

A Curriculum Guide to

George and the Ship of Time

By Lucy Hawking

About the Book

George and his trusty robot, Boltzmann Brian, only planned to sneak a ride into space; instead, they find they're unable to reset the ship's course because of its preprogrammed route. Communication is difficult due to the time delay, and George can't answer his mom's questions, much less heed Annie's urgent warning. The spaceship finally turns and crash-lands onto an Earth that George doesn't recognize because of its highly changed climate. Fortunately, a school bus picks up George and Boltz in the desert, but George finds life on Earth has changed. He realizes that people can't think for themselves or use their imaginations: thoughts have been replaced by virtual reality. George must convince Hero, his new friend, that they must work together to defeat the world's megalomaniac leader, Trellis Dump, in order to restore the planet to livable conditions.

Discussion Questions

The discussion questions below particularly address the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (RL.4-7.1, 2, 3, 4 RI.4-7. 1, 2, 3, 4) and the following Next Generation Science Standards: (PS4.A, C) (PS2.B) (ESS3.A, C, D) (ESS1.A, B) (ESS2.D) (LS2.A) (LS4.D)

1. Discuss the definition and use of inferences. Find an inference that can be made about one idea or scene in the book. What evidence supports that inference?
2. How does the move from zero gravity back to Earth's gravity affect George? How do you think it would feel? Do you have any interest in traveling to space? Explain your answers.
3. How does the book's setting influence or affect George and Trellis Dump? Do they react similarly or differently to the conditions? Cite evidence from the story to support your ideas.
4. Explain the concept of time dilation, and how George retains his youth compared to the rest of Earth's population.
5. Time dilation causes George's friend Annie to age faster than George when they finally meet again. What effect does it have on George, and how does he feel about it? Do you think their friendship will change? If so, in what ways? Imagine that one of your friends is suddenly decades older than you. Describe how you would feel, and explain what changes might occur within your friendship. What advice might you give to George and Annie?

6. Describe the younger Annie, and compare her to older Annie. Does her personality change? What new challenges, roles, or obligations does she have in her life? Explain your answers.
7. Why do Earth's people have restricted access to science and technology? What events and occurrences are denied? Why has their ruler set these limitations? What does he want from the people? What are the dangers of a society with these parameters?
8. Why is Hero so reluctant to believe George, making the assumption that he's telling stories? How does she respond to his statements? In what ways is she influenced by her background? Do you think it's possible to overcome prejudices and learned behaviors or ideas?
9. Identify two or three sections of scientific information presented in the story. How do these facts affect the storyline, and why do you think the author included them?
10. Compare and contrast Matushka with Trellis Dump. Include your thoughts about their ideas, motives, strengths, weaknesses, and character traits. Which leader would you rather live under? Explain your answer.
11. Nimu is falsely accused of betraying her father. How does she feel about this accusation, and how does it affect her actions? Why do you think others believed it to be true? Have you ever been accused of something you didn't do? Explain what happened and how you felt. Was it ever resolved? What did you learn from the incident?
12. Why is it critical for Boltz to receive Emphyrean's information? How does losing Boltz affect George, and how does this action propel the story? Describe George's feelings on losing Boltz. What would you tell George if you were there with him?
13. What is Wonder Academy's true purpose? Do you think it's smart to separate highly intelligent people from the rest of the population? What effect might that have on the individual and on society? Explain your answers, giving reasons for your ideas.
14. Why do you think the author includes a saber-toothed tiger? Describe how this event affects the plot.
15. George and Hero wear jumpsuits much of the time. Describe the kinds of clothing you believe might be worn in the future. How do you think people's jobs or living situations will impact what they wear?
16. How does the author use names to help convey information? Give three examples and explain how the names provide insight into the characters.
17. Do you think robots should be programmed to have emotions or feelings? Support your stance with examples from the book or current events.

18. How does Hero change over the course of the book? Describe her at the beginning of the story, and then compare that to how she appears by the end. What do you think prompted these changes? What advice do you think Hero would give her younger self?

19. Identify the book's themes. How do they relate to science or current events in the world today? Who would you recommend read this book?

Extension Activities

1. The term *dump* is used in a variety of ways. List all variations on the word and compare them. Explain the book's usage of the word *dump*, and how it relates to situations in the story. Do you think the book's use of *dump* will start to become a part of your vocabulary? Write an essay explaining your answers to these questions that includes thoughts on how new technologies can create a new language.

2. Create a character sketch of Trellis Dump. Give a physical description of Dump, and then include a list of his motivations, his lifestyle, and his beliefs. Does this information help you to understand the reasons for his actions?

3. Using the book, develop a vocabulary list of words that are unfamiliar to you. Locate the sentences where the words are used and try to define them in context; then use a dictionary to look them up, and include the definition next to each word in your list.

4. Make a map of George's route based on the description of his travels. Label each place and name the people he met there. Where would you like to journey to? What would you need to prepare for the trip?

5. Science plays an important role in the story. Choose one of the essays in the book's back matter and relate the information to events in the story. Explain how the factual information is used to progress the plot. Which scientific topic would you like to learn more about?

6. Take your answer from question five and research it in depth with a small group. Then create a visual or media presentation to explain the topic, using images and quotes to enhance the presentation. Include your predictions for what might happen to this area of science in the future.

7. Atticus and George eat ants and describe them as kind of citrusy. Research edible insects and create a presentation to show the insect, the described flavor, where they're eaten, nutritional value, and how they're prepared. Which would you most like to try?

8. Queen Bimbolina Kimobolina uses emojis to communicate. Write a short message to a friend using only emojis, and then see if they can decode it correctly. Was it more challenging than you expected?

9. Read the essays in the book's back matter. Then write an essay of your own explaining what scientific issue most concerns you, and how you feel you can personally make a difference.

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