

## A Curriculum Guide to

### ***George and the Blue Moon***

By Lucy Hawking and Stephen Hawking

#### **About the Book**

George and his good friend, Annie, love traveling in space, which they've done secretly in the past. So when Annie sees an ad for a nearby space camp that trains future astronauts, she and George figure out how to join the program. At first it's fun living with other kids and competing in challenges, although everyone misses their cell phones and Internet access. But soon George and Annie realize that camp's a lot more dangerous than it should be. Instead of focusing on learning about space, the two friends and their new allies find themselves fighting to survive and save their families. With informational sections full of fascinating facts, this fast-paced novel combines the latest in space science with a grand adventure.

#### **Discussion Questions**

The discussion questions below particularly address the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (RL.4-7.1, 2, 3, 4) (RL.5-6.5)

1. Think about different meanings for the book's title, *George and the Blue Moon*. Why do you think the books in this series include the name of the main character? Discuss the expression "once in a blue moon." How does it relate to the story? Brainstorm other possible titles for the book.
2. The epigraph in the book is a quotation from Isaac Newton. Find out more information about who he is and what he believed. Before reading the book, discuss the quote and what it means to you. After you've read the book, talk about how the quote relates to the story.
3. Describe the informational sections throughout the book. Why do you think the authors included them? What do they add? Would you read the story differently if they weren't there? Have you read other books that combine fiction and nonfiction in a similar way?
4. George and Annie have been friends for a long time. How are they similar? How are they different? Talk about their strengths and how their personalities complement each other, both in how it makes for a good friendship and in terms of the plot.
5. Compare and contrast Annie's and George's families. What does George like about Annie's parents and household? What does Annie like about George's? Which home would you rather live in?
6. George and Annie use some deception to apply for the junior astronaut program. List the steps that they take. How do they fool their parents? How do they get to the space camp? Do you think it was a good idea to go? What do you think should have happened if they'd been caught in a lie?

7. Both Cosmos, a supercomputer, and Boltzmann, a robot, prove to be important to the plot. What role does each of them play? How are they helpful to George and Annie? Give specific examples of when they seem almost human and when they seem mechanical. Does anyone ever treat them like humans who have feelings and emotions? If not, should they? Explain your reasoning.

8. What is happening to George's family and Annie's mother while the kids attend space camp? How do the two friends figure it out? What will happen to their families if George and Annie don't rescue them?

9. Chapter nine consists only of pictures. What happens in this chapter? Why do you think the authors chose to convey it only in pictures?

10. What does Annie think of Leonia when they first meet? How do Annie's feelings and beliefs about Leonia change throughout the book? What makes them good partners? What do you think Leonia's home life is like? Do you think that impacts the way she acts and thinks?

11. What is the third challenge that the junior astronauts are expected to face? Annie decides that the way to complete it is to leave. "This was the challenge—knowing when you were in too much trouble to continue safely." How does she know that? What makes it a difficult test? Why don't the other kids figure it out?

12. Describe the scene where Annie and Leonia work together to land the plane. What has gone wrong? What do each of them contribute to the success? How does Annie's skill at playing computer games prove useful? Name another activity with a skill set that could be useful in an unrelated situation.

13. Describe Igor both physically and in terms of his personality. What role does he play in the plot? What are some of his skills? Discuss how he and George get along, and why they might react certain ways.

14. George is greatly relieved after helping to remove the boxes of people from the spaceship. "He had never really understood until that moment how being afraid for someone else is even scarier than being afraid for yourself!" Why do you think it's scarier to be afraid for someone else? What might make you feel that way?

15. What makes Rika Dur a good villain? Can you find clues in the text that she wasn't what she appeared to be? Why does Alioth Merak disguise himself?

16. How do the authors build suspense in the final chapters? What obstacles do George, Annie, and their allies face? How do they overcome them?

17. Bullying happens throughout the story. When does it appear before space camp? What is its impact at space camp? What is cyberbullying? Discuss why people might bully one another and

what steps can be taken to prevent or end it. What can you do if you see someone being bullied at school or are bullied yourself?

18. Discuss the last two pages of the story. Were you surprised by the ending? Can you find clues earlier in the novel that indicated George might make that last-minute decision? What do you think will happen to him next?

## **Extension Activities**

### **Get Your Application In**

What would you write if you were applying for a spot at space camp? Write a letter of application emphasizing your strengths and desire to participate in the program. In addition to math, science, or technical skills, consider including information such as your work ethic, problem-solving skills, or ability to work well with others. Don't forget to explain what you'd like to learn at space camp, even if you don't plan to go to outer space.

### **Games Are Good!**

Annie finds that her experiences with computer games and playing with Legos are useful at space camp. What are other benefits of playing games? Prepare a speech arguing that playing games can be good preparation for the future. Give specific examples of games and how they are beneficial. Deliver the speech to a small group of your classmates. Did your group have similar ideas? Were you surprised by any benefits you hadn't thought about before?

### **Striking Images**

The authors love to play with figurative language. For example, "realization dawning like the sunrise on a planet with two suns in the sky" and "her limbs scissoring like blades." Find other metaphors and similes throughout the book, and compile a class list on the board. Choose three examples and write your own figurative images in place of the ones the authors used. Was it easier or harder than you expected? Why do you think writers enjoy using figurative language?

### **What's That Word?**

The authors also love to find just the right words to describe their scenes and characters, some of which may be unfamiliar to you. As you read, make a note of new vocabulary, listing at least ten words. Try to define the word in context and then look up the definition. Were you on the right track? To share your new knowledge, write the word and definition on an index card and illustrate or decorate it. Your teacher will display the cards for everyone to see.

### **The Latest Scientific Ideas**

Throughout the book, experts write about the latest scientific ideas; other informational sections also address scientific topics. With a partner, choose one of those topics to research. Use articles on the Internet or in your school library to expand on the information provided in the novel. Then prepare a multimedia presentation for your classmates using images and quoting from experts. Make sure to include the most surprising fact you discovered, the piece of information that most interested you, and a prediction about what the science might look like in the future.

*Guide written by Kathleen Odean, a former school librarian and Chair of the 2002 Newbery Award Committee. She gives professional development workshops on books for young people and is the author of Great Books for Girls and Great Books about Things Kids Love.*

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