Dino-Pals Are Dino-Mite!

Earth Is All the Home We Have

by Joanna Korba
How to use this book
1. Learn about the genre by reading pages 2–3. Get background information about famous science fiction authors on pages 5–7. (Shared reading)
2. Read the science fiction stories for enjoyment. (Leveled texts)
3. Reread the stories and answer the questions on pages 16–17 and 28–29. (Shared reading)
4. Reread the last science fiction story. Pay attention to the comments in the margins. See how an author writes science fiction. (Leveled text)
5. Follow the steps on pages 30–31 to write your own science fiction story. (Shared reading)
6. Complete the activity on the inside back cover. Answer the follow-up questions. (Shared reading)
What is science fiction?
Science fiction stories use scientific facts and technological developments to imagine a world that doesn’t yet exist—but could. Sometimes the science is based on facts, and sometimes it is based on speculation. Often, the science and technology lead to a problem. Science fiction stories often take place in unusual settings including outer space, distant futures, or among alien creatures.

What is the purpose of science fiction?
The purpose of science fiction is to reflect on how we live today by exploring imagined worlds. It sets out a possible (though sometimes highly improbable) situation and then explores it, usually in a serious way. Science fiction hopes to make readers think about the consequences today’s actions may have for the future. (Think about a man who discovers a way to make himself invisible. What might happen next? What about someone who invents a machine that travels in time. What will the results be?)

How do you read science fiction?
Look for science and technology when you read science fiction. Ask yourself how these things are altering or changing the characters. Keep an open mind as you read. You are entering into a world of “what if.” It might be a world of the future or the past. It might be on another planet or in another universe. It might even be a frightening world. But it is going to be an interesting trip!

Who invented science fiction?
Some say that science fiction was invented when someone imagined an alternate world or life on another planet. In the early 1700s, Jonathan Swift wrote about a world with only tiny beings. In the early 1800s, Mary Shelley wrote about a scientist who brings a monster to life using body parts of dead people. Modern-day science fiction began toward the end of the 1800s. Scientific and technological developments of this era inspired writers such as H. G. Wells and Jules Verne to imagine time travel and visitors from other planets. Twentieth-century authors wrote about robots, future societies, and intelligent life in other worlds. More recent writers have explored the effect of computers and artificial intelligence on human beings and the universe.

Science fiction writers continue to look at society today by looking at what might happen to it. And that is almost always something unexpected.
Personification

Personification means “giving human traits to inanimate objects.” Human traits include emotions, desires, sensations, and physical gestures. Given the fantastical nature of science fiction, personification is a particularly fitting literary technique for science fiction authors. Notice how the author of these stories describes inanimate objects such as text and silence as if they had human emotions or abilities.

Heteronyms

Heteronyms are words that have identical spellings, but different meanings and pronunciations. Because of the identical spellings, heteronyms can be confusing to many readers. It is important to read carefully to know which heteronym the author is using. Row is an example of a heteronym. When an author wants to write about arranging objects in a line, the word is pronounced /ROH/. When an author wants to write about two people fighting, the word is pronounced /ROW/.

Identify Sequence of Events

Good stories include key events, or plot points, in the beginning, middle, and end. These events are logically placed, creating a natural flow to the story. To help readers better understand a story's sequence, and connect one action or scene to another, authors often include key words and phrases such as on (date), not long after, finally, when, as, and before. Good readers look for a story's natural progression of events to help them better understand the plot.

Jules Verne

From the Earth to the Moon (1865) tells the story of three gun enthusiasts who build an enormous cannon from which they launch themselves in a bullet-shaped spacecraft toward the Moon.

Verne's novel predates space travel by 100 years. And although it has been proven that a cannon blast could not send men into space, Verne's calculations about space travel were remarkably accurate. What's more, Verne's fictional “space shot” took place in Florida, not far from the Kennedy Space Center!

H. G. Wells

In The Time Machine (1895), an inventor known only as Time Traveller uses his tabletop time machine to go 800,000 years into the future. He finds that human beings have evolved into two species: the Eloi, a beautiful, though simple leisure class who live above ground in a paradise. Below ground live Morlocks. They are light-fearing beasts who, it turns out, are actually ranchers who feed on Eloi.

In The War of the Worlds (1898), Earth is invaded by Martian super-beings who take over the planet in huge tripod war-machines. They feed on humans, but are eventually defeated by germs. Worlds is the first story that details a conflict between mankind and an alien race.
Ray Bradbury

*The Martian Chronicles* (1950) is a collection of interrelated stories about the human colonization of Mars. During one exploratory trip, a germ is unintentionally introduced to the Red Planet that leads to a near-extinction of the Martians. Back on Earth, after a global nuclear war causes a near-extinction there, the remaining humans travel to Mars. The survivors of both planets begin anew.

The title *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) refers to the temperature at which book paper combusts. This novel portrays a world in which reading and critical thought are outlawed. Set in a futuristic America, the novel was written at a time when censorship was a key issue in American society.

Robert A. Heinlein

*Red Planet* (1949) takes place at a boarding school on Mars in a colony inhabited by Earthlings. Two students, Jim Marlowe and Frank Sutton, with the help of a pet “bouncer” named Willis, discover a plan by the colony’s evil administrator to stop the annual migration of colonists, an expensive but necessary event to avoid life-threateningly cold weather. The trio alerts the colonists, who revolt and triumph. They also discover that Martians begin their lives as bouncers, so Jim allows Willis to go off to become an adult Martian.

Ursula K. Le Guin

*Rocannon’s World* (1966) tells the story of an Earth scientist named Rocannon studying a remote, primitive world. When a technologically advanced alien race attacks the planet, Rocannon is marooned and must lead an alien race in a battle to free their world. This is the first in Le Guin’s popular *Hainish* series of books.

*Catwings* (1988) is the story of four kittens born to Mrs. Jane Tabby in an alley in the big city. Thelma, Roger, James, and Harriet are like any other kittens except they each, inexplicably, have a set of wings on their back! Their mother urges them to fly out of their bad neighborhood and make their way in the world. The siblings wind up in the country, where they eventually meet humans who feed and take care of them—in secret, because they fear most people would not understand felines who fly.

Madeleine L’Engle

*In A Wrinkle in Time* (1962), a high-school girl named Meg Murry and her five-year-old brother Charles travel through time and space to rescue their scientist father who has been imprisoned on the evil planet of Camazotz while traveling through the fifth dimension on a top-secret assignment for the government. Calvin O’Keefe, who is a classmate of Meg’s, and three celestial beings—Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Which, and Mrs. Who—accompany the children on their adventure.
Frowning, Mr. Mackey read the text shouting from the computer screen: DINO-PALS ARE DINO-MITE. THEY CHARM, ENTRANCE, AND DELIGHT!

“Let me get this straight,” he said to his children, Liza and Theo. “You want us to buy you some dolls?”

“At your age?” Mrs. Mackey added, looking bewildered.

Theo (age 14) flashed his sister (age 12) a can-you-believe-it? look. “Dad, these are hardly dolls,” he said slowly, as if he were explaining something to a young child. “They are extremely sophisticated robot companions.”

“But they look like cuddly, little baby dinosaurs,” his mother said, examining the Dino-Pal images onscreen. “They aren’t much bigger than bunny rabbits.”

“Oh, Mother,” Liza said, sighing dramatically. “Each of these so-called baby dinosaurs is an accurate recreation of a microceratops, an herbivore of the Late Cretaceous.”

Mr. Mackey blinked. “I didn’t get half of what you said, Liza, but I get your point. You two both want these Mike-o-Syrup-Tops. But why? What’s so special about them?”

“my-kroh-SAIR-uh-tahps,” Liza muttered. Correct pronunciations were important to her.

Theo’s eyes lit up. “What’s so special about them? They can act like real animals, Dad! Once you activate them, they follow you or go wherever you point. And they’re programmed to respond to your moods.”

Liza smiled happily. “If you sit down and pat your lap, they hop up, settle in, and make this sweet humming noise—sort of like purring.”

Mrs. Mackey frowned now. “If they’re that lifelike, they must cost a fortune. We can’t afford one wildly expensive toy, much less two!”

“First of all, they’re not toys,” Liza insisted. “They’re robot companions.”

“Second of all,” Theo continued, “they’re experimental models. We’d be agreeing to try them out for the company, so we’d only have to pay for shipping.” He got a desperate look in his eyes. “But there’s not much time. It’s a limited offer. You have to act now!”

“Look,” Liza said, using the cursor to bring up the relevant screen, “read all about it for yourselves.”

Mr. and Mrs. Mackey scrolled through the page quickly, shrugged, and signed up for two Dino-Pals.
When Mr. and Mrs. Mackey came down for breakfast on Saturday morning, their children were carefully taking their Dino-Pals out of their packing boxes.

“Well, that was fast!” said Mr. Mackey. “Where were they shipped from?” he asked, investigating the boxes. “I don’t see any return address.”

“Who cares? We won’t be returning them,” Liza responded and then broke into an admiring grin. “Just look at him, Mom. Look at the bony formation on his head. Doesn’t it look like he’s wearing a little cap?”

“How do you know it’s a he?” Mrs. Mackey asked, amused.

“The instructions say so,” Theo answered, holding up a bulky booklet. “Mine’s a she. We’ve been reading about them for the past hour.”

“Amazing!” Mr. Mackey cried, shaking his head in disbelief. “You two usually have to be dragged out of bed on a Saturday morning.”

Mrs. Mackey was intrigued by the tiny creatures. “How do you make them work?” she asked.

“Like this,” said Liza as she reached behind the bony cap on her creature’s head.

The little dinosaur seemed to be waking up from a deep sleep. He shook his head slowly, took a few steps, and looked at each of the Mackeys with bright yellow eyes. Then he trotted toward Liza, stopped, and began rubbing his head against her arm as he made gentle humming noises. With a delighted laugh, Liza reached down and scratched his little head.

Mr. Mackey crouched down in front of Theo’s robot. “I know they’ve made huge advances with robots and artificial intelligence, but this is incredible!” He reached for the activation switch.

But Theo quickly scooped up the little dinosaur and held her protectively in his arms. “I’m sorry, Dad. She’s my companion. I have to activate her first. I think I’ll take her down to the basement, so I can get to know her better.”

Liza saw the puzzled looks on her parents’ faces and quickly added, “We don’t want them getting loose in the house until we know how to control them.”
“Oh,” Mrs. Mackey said with a hesitant smile. “I guess that makes sense.”

Mr. Mackey still looked puzzled. “Okay, but you’ll have to come up for breakfast. I’m making your favorites—blueberry pancakes.”

“We already ate!” Theo called back as he and his sister entered the basement and shut the door firmly.

“I think we were a little hasty buying those robots and bringing them into our home,” Mr. Mackey muttered as he poured syrup onto his pancakes. “What do we know about the company who makes them? Nothing!”

Mrs. Mackey grabbed the phone and punched in her friend’s number. “Sylvia? It’s Mona Mackey. I was just wondering if you or your kids know anything about these robot pets called Dino-Pals.”

There was a gasp on the other end. “They arrived yesterday, Mona. I . . . we . . . that is, Tony and I . . .”

“What’s wrong, Sylvia? You sound so odd.”

“They seem so cute and so lifelike, don’t you think?” Sylvia began to giggle but stopped abruptly. “I’m being too loud. The kids are upstairs, talking to those things.”

“They talk?” Mrs. Mackey asked sharply. “Listen, Sylvia, I’m putting you on speakerphone so Pete can hear you . . .”

“Sylvia, it’s Pete. What do you mean they talk?” Mr. Mackey asked. “There was nothing in the computer ad about talking.”

“We were passing by the kids’ room and heard the boys converse with each other, pleasantly. They usually only yell and fight. Then we heard these high-pitched voices and . . . Who’s that? . . . Oh, it’s you, Tony. I’m talking to the Mackeys. Their kids have them, too.”

Mr. Ramos came on the line, speaking in a harsh whisper. “Listen, something’s going on. All the kids seem to have these Dino-things. Did Sylvia tell you what we heard?”

“No, not yet,” Mrs. Mackey said, almost whispering. “We were in the hallway outside the boys’ room and overheard the Dino-Pals say something about how all the kids should prepare for D-Day and keep the parents away. We made our entrance and . . .”

“. . . they went back to acting like cute little dinosaurs.”

Mrs. Ramos interrupted. “They wouldn’t talk to us!”

“Did you ask the kids about this ‘D-Day?’” Mr. Mackey asked.

“Of course we did,” Mr. Ramos hissed. “They said it was just a party they were going to have with other kids, a Dino-Day at the park. Kept babbling that ‘Dino-Pals are Dino-Mite.’”
“But you don’t believe them, do you?” said Mrs. Mackey quietly.
“No,” said Mr. Ramos. “Things have gotten too weird. The kids have changed, somehow. Dollars to doughnuts those things aren’t robots. We’re beginning to think—Who’s that?”

There was a sudden CLICK as the connection was broken.

For the next fifteen minutes the Mackeys talked to each other quietly, but nervously, repeatedly trying to get their friends back on the phone. They also listened anxiously at the basement door, unable to hear anything.

Then the phone shrieked at them. Mr. Mackey ran and snatched it up. “Hello?”

“Pete, it’s Sylvia Ramos. I called to apologize. I don’t know what got into Tony and me. All that foolishness about those cute little robots.”

Mr. Mackey’s face was a mask of shock. “Foolishness?” he mumbled.

“Yes, yes,” Mrs. Ramos said soothingly. “Making them seem like monsters when they’re just the converse. Really, Pete, Dino-Pals are Dino-Mite!”

And then she hung up.

Mr. Mackey slammed down the receiver. “This is crazy. I want those robots gone!” He quickly relayed to his wife what Mrs. Ramos had said.

The two of them headed into the basement. “Kids, we’ve got to talk to you,” Mr. Mackey called out, as he and his wife descended the stairs.

Silence wrapped itself around them.

“Liza? Theo?” Mrs. Mackey tried to keep her voice calm. “Where are you?”

“Right here,” Theo said in a flat voice. “What do you want?”

He and Liza were crouched beside the creatures, who looked innocently up at Mr. and Mrs. Mackey with their bright yellow eyes.

“We’ve been talking to Mr. and Mrs. Ramos,” Mrs. Mackey said quickly. “We’ve . . . we’re . . .”
Reread the Story

Analyze the Characters, Setting, and Plot

• Who are the characters in the story?
• Where and when does the story take place?
• What is the problem in the story?
• How is the problem resolved? Or is it?
• What unusual event happens at the end of the story?

Focus on Comprehension:
Sequence of Events

• What happened right after Mr. Mackey reached for the activation switch on Theo’s dino-pal?
• What did the dinosaurs do right after Mr. and Mrs. Ramos entered their sons’ room?
• What did Mr. and Mrs. Mackey do right before the children locked them in the basement?

Focus on Story Mood

Authors develop a story’s mood by including characters, details, and events which lead readers to feel certain emotions throughout the story. Story moods include fear, intrigue, euphoria, contentment, and nostalgia. This science fiction story’s mood suggests that something bad is going to happen. Identify three events that make you feel as if something bad might happen.

Analyze the Tools Writers Use: Personification

• On page 8, the author says that the text is shouting from the computer screen. How is this an example of personification?
• On page 14, the author says that the phone shrieked at them. A phone does not really shriek. What sound do you think the phone made that sounded like a person shrieking? How might the mood of the story affect how the Mackeys heard the phone ring?
• On page 14, the author says that silence wrapped itself around them. What did the author mean by this? How does personifying silence help the development of an uneasy mood?

Focus on Words: Heteronyms

Make a chart like the one below. For each word, identify its part of speech. Then identify the heteronym’s definition. If necessary, use a dictionary to help you with the different pronunciations. Finally, identify words from the text that helped you determine the heteronym’s meaning.

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New Year’s Day, 3012: Five Days to Departure.

My name is Jim Smith, and my family is one of the Pioneers in Space families. People all over the world know the names of the families who are going. And why we have to go.

I’m going to record my thoughts for the next five days. My English teacher (we call her Mrs. E.) thinks it will help me prepare for leaving.

“Jim,” she told me, “you’ve got a gift for the English language. I know you’ve got mixed emotions about leaving. Keeping a journal will help you deal with these feelings.”

But how can I deal with something so monumental? My family will be leaving everything behind—this town, this country, this world. I know the planet is in terrible shape. How can I not know? For almost a year, I’ve had to wear air-purifier buds in my nose when I go out. It used to be only on the “bad” days, but now every day is a “bad” day. People once needed air to live, but now air is a killer trying to strangle us.

Then there are the plants. I hear stories of how grass, flowers, and trees were everywhere. They were gone by the time I was born, all but the mellek trees. Scientists created them in the 2930s to survive in the bad air, but even they died off a few years ago. How can I miss something I barely knew? And yet I do miss them.
I know there also used to be lots of life forms sharing this planet. I learned about them in the Shared Files. Now there are just people and a few furry critters—like Skipper, who is curled up beside me, snoring, as I write this.

It makes me angry to realize what we’ve lost. For centuries and centuries, we thought we could do whatever we wanted to this planet. In spite of what the scientists said, we kept cutting down trees, killing anything that got in our way, and sending poisons into the air. We turned a strong, healthy world into a sad, sickly invalid. Now it is too late to heal her.

We have to leave to survive.

**Four Days to Departure.**

I told Mrs. E. that I’m keeping a journal. She thinks it will be an important document that could become part of our New History.

“Write about the Pioneers in Space Resettlement Program,” she said. “Create a record of the events that led to the departure.”

Well, okay, but where should I begin? I don’t have time to cover everything that went wrong. I guess I’ll start with the floods.

By the mid-2700s, coastal floods had covered miles and miles of shorelines all over the world. But it was the Tidal Waves of ’48 that did the most damage, wiping out islands that had been home to millions of people. Then came the Dry Times that destroyed the remaining crops and started the food wars. We’ve slowly had to switch over to a GenFab diet of genetically fabricated food.
As things got worse and worse, the world’s greatest scientists began to work on a planetary resettlement program. About twenty-five years ago, they established two teams. Team 1 sent out probes to all parts of the galaxy and beyond, trying to find another planet that could support life as we know it. As data streamed back from the probes, the Team 1 scientists analyzed the results. Amazingly, two possible planets were found. In both cases, there were major differences. We would have to adapt to survive. After much study, the team decided that one planet, on the other side of the galaxy, was really the only place for us.

Meanwhile, Team 2 worked on speeding up interplanetary travel. The plan was to send a few pioneer families out, adapted for life on this new planet, to see if it could indeed become a new home. The advance families would have to be able to get there within months, not years. (We all know that the global resettlement must start in twelve months. Even then, many won’t make it.)

Two years ago, Team 2 had a breakthrough in fusion conversion. Mrs. E. probably expects me to supply details here, for the record, but I can’t. I don’t understand all that scientific theory. All that matters to me is this: We pioneers can now get to our destination in just under two months!

Many families were selected at random to be possible pioneers. But only those families who passed several tests were finally chosen to go—those with minds and bodies strong enough to survive.
Then we pioneers had to go to classes to learn about the area of the new planet we would be resettling—its language, its inhabitants—using probe data. And we underwent several operations to change our appearance and voices so that we would fit in.

That pretty much covers it. I’m too tired to continue now—but more tomorrow.

**Three Days to Departure.**

My journal kept calling to me all day, but I had no chance to write. We spent the day finalizing our packing lists and doing some housecleaning. Now I’m typing in my journal with Skipper looking on, his furry head close beside mine. I’m glad that I’m not leaving everything behind. I’ve got my family—Mom, Dad, my sister Mary, and Skipper. I’m good friends with two of the kids in the other families settling near us. But there are so many people I’ll be leaving behind. Ifi Garay, Dax, Mem, Mrs. E.—

I can’t go on writing. My heart feels like it’s going to explode. It may not be much of a world now, but it’s the only one I know. This new world—I have no idea what it will be like to live there.

**Two Days to Departure.**

We just had a family council. It was a chance for all of us to talk about our fears and hopes. Mom admitted that she couldn’t help wondering if some of the data collected was invalid. “All it would take is one mistake, and we’d be doomed. Something in this new world might make us sick or kill us. Or we wouldn’t fit in for some tiny reason, like our eyelashes were too thick, and then we couldn’t make the necessary changes to the planet so that the others could come.”

Dad pointed out that we were doomed if we didn’t go. “This old world doesn’t have much longer to live, you know that,” he said. “All the scientists agree that we have less than two years left. We stand a better chance on this new planet.”

“We have to trust the scientists,” Mary said. “They’ve spent years checking and rechecking the data. It’ll be okay, Mom.”

Mom tried to smile reassuringly, but I could tell she was still worried. I was worried, too. I was thinking about some of the odd behaviors of the major inhabitants of the planet. I wanted to run through some role-playing to make sure we knew how to behave with them. We spent the whole afternoon dreaming up and acting out scenarios.
We had to keep reminding one another that the year there was only 2015.
Skipper happily joined in but otherwise had nothing to contribute. Weird.

One Day to Departure.
I’m going to spend the day saying good-bye to friends and finishing up my packing. Then I’ll give Mrs. E. a copy of my journal up to now, so she can see what I wrote.

***
I’m back. Mrs. E. was thrilled with my journal. She’s going to use it with the kids in her English classes and send it along to other teachers. “This will help the rest of the children and young people get ready,” she told me. She obviously believes that we pioneers will be successful and that after a while, everyone else can come, too. I have to believe it, too.

Maybe I’ll start another journal when we’re in our new home. Wow, those words keep echoing in my brain: Our new home.

Departure Day!
This is my last journal entry for Mrs. E. I’ll send it just before we get on the ship and then leave my telepad behind. It would be too dangerous to bring such a technologically advanced thing with us.

Right now, I’m sitting in the Insta-Port, along with the rest of my family. We’re all wearing our new clothes, trying to get comfortable in them. My sister looks morose.
“I hate the way the doctors made me look, and I hate my new name,” she mutters.

Mom nods sympathetically and says, “I know, dear, but these are things we have to do to fit in. We don’t want the inhabitants to think we’re strange.”

“Later it won’t matter,” Dad points out. “Not after we’ve made the necessary changes to their planet.”

Suddenly I see our ship off in the distance. I get so excited, I forget myself and blurt out, “Snar evo nollux . . .”

“Speak English!” Skipper says sharply. “You’ve been studying with ‘Mrs. English’ for long enough!”

Everyone looks at him warningly.
“I mean, arf, arf!” he says, shaking his furry head and wagging his tail the best he was able to.

With a little more practice, I think Skipper will make a very good family “dog” in our new home.

The story ends with a plot twist. Jim’s family is not fleeing Earth; they are going there! The author is using another common theme in science fiction: parallel universes and is also making a point about how we live today. She wants readers to think about what could happen if we don’t take better care of our planet.
Reread the Story

Analyze the Characters, Setting, and Plot
- Who are the characters in the story?
- Where and when does the story take place?
- What is the problem in the story?
- Why are families traveling to a new planet?
- How does Jim feel about traveling to a new planet? How does the rest of his family feel?
- How does the story end? Does this ending surprise you? Why or why not?

Focus on Comprehension: Sequence of Events
- What happened after the Dry Times?
- Team 1 analyzed data after . . .
- What does Dad say after Mom admits she's worried about invalid data?
- What happens after Jim says, “Snar evo nollux . . .”?

Analyze the Tools Writers Use: Personification
- On page 19, the author says that “air is a killer trying to strangle us.” What is the author trying to say?
- On page 20, the author describes the planet as a sick female who is dying. How does this example of personification create a sense of doom?
- On page 24, the character Jim Smith writes, “My journal kept calling to me all day . . .” What does this mean?

Focus on Words: Heteronyms
Make a chart like the one below. For each word, identify its part of speech. Then identify the heteronym's definition. If necessary, use a dictionary to help you with the different pronunciations. Finally, identify words from the text that helped you determine the heteronym's meaning.

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How does an author write SCIENCE FICTION?

Reread “Earth Is All the Home We Have” and think about what Joanna Korba did to write this story. How did she develop it? How can you, as a writer, develop your own science fiction story?

Decide on a Science Fiction Story Idea

Remember that science fiction stories are just that—stories. They rely on strong characters and a well-developed plot. The “science” part comes from the setting (such as the future, or an alien planet), and how technology impacts the characters’ lives. One way to come up with a science fiction idea is to ask yourself “What if . . . ?” In “Earth Is All the Home We Have” the author wondered “What if our planet was no longer inhabitable and we had to find another place to live?”

Brainstorm Characters

Writers ask these questions:

- What kind of person will my main character be? What are his or her traits? Interests?
- What things are important to my main character? What does he or she want?
- What other characters will be important to my story? How will each one help or hinder the main character?
- What connection does the main character have with science or technology?
- How will the characters change? What will they learn about life?

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<td>Jim</td>
<td>excited; sad; thoughtful</td>
<td>Jim is excited that he and his family are going to a new planet but he’s also sad to leave his friends behind. He decides to write his thoughts down in a journal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom</td>
<td>uncertain; worried</td>
<td>Mom questions the validity of the data the scientists collected about the planet they’re going to. She’s very worried that something on the new planet could make them sick or worse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipper</td>
<td>loyal; stern</td>
<td>In assuming the role of the family dog, Skipper is always by Jim’s side. When Jim slips up and speaks his native language, Skipper sternly scolds him, ironically slipping up himself and speaking English!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brainstorm Setting and Plot

Writers ask these questions:

- Where does my story take place? How will I describe the setting?
- What is the problem, or situation?
- What events happen? How does the story end?
- Will my readers be entertained? Will they learn something?
- How will I include science and technology in my story?
- What science fiction theme will I include? (aliens, time travel, out-of-control inventions, etc.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Jim’s family home in the year 3012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem of the Story</td>
<td>Jim’s planet is dying due to misuse of the environment by its inhabitants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story Events</td>
<td>1. Jim’s family has been chosen to be a Pioneers in Space family. They are getting ready to leave their home planet in five days and travel to a planet on the other side of the galaxy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Four days before departure Jim writes in his journal about some key historical events that led to the destruction of his home planet: the Tidal Waves and following Dry Times created food wars on his planet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Jim also writes about how scientists analyzed other planets that might be inhabitable and concluded that one on the other side of the galaxy would work, if Jim and the others adapted themselves for life there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Three days before departure Jim’s family prepares to leave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Two days before departure Jim’s family has a family meeting to talk about their hopes and fears.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. On departure day, Jim and his family are in the Insta-Port, excited and waiting to leave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solution to the Problem</td>
<td>In a plot twist, it is revealed that Jim and his family are not humans fleeing Earth, but are aliens traveling to Earth.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glossary

**converse** (kun-VERS) verb to exchange thoughts via speech; to talk (page 13)

**converse** (KAHN-vers) noun something reversed in order or relation (page 14)

**entrance** (en-TRANS) verb to carry away with delight, wonder, or awe (page 8)

**entrance** (EN-truns) noun a place of entry (page 13)

**invalid** (IN-vuh-lid) noun a person suffering from disease or disability (page 20)

**invalid** (in-VA-lid) adjective without foundation or force in truth (page 25)

**record** (rih-KORD) verb to make written note of something (page 18)

**record** (REH-kerd) noun something that recalls past events; an official document that tells of past events (page 20)

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Make Connections Across Texts

Complete a graphic organizer like the one below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dino-Pals Are Dino-Mite!</th>
<th>Earth Is All the Home We Have</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Point of View</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Setting</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Characters</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Important Scientific Fact</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problem</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solution</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ending</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analyze the Stories

Use your graphic organizer to help you answer the following questions.

- The first story is written from the third-person point of view. The second story is written in first person. What can you infer from this information?
- What personal connections can you make to the problems in the stories?
- Which character from the stories do you most understand? Explain.
- Which character from the stories did you not like? Explain.
- How are the story endings different? How are they the same?
- What can readers learn from these stories?
**Two Science Fiction Stories**

For the Mackey family, it seems to be life as we know it today. But will Liza’s and Theo’s new dinosaur-robot toys change everything? It’s 3012, and Jim Smith and his family are leaving their home planet. Why? What will life be like on their new planet? Read these stories to find out.

**Joanna Korba** has been a freelance writer for more than fifteen years and has published fiction and nonfiction material for a variety of publications. Her writing interests include science fiction, drama, stories for beginning readers, and wordplay.

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**Enjoy all of these Fiction Readers’ & Writers’ Genre Workshop titles in this set.**

**Historical Fiction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Westward Expansion</th>
<th>Famous Battles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Lewis and Clark Expedition: Crossing the Rocky Mountains</td>
<td>Stable Boy at the Alamo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building the Transcontinental Railroad: Blasting Through the Sierra Nevadas</td>
<td>Monitor vs. Merrimack: Clash of the Ironclads</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legends</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robin Hood Shoots for the Queen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Story of William Tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sword in the Stone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the Footprints of the Yeti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stalked by Bigfoot</td>
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<tr>
<th>Mystery</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whose Song Is It, Anyway?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mixed-Up Guitar Case</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Missing Necklace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stop, Thief!</td>
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<td>Hercules’ 11th Labor</td>
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<td>Pandora’s Box</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demeter and Persephone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Odysseus and the Cyclops</td>
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<td>Circe Enchants Odysseus</td>
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<td>The Call of the Sirens</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comedy</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Trouble with Northrup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Trampoline’s Highs and Lows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jimmy Aaron’s Best Worst Day of Fifth Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Drama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Emma Edmonds: Union Soldier and Spy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clara Barton: Battlefield Nurse</td>
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<th>Realistic Fiction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linda’s Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalissa and the Grand Finale</td>
</tr>
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<td>A Game Is a Game—Or Is It?</td>
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<td>Buff Goes Wild!</td>
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<td>The Encouragement App</td>
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