



Reading Planet Astro

STARS

TURQUOISE

MERCURY

PURPLE

VENUS

GOLD

EARTH

WHITE

MARS

STARS

JUPITER

MERCURY

SATURN

VENUS

SUPERNOVA

EARTH

FREE
Guide for
Teachers

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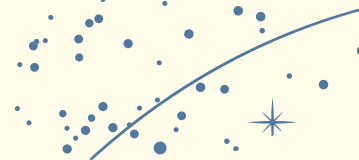
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Contents



★ Welcome to <i>Reading Planet: Astro</i>	4
★ An introduction to the fiction books	6
★ An introduction to the non-fiction books	8
★ Levelling and progression	10
★ How to use the books	12
★ Useful book features	
★ Teaching notes and photocopiables	
★ Using <i>Astro</i> with different groups	16
★ Children with special educational needs	
★ Children with English as a second language	
★ Reluctant readers	
★ Reading for pleasure with <i>Astro</i>	18
★ Fostering parental engagement	
★ Using <i>Reading Planet: Astro Online</i>	19
★ <i>Astro</i> and the reading curriculum	20
★ <i>Astro</i> across the curriculum	21
★ Reading assessment with <i>Astro</i>	22
★ Using the teaching notes for assessment	
★ Assessment: diagnosis and action	
★ Reading Planet: <i>Astro</i> assessment form	

Welcome to *Reading Planet: Astro*

What is *Reading Planet*?

Rising Stars Reading Planet is an extensive and exciting reading programme for children from Reception (ages 4–5) through to the end of Key Stage 2 (ages 10–11). It provides carefully graded reading books that will help children to develop the reading skills they need for success in school, as well as a lifelong love of reading.

Reading Planet offers children an enticing array of fiction, non-fiction, traditional tales and even retellings of literary classics, all beautifully illustrated in a range of attractive formats.

In addition to the print books and Teacher's Guides, *Reading Planet* also has its own dedicated Online Reading Library, featuring all the books from the series as read-aloud ebooks incorporating self-marking comprehension quizzes.

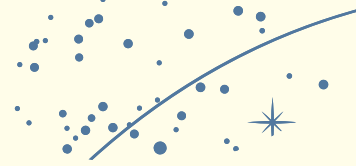
The non-fiction books feature a wide variety of text types, from how-to guides and biographies of significant individuals to information books on topics such as travel, computing, technology, the environment and art. (See page 8 for more information.)



How does *Astro* fit in?

Reading Planet: Astro is a brand-new range of highly engaging and carefully structured reading books for struggling and reluctant readers at Key Stage 2. The *Astro* books are specially designed to have a high interest level – strongly appealing to children aged 7 to 11 – but a lower reading level, so they support and engage children who have struggled to reach fluency in reading.





Carefully levelled to increase reading skills

In *Astro*, the books gradually increase in reading challenge from Band to Band. The first four Bands are specially written to practise and reinforce phonics, giving a second chance to children who may have struggled with phonics previously. The ideas and language in the books very gradually become more complex from Band to Band, so that children learn at their own rate and improve in confidence.

Reinforcing phonics – and more!

As well as strengthening children's phonics skills in an age-appropriate and supportive context, the *Astro* books also develop children's comprehension, fluency and vocabulary skills, with questions at the end of each book that reflect the content domains of the National Tests. This helps to ensure that all your children are prepared for success as they proceed through primary and on into secondary school.

Real child appeal

Written and illustrated by expert children's authors, artists and photographers, the *Astro* books are designed to appeal to children's real interests – from humour and fantasy to real-life and historical adventure, as well as green issues, space, computer games and more! The *Astro* books also mirror the best children's fiction and non-fiction in design and layout, giving struggling and reluctant readers a fun reading experience that's very similar to that enjoyed by their more fluent peers.

Learning is built in

Children's key reading skills are reinforced in every reading session with *Astro*, using questions and activity ideas built into the books themselves. There's also an ebook audio version of each book, complete with comprehension quiz. Each book is also supported with detailed teaching notes for running a reading session, including activities for enhancing phonics, comprehension and fluency. Assessment ideas are provided for each book (and see also the assessment section on pages 22 to 25 of this guide).



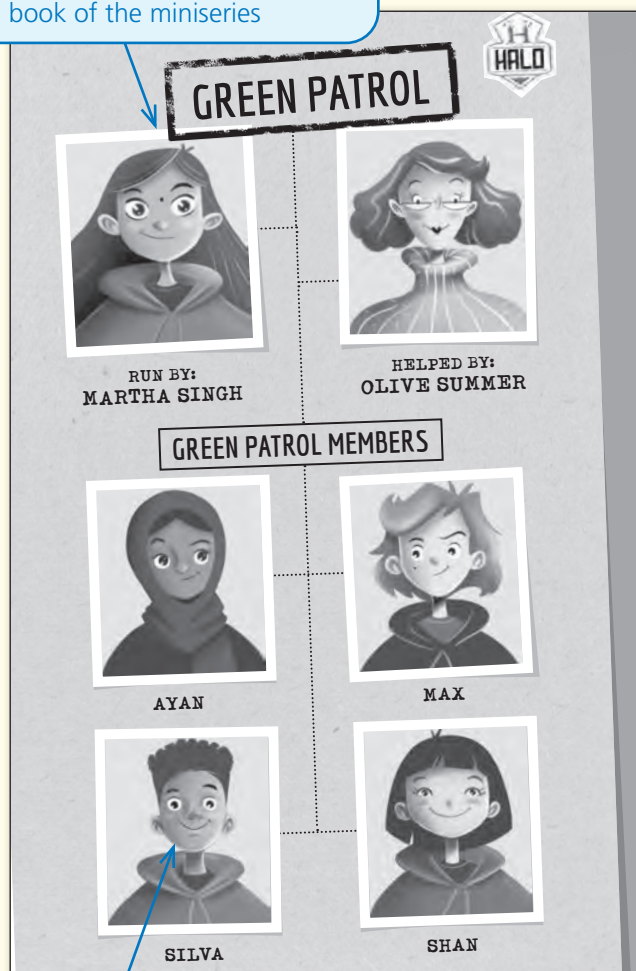
An introduction to the fiction books

Astro contains books on a huge variety of different themes and topics, all illustrated with high quality artwork. Here's a quick look at some of the fiction books within *Astro*, showing the range of genres and approaches, and the special features that will support your struggling and reluctant readers.

Fiction miniseries

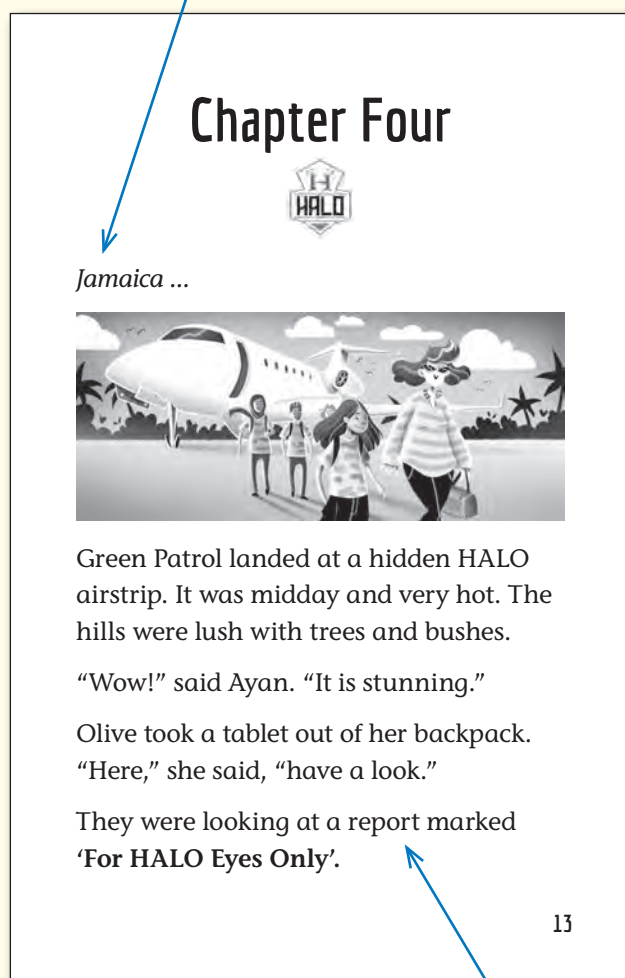
Four fun fiction miniseries strands run throughout *Astro*. Each miniseries runs across four Bands, so children can enjoy the adventures of the same cast of characters. Children will love revisiting favourite characters as they progress through the Bands, and the longer story arcs give potential for greater character and plot development, enhancing comprehension skills. The novel-format miniseries cover topics as varied as school stories, funny pirate stories and time travel.

The same engaging characters feature in each book of the miniseries

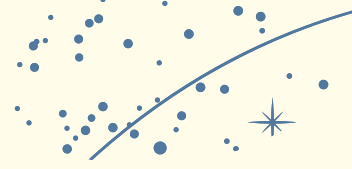


Recaps of characters and plotlines are provided at the beginnings of the books

The font is specially designed to be dyslexia-friendly



Not too much text on the page – but enough text to be age-appropriate

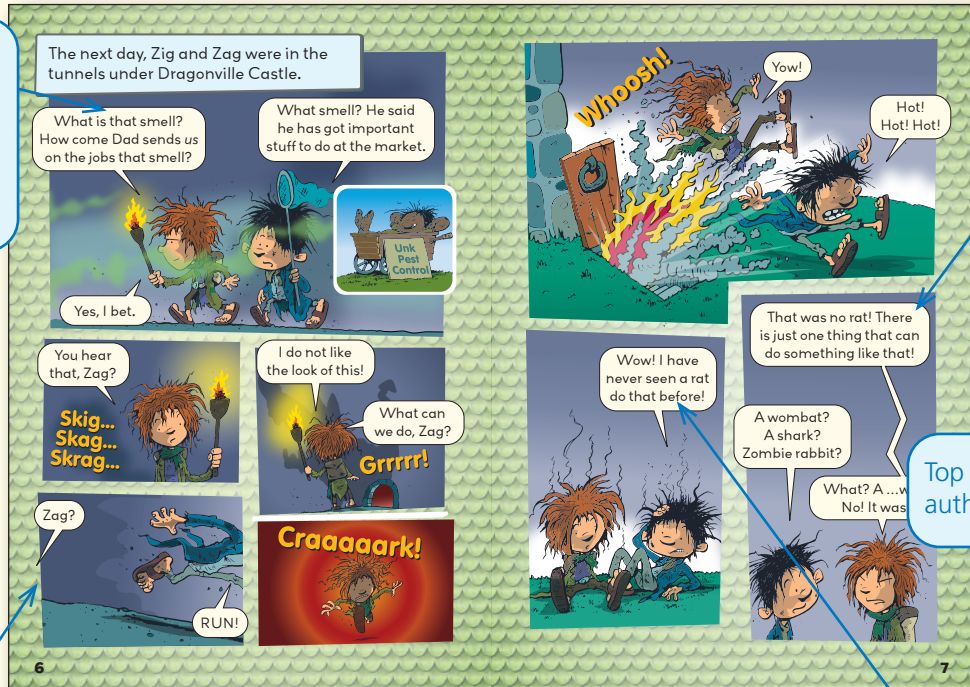


Graphic novels

There are also two graphic novel miniseries which each run across four Bands. Graphic novels have proven to be particularly appealing to reluctant readers, who often enjoy the special combination of text and artwork and find these books easier and more fun to read and understand than regular novels.

The combination of artwork and text is particularly supportive for struggling and reluctant readers

Children practise their comprehension skills as they draw inferences from both pictures and text



Sentence structures are kept simple at the earlier Bands

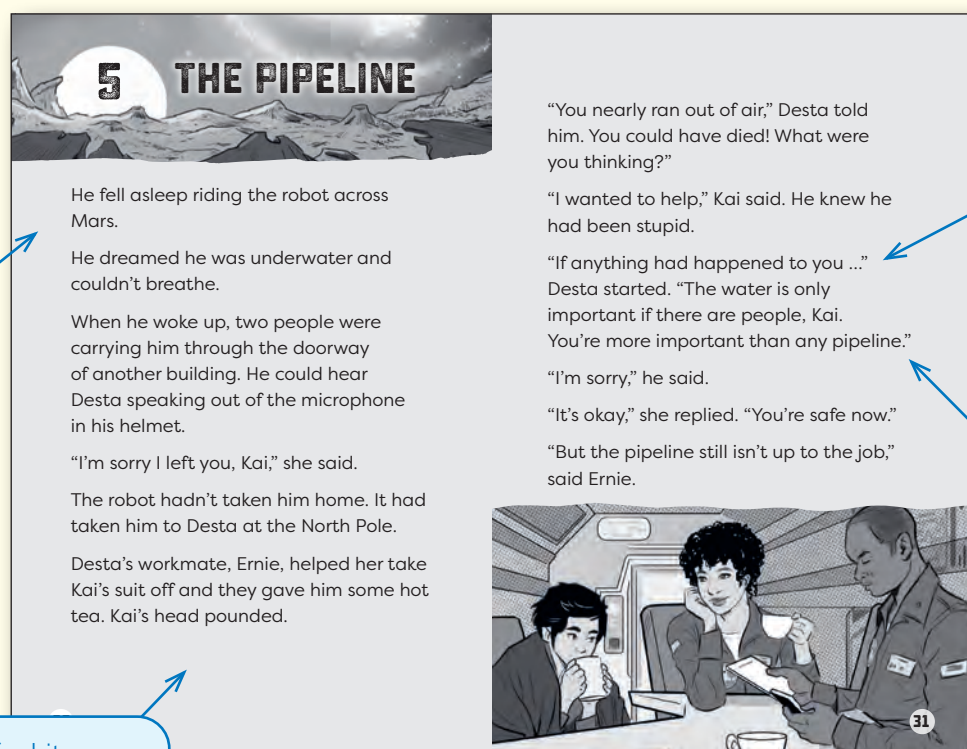
Top quality children's authors and illustrators

The text is phonically controlled in the first four Bands

Standalone fiction

As well as the fiction miniseries, each Band contains one stand-alone fiction title on a topic that will intrigue and inspire reluctant and struggling readers.

Exciting storylines told in simple and age-appropriate language



Phonics is a key element of text in the first four Bands

Dyslexia-friendly fonts are used

Text appears on off-white paper to support dyslexic readers

An introduction to the non-fiction books

Non-fiction is an important part of the mix in *Astro*. Some struggling and reluctant readers find it easier to engage with non-fiction on high-interest topics than with fiction, and the highly-illustrated nature of much non-fiction is also very appealing.

The non-fiction strand has something to interest everyone, with books on topics as varied as Black History, computer games, space exploration and the work of young eco activists. Many of the books have a lively, magazine-style feel which draws young readers into the topic. Just like the fiction, all the non-fiction books contain comprehension quizzes and tips to help with phonics and vocabulary.



Exciting and age-appropriate topics

A full range of non-fiction features included – diagrams, maps, labels, captions, etc.

What is an ICE AGE?

An ice age is when the climate stays cold for a very long time, and ice covers the land all year round. An ice age lasts for thousands of years. Living in an ice age would not be much fun!



Ice sheets

If the air stays below freezing point all year, then snow never melts. New snow falls on top, so it gets thicker and thicker on the ground. It becomes like a huge white snow blanket, and can be over 1,000m thick!

Glaciers

In hilly places, big rivers of ice can form between the hills. These are called glaciers.

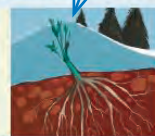


What happens in an ice age?

When it is cold for a long time and ice covers the ground, then a lot of changes happen to living things:

1 Plants die

Plants can't grow if it's very cold or they are covered in ice!



2 Animals are short of food

Many animals go hungry if there are no plants to eat. Some will die.

3 People are short of food

People eat plants and animals so it's hard to live in an ice age.

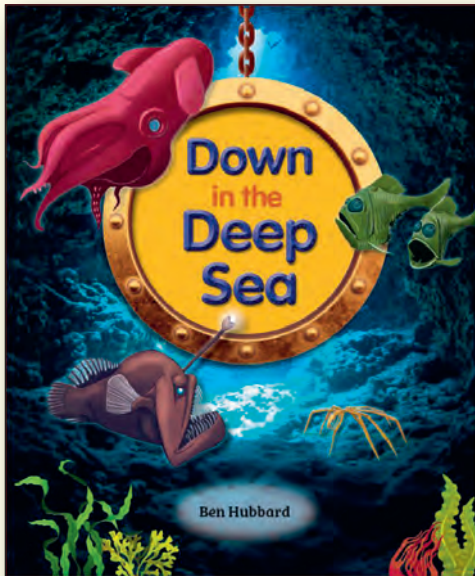
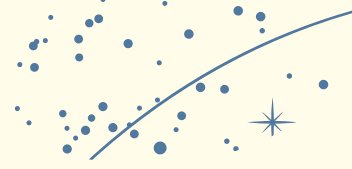


WHAT!

Ice ages have been happening over millions of years. There have been at least five ice ages in the life of planet Earth.

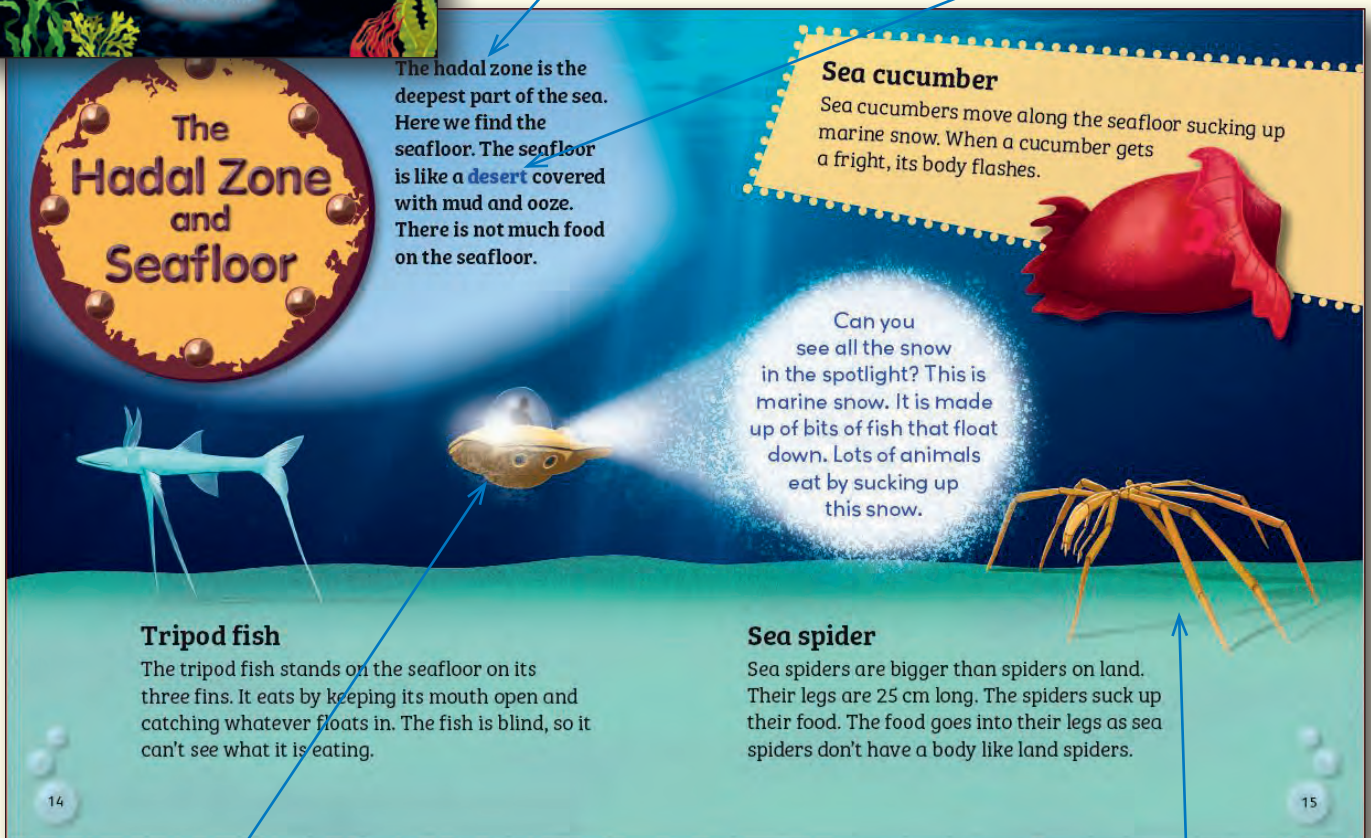
Text gradually increases in difficulty from Band to Band

Dyslexia-friendly fonts are used



The text is phonically controlled in the first four Bands

Glossaries to explain any less-familiar or topic-specific vocabulary



Photos and artwork support comprehension and add to the information in the text

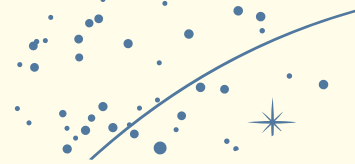
Layouts are clear and not too 'busy'

Levelling and progression

The chart below shows the levelling guidelines for each Band within *Astro*. The first four Bands carefully follow the phonic progression framework established at Key Stage 1 in *Letter and Sounds: Principles and Practice of High Quality Phonics* (2007), giving children the opportunity to revisit earlier phonic learning and master any aspect of phonics that they may not have acquired during their first few years of school. Throughout *Astro*, comprehension skills and reading fluency are developed alongside phonics, with each Band building on the previous one.

Each *Astro* Band has a dual level – for example, ‘Stars/Turquoise’ or ‘Jupiter/Mercury’. The first Band name in each pair represents the child’s interest level/chronological age. The second represents their reading level (roughly one school year below the interest level). This shows how the books support and extend the child’s current reading level whilst being appropriate and engaging for their chronological age.

Band		Phonics progression	General progression
STARS* Interest age 7–8 *equivalent to Lime band	TURQUOISE Reading age 6–7	Rocket Phonics Level 3 Letters and Sounds phases 3–4 ar, or, ur, ow, oi, ear, air, ay, er	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Some variety of sentence structures and lengths ★ Simple linear plots ★ Some variety of layout/placement of text and images ★ Some more unusual/technical vocabulary as appropriate, especially in non-fiction ★ Illustrations provide some support for reading the text
MERCURY* Interest age 7–8 *equivalent to Brown A band	PURPLE Reading age 6–7	Rocket Phonics Level 4 Letters and Sounds phases 4–5 wh, ph, /ai/ a–e, a, /ee/ ea, e–e, ie, ey, y, e, /igh/ ie, i–e, y, i /oa/ ow, o–e, oe, o, /oi/ oy, /ow/ ou	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Some sentence structures may be longer but always straightforward to understand ★ Some books may have short chapters ★ Characters becoming more distinctive and rounded ★ More opportunities for readers to ask and answer questions and discuss characters and motivation ★ Varied placement of text and images ★ Non-fiction covers a wider curriculum range and different formats
VENUS* Interest age 7–8 *equivalent to Brown B band	GOLD Reading age 6–7	Rocket Phonics Level 5 Letters and Sounds phase 5 /oo/ ew, ue, u–e, u, ou, /yoo/ ew, ue, u–e, u, /er/ ir, er, ear, or, /ear/ eer, ere, /air/ are, ear, /or/ aw, our, au, ore, augh, (w) a, al, /j/ ge, dge, /s/ ce, se, /k/ ch, /ch/ tch, /ar/ al, /l/ le	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Occasional more challenging sentence structures may be included ★ Storylines may be more involved, but still linear with a clear beginning, middle and end ★ Controlled proportion of unfamiliar words on the page ★ Non-fiction may cover a wider curriculum range and include more than one clearly identifiable subsection ★ Non-fiction features can be more sophisticated, including charts and diagrams as relevant to the topic
EARTH* Interest age 8–9 *equivalent to Grey A band	WHITE Reading age 6–7	Rocket Phonics Level 6 Letters and Sounds phases 5–6 /sh/ ch, /s/ ci, cy, ce, sc, st, /r/ wr, /n/ kn, gn, /m/ mb, /j/ ge, gi, gy, /sh/ s, sion, ssion, cian, ci, sure, tion, ti, /e/ ea, /i/ y, /ch/ ture, /ai/ ei, eigh, /u/ ou	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Wider range of genre and writing styles ★ Stories may be sustained over several chapters ★ Some longer sentence structures with more subordinate clauses may be included ★ Increasing opportunities for inference ★ Varied placement of images and text; where appropriate, fewer images than at earlier Bands ★ Non-fiction includes more detailed information ★ More technical or specialist vocabulary may be included



MARS* Interest age 8-9 *equivalent to Grey B band	STARS Reading age 7-8	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Language is still straightforward and natural, using mostly familiar words but with a little more scope for variation ★ Sentences are mostly speech-like and relatively short, but different sentence structures can be used for effect (e.g. longer sentence followed by shorter sentence for impact) ★ More opportunities for children to draw on previous reading/real life experience to understand text ★ In fiction, stories give more opportunities to practise and develop inference ★ Non-fiction can be organised in different ways, e.g. thematically, chronologically or sequentially
JUPITER* Interest age 9-10 *equivalent to Blue A band	MERCURY Reading age 7-8	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Language is still mostly straightforward and natural, with mostly familiar vocabulary, but more complex/unusual words sometimes used for effect ★ Most sentences are short and speech-like, but with variation in length and structure where needed for effect (e.g. suspense, humour) ★ More complex ideas are sometimes included, and longer/multi-clause sentences may be used to help express these ideas ★ In fiction, plots are still mostly familiar from children's other reading/viewing, but there is more scope for surprising plots and ideas ★ Non-fiction uses a wider range of features (charts, maps, diagrams, cutaways, tables) as appropriate to support comprehension
SATURN* Interest age 10-11 *equivalent to Blue-Red band	VENUS Reading age 7-8	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Language is more varied than in earlier Bands, with some more literary or technical language where appropriate ★ Stories and non-fiction texts are becoming a little more complex, and ideas may take longer to play out (e.g. across two or three chapters or sections) ★ The increasing length of the books supports children's developing reading stamina and gives opportunities to practise key comprehension skills such as prediction and inference
SUPERNOVA* Interest age 10-11 *equivalent to Red+ band	EARTH Reading age 8-9	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Some unfamiliar or technical language may be used where appropriate, though always in a context that supports comprehension ★ Books may use a range of different tones (humorous, serious, technical, suspenseful, etc.) as appropriate to the subject matter ★ Where appropriate, there is more text on the page and fewer images than at lower Bands, to extend reading stamina ★ Stories and non-fiction topics may be further removed from children's own real-life or reading experience so that more inference is required

How to use the books

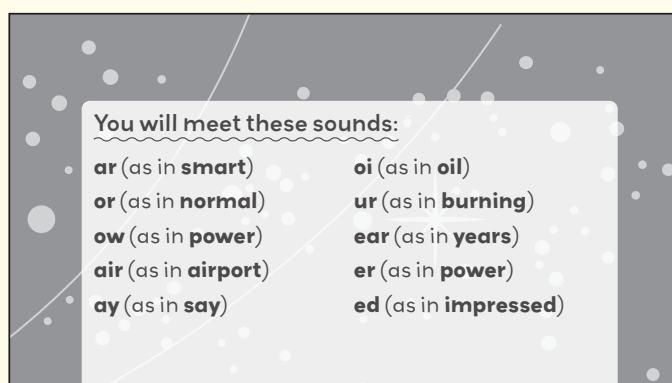
All the books in *Astro* are ideal for use with individual children or with groups, depending on the needs of your class. The books themselves contain many useful features to help you structure a fun and purposeful reading session. In addition, there are supportive teaching notes with enough ideas for several teaching sessions, and photocopy masters which give children practice with a range of essential reading skills.

In the teaching notes, each book is split into several sections with a reading activity for each section. You can choose how many of these sections to cover in a reading session, depending on the needs of the children. For example, you may wish to focus on just one section for a quick and pacy ten- to fifteen-minute reading session – or you may wish to cover several sections in a session that lasts half an hour.

Useful book features

Help with phonics

In the first four Bands (Stars/Turquoise to Earth/White), the inside front cover of each book shows the focus graphemes and phonemes which feature in the book, and lists examples of words from the book that contain each grapheme/phoneme. You can start the reading session by introducing the focus phonics, and give children practice reading the linked words.



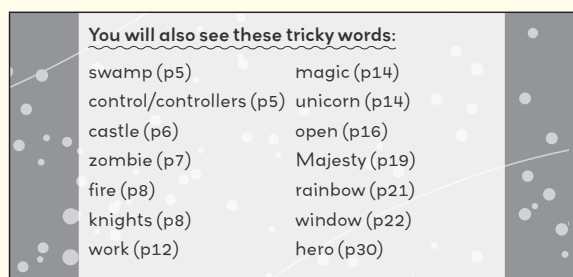
Help with vocabulary

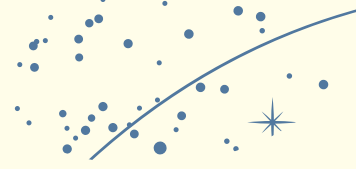
Also on each inside front cover is a list of any above-level or complex vocabulary that children may find tricky, with page numbers. All *Astro* books include some of these high-interest but non-decodable words, to add interest, to widen vocabulary knowledge, and to factor in vocabulary that is relevant to the non-fiction topic or subject matter.

You can help children read these words and discuss their meanings in advance of reading the book, or you can support children to read the words in context as they crop up in the text. You can also pre-teach these more complex words as whole words if you wish, so that children read and recognise them more easily when they read the book.

If children struggle to read a less-familiar word, encourage them to use a range of strategies to work it out:

- ★ Think about what the sentence means and which word would fit best.
- ★ Read the sentence, leaving a gap for the tricky word, and then come back to it. Can you work it out now?
- ★ Use the pictures and the meaning of the surrounding text to help you work out the word.
- ★ Think about what's happening in the story at this point, or about the information if it's a non-fiction book. What words would fit? Could the tricky word be one of these words?
- ★ Look for little words you know inside a longer tricky word – this can help you work it out.
- ★ Use the phonics you know to help you – even if it just gives you the start or the end of the word, it's a starting point!



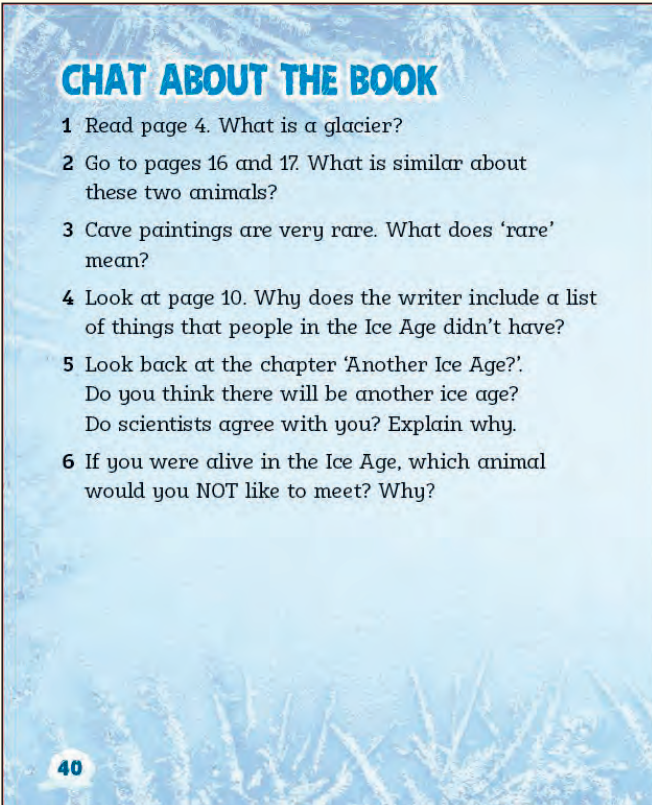


Help with comprehension

The last page of each book gives a list of comprehension questions to check children's understanding of the text. These are designed to help improve key comprehension skills and widen vocabulary, linking to the content domains of the National Tests. They're also designed to stimulate children to chat about the book and share their responses to it. Answers to these questions can be found on the *Reading Planet Online Library*.

Help with follow-up activities

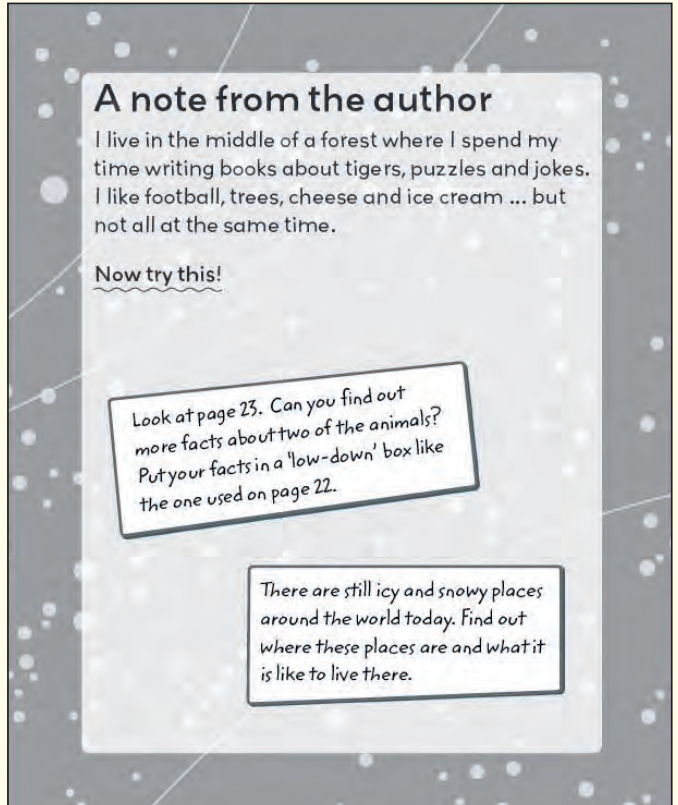
On the inside back covers, children will find a lively and interesting note from the author and a couple of follow-up activities. These are designed to give children the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding through a range of mini projects, including art and design, research, imaginative or informative writing, debate and drama.



CHAT ABOUT THE BOOK

- 1 Read page 4. What is a glacier?
- 2 Go to pages 16 and 17. What is similar about these two animals?
- 3 Cave paintings are very rare. What does 'rare' mean?
- 4 Look at page 10. Why does the writer include a list of things that people in the Ice Age didn't have?
- 5 Look back at the chapter 'Another Ice Age?'. Do you think there will be another ice age? Do scientists agree with you? Explain why.
- 6 If you were alive in the Ice Age, which animal would you NOT like to meet? Why?

40



A note from the author

I live in the middle of a forest where I spend my time writing books about tigers, puzzles and jokes. I like football, trees, cheese and ice cream ... but not all at the same time.

Now try this!

Look at page 23. Can you find out more facts about two of the animals? Put your facts in a 'low-down' box like the one used on page 22.

There are still icy and snowy places around the world today. Find out where these places are and what it is like to live there.

Teaching notes and photocopiables

Each of the *Astro* books has a full set of supportive teaching notes, with ideas for purposeful and enjoyable reading sessions.


The book at a glance

Planet Protectors

By Emily Hibbs

STARS

TURQUOISE



Book overview

In this engaging non-fiction book children will meet some of the young activists around the world who are working hard to protect the planet from the effects of climate change. The book spells out some of the problems caused by global warming, pollution and deforestation, and gives inspiring examples of children and young people who have come up with ideas to help solve the problems.

Curriculum links

This book will support work on the topic of climate change within the science curriculum, with links to the topic of living things and their habitats. The examples of young activists will also help children think about ways of playing a positive role in society, which is relevant to work in PSHE.

Reading and SPaG (Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar) objectives

This book and the suggested activities will support children to:

- ★ reinforce and extend their knowledge of phonics, particularly reading words with the phonemes and graphemes /ow/, /er/ and /or/
- ★ increase their reading fluency and comprehension by reading and talking about the book
- ★ make comparisons within a text
- ★ understand how paragraphs are used to group related material together.

Before reading

Introduce children to the book by looking at the front and back cover.

- ★ Show children the front cover and ask: *What do you think our planet, Earth, needs protecting from?* Share children's ideas and discuss what they already know about the problems caused by global warming, pollution, etc.
- ★ Ask: *Do you think children can do anything to help protect the planet? What kinds of things could children like you do?*

During reading

Read pages 4 to 7 together.

- ★ At the end of page 5, ask: *Can you tell me three problems that our planet has?* Talk about how the pictures and captions on page 4 help to spell out the problems.
- ★ On page 5, point out that the word 'activists' is in bold type. Do children know what it means? Flip to the glossary on page 30 to find out. On page 6, model reading the first paragraph fluently and with expression. Ask children to copy your expressive reading.
- ★ At the end of page 6, talk about how the three paragraphs on this page are each about a different topic. Can children tell you what each is about? (Paragraph 1: how gases in the air protect us from the Sun; paragraph 2: how some things we do add extra gases to the air; paragraph 3: how the extra gases make the planet warm up and cause global warming).
- ★ Ask children to flip back through pages 5 to 7 and find and read as many words as they can with

P = Phonics **C** = Comprehension **F** = Fluency **V** = Vocabulary

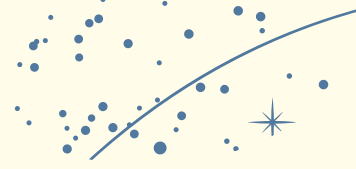
Links to other subject areas

Key English and reading skills covered in this session

Discussion points, links to the session objectives and assessment pointers to look out for as children read

Ideas to focus children on the key phonics, and activate their comprehension skills

Ideas for assessment throughout the session



In the first four Bands, each book has one photocopy master (PCM) which links to the key phonics, and one which relates to the comprehension skills practised in the book. In the second four Bands each book has one PCM which relates to the comprehension skills practised in the book.

PCM1 – Phonics

Dragonville: The Unks of Slug Swamp

Name: _____

Unscramble it!

Unscramble the words and write them on the lines. Then draw a line to link each word with the correct picture.

earps _____



ibloing _____



pitnur _____



searsh _____



sclur _____



urf _____



lois _____



Find and write three words with 'ur', three words with 'ear' and three words with 'oi' from the book.

Using *Astro* with different groups

Astro is specially designed to be easy and effective to use with many different groups of young readers – including children with special educational needs, children with English as a second language and reluctant readers.



Children with special educational needs

The gradual skills progression in *Astro* makes it ideal for use with children who struggled to learn to read in their first few years of school, whether because of dyslexia or because of other specific learning difficulties.

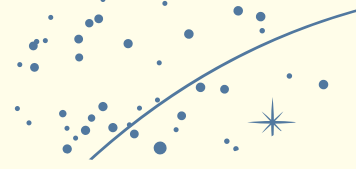
The chart on page 10 shows the step-by-step phonics progression in the first four Bands, which helps to reinforce and strengthen children's grasp of essential phonics skills. The books in the first four Bands are specially written to give lots of practice with a limited range of graphemes and phonemes, giving children a second chance to learn them. By revisiting earlier learning in a supportive, fun and age-appropriate context, children will develop the reading skills and confidence they need to progress further.

The later four Bands, though not phonically structured, very gradually increase in complexity of language and ideas, to ensure that children always feel a sense of familiarity and support, even as their reading skills and stamina are increasing.

Here are some of the key features that make *Astro* books accessible and engaging for children with special educational needs.

- ★ In the black and white books, off-white paper is used to help reduce glare and contrast, which is particularly helpful for dyslexic children.
- ★ Fonts are accessible and clear, with a large type size, straightforward letter formation and generous spacing.
- ★ Spaces between words and lines have been specially adjusted to make the text easier to follow.
- ★ Text is always horizontal for ease of reading.
- ★ Punctuation is kept simple, to clarify the meaning rather than add complexity.
- ★ In the colour books, text always appears on a dyslexia-friendly light tint panel.
- ★ The books are highly visual, with clear layouts and striking use of colour where appropriate.
- ★ In fiction, plots are straightforward, and each mini-series book begins with a plot recap to remind children of the story so far.
- ★ Fiction books start with a character page to remind the reader of the key characters.
- ★ In non-fiction, the text is clear and to-the-point, avoiding unnecessary wordiness. Clear subheadings, summaries, bulleted lists and graphics are used to help convey meaning concisely.
- ★ In all *Astro* books, the word count and page extent is shorter than in most Key Stage 2/ junior readers, so struggling readers are not overwhelmed by a dense page of text – whilst maintaining a similar look and feel to more mainstream books for the age group.

In addition, the Online Library ebooks are full of features that will help children with special educational needs. The option to listen to a lively and expressive reading of the text is invaluable, and the ebooks also enable children to 'jump' to a specific section of the text or enlarge the font to help them read the words.



Children with English as a second language

Young second-language learners need books with straightforward and everyday language, combined with ideas and concepts that are interesting and age-appropriate. The gradual skills and language progression in the *Astro* books means that the language used is familiar and supportive for second-language learners, while the age-appropriate topics and lively approach of the books have lots of child-appeal.

The inside front cover of each book lists the trickier vocabulary included, with page references, and gives you the opportunity to pre-teach and explain some of this vocabulary to children before they read independently, reinforcing the meanings of the words and increasing children's vocabularies as they learn. The comprehension questions at the end of each book are also perfect for extending children's grasp of English, giving lots of opportunities for discussion and reinforcement. The glossaries in the non-fiction books are also invaluable for children who are developing their knowledge of English.

Most of the features listed on page 16 under 'Children with special educational needs' are also relevant for second-language English learners – especially the use of simple and straightforward language, clear text features and signposting, plot recaps, character introductions, etc.

Reluctant readers

Sometimes children lack motivation to read, because they don't see it as an enjoyable or meaningful activity. Reluctant readers can be hard to engage, but the *Astro* books have a lot of potential for motivating them.

- ★ The books have top-quality artwork, and are written by well-known and accomplished children's authors. Age-appropriate and not at all 'babyish', these books look very similar to the trade books enjoyed by your struggling readers' peers.

- ★ The lower word counts and shorter page extents of *Astro* books help to engage reluctant readers, who are often put off by pages of dense text. The *Astro* books are supportively shorter than many Key Stage 2/junior level books, while also being long enough to be age-appropriate, and to help develop reluctant readers' stamina.
- ★ The high-interest, low-reading-level approach means that reluctant readers can achieve early success with these books. Once they have experienced some success in reading, they will find it easier to enjoy the process, and reading will become less difficult and more fun.
- ★ The variety of styles, themes and approaches in the *Astro* books means there's a lot of choice. Offering as much choice and independence as possible is very helpful for reluctant readers, as it encourages them to take some ownership and control of their own reading. This in turn enhances their confidence and shows them that reading can be fun as well as useful!



Reading for pleasure with *Astro*

There's plenty of evidence that reading for pleasure enhances children's learning as well as their enjoyment (see for example Clark, C., and Douglas, J. (2011) *Young People's Reading and Writing: An indepth study focusing on enjoyment, behaviour, attitudes and attainment*, National Literacy Trust). This is why the *Astro* books have been designed to compete with the best children's trade fiction and non-fiction in quality, appearance and variety.

All children, regardless of their current reading skill level, need access to books which will excite, inspire and entertain them. The *Astro* books offer lots of variety at every level, so struggling and reluctant readers will find books that they really want to pick up. The crucial thing is that the *Astro* books are written to be at the appropriate reading level, so that children experience early success in reading them. Success in reading is the key to enjoyment, as it's hard for children (or anyone of any age) to enjoy something they find difficult!

All developing readers need repetition and reinforcement, so encourage children to revisit books they've already read and enjoy the feeling of success that comes with re-reading them. This will help build their confidence – time spent revisiting well-loved books is never wasted!

Sometimes children may show interest in reading a book that's at a higher level than they can easily manage. It's often worth encouraging them to have a go at reading these trickier books – consider pairing them with an older child or adult if they lack the stamina or experience to tackle the book independently.

Encourage any interest they show in books, this will help them associate reading with pleasure.

Fostering parental engagement

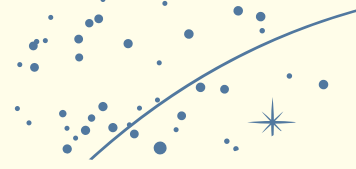
Parents can be a wonderful source of help and support for their children's reading. However, sometimes the parents of struggling or reluctant readers can find it hard to know how best to help – especially if reading times sometimes feel difficult or stressful.

One of the key ways that parents can help is by reading to their child. Reading a book aloud at bedtime (or any other time!) is a brilliant way of enjoying a cosy time together whilst also strengthening children's vocabulary, comprehension skills and reading enjoyment. So it's always worth encouraging parents just to keep on reading to their junior-aged children – any book that the child is interested in would be fine!

The *Astro* books also contain several helpful features that make reading sessions at home easier for parents.

- ★ The phonic guidance inside the front cover helps to show the sounds and letter patterns that are being taught.
- ★ The tricky words listed inside the cover give parents a chance to discuss word meanings and introduce more complicated words before the reading session starts.
- ★ The comprehension questions and additional activity ideas at the back of the book are ideal for extending the reading session, and give lots of ideas for discussing the book.





Using Reading Planet: Astro Online

Each of the books in Reading Planet: *Astro* is available as an ebook in the Reading Planet Online Library for Key Stage 2. The ebooks offer more ways to extend children's reading experience and reinforce their learning. You can access all *Astro* eBooks for free with a 30-day trial at risingstars-uk.com/RPOnline

The Online Library is an ideal resource for individual children or groups to use, alongside or

instead of the printed books. Struggling readers often find the experience of reading on-screen enjoyable and immersive, so it offers a good alternative to reading from a book.

You can allocate books to children so that they can access the Online Library from home, as well as from school. This helps extend their learning and makes reading at home both purposeful and fun.

Children can read the text for themselves or click to listen to audio – text is highlighted as it is read aloud



Each ebook is supported by a fun interactive comprehension quiz to reinforce children's understanding – and 'check-point' quiz questions at intervals throughout the book, which help check their comprehension during reading



Astro and the reading curriculum

Astro supports children in developing their word reading and comprehension skills in line with the National Curriculum. All the books give opportunities to meet the following key curriculum requirements:

Years 3 and 4

Word reading

- ★ Apply growing knowledge of root words, prefixes and suffixes
- ★ Read exception words, noting unusual correspondences between spelling and sound

Reading comprehension

- ★ Listen to and discuss a wide range of fiction and non-fiction genres
- ★ Read books that are structured in different ways and for a range of purposes
- ★ Increase familiarity with a wide range of books, including fairy stories, myths and legends, and retell them orally
- ★ Identify themes and conventions in a wide range of books
- ★ Discuss words and phrases that capture the reader's interest and imagination
- ★ Check that the text makes sense, discussing understanding and explaining the meaning of words in context
- ★ Ask questions to improve understanding of a text
- ★ Draw inferences such as characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justify with evidence from the text
- ★ Predict what might happen from details stated and implied in a text
- ★ Identify main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph and summarise these
- ★ Retrieve and record information from non-fiction
- ★ Participate in discussion about books, taking turns and listening to what others say

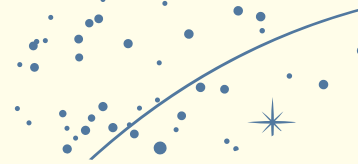
Years 5 and 6

Word reading

- ★ Apply their growing knowledge of root words, prefixes and suffixes both to read aloud and to understand the meaning of new words that they meet

Reading comprehension

- ★ Read books that are structured in different ways and read for a range of purposes
- ★ Recommend books that they have read to their peers, giving reasons for their choices
- ★ Identify and discuss themes and conventions across a wide range of writing
- ★ Make comparisons within and across books
- ★ Check that the book makes sense to them, discussing their understanding and exploring the meaning of words in context
- ★ Ask questions to improve their understanding
- ★ Draw inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justify inferences with evidence
- ★ Predict what might happen from details stated and implied
- ★ Summarise the main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph, identifying key details that support the main ideas
- ★ Distinguish between statements of fact and opinion
- ★ Retrieve, record and present information from non-fiction
- ★ Participate in discussion about books, building on their own and others' ideas and challenging views courteously



Astro across the curriculum

Many of the *Astro* non-fiction books have links to other curricular areas. This chart gives a quick overview of some of the main cross-curricular connections.

Band		Title	Curriculum link
STARS	TURQUOISE	Planet Protectors	Science/Citizenship
STARS	TURQUOISE	Amazing Men in Black History	Black History/Citizenship
MERCURY	PURPLE	Exploring Space	Science
MERCURY	PURPLE	Down in the Deep Sea	Science/Geography
VENUS	GOLD	Game On! How computer games are made	Computing/Design and technology
VENUS	GOLD	The Ice Age	Science/Geography/History
EARTH	WHITE	When Experiments Go Wrong	Science
EARTH	WHITE	Food Myth Busters	Science/PSHE
MARS	STARS	Discovering Tutankhamun's Tomb	History
MARS	STARS	Amazing Women in Black History	Black History/Citizenship
JUPITER	MERCURY	The Number Universe	Maths/Art and design
JUPITER	MERCURY	Lights, Camera Action: How movies are made	History/Design and technology
SATURN	VENUS	Why are you wearing THAT?	History/Design and technology
SATURN	VENUS	Inside Our Planet	Science/Geography
SUPERNOVA	EARTH	The Story of Us	History/Science
SUPERNOVA	EARTH	Your Brilliant Brain	PSHE/Science

Reading assessment with *Astro*

There are lots of opportunities for assessment as you observe children read the *Astro* books. You can build assessment into your regular reading sessions with either an individual child or a whole group.

Using the teaching notes for assessment

Each *Astro* book has dedicated teaching notes which set out all you need to run a purposeful and enjoyable reading session. The notes can be found on the *Reading Planet Online Library*, alongside each title. For each session, specific learning objectives are suggested, and assessment opportunities are flagged up throughout the session using these logos:

- P** Phonics
- C** Comprehension
- F** Fluency
- V** Vocabulary

Each time you see these logos in the teaching notes, you will find suggestions for questions you can ask or activities you can do to assess children's grasp of one of the relevant skills.

★ Ask children to read pages 8 to 13 independently. Say: *When you've finished reading this section, I want you to tell me whether your prediction about the thing under the castle was right – and also tell me what you think will happen next in the story.*

P Listen to children as they read aloud, and prompt them to use their phonic knowledge to tackle words with the book's focus graphemes, e.g. 'years', 'cart', 'town', 'spears', 'clever', 'bother', 'howl', 'padding'.

C When they have finished the section, ask children to tell you their prediction about what Zig might see through the keyhole and what might happen next.

★ Flip back briefly and look for some more adverbs and adverbials that tell us what happened when ('Years ago', page 9, 'Next', page 11, 'last year', page 12).

Read pages 14 to 17 together.

★ Pause during the reading to talk about what is happening. Were the children's predictions correct?

★ Check that children can use their phonics to decode words with the focus graphemes.

Ask children to read pages 18 to 21 together. Say: *I want you to think about how Lord Tim feels when the kids mention the dragon. Look at the pictures for clues, as well as thinking about how you would feel if you were him.*

★ Discuss this when children have finished reading the section – if necessary, draw their attention to Lord Tim's expression at the top of page 20, the way he calls for the kids to be put in jail, the way he looks when he's told getting rid of the dragon is his job, etc. Can children infer that Lord Tim is not keen to face a dragon?

★ Briefly share predictions for the last part of the book.

As a group or individually, children can read the rest of the book.

★ Encourage them to think about what is happening and keep on making predictions as they read. Pause sometimes to discuss these.

V Ask them to point out some of the adverbs and adverbials that tell us when things happened (e.g. 'for years', 'still', page 22, 'then', page 25, 'never', page 27).

★ At the end of the book, look back at children's predictions from earlier in the session. Were any of their predictions right? Explain that good readers adjust their predictions all the time as new information comes up in the story. The key

thing is to keep looking for evidence in the words and pictures.

★ Ask: *Was the ending of this story a surprise? Why, or why not?* (For instance, children may have picked up the clues that Lord Tim was not much of a hero – in which case they won't be surprised he is scared off by the unicorn dragon...)

Reading for pleasure

★ Ask: *Which was your favourite part of the story, and why?*

★ Encourage children to read some of the dialogue out loud. Can they make it sound as if the characters are really talking?

★ Ask: *Have you read any other graphic novels or comics? How were they similar to this book? How were they different?*

★ Encourage children to look for other books by Martin Chatterton if they enjoyed this one – for example his *Bad Dog* stories.

Follow-up activities

P **C** Use PCM1 and PCM2 to reinforce the phonics and comprehension skills focused on in this book.

★ Children could draw some graphic novel panels to illustrate the next adventures of the Unks or of Lord Tim. They could use their ideas from PCM2 if they like.

P Challenge children to choose a favourite scene from the book and act it out in a small group. Can they make up some more dialogue to extend their scene?

★ Who do children think is the real hero of this story, and why? Encourage them to give some reasons for their opinions.

★ **P** = Phonics **C** = Comprehension **F** = Fluency **V** = Vocabulary

Reading Planet: *Astro* assessment form

Date of reading session: _____
 Title of book: _____
 Phonic focus of session (if applicable): _____

Use this form to make brief notes of any issues observed during the reading session.

Child's name	Phonics	Comprehension	Fluency	Vocabulary	Other



On page 25 of this guide you will find a simple form that you can fill in during the reading session, to note your observations and flag up any issues that may need further attention.

You could fill in a form for every reading session, or just use it periodically (for example, every half-term) when you want to focus specifically on assessment.

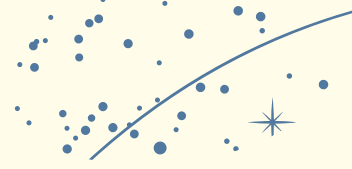
Assessment: diagnosis and action

Once you've noted any issues that you've observed with children's grasp of phonics, comprehension, fluency or vocabulary, you can decide on the next steps to help children improve – either for a whole group, or for an individual child.

Here are some ideas for actions you could take to help children fill in any gaps in their learning, following assessment.

Phonics

If you note that a particular child or group is struggling with an aspect of phonics, there are some games and activities you could use to help them practise and improve on the next page.



- ★ Each *Astro* book from the first four Bands has a phonics PCM with a simple activity to help reinforce the book's phonic focus. Children could complete these as an engaging way of reinforcing their phonics skills.
- ★ Use the book children are currently reading, and have a race to see how quickly they can find and read a word that contains a grapheme they are struggling with. Make a collection of the words they find while doing this activity, and build it up over time. You could put the words on flashcards and return to them frequently for a quick word-reading session.
- ★ Choose one or more graphemes that a child is struggling with, and give them a point for every time they spot and read a word with that grapheme in their book. How many points can they get in one reading session?
- ★ If children seem to be struggling with more than a handful of graphemes and phonemes, it may be a sign that they need to backtrack a bit and try a book from an earlier Band. You could use one of the earlier Bands within *Astro* if appropriate, or revisit books from *Reading Planet: Rocket Phonics* to give additional phonic practice before they move on again.
- ★ If children seem to be concentrating so hard on reading that they find it hard to think about the book, you could encourage them to re-read the book. Pause throughout the re-reading to talk about it (using suggested questions from the teaching notes, or children's own ideas). Tackling comprehension on a second read-through often frees children up to think about what they are reading, as opposed to just decoding the text. You could also re-read all or part of the book aloud to the children before discussing it – hearing you read will give them the opportunity to think about what they are hearing, and they will also benefit from hearing you model fluent reading.
- ★ Encourage children to tell you what they are thinking as they read, and share your own ideas for what might happen next, how a character is feeling or why something has happened.
- ★ Keep relating both stories and non-fiction back to children's own experience, and encourage them to give their own opinions about the book.
- ★ Some children enjoy acting out a scene from a story – this helps children think about the characters and their motivation, and can be a good way of encouraging a deeper engagement with the story.
- ★ Encourage children to take the role of the 'expert' on a book they enjoyed – can they tell someone else about the book and encourage them to read it too?

Comprehension

You may notice that children can read the text on the page but struggle to talk about it, or struggle to ask or answer questions about it. For some children, the effort required to decode the words is so great that they don't have much mental bandwidth to think about what they're reading. Here are some ideas for gently increasing their comprehension skills.

- ★ Each *Astro* book has a comprehension PCM which is designed to practise some of the key comprehension skills covered in the reading session. Children could complete these as a way of practising their comprehension skills in a supportive context.

Fluency

Many children who have difficulties decoding words find it very hard to read with fluency. Their reading can sound stilted, and this in turn makes it harder for them to understand and engage with what they are reading. Here are some ideas for developing children's reading fluency.

- ★ Encourage them to re-read their favourite part of a book several times. Once it's familiar, they should find it easier to read with more natural expression and emphasis.

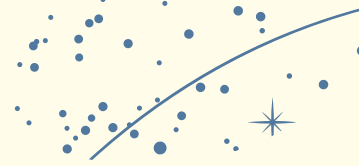
- ★ Model expressive reading of a passage from a book (dialogue is often good for this). Show children how you use your voice to convey how the characters are feeling as well as the words they say. Choose a short passage and ask children to mirror your own expressive reading. Eventually this will help them read new passages with appropriate pace and expression.
- ★ Encourage children to read aloud in pairs sometimes, taking turns to read a paragraph or section (or each reading the words of a different character). You might want to invite them to critique each other's reading (politely, of course!) and suggest improvements to make the words sound more natural or more exciting.
- ★ Fluency is closely linked to comprehension – if children don't understand a passage of text, it is very hard for them to read it fluently and meaningfully. Children who struggle to read fluently may also need to work on their comprehension skills, so it's helpful to ask them questions (perhaps using those in the back of the book, or in the teaching notes) to elicit whether they have understood.

Vocabulary

Sometimes children have a limited vocabulary because they haven't had much experience listening to and joining in with conversations in English – either because English is not their first language, or because of limited social opportunities. Here are some ideas for helping foster an interest in words.

- ★ When reading with a child, pause occasionally and say, *Can you tell me another word that means the same as that one?* or *How else could the character have said that?*
- ★ If a child stumbles on a less-familiar word, check that they understand its meaning.
- ★ Encourage children to actively look out for words they don't know when they're reading. You could discuss the words together, and look up their meanings in a dictionary.
- ★ If possible, encourage children to keep their own list of interesting words they have found while they're reading. Encourage them to identify some favourite words and practise using them, either in speech or in their writing.
- ★ Encourage children to chat about the books they read, using language from the book as much as possible.





Reading Planet: Astro assessment form

Date of reading session: _____
Title of book: _____
Phonic focus of session (if applicable): _____

Use this form to make brief notes of any issues observed during the reading session.

Child's name	Phonics	Comprehension	Fluency	Vocabulary	Other