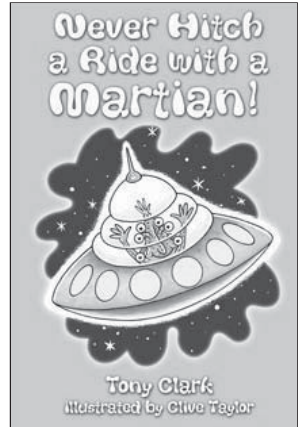


Never Hitch a Ride with a Martian!

by Tony Clark

illustrated by Clive Taylor



Book Summary

When a short-sighted Martian loses his way and crashes on Earth, three children get the chance to be taken for the ride of their lives. This story describes the excitement of their trip into outer space and what they find, to their amazement, on their return.

Features of the Book

- An example of narrative fantasy
- The humor in the text and illustrations
- The use of adjectives – *tremendous, shaky, bulgy, disgusting, gigantic*
- Text in the illustrations
- The Martian's voice
- The concept of the missing time
- Inventive language – *gunk, Ziggle Toad, goo*
- The invitation from the author that leads the reader into the story

Purpose

Never Hitch a Ride with a Martian! can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills:

- S** identifying the importance of setting to the story's development;
- S** using inference to draw conclusions;
- S** studying word meanings systematically;
- S** using text as a model for students' own writing;
- S** exploring the use of descriptive language.

The Guided Reading Lesson

- S** Identifying the importance of setting to the story's development
- S** Using inference to draw conclusions

Introducing the text

Through the media of TV, movies, and comics, most students will have some knowledge of the topic of alien visitors and UFOs. The image on the cover of the book offers a strong clue to the topic and the tone of the story. The title will be intriguing and should stimulate some discussion.

- *What kind of story do you think this is? Is it serious or funny? How can you tell?*
- *What do you think the title means?*
- *What can you tell me about the main character? How would you describe it?*

Discuss the idea of hitching a ride.

- *How would you hitch a ride on a UFO? Where would you hitch a ride to?*

Stories that are about beings from other worlds and UFOs usually contain vocabulary that is common to the genre. Talk about the kinds of words that the students might meet in the story and list these on the board. Discuss the meanings of words such as "lift-off," "UFO," "screen," "controls," and "asteroid," which appear in the story.



Reading and discussing the text

Ask the students to read the first two chapters of the story independently. This describes the setting and outlines two of the problems in the story – the spaceship has crashed, and the Ziggle Toad has eaten the Martian's tools. You could read the first page of chapter 1 together. The author has used the idea of sharing a secret to encourage the reader to turn the page.

- *As you read chapters one and two, think about where the author has set the story. How could this make a difference to the way the story carries on from the end of chapter two?*

When the students have finished reading, ask them to tell you the words or phrases that the author has used in describing the setting. Write these up on the board.

- *What is important about where this first part of the story takes place?*
- *Would the story have turned out differently if the spaceship had crashed in the middle of a town or in a place where a lot of people had seen what happened? Why?*

Discuss the way that the author has made the story secretive by the opening words used on the first page and the fact that the rest of the story unfolding depends on the children keeping the news of the crash to themselves. This is why the author has set the story in a remote place.

The students can now read the rest of the book independently.

- *What words or sentences give you clues about the real reason why the Martian has crash-landed on Earth? Make a note of the pages where you find these.*

When the students have finished reading, discuss the purpose-setting question. The author gradually leads the reader to the conclusion that the Martian has problems with his eyesight, even though he has six eyes. Rex finally sees the answer on page 24. Some of the clues that the students may have marked could be:

- The Martian looked at the buttons in front of him. He didn't seem to know which one he should press. (page 18)
- "How can he read that map?" said Gina. "It's covered in green gunk." (page 21)

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 Studying word meanings systematically

The author has used a number of interesting verbs in the story, for example, nudged, nibbled, scraped, squeezed, sprinted. Find and discuss these with the students. Look at possible synonyms and ensure that the students understand the exact meanings of these words. You could mime the actions and ask the students to match the mime with the appropriate verb.


S Using text as a model for students' own writing

Discuss the form of the story with the group – the setting, the problem(s), the way the characters develop, and the resolution. Then look at the way the author has used descriptive language and humor to create the atmosphere for the story.

 Ask the students to write an alternative beginning to the story, combining the first two chapters and creating a different crash scene and a different space being.

S Exploring the use of descriptive language

Ask the students to look for examples of interesting adjectives that the author has used to describe the crash and the children's first encounter with the Martian. Discuss why adjectives are used and how effective these examples are. Ask the students to suggest even better alternatives. Some of the adjectives they may locate are: tremendous, shaky, bulgy, disgusting, and gigantic.

 Ask the students to choose eight of these adjectives and to list them on the blackline master on page 70. They can then suggest their alternative to the author's words.

- *Does the word you have suggested make sense when you use it in the same sentence?*