

TEACHERS' NOTES FOR 6788

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SERIES: CRACKERS



Here are a range of activities which can be used to extend students' knowledge of the story, explore some basic research skills and gives students the opportunity to express their ideas.

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BRIEF OUTLINE OF STORY

'What's the scariest think you an think of?' asked Josh.

'Spiders,' muttered Damon.

'Damon's a scaredy-cat,' jeered Josh.

Damon and his brother Josh are off for a fishing trip with their grandfather out in the lonely bush. But as it turns out, they're not alone. Tom and Bert are there, and they are less than friendly. Then 6788 arrives - and 6788 is big and has eight black hairy legs.

Have all Damon's nightmares come true?

RATIONALE

6788 is intended for young readers who are discovering 'chapter books'. This story introduces a science fiction idea into a familiar situation; the fishing holiday with Grandpa.

Because some children (and many adults) are frightened of spiders, the plot involves a telepathic alien who might look like a spider, but who is a vegetarian peace-loving creature. And who just happens to come from a very large family.

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION

In a science fiction story, the trend is that it:

- starts with the premise ‘what if’
- describes someone or something that is technologically or scientifically based
- future oriented
- uses other worlds
- often a quest
- has some kind of internal logic
- contains unusual but sustained characters with whom the reader can identify.

Readers are guided to other ‘Crackers’ with science fiction themes such as :

[Astronet](#) by Goldie Alexander.

Seawall By Goldie Alexander.

[Killer Virus: An Anthology of Short Stories](#) by Goldie Alexander. This selection includes a number of science fiction stories.

For advanced readers: ‘**Galax-Arena**’ by Gillian Rubinstein. Phillip Pullman. Garth Nix.

TALKING POINTS

1. What kind of camping trip are the boys going on? Who is in charge?
2. There are three points of view (POV) to this story: 6788’s. Damon’s. And Tom and Bert’s. Each group or person has different ideas on what is actually happening. Can you explain what they are?
3. Imagine you are 6788. How did you happen to land on planet Earth? Why is this so scary for you? What are some of the creature you have met? Give these creatures their real names. Think of other creatures that 6788 might have met. Describe them from his point of view.
4. Josh enjoys teasing Damon. Is he just being mean? How would you treat Damon if you were his older brother or sister? Do you have an older brother or sister who enjoys teasing you? How do you handle a ‘teaser’ if you want him/her to stop teasing?
5. 6788 has some amazing skills - for example he carries a full tool kit in his pouch. What is 6788’s full name? Why is his name a number?
6. Where does 6788 come from? What else can he do? What does he eat? What food does he especially like?
7. How does 6788 help Damon recover from falling in the river?
8. DimSim is the boys’ dog. Do you own a pet? If so, can you rely on that pet to look after you? Can an animal ever replace a human as a friend?

9. Damon and Josh are being very brave. Can you think of any other situation where a child might have to be brave? Might that situation occur around you? In a far away country? On this planet?
10. Consider the story's end? What if the space ship hadn't come to rescue 6788? What might happen then?

ACTIVITIES

- Make a story-board or collage to convey 'BRAVERY' or 'ALIENS' or some other unexpected situation.
- Mock up an interview with 6788 with you as the interviewer, Ask a friend to be 6788.
- Then change roles with him or her.
- Illustrate a cover for this story.
- What might happen after this story ends?
- Imagine having 10,000 brothers and sisters. Can you think of another way of naming them?
- Write the lyrics for a song called 'SPACESHIPS'.

WRITING EXERCISES

1. Design your own alien. What does it look like? What personality would you like it to have?
2. Write a story called "ALIENS HAVE COME TO OUR SCHOOL".
3. Sketch a cover for your story.
4. Pretend you are living in the future. In what ways might your life be different? Plan a typical day in the year 2550.
5. You are an alien visiting Earth. What do you like about Earth? What do you dislike? What do you decide to change?

WHAT INSPIRED THIS STORY?

" I have always been fond of science fiction. Through science fiction, a writer can create a whole world with its own clothes, music, language and customs.

My second reason is that I admire spiders. I see them as interesting insects with some amazing skills in climbing and spinning. Nevertheless, lots of people find them scary. So it seemed a fun idea to create a peace loving alien who just happens to look like a spider but who also has a very likeable personality."