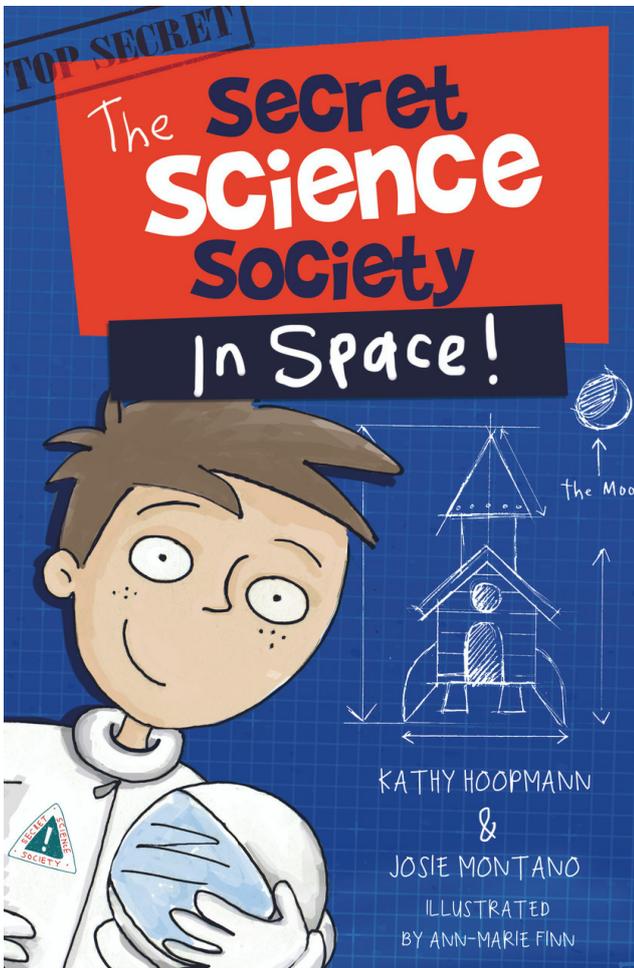




Wombat Books
Stories you'll want to share

Teachers' Notes



The Secret Science Society in Space

Josie Montano & Kathy Hoopmann/ Ann-Marie Finn

ISBN: 9781761110092

Recommended retail: \$12.99

Reading level: 8+

Book Summary

Mona is earth-bound.

Kiki is mission control.

Bart has a galactic space obsession.

And Zane's thinking is off the planet. The Secret Science Society need to come up with a prize-winning experiment.

Will their excursion to the Planetarium be over the moon? Do they really build a rocket ship to put a dog in space? And will they solar-brate a win at the Science Expo?

With Zane's mystery modifications this can only mean one thing: An astronomical DISASTER! But sssshhhhh, the ending is out of this world.

Wombat Books, PO Box 302, Chinchilla, Queensland 4413 www.wombatrhiza.com.au
admin@wombatrhiza.com.au

Light the Dark Pty Ltd, Trading as Wombat Books ABN: 30 137 345 941

These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use and study within schools and other educational institutions, but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.

Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Book Summary | 1 |
| Themes | 2 |
| About the Author | 3 |
| Teaching Points and Activities | 4 |
| Discussion Questions | 5 |
| Classroom Activities | 6 |

Reasons For Studying This Book

THE SECRET SCIENCE SOCIETY IN SPACE is a fun story about diversity and individuality and the joys of science. It follows the adventures of four students who are forced to work together to represent their school to produce a project for a science fair.

Zane has ADHD, Bart is autistic, Kiki has anxiety and Mona is, well, Mona is Mona. After visiting a space exhibition, they are alarmed to discover that Laika, the first dog to orbit the Earth, was sent up in a rocket with no chance of return. They decide that their project would be to create a spaceship that could bring animals home safely. Despite a comedy of errors, naturally, they win first prize. As they work together, the very diverse characters discover that they all have strengths and weaknesses and that to be the best team, they have to support each other in the difficult times and celebrate the good.

In a society that is increasingly aware of mental health issues and where many children are presenting with a variety of diagnoses, it is important to reach all children with literature they can relate to. By showcasing a group of children with autism, ADHD and anxiety, who work together as a team for a common goal using their differing personalities cohesively, students may see themselves represented and feel valued. This book encourages diversity and acceptance, with links to English, Science and HPE. It artfully demonstrates that relationship-building can be fun and exciting, and how great science can be, especially working on experiments!

Themes

| | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|----------|
| Strength of diversity | Space travel | Strengths & Weaknesses | Teamwork |
| Differing personalities | Labels do not define a person | The joys of science | |

About the Authors:



Kathy Hoopmann has written over twenty books for children and adults, with translations into almost as many languages. She is best known for her books on neurodiversity and mental health. She has been shortlisted for literary awards all over the world, including the CBCA Award (AUS) the ALCS Educational Award (UK) and has four times been awarded a Nautilus Award (US).

Josie Montano is an award-winning author with over 20 years' experience and 60 resources internationally published within a variety of genres. She writes under two pseudonyms, 'Montano' for fiction, and 'Santomauro' for books on autism. Josie is a storyteller who strives to advocate for and to celebrate those who are diverse.



About the Illustrator:



Ann-Marie Finn is an artist, illustrator, and author of children's books. She lives in Western Queensland with her two boys, a cat and some chooks who keep her entertained between work, studies and creative ventures. Ann-Marie has a growing collection of children's books to her name.

Author Interview

The characters in your book have ADHD, autism and anxiety. Why focus on these traits?

Between us, we have considerable background knowledge in these areas and we know that often only the negative sides of diagnoses or mental health issues are promoted. We wanted to show, in a lighthearted way, how our character's strengths can shine when they are accepted and supported.

Many kids and YA books deal with mental health and neurodiversity. Why do you think it's become a common theme to explore?

Awareness of mental health issues and neurodiversity in our society has been raised significantly over the years. As children and youth are diagnosed, often their greatest quandary is that they feel that no-one could possibly understand what they are going through, and consequently feel isolated and misunderstood. Therefore, it is vital that they have access to literature aimed at themselves. Seeing characters like Kiki, who has anxiety, Bart with autism and Zane with ADHD helps them realise they are not alone and that by seeing characters like themselves on the page, they feel validated and accepted.

One of the main themes of this book is putting aside differences to work together. How can we do that in our everyday lives?

Listen to each other. It's that simple. Throw away preconceived ideas and take a moment to step into someone else's shoes. Once you know where a person is coming from and why, it's so much easier to accept them for who they are, and enjoy what they have to offer.

Authors Note

We met in 1999 at the Ipswich Writers Festival and have been friends ever since. We have both written extensively on Autism Spectrum Disorders (Asperger Syndrome), plus we publish in other genres as well (Josie also writes as Josie Santomauro). For years, we had dabbled with the idea of working together, however nothing seemed to feel right. That all changed when Kathy moved back to Australia after a long stint in the Middle East and found that Josie now lived five minutes from her. It had to be an omen! So, over a coffee one week, we came up with the concept of the Secret Science Society and had a blast creating a bunch of quirky, lovable rascals who get up to all sorts of mischief, whether they mean to or not. With our combined understanding of diagnoses that have lots of letters (ASD, GAD, ADHD, etc) we hope that the antics of the Secret Science Society will delight, entertain, and hopefully educate our readers, young and old alike.

Key Curriculum Areas:

CURRICULUM AREAS AND KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

Year Four

English, Humanities and Social Science, Health and Physical Education

| | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| ACELA1488 | ACELT1603 | ACELY1687 | ACELY1675 |
| ACHASSIO77 | ACHASSIO81 | ACHASSK072 | |
| ACPPSO33 | ACPPSO37 | ACPPSO38 | |

Year Five

English, Humanities and Social Science, Health and Physical Education

| | | | |
|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| ACELT1608 | ACELT1609 | ACELT1610 | ACELA1525 |
| ACHASSIO94 | ACHASSIO99 | | |
| ACPPSO51 | ACPPSO60 | ACPPSO57 | |

Year Six

English, Humanities and Social Science, Health and Physical Education

| | | | |
|------------|-----------|-----------|--|
| ACELT1613 | ACELY1709 | ACELY1801 | |
| ACHASSI127 | | | |
| ACPPSO51 | ACPPSO57 | ACPPSO60 | |

Year Seven

English

| | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| ACELT1619 | ACELT1620 | ACELT1622 | ACELT1621 |
| ACELT1803 | ACELY1722 | ACELT1625 | |

Teaching Points and Activities

This book may be used for whole class, small group or independent learning activities in schools.

Please note, the following suggestions and activities are suited to a variety of year levels spanning Foundation to Year 6 primary aged children. Some activities may be applicable to early secondary school students, as well.

Knowledge and Literal Understanding

Pre-reading Questions

1. Show the cover to the class and ask the students what they think the book might be about.
2. Read the back cover blurb. Does this give them more of an idea of what the book could be about?
3. Consider using the bingo card activity in the activities section with the class for them to fill out before the book and reflect on after reading.

After-reading Questions

4. Ask students if the characters remind them of anyone they know: a friend, a sibling, themselves perhaps.
5. What is their first impression of each of the members? What about the group as a whole?
6. How do the children change over the course of the story?
7. Did any of the class guess the events of the story? What about the twist?
8. Ask students to pick a scientific fact or discovery from the story that is interesting to them. Why does it interest them?
9. If you could draw an alternative cover of this book, what would it look like?
10. What do you think might happen further in the series?

Discussion Questions

Diversity makes our society stronger

- The Secret Science Society are a group of unique characters. What is it about you that is unique?
- Not only are the Society diverse, but so are their families. How diverse is your family? What are some of the differences between you and what are some of the similarities?

Space Travel

- Bart tells everyone about how only 12 men have landed on the moon. Research space travel to the moon. Who was the first person and who was the last person to travel to the moon?
- In Planetworld, the Society see a real parachute on display that belonged to a shuttle that returned from Space. What were some of the differences between the shuttle and the rocket?

Strengths and weaknesses

- Think about the members of the Secret Society. What is a strength and weakness of each character from the group?
- Now think about yourself. Name two of your strengths and one weakness.
- Is there any way to turn a weakness into a strength? What defines a weakness?

Teamwork and differing personalities

- Consider moments where the Secret Society worked together as a team. List some examples of those moments, and why they might have worked well together.
- Did their differing personalities contribute to that success as a teamwork? Why or why not?

Labels do not define a person

- In this context we are talking about terms and labels used such as neurodiversity and neurodivergence (autism, ADHD) or mental health labels (such as anxiety). What do these labels and terms mean?

- Bart is autistic, Zane has ADHD, Kiki has anxiety. Do these labels help the Secret Society members or do they hinder them?
- When are labels helpful or unhelpful? Who do they help?

The joy of science

- The Science Society are very keen and excited about the Science Fair. If you were to enter a Science Fair, what would you be excited to create?
- Science encourages logical thought and imagination at the same time. Why do you find science exciting?

General

- Which character do you think you are most like? Why?
- Would you want to be part of the Secret Science Society? Why/why not?
- How do the characters change throughout the book?
- Zane was very tempted to push the big red emergency button at Planet World. Discuss as many 'emergencies' as you can to justify the pushing of the button.
- When Bart divides the group in different tasks each worth 25%, Mona has to complete the oral presentation, Kiki's job is to design and make the poster, Bart and Zane need to make the space kennel. Do you think that the tasks were the right ones for each child? Why? Why not? Which task would suit you best with the skills that you have?
- Scruffy is Mona's stuffed dog from when she was a small child. She pretends she has outgrown it, but it is obvious that it still means a lot to her. Do you have a toy that still means a lot to you? How would you feel if it was given away? Could you think of a situation where you'd be happy to donate it for a good cause?
- Mona discovered something new about her dad that she had never known (that he had actually been up in a rocket to a space station.) Have you ever discovered something new about someone that you have known for a long time? If you can't think of anything, then pretend your friend or family member just told you something about themselves that is amazing. For example, maybe your mum is a princess or your friend has a cave underneath his house. How would you react? Would it change anything between you?
- Zane 'borrowed' his next door neighbour's dog to take to the Science Fair. Discuss. Do you think that was okay or not okay? Why? How do you think the neighbour will feel when they discover what Zane has done? How would the dog have felt? Is it okay to do anything you like just because you think you have a good idea? Why or why not?
- At the end of the book, the audience at the Science Fair were invited to ask Mr Mona some questions about being an astronaut. What would you ask?

Activities

Short activities

- Although Zane is someone who sometimes makes poor choices and therefore creates disasters, other times he surprises his friends by having some really good ideas. Go through the book and list the ideas that were not good choices and those that worked well.
- Zane loves to tell jokes. Research or write your own space jokes and share them with your friends and family.
- Zane perfects the Whites-of-the-Eyes-Piggy-Nostril-Gopher-Mouth-Snarl. Create your own funny face and give it a name. Now draw it.
- Zane thought his snoring grandpa was a spooky astronaut alien zombie. Draw, or create your version of a spooky astronaut alien zombie.
- Design your own space kennel. Don't forget to include all the things that a dog would need to survive such as a spacesuit, air, food, protection from the elements, etc.
- Design your own Secret Science Society logo.
- Bart is very good with big numbers. Draw up a chart about how many kilometres/miles are between planets.
- Write a creative story about you travelling through space and landing on a planet, how did you travel there and what/who do you find there?
- There have been six missions to the moon. Create a poster about one of the moon landings, who was involved, their trip, mission etc.

Write a short story inspired by science

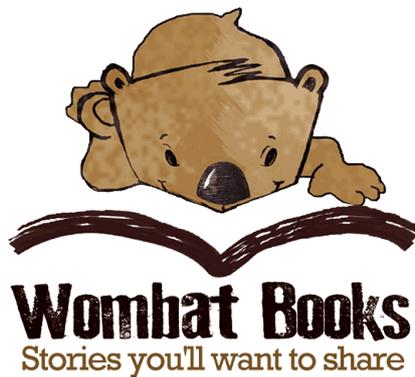
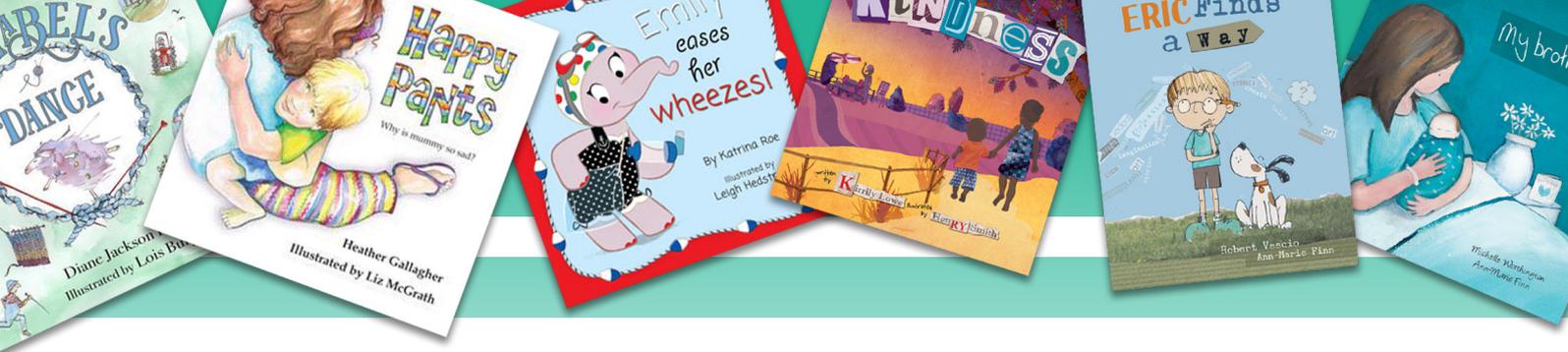
- The Secret Science Society love to explore scientific ideas. Science can be very fun and exciting. Using a scientific concept come up with a short story that explores it. Maybe it's about volcanoes erupting, wormholes in outer space, or how the vibrations of sound can change over speed and distance. Do a little research on a scientific topic.
- Now let's plan a short story. With a piece of paper fold it into three parts. Write Beginning on top part, Middle on the middle section, and End on the last one. Come up with a beginning, middle and end to your story. Go home and write your story out. Remember it doesn't have to be perfect, it's just about having fun and exploring a new idea. If you're able, share yours with the class the next day.

BINGO

| | | |
|--|------|--|
| | | |
| | FREE | |
| | | |

Create a bingo card

- Using the bingo card shown above write in the squares what you think might happen in the story based on the blurb and front cover of the book. As you read colour in the squares of guesses you got right. The aim is to get a bingo.
- Consider the book after reading. Look at your predictions and discuss as a class what you thought might happen, and why. Then unpack what actually happened in the story. Do you like how the story unfolded? Was it a good climax? Were there any twists?
-



Kathy Hoopmann and Josie Montano are available for author talks and workshops. Contact Wombat Books for more information.

The Secret Science Society in Space Teachers' Notes can be used in schools (independent learning, small groups, and whole classes); at home with caregivers; and as part of mental health support programs facilitated by counsellors, psychologists, children's charities, etc.

Connect with Wombat Books

Website: www.wombathiza.com.au
Facebook: www.facebook.com/wombatbooks

