin	9780143779186	3+	\$24.99		
Business Chickens	Jess McGeachin	9780143779179	3+	\$24.99		
The Tree at Number 43	Jess McGeachin	9781760898861	3+	\$24.99		
Frankie and the Fossil	Jess McGeachin	9781760898847	3+	\$24.99		
Fly	Jess McGeachin	9781760892562	3+	\$24.99		
The Lost Library	Jess McGeachin	9781760892715	3+	\$24.99		
TOTAL						

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