



Lightning Strikes: Spaced out By Moya Simons

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Themes:

Space
Robots
Gadgets/ inventions
Adventure
Fitting in
Family

Synopsis

A sci-fi adventure packed with robots, rockets, sledge-racing and fascinating inventions.

Centuria – a planet full of new technology and fascinating inventions. A great place for Jesse to spend his two hundred and fifty space credits he's brought with him from Earth. But when he rescues human-like robot boy, Michael, Jesse must go deep into the Farlands around the city. Will he be able to help Michael find his family? And will he be able to get back to Earth?

Author Focus

Moya Simons was born in Moree, NSW, but has spent most of her life in Bondi. Moya has written many books for children including the popular *Dead* series and *Totally* books, several *Aussie Bites* and *Aussie Chomps*, and the applauded *Hello God* and *Let Me Whisper You My Story*. Her achievements include being short-listed four times for the Young Australian Best Book Awards. Moya is also the author of the acclaimed series, *The Walk Right In Detective Agency* with Walker Books Australia.

Moya Simons' inspiration for writing *Spaced Out*:

"I have always loved space fantasy movies and books. I was attracted to the idea of writing about friendship between a human and a robot because, once you give the robot boy human emotions, what is the real difference between them? Nothing really, except a bit of circuitry. It's my way at looking at the similarities between us all, not the differences, and making a friendship between a robot boy and an earthling entertaining, exciting and very meaningful. I also enjoyed the adventures I could create, the excitement of a planet geared for intergalactic shopping, and using my imagination to create a robot colony. Writing this was great fun!"

Activity Ideas

- Look at the front cover of *Spaced Out* and read the blurb on the back. What do you think this story will be about? Write your own story based on these clues.
- Imagine you were visiting the shops of Centuria. What amazing gifts and gadgets would you be looking for? Draw what you imagine they would look like.
- What do you think are the main differences between humans and robots? Do you think you would treat a thinking/feeling robot differently to a human friend? Why/why not?
- Imagine you have just returned from a trip to Centuria. Write a speech you would give to your classmates about your adventures.
- Why had the human-like robots left CenCity to live in the Farlands? Do you think robots that think and feel like humans should have the same rights and freedoms as humans? Why/why not?
- Create your own robot using milk bottles, toilet paper roles, paper and any other materials available to make your robot individual. Would you give your robot features like a human with legs, arms and a face? Or would you make it more alien-like?
- If a robot like Michael came to join your school what difficulties do you think they would encounter? Think about how they would fit in with the other students, and how they would join in sports and learning activities.
- What does the story teach you about accepting others who seem different to you?
- Research space travel as it exists in our current time. Where have people visited in space? What is involved in travelling to space?
- Compare *Spaced Out* to either the movie *AI* or *I am Robot*. How does each treat the human-robot relationship? What issues do they raise about robots that think and feel like humans? In what ways do they differ?