



TEACHERS' RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Pre-school to Lower Primary, ages 3–7

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **English:** Literacy, critical and creative thinking, personal and social capability
- **Sustainability:** The Environment
- **Maths:** Measurement
- **Science:** Biological Sciences; Living things
- **Art:** Visual Artworks and Design

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- To respond to text and share feelings and thoughts about events and characters in the text
- Recognise some different types of literary texts and identify some characteristic features of literary texts, for example beginnings and endings of traditional texts and rhyme in poetry
- To use the text as a springboard for cross curricular teaching

PREPARED BY

Shelly Unwin and Penguin Random House Australia

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Blast Off!

Shelly Unwin & Ben Wood

PLOT SUMMARY

Are you ready to explore? 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 . . .

Rocket through the solar system in this funny, fact-filled whirl around the planets. Join two junior astronauts as they discover what makes each planet unique and what might happen if you were to get too close. 'You couldn't land on Mercury – the heat would burn your bum!'

Written in rollicking verse and beautifully illustrated, *Blast Off!* is an enticing mix of narrative and information.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shelly Unwin grew up in England surrounded by animals and a feisty palomino pony. She was the middle child of three, but also had eleven foster siblings (not all at the same time!). Shelly studied Teaching and Biology at university and moved to Australia in 2002.

Shelly has published a series of five picture books celebrating age and number (*You're One! You're Two! You're Three! You're Four!* and *You're Five!*) as well as her space adventure book *Blast Off!* Shelly's work is recognised for its sneakily educational aspect and energetic rhyme. Shelly says she doesn't mean to write in rhyme, it just happens, but she loves the rhythm and beat as well as the predictability and humour that rhyme can add.

Shelly is actively involved with several schools as the 'author in residence' for their writing programs and has spoken at several writers' events in Sydney. She lives on Sydney's North Shore with her husband and their two young children.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Ben Wood has been illustrating children's books and products for over a decade. He has worked with many Australian publishers and authors, and loves the challenge of interpreting an author's words into images. Growing up in country Victoria has influenced Ben in his work, as animals and nature are some of his favourite things to draw. When he isn't in his studio, Ben visits schools to teach students about illustrating stories.

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Shelly's son was three years old when she wrote *Blast Off!* He loved talking about space, the solar system and planets, but Shelly found there weren't many books available that combined space facts with a fun story. So Shelly set about writing a story where he could learn about space, but have a cool adventure and a bit of a giggle at the same time – and *Blast Off!* was created.

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Classroom / Shared reading

Read *Blast Off!* together as a class.

1. Ask students to identify their favourite part/s of the story.
2. Discuss the differences between each planet and what it would be like to visit them. Why could we not live on any other planet?
3. Ask students what an alien is, and discuss whether they think there might be other living creatures in space.
4. Ask students which is their favourite planet and why.
5. Ask students why they think the author choose to write the story in rhyme.

Language and literacy

1. The book is written in rhyming verse. Identify and write down each of the rhyming pairs in the book.
2. Choose one planet from our solar system. Using the information about the planet in the book (including the endmatter), write a new 4-line rhyming verse about the planet.
3. For another rhyming activity, see *Worksheet 1*

Sustainability and the Environment

1. Why is Earth the only planet in our solar system that can sustain life?
2. Why is it important for us to look after our planet?
3. What can we do to protect our environment?
4. Look at the diversity of animals that live on our planet. (*Hint: Look closely at the illustration on the Earth pages for hints.*) As a class, discuss what puts this diversity at risk and what humans are doing or can do to try to protect this diversity.

Maths

1. Did you notice a simple diagram of the solar system running along the bottom of some pages? Use the diagram and a ruler to answer these questions:
 - a. Which planet is closest to Earth?
 - b. Which planet is closest to the Sun?
 - c. Which planet would take the longest time to travel to from Earth?
 - d. Which planets are further from each other: Mars and Earth or Jupiter and Saturn?



- How old would you be if you left Earth now and travelled for three years?
- Discuss the time needed to travel between Earth and other planets in the solar system, such as Saturn. Imagine travelling for three whole years.

Activity: Design and build an air-propelled rocket using an empty toilet roll, paper, sticky tape and a straw. Close one end of the roll off with a nose cone made from paper and sticky tape. Balance the rocket on a straw, blow, and see how far your rocket can travel. Record your results in a table. Which rocket travelled the furthest distance? See the link under 'Further activities' for tips on making straw rockets.

Science: Biological Sciences: Living Things

- What are some of the strangest looking creatures that live on the earth? Can you find examples of any in the book's illustrations?
- What things do all animals and plants need to live?
- Animals can live in very different habitats. Look at the Earth page. What different habitats do the animals in the photos live in? How they are suited/adapted to living there?

Art: Visual artworks and design

- Looks at the first spread in the book (*Text: 'Are you ready to explore?'*). The illustration was created using a combination of mixed media and digital art. This gives it a layered look. Can you find these textures/patterns in the illustration?
 - newsprint
 - paper
 - crayon
 - pencil
 - graph paper
- Colours can suggest lots of different things, including moods and temperatures. Compare the illustrations for Mercury and Uranus, paying close attention to the colours. What do the colours of each illustration say to you? How do you think the colours fit with the text on each page?
- See Worksheet 2: Make a solar system crown

Activity Did you notice the dog astronaut taking selfies in space? You can create your own space selfies. Steps:

- Choose your favourite planet from the book.
- Decorate a large piece of cardboard or an old sheet to look like that planet. (You could show the landscape in detail, or the curve of the horizon with the sky other planets in the background.)
- When the cardboard/sheet is dry, lay it flat on the ground. (Or, ask an adult if you may hang it on a window/wall/doorframe and if they'll help you fix it in place.)
- Lay on top of/stand in front of your landscape and take a photo of yourself in outer-space!
- Your class could make a space-travel scrapbook or poster combining all your space selfies.

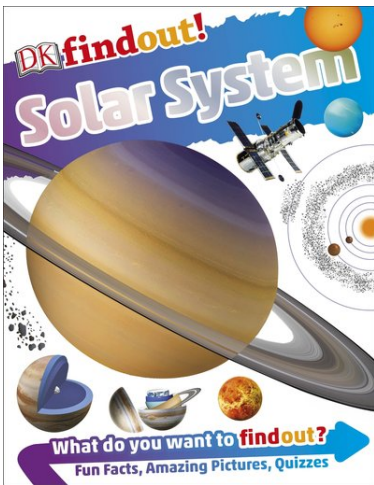
FURTHER ACTIVITIES

You can find lots of fun solar system-themed craft activities and experiments online.

- For tips on making straw rockets, try:
 - <https://buggyandbuddy.com/straw-rockets-with-free-rocket-template/>
- You can make solar system maps using buttons, painted bottle lids, coloured felt, miniature pom poms and more. For example:
 - <http://deceptivelyeducational.blogspot.com.au/2012/04/solar-system-with-button-planets.html>
 - <http://munchkinandbean.blogspot.com.au/2014/03/solar-system-felt-board.html>
- You can even make a solar system mobile for your classroom by making planets with papier-mâché and balloons, large pom poms, foam balls, or discs of coloured paper. For example:
 - <http://www.we-are-scout.com/2015/10/make-a-pom-pom-solar-system-mobile.html>
 - <https://daveandandrea.wordpress.com/2011/11/11/diy-baby-mobile/>



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



DK findout! Solar System

Why this story? Easy-to-read non-fiction to give you more facts about our solar system

DKfindout! Solar System teaches kids everything they would want to know about the awe-inspiring solar system.

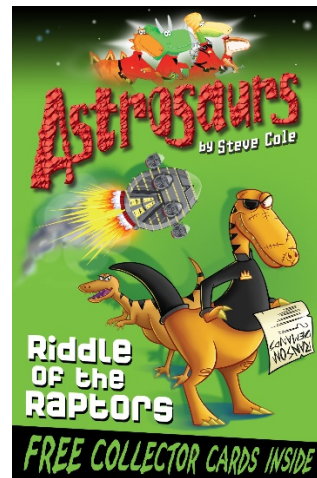
From the planets to meteorites all a budding astronomer needs to know. Packed with fun facts, quizzes and amazing photography



Space Dog
by Mini Grey

Why this story? Another funny and entertaining story about adventuring through space.

Spacedog's lonely mission is nearly over, and it's nearly time for him to go home. But one perilous rescue attempt later, and he finds himself with an Astrocat aboard his ship. But everyone knows Spacedogs and Astrocats are sworn enemies . . . aren't they? And then they encounter a Moustronaut in peril, in this intergalactic romp.



Astrosaurs
by Steve Cole

Why this story? A longer read about silly space tales.

Captain Teggs is no ordinary dinosaur – he's an astrosaur! On the incredible spaceship DSS Sauropod, along with his faithful crew, Gypsy, Arx and Iggy, Teggs rights wrongs, fights evil and eats a lot of grass!

In this first adventure, the herbivore astrosaurs have to face a fearsome enemy – a band of greedy carnivorous raptors who have kidnapped two athlete dinosaurs from under Teggs's nose. Can the Captain save the dinosaurs, escape from terrifying T-Rexes and still save the Dinosaur Games?



WORKSHEET 1: Rhymes

In the table below, the first column shows words used in *Blast Off!* In the second column, write the rhyming word used in the book. Can you think of other rhyming words and add them to the third column?

	Rhyme used in <i>Blast Off!</i>	Alternative rhyming words
thick	sick	pick
flow		
air		
jewel		
blue		
stream		



WORKSHEET 2: Make a solar system crown

You'll need:

- A print-out of these sheets (NOT double-sided)
- Cardboard (black, blue or colour it yourself)
- Pencils, crayons or textas
- Scissors
- Glue and sticky tape
- Measuring tape
- Star stickers, glitter, silver or gold poster paint textas (optional)

Steps:

1. Colour in the planets on the next page.
2. Cut each planet out and put them aside.
3. Get a classmate or adult to measure around your head (its diameter) using the tape. Hold the tape loosely, and remember to position the tape as if it were a hat.
4. On the long edge of your cardboard, mark out the diameter of your head, plus at least 3 cm extra.
5. On the short edge of your cardboard, mark out 8-10 cm high, and the same width as step 4. Cut out this strip, or get an adult to help.
6. Colour the cardboard strip blue or black if it isn't already.
7. Place each planet in order along the cardboard strip. (Leave about 3 cm free at the end.)
8. When you're happy with the position of your planets, glue each one in place.
9. Optional: you may like to add some stars using stickers, glitter or poster paint textas.
10. Roll the cardboard strip into a ring, with the blank 3 cm end tucked behind. Hold it in place and check that it fits your head. When you're happy with the fit, glue the crown into shape. You may like to add some tape to the inside of the join for extra strength.

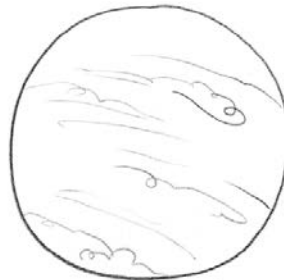
Tip: You could also colour and cut out the planet shapes to make a simple mobile using string and a painted piece of dowel or an embroidery hoop at the top.



WORKSHEET 2 continued



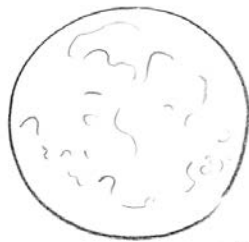
Jupiter



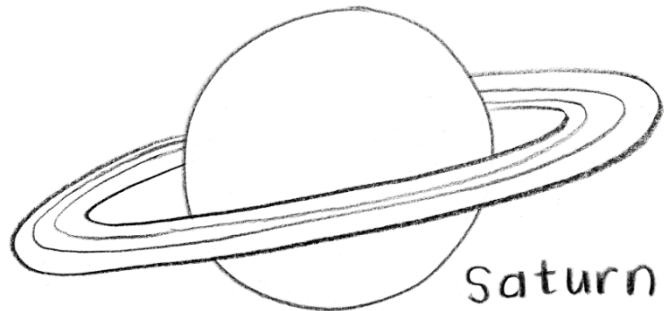
neptune



Uranus



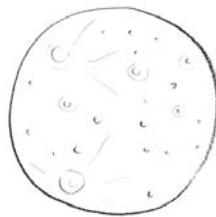
Mars



Saturn



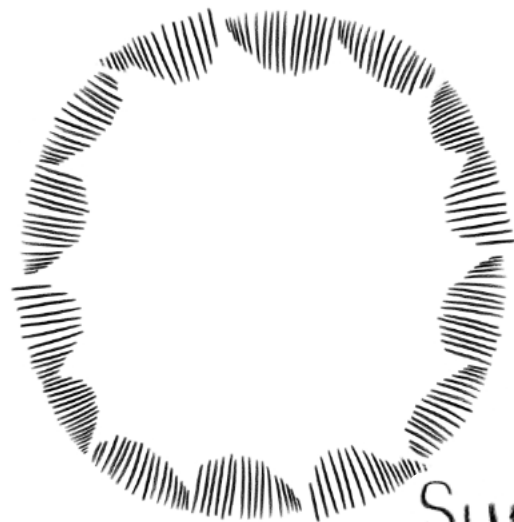
Earth



Mercury



Venus



Sun

ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
<i>Blast Off!</i>	Shelly Unwin & Ben Wood	9780143785040	Pre-2	19.99		
<i>DK findout! Solar System</i>		9780241225202	1-3	14.99		
<i>Space Dog</i>	Mini Grey	9781849419819	Pre-1	19.99		
<i>Astrosaurus</i>	Steve Cole	9781849411493	1-3	15.99		
TOTAL						

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