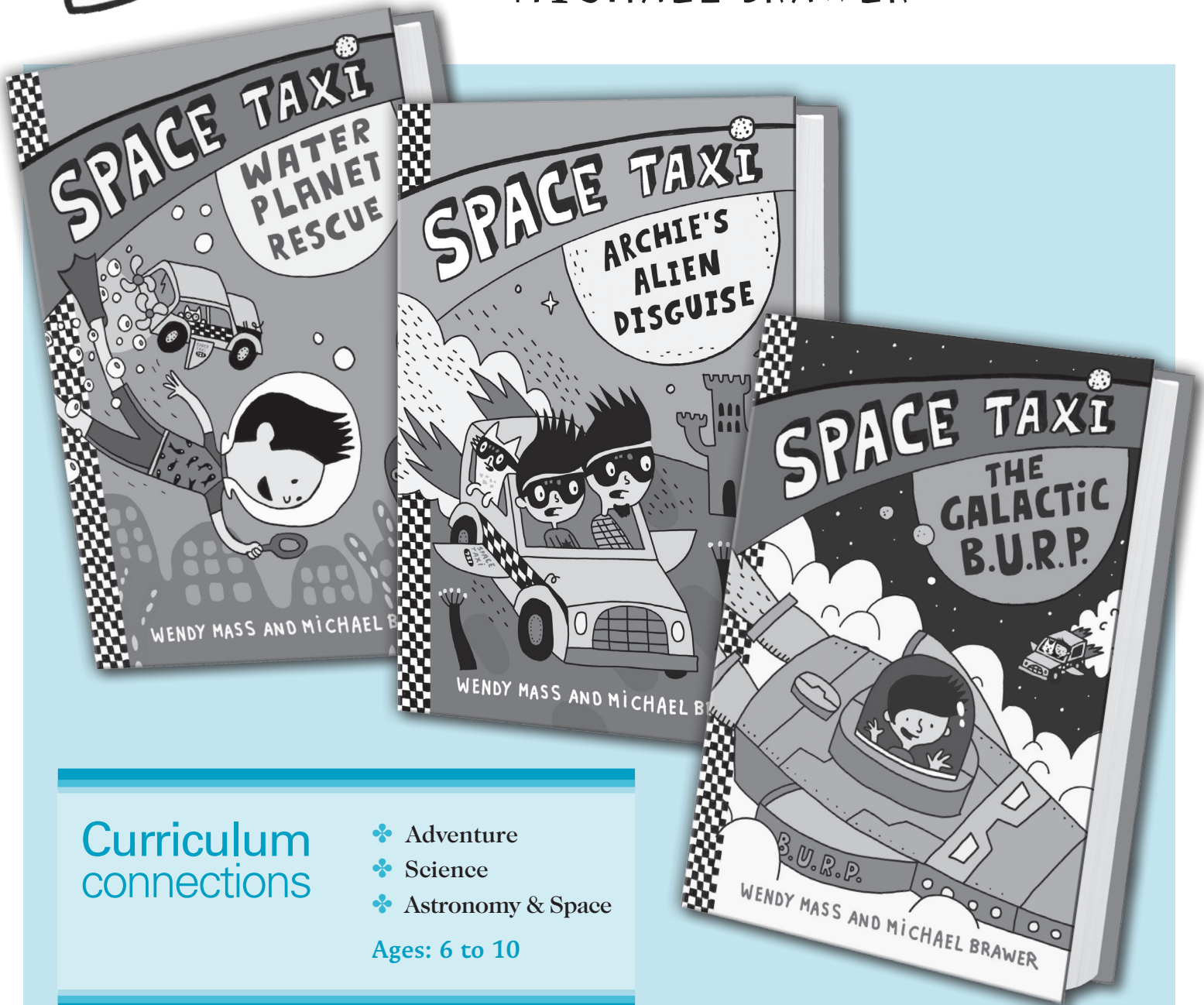


# SPACE TAXI

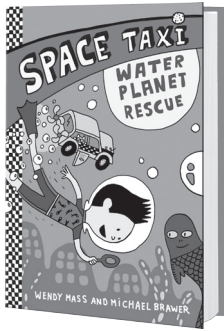
By  
WENDY MASS &  
MICHAEL BRAWER



## Curriculum connections

- ❖ Adventure
- ❖ Science
- ❖ Astronomy & Space

Ages: 6 to 10



## ACTIVITIES FOR *SPACE TAXI: WATER PLANET RESCUE*

## COMPREHENSION CONNECTION

### Character Profile

In order to fully understand the Space Taxi stories it is important to understand the main characters. Help students develop a deeper appreciation for the main characters with this character profile activity. Invite students to pretend they are creating a social media profile for one of the main characters (e.g. Archie, Dad, Pockets). They should include factual information that can be found by referring back to the book, but they may include additional information that aligns with what is known about the character. Students must be able to justify any of their responses by using text-based details. They should include the name of the character, information about their character's personality, details about where they work or study, and any hobbies. You may want to show screenshots of social media profiles to help students visualize the assignment. After profiles are complete, discuss each one as a class and encourage students to challenge one another to justify the details they chose to include. Students should be able to show text-based evidence.

## WRITING

### Narrative Writing-A Brief Moment on Nautilus

Archie enjoys swimming through the water on Nautilus. He described the experience as feeling like he was swimming through pudding. Have students practice their narrative writing skills by imagining they are visiting planet Nautilus. They should describe the experience in detail, focusing on what they saw, felt, and heard, but narrowing their focus to one small moment in time. Remind students that narrative writing should help a reader feel like they are “in the moment” with the author, so they might want to include dialogue. They can be

creative, but their setting should be clearly identifiable as Nautilus. Students can add illustrations to their short narratives as well. Compare and contrast the finished narratives among classmates. Did everyone have the same idea for their writing pieces? Which ideas were similar? Which ideas were different?

## SCIENCE

### Magnetism: Did You Know?

Planet Nautilus has a highly magnetized mineral found under the floor of its ocean. There are naturally occurring magnetic minerals found on earth too. Magnets are used for many different purposes. Students can discover some of the uses of magnets and other fun facts and then share their findings with others by creating a “Did You Know Poster.” Challenge students to research magnets and look for the most bizarre facts they can find. Begin by dividing the class into small groups. Then provide them with some research materials and assign them the task of gathering as many interesting facts about magnets as they can. Each group should create a poster display sharing what they learned. For example, “Did you know? Cow magnets are magnets fed to cows to keep any wires or other metal objects they might eat from causing damage.” Invite each group to share their poster and discuss as a class which facts they found most interesting. You can use this “Did You Know?” activity as a launching point for a deeper investigation regarding magnets.

## CHARACTER EDUCATION

### Role-Play Problem Solving

Carp and Salmon blame one another for the decreasing water. There is great mistrust between the undersea people and the abovesea people. Fortunately, they were able to see their mistake for themselves when it was revealed B.U.R.P. was behind the missing water, but was there another way to resolve their differences? In this role-play activity, divide the class in half. One side is the abovesea group and the other is the belowsea group. Begin by having each side list out all of their complaints and accusations toward the other side. Set a timer for one minute, and encourage both sides to

voice their complaints at the same time. (There will likely be a higher noise level and few people will be able to hear). Then, ask each side to write down what they heard about the other side's concerns. They will probably not be able to list the other side's concerns. Pause the role-play and ask students to reflect on why they were unable to write down the other side's concerns. Next, brainstorm a way that both sides could be heard. This might be having a spokesperson from each group or it might involve pairing students up. Let the class problem-solve. Then, carry out the plan and see if both sides can at least state the other side's concerns. Next, pause the role-play again and reflect on the process. The next step is to try to understand the other side's concerns. As a class, brainstorm a way to develop that understanding. What might work? Determine a strategy and then continue with the role-play. Stop the role-play after a few minutes and debrief. Are they happy with the strategy they chose? What would they change? How might they use this process to solve their own problems?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Chapters 1-2

- How does Dad feel about being away from his job for a while? What evidence from the story supports this?
- Why does Pockets have to act like a regular cat when Penny is around? Use text-based details to support your answer.
- What does Mom mean when she says Penny could “charm the rattles off a snake”? Explain this in your own words.
- Why does Pockets want to avoid going to the groomer? What finally convinces him to go?

### Chapters 3-4

- How does Archie's map work? Why was he worried that it wouldn't work?
- Why do they need to go to Akbar's Floating Rest Stop? How would you describe the rest stop? Compare and contrast it with other rest stops you may have visited or read about.

- How does Pockets react when he sees Graff? Why does he do this?
- What does Graff give Archie? Do you think this might be important? Make a prediction about how this gift might be used on Nautilus.
- What problem do Archie and his Dad face as they are just about to approach Nautilus?

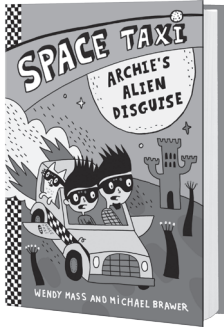
### Chapters 5-6

- Who are Carp and Salmon? Why do you think they are both there to greet Archie, his dad, and Pockets?
- What do some undersea people think is the cause of the decreasing water? What do you think? Support your thinking.
- Why does Archie step forward and volunteer to go into the water to look for clues? How does Pockets react to this? Why?
- What clue does Archie discover? Why did it take three of them to pull this clue away from the ocean floor?
- What does Pockets discover about the clue Archie and his dad bring back? What happens when Archie drops the black rock? Why do you think this might have happened?

### Chapters 7-8

- What happens when people who are not from Nautilus touch the black rocks? Why is this a problem for Archie?
- Explain what Archie means when he says, “Strange how one thing leads to another.” Describe the sequence of events that led Archie to discover how B.U.R.P. was stealing the water and what they were really after.
- How do Salmon and Carp react when they learn it is B.U.R.P. behind the decreasing water?
- What plan did Pockets use to reveal the B.U.R.P. agents?
- What was B.U.R.P.'s plan? Why did they want the magnetic rocks?
- Dad says, “The universe may be a very big place, but good friends make it a lot smaller.” What does he mean by this? Do you agree? Why or why not?





## ACTIVITIES FOR *SPACE TAXI: ARCHIE'S ALIEN DISGUISE*

### VOCABULARY

#### **From Rest-Stop to Mission Accomplished: Building Academic Vocabulary**

As readers begin to get hooked on a series, they acquire more and more academic vocabulary. This growing academic vocabulary helps readers move from simple chapter books to more complex texts. In order to foster this vocabulary development, ask students to look for words in the book that are not part of their everyday speech. Students should look for words that they do not typically use in conversation with friends and family, and then choose these as their words to practice. Help them develop ownership of these words by having them commit to using the words at least three times throughout the day. This is their mission. To prove their mission is accomplished, students should keep a “mission log” detailing each situation when they used each word. To keep everyone accountable, the class can create an Akbar’s Floating Rest Stop-themed bulletin board with each student’s name and the words they are hoping to add to their vocabulary. This “rest stop” is where each vocabulary word can be posted until students have completed the challenge. Once they have successfully added each word to their vocabulary, they can write “Mission Accomplished” over the top of the word.

## SCIENCE

### **Light Inquiry**

Students can turn to back of the book to learn some interesting facts about light after reading about Archie’s adventure on Planet Tri-Dark. In order to further extend students’ learning about light, engage students in this inquiry activity. The goal of this project is to give students the opportunity to perform a number of different science experiments to discover information about light. Prepare students by explaining that one way we gain knowledge is by reading, but another way we gain knowledge is through observation and experiments. Then, set up a

number of different stations that will allow students to draw conclusions about how light works.

At each station, set up a light experiment that either students can conduct themselves or is performed by an adult volunteer or an older student. (This is a great collaborative activity with a middle or high school science class.) As students observe the experiment, have them think about what conclusion they could draw about light. Give students field notebooks or science journals to record their thinking. They could also record questions they have. After all students have rotated through the experiments, gather together as a class and discuss the new learning. Create a class chart of the learning, then provide informational text for students to read more about each topic. Some topics for experiments regarding light include showing the spectrum of colors using a prism, demonstrating how light can be refracted through water, showing how mirrors work, or demonstrating light pollution. One resource for additional ideas is [optics4kids.org/home/content/classroom-activities](http://optics4kids.org/home/content/classroom-activities). This website is sponsored by the Optical Society (OSA) and features light experiments that range from very simple to much more complex. As a whole class, debrief about the experience and discuss how observing with the goal of understanding how light works helped them learn.

## WRITING

### **Camo-it-Now In Real Life: Informational Writing**

In order to hide the car on planet Tri-Dark, Pockets uses a can of “Camo-it-Now” to make the car invisible. While camouflage in nature is not exactly an invisibility cloak, it can be an important defense mechanism for many animals. Give students the opportunity to explore the importance of camouflage and practice their informational writing with this challenge. As a class, create a class book or presentation all about camouflage by assigning one or two people to each topic. Topics might include specific animals that use camouflage (e.g. leaf-tailed gecko, owl, chameleon, octopus), why the military uses camouflage, how camouflage design is going digital, why camouflage works, etc. Students can brainstorm additional ideas related to camouflage to research as well.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Chapters 1-2

- How does Archie feel when he first sees Bloppy? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
- Why is Bloppy nervous? What is he worried about?

### Chapters 3-4

- Why is Archie excited when he hears about Planet Tri-Dark? How is it described?
- Without lights, how are Archie and his dad able to land the taxi? What happens during their landing?
- What choice does Archie have to make? Would you make the same choice? Why or why not?
- Besides hiding the car with Camo-it-Now, what else do Archie and his dad have to do in order to “blend in” on the new planet?



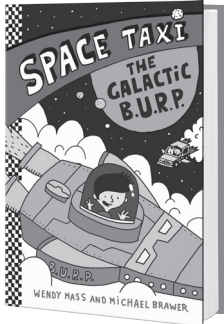
### Chapters 5-6

- Why is the undercover agent sleeping? What evidence from the text explains this?
- Pockets tells Archie that his guess is not just luck. He says, “You recognized a clue, and it led to a bigger clue. That’s what a good detective does.” Do you agree with this statement? What else do you think a good detective needs to do?
- How does Pockets get inside the castle? How does Archie get inside?
- How does Archie find the princess?



### Chapters 7-8

- In what ways is the princess not like other princesses? Use evidence from the story to support your answer.
- Who does the princess think kidnapped her and for what reason? What is the real reason?
- Describe some of the events the princess witnessed that would be shocking for someone from her planet. How does she react?
- Why does Pockets want to avoid calling Feemus? What does Feemus do?
- How does Bloppy feel at the end of the story? Why does he feel this way? Use details from the text to support your answer.



## ACTIVITIES FOR *ACTIVITIES FOR SPACE TAXI: THE GALACTIC B.U.R.P.*

### VOCABULARY

#### Acronym Scavenger Hunt

B.U.R.P. is probably an acronym for something, but the leader is keeping it top secret. Usually acronyms are used when it would take too long to say or write the full name of an organization, procedure, or title. To help students understand how acronyms are all around them, challenge them to an acronym scavenger hunt. Their goal is to look through books, articles, and their environment to find as many acronyms as they can. They should record the acronym, what it stands for, and where they found it. Debrief as a class and compare and contrast the different acronyms they found. Was anyone surprised by what the letters stood for? As an extension, have student try to guess what B.U.R.P. might stand for. Then, ask students to pretend they are in charge of their own secret organization. What would they choose for their acronym?

### WRITING

#### Save This Species: Speech Writing

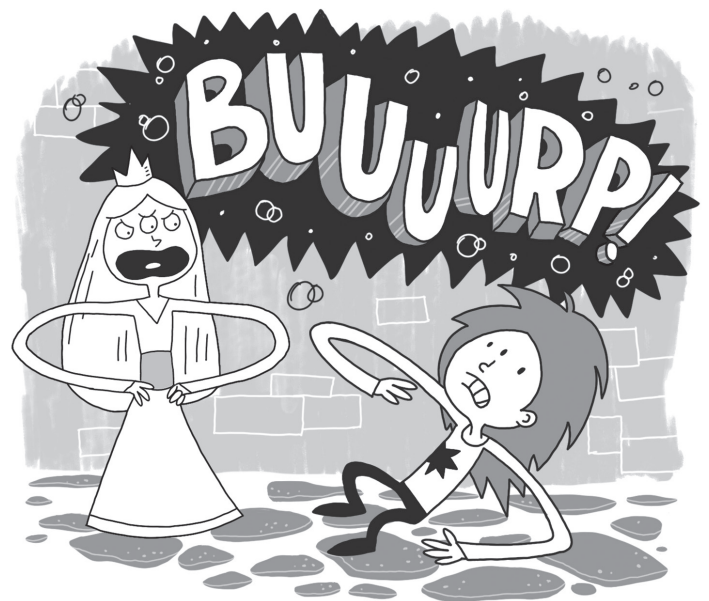
Pockets and Archie learn that B.U.R.P. is trying to steal an endangered species of plant. Endangered plants and animals are not something just found in fiction. Give students the opportunity to practice their argument writing and learn about endangered plants and animals with this partner speech-writing activity. First, give students the opportunity to choose a plant or animal on the endangered species list to study. A listing of endangered species may be found on the World Wildlife Fund website at [worldwildlife.org](http://worldwildlife.org), or for a listing of endangered plants, animals and wildlife in the United States visit [www.fws.gov/endangered/species/us-species.html](http://www.fws.gov/endangered/species/us-species.html). Students should learn about the species they chose and through their research develop an understanding of how others might help stop the extinction. Then, with a partner, they should write a speech to convince others to take action. Their speech should follow the opinion writing outline of having a

clear claim and evidence to support that claim. Students may want to use posters or multimedia presentations to enhance their speeches. As a culminating activity, the class could host a “conservation day” and invite parents and guests to hear their speeches.

### SCIENCE

#### Gadget Gallery

Pockets has many gadgets inside his furry pockets that help him on missions. Most gadgets are designed in response to a particular problem. Invite students to create their own gadgets with this inquiry-based project. Begin by asking students to think of everyday problems that might be solved by a gadget. Brainstorm a list as a class and then have teams choose a problem and work together to create a gadget to solve it. Each team should describe the problem, identify what they would need to learn to solve the problem and create a list of materials. Then, they can either work together to develop a prototype or develop a poster showing how they would design the gadget if they had the necessary materials. The instructor facilitates the process by directing students toward resources that will help them understand the science behind how each gadget works. Students might want to choose problems that already have gadgets to solve them, and then work on developing an improved version. As a culminating activity, host a gadget gallery to display all of the prototypes or posters.





## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Chapters 1-2

- What is special about the sunglasses Pockets gives Archie? Describe how they work.
- What beast does Pockets hide from? How does Archie feel about the beast? How does Pockets's dad feel when he hears Pockets is in a tree? Use details from the text to support each answer.

### Chapters 3-4

- What is the problem that Pockets is trying to understand?
- What are some possible explanations for why someone might want to steal a plant? What does Pockets suggest could be reasons? What other explanations would you suggest?
- What information does Archie learn about Canisantha? How do they eliminate one possible reason why someone might want to steal the plant?
- Why does Pockets scream when he learns where the plant grows?
- Why does Minerva laugh when she hears where they are going? What do Mom and Penny have to do to help make sure Pockets goes on the mission?
- How does Penny's family feel when they hear her talk? Use details from the text to support your answer.
- What plan does Archie's dad propose to keep Pockets safe? Do you think it will work?

### Chapters 5-6

- What question does Archie ask himself when he realizes the plant is out of his reach? How does this help him?
- What choice does Archie have to make when his dad says, "Honestly, I am not ready for it, but I am trying to be brave for the both of us"? What does Archie choose? What choice would you make?

### Chapters 7-8

- What does Archie discover within the room inside the spaceship?

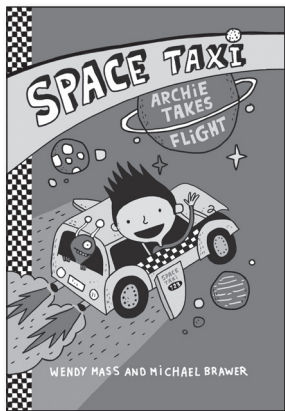
- Why does the little black cat look familiar to Archie? What evidence is there that this is the same cat from Tri-Dark?
- Why was Archie mistaken for Sebastian? Use details from the text to explain your answer.
- What does Archie tell Sebastian to make him think he is a great criminal mastermind?
- What happens when Pockets is fed the plant?
- How does Pockets survive? Explain using evidence from the text.
- How does Pockets "pay" Archie for his work on the mission? Do you think this is a good form of payment? Why or why not?



# SPACE TAXI

## about the series

Archie Morningstar's dad drives a taxi through outer space! And with the help of a talking cat named Pockets, Archie and his dad help fight crime across the universe.



### SPACE TAXI: ARCHIE TAKES FLIGHT

HC 978-0-316-24319-3

PB 978-0-316-24320-9

Also available in downloadable audio & ebook formats



### SPACE TAXI: WATER PLANET RESCUE

HC 978-0-316-24323-0

PB 978-0-316-24322-3

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### SPACE TAXI: ARCHIE'S ALIEN DISGUISE

HC 978-0-316-24326-1

PB 978-0-316-24328-5

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### SPACE TAXI: THE GALACTIC B.U.R.P.

HC 978-0-316-24331-5

PB 978-0-316-24330-8

Also available in downloadable audio & ebook formats

## praise for the series

- ★ “This blend of rollicking adventure and a splash of science will make this series a hit with young readers.”

—School Library Connection

- ★ “With wacky adventure, imaginative settings and wildly varied ETs, this series has endless potential. Archie’s sense of wonder and dedication to his newfound responsibility are inspirational. —Kirkus Reviews

“The plotting never overdoes it, the surprises are gentle, and the humor is always on target for a young demographic.” —Booklist

“Out-of-this-world fun.” —Publishers Weekly

## about the authors



Wendy Mass has written lots of books for kids, including *The Candymakers* and *Pi in the Sky*.

Michael Brawer is a teacher who drives space taxis on the side. They live in New Jersey with their two kids and two cats, none of whom have left the solar system. Find out more about the Space Taxi series at [SpaceTaxiBooks.com](http://SpaceTaxiBooks.com).



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