



A Brave Spaceboy

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by Dana Kessimakis Smith

Illustrated by Laura Freeman

About the book:

On moving day, an enterprising little boy bids farewell to his fears. By playing pretend, he turns the scary unknown into an out-of-this-world adventure! In his handcrafted rocket ship, the astronaut boldly sets a course for Mars, but as soon as he touches down in the unfamiliar terrain, he has a close encounter with a new life form! Never fear, for this brave Mars walker knows how to deal with the stranger in his midst... He lets his imagination soar!

About the guide:

This guide includes discussion questions and projects appropriate for book clubs, literature circles, and classroom discussions. It is intended to provoke thought and insight into the subject and themes of this book, including imagination, fear, play, family, and moving.

Author Interview:

1. Would you go to space if you could? Why or why not? **No way! I would like to say I am that adventurous, but to tell you the truth traveling through space sounds a bit scary to me. I've read stories about astronauts who go to space...what brave and amazing people they are!**

2. Kids love boxes. What do writers love? Office supplies of course! I can never get enough pens and notebooks!
3. Do you like to start a new piece of writing or revise more? Why? I like to start with a new piece of writing. After working on the same story for months, it's fun and refreshing to work on another idea. Most of the time though, I'm working on four or five stories at the same time. This way, when I sit down to write, I have several stories to choose from. I choose the one I feel I can contribute to the most that day. I grin and bear revisions though, because re-writing is part of writing and has proven to make my story so much better.
4. If you had an afternoon to play what would you do with it? I would play in the dirt! I love to be out in my garden in the sunshine.
5. What can your fans look forward to next? My next book "WHAT BEST FRIENDS DO" is due out in 2007. It's a picture book about a loving (and sometimes wacky) relationship between a child and his/her dog. Also, "MY DADDY'S A GRIZZLY BEAR" will be illustrated by Lynn Munsinger and is due out in 2008. In this picture book a young child and his/her father use their imaginations "turning into" different kinds of bears.

Questions for your little explorer:

1. Is it an important day for the family? How do you know?
2. What do they use to create a spaceship? What shapes can you find in the pages of the story?
3. What does a pilot do? Would you rather be a pilot or the commander in chief? Why?
4. Who do they meet? How do they meet her?
5. What do they see on their journey? What would you most like to see in space?

Projects:

Art:

Cardboard box art (of course!)

Locate a large appliance box if possible and then brainstorm all the different objects that it could become. Paint the outside and let it dry if you want a professional look or just go to it with a box of markers. Your imagination is the limit! Consider adding smaller boxes to the larger one with duck tape to add dimension to your project (cereal boxes are ideal because they are so light). Take a picture of your creation.

cardboard box art II

Collect a wide variety of boxes (cereal, pasta, laundry, etc.) and then create a whole city block using the boxes. Decorate them with paint, fabric, wallpaper samples, newspaper, contact paper, or any other product you think adds dimension.

UFO art:

Use two paper plates to create a UFO spaceship. Glue or tape the edges closed and then decorate with scraps of construction paper or other bright fabrics, glues or paints. Hang from the ceiling for a fun look!

Soda Rocketship:

Use a plastic soda bottle (individual size or 2-liters for large ships) and permanent markers and construction paper to create a one of a kind ship for your explorer.

Cooking:

Starship cookies:

Cut out the center of traditional star-shaped sugar cookies and add a hard candy to melt inside the negative space. Devour inside spaceship for nutrition on long journeys to Mars and beyond.

Music:

Sing to the song "Farmer in the Dell"

We're flying to the stars
We're flying to the stars
Blast off from the living room
We're flying to the stars!

Other verses:

We're orbiting the earth
We're landing on Mars
We're traveling back home