

The Rocket Man

by Julia Wall

Summary

Robert Goddard has become known as the father of the space age, although his accomplishments were largely unnoticed while he was living. This biography explores his life and outlines his major achievements.

Features of the Text

- Biography
- Explanations
- Diagrams
- Sequencing and organization of information
- Specialized language

Purpose

The Rocket Man can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills:

- S** identifying features of biography;
- S** skimming and scanning;
- S** synthesizing information;
- S** note taking.

The Guided Reading Lesson

- S** Identifying the features of biography
- S** Synthesizing information

Introducing the text

Review the features of biographies and the kinds of information they contain. Ask the students to look at the cover and the contents page.

- *What does the title suggest about its contents?*
- *What kind of information do you predict will be in each chapter?*

Reading and discussing the text

Ask the students to read to the end of page 3.

- *What features of biography have you noticed so far?* (general introduction, year and place of birth, early interests and influences)
- *How would you describe Robert?*
- *What do you think is the importance of this section?*

Encourage the students to skim through the pages and identify characteristics of Robert that are implied or stated in the text, for example, determination (page 2), fascinated, interested, experimenter (page 3). If necessary, show the students how to skim and scan the text for specific information.

Ask the students to read to the end of page 9, identifying further key events and characteristics. Ask them to make brief notes of the key events, then discuss these in pairs before sharing them with the rest of the group.

- *Why did his ideas seem so ridiculous?*
- *Why did Goddard keep quiet about his accomplishments? Would you have done that? Why/why not?*

Discuss how the environment, people's opinions, and the times can affect or shape our actions.

Ask the students to read to the end of the book.

- *Why do you think people read biographies? What can we learn from them?*

Draw out the idea that biographies often convey themes such as overcoming conflicts or struggles against nature and society. Ask the students to identify and discuss the themes of this biography.

- *How would you characterize Robert Goddard?*
- *What other people share these attributes?*
- *Have you had to face criticism for your ideas? What kept you going or caused you to give up?*
- *Do you think stories like this can have an effect on other people?*

Following Up

The students can:

- use the blackline master on page 75 to identify key information and record notes
- create a timeline of Robert Goddard's life
- compare and contrast Goddard's character traits with those of another inventor that they have read about.