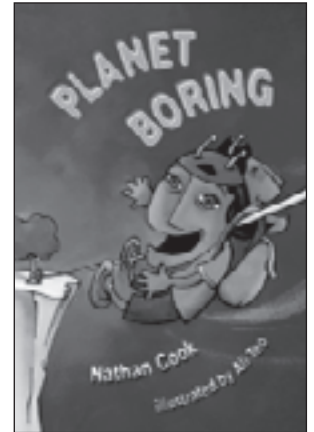


# Planet Boring

by Nathan Cook

illustrated by Ali Teo



## Book Summary

Mag gets out of a boring trip to Earth when her friend Gork wins tickets to a concert on planet Frenzzi. The trip to the concert is an adventure, but is it real?

## Features of the Book

- The science fiction genre
- The narrative structure – orientation, problem, climax, resolution, and conclusion
- Invented compound words – *thrillsuit*, *thrilldome*, *vidwall*, *Vibeshield*
- Colloquial speech – *Knock it off! This is for real. Yeah, right! Big thrill. Way cool!*
- The use of ellipses for effect and italics and capitals for emphasis
- The use of simile – *as white as a slimeworm; like a twisting animal*

## Purpose

*Planet Boring* can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills:

- S** skim-reading a text for a set purpose;
- S** investigating the use of hyphenated and compound words;
- S** discussing an author's intention and style;
- S** writing dialogue using words other than "said";
- S** using the information in a text to create a story map.

## The Guided Reading Lesson

- S** Skim-reading a text for a set purpose
- S** Investigating the use of hyphenated and compound words
- S** Discussing an author's intention and style

## Introducing the text

Ask the students to study the front cover of the book. Ask them to try to predict what the story might be about and where it might be set. Some clues are the word "Planet" and the two heads and antennae on the character.

- Does the cover match the title? Does the cover look boring?

Ask the students to write a quick list of things they find boring. Keep this list.

- Do you think your parents would have found these things boring?

Read the blurb on the back of the book. Discuss the setting of the story.

- Why is the word "real" in quotation marks?
- What do you think the last sentence of the blurb means?

Activate the students' prior knowledge about the science fiction genre. They could discuss TV programmes or other stories they have read.

- What sorts of things happen in science fiction stories?
- Do things ever happen that aren't yet possible?
- What do you notice about the names for things in these stories?

Make a list of objects from science fiction stories, for example, warp drive, aliens, space station, docking bay, lasers, shields.

- In stories about the future, which things have remained the same?

## Reading and discussing the text

Read the first page of chapter 1 together. Discuss any vocabulary that is unclear.

- *What time period do you think the story is set in?*
- *Can you tell where the characters live? What would you call them?*
- *How are they different from humans?*
- *What might be the pros and cons of having two heads?*

Ask the students to read the rest of the chapter and think about the following questions:

- *In what other ways are the characters different from humans?*

When the students have finished reading, discuss the characteristics of Mag and her family.

- *How are they like your family? How are they different?*

The students could now read the rest of the story independently. When they have finished reading, discuss the invented vocabulary. Many of the terms are compound words. Ask the students to skim-read and make a list of the compound words they find (there are about forty).

- *Why do you think the author has used invented words?*
- *Can you suggest some alternatives to the author's vocabulary?*

As a group, choose five of the terms and create a glossary for them.

At one point in the story, the reader and some of the characters (but not all of them) know that the trip is not “virtual” but “real”.

- *Find the part in the text where Mag discovers the truth.*

There are more clues further on when the synthie and Mag communicate non-verbally to confirm that the adventure is actually “real”.

- *How does this knowledge affect how Mag acts and responds in certain situations?*
- *Why do you think the author uses this technique?*
- *Do you think the author has a message for the reader? What is it?*
- *What is Gork's reaction when he discovers the truth about the trip?*

Discuss the author's style of writing – a combination of zany humour and science fiction.

## Revisiting the Text

The suggested activities below can be used immediately after the guided reading lesson if appropriate or could be taken as a mini-lesson at a later time.

### **S** Writing dialogue using words other than “said”

Much of the text is dialogue, and the author has used a lot of words other than “said” to convey the feelings and atmosphere in the story to the reader. Ask the students to skim-read the text in pairs, noting words that are used instead of “said”, for example:

“Not so, Miss Mag,” Drebs corrected.

“Whoa! Far out, man!” shouted Gork.

“Dreebs, you've got to do something,” croaked Gork.


“Help us, please,” whispered Mag.

“How real?” she demanded.

“Bad!” Dreebs confirmed.

Choose several of the terms and explore their meanings.


- *What does this word make you think of? How would the character say that sentence?*
- *Can you think of a synonym for the word?*

 Ask the students to write their own piece of dialogue using words other than “said”. They could read their work aloud to the group with appropriate pace and expression.

### **S** Using the information in a text to create a story map

Discuss the plot of the story and the sections it is divided into – the beginning on Kos, the journey to Earth, and the adventure on Earth. Now look at each section and ask the students to identify the main ideas.

- *Is that a main idea or supporting detail? How can you tell?*
- *Would it make any difference to our understanding of the story if that part were left out?*

 The students could use the blackline master on page 64 to create a story map of the adventure using the main ideas from above. They should start on the planet Kos and include the trip to Earth. Then they could map out the events that take place on Earth itself.