

# Cosmic Transition

A National Literacy Trust membership resource

**A celebratory literacy transition project for Year 6 pupils with an intergalactic theme. This resource commemorates the anniversary of the first moon landing and is based on the hilarious and touching book *Cosmic* by Frank Cottrell-Boyce.**

Immerse yourself in another world this summer, full of rockets, vomit comets, gravity simulators and moon walks. Take up the challenge to research, plan and hold your very own moon party to celebrate all things space-related in celebration of the anniversary of the moon landing in July 1969.

## Mission Overview

- Pupils research and explore the inspiring world of space travel and exploration through their own exploration of Frank Cottrell-Boyce's treasure of a book, *Cosmic*. Both hilarious and touching, we follow 12-year-old pupil Liam from his first anarchic day at secondary school (his own transition experience is not quite like other Year 6 pupils...) to his becoming the designated adult in charge of a trip to the moon. Only a small white lie was involved...
- Inspired by space tales, pupils take up their own ideas and interests to research, develop and finally present in their very own Moon Party display. While a gathering of people to view the work and celebrate together may not be possible, you can still build a display of work than can be shared via email newsletters, the school website or school social media channels. Copies of exemplary work can be shared with the secondary schools that pupils are moving on to, demonstrating the skills your pupils have attained.
- Anchoring the story in *Cosmic* is Liam's personal audio diary of his exploits (just in case his dad needs a full explanation of why he isn't actually on a school trip to the Lake District). Pupils will record their own short audio diaries for their new secondary form tutors about their own dreams, aspirations and achievements. Transition and technology – a match made in heaven.



The resource has been designed to be flexible to meet the needs of busy Y6 teachers. Dip in; read the book as a class reader; select as many of the activities as you wish in the time you have or go for the whole project and enjoy the summer term in the company of cosmic heroes and characters of all shapes and sizes, both real and imagined. The project seeks to support both academic and pastoral transition as your pupils, just like Liam, face the daunting and exciting task of growing up and taking the next steps in their learning journey.

*To infinity and beyond!*

– oops that is Buzz Lightyear not Buzz Aldrin...

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T: 020 7587 1842 W: [literacytrust.org.uk](http://literacytrust.org.uk) Twitter: @Literacy\_Trust Facebook: [nationalliteracytrust](https://www.facebook.com/nationalliteracytrust)

## Mission Control

You will need:

- A copy of *Cosmic* by Frank Cottrell-Boyce.  
All page numbers in this resource refer to the 2019 edition published by Macmillan Children's Books (ISBN 978-1-5290-0877-7).
- A notebook/scrapbook/research folder for pupils to record their ongoing reflections, character logs and project research notes and findings.

### Launch Schedule: Phase 1

- Introduce the book by watching together as BBC presenter and comedian Ed Petrie reads an opening extract from *Cosmic* as part of the 'Bringing Books to Life' series. He explains why he loves the book and shares how it captured his imagination.  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p016tdby>
- Set up some 'conversation stations' around the classroom to open up discussion and prediction about the book and the topic of space, following the clip. Conversation stations are a great way get pupils talking together. Simply stick up poster-size paper at different points around the class with a conversation starter heading for each. Pupils can add Post-It notes of their ideas, thoughts and comments and you can use these to start discussions and encourage pupils to compare their thoughts.

#### **Possible station headings:**

- > Is it ever ok to lie?
- > What do you know about the first moon landings?
- > What do you think happens to Liam and his other five fellow child astronauts?
- > How do you think Liam ended up in space?
- > What intrigues you about space travel? What questions would you like to know about space?
- > What do you think will be the main themes of the book?
- > What books have you read that have stayed with you, that you really remember and have made a big impression on you?

Follow up with whole class discussion around each and take a photo of each station, or notes from the discussion, so that when you have completed the book you can reflect back on the original conversations.

NASA has an amazing archive to draw from but these two short summary videos give a perfect introduction to set the context for the project. First, an overview of the Apollo missions and the space race (Video 1) and then the actual moments of the Apollo 11 landings (Video 2) as part of the 11 key moments of Apollo 11.

Video 1: [https://images.nasa.gov/details-NHQ\\_2019\\_0205\\_Celebrating\\_Apollo\\_as\\_We\\_Push\\_Forward\\_to\\_the\\_Moon.html](https://images.nasa.gov/details-NHQ_2019_0205_Celebrating_Apollo_as_We_Push_Forward_to_the_Moon.html)

Video 2: <https://spacecentre.co.uk/blog-post/apollo-11-key-moments/> (The video is called The 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Apollo 11 – but a great summary for this year's 50<sup>th</sup> celebration also.)

Pupils at this stage don't have to narrow down their chosen research topic but advance notice increases their motivation and gives clear purpose and audience to the project at the outset. As they read *Cosmic* and continue to find out more about the moon landings, areas of personal interest will arise and develop.

- Spend some time with pupils creating and developing your learning environment for the project.

> Download free posters here:

<https://share.america.gov/50th-anniversary-of-the-first-moon-landing-poster/>

> NASA posters and logos:



<https://www.nasa.gov/specials/apollo50th/media.html>

> Make a moon phase calendar for display:

<https://www.jpl.nasa.gov/edu/learn/project/make-a-moon-phases-calendar-and-calculator/>

> Create your own solar system models: <https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Solar-System-Mobile>

> Design your own recruitment adverts/posters for aspiring astronauts... 'Your country needs you...!'

- You might want to encourage pupils to interview and collect family memories of the iconic moon landing itself... *Where were you when...?* Collecting quotes and accounts would make a great addition to the display for the project. Add to this interviews with staff members and local community members where possible and you would have your very own local archive of the magical moment in history.
- Finally give pupils time to decorate and set up their very own research scrap book. This will serve both as a great means of collating all the response work on the book (ongoing character logs/timelines, etc.) but also a perfect place to bring together their own personal or group work around their chosen research area. It can then be displayed as

part of a classroom space museum. – the fount of knowledge for all things moon related!

- Pupils may wish to work independently or collaborate in small groups throughout the project, depending on whether they wish to present their work alone as part of the Moon Party or as part of a group. The idea would be to set up a carousel of learning experiences run by the pupils to explain to each other.

## Launch Schedule: Phase 2

Intersperse reading and response activities with pupils' ongoing scrapbook research into the moon landings. Below is a selection of activities linked chronologically through the chapters of *Cosmic*. The book is also available as an audio book and you might want to encourage both whole-class interactive reading aloud and choose other sections to just listen and enjoy together.

- **I'm not exactly in the Lake District ...Completely Doomed (pages 3–9)**

We start right in the midst of the action with Liam's audio diary to his parents. A great place to introduce character logs to build a picture of the main characters as we travel through the story and of course to begin the pupils' profile of Liam – the hero (or not!) of the hour. One of the final project outcomes will be to replicate the idea of an audio diary. Pupils will be encouraged to record a brief audio diary of their hopes, dreams and aspirations for the future as a transition snapshot for their Y7 form tutors, so highlighting the nature of an audio diary here will prepare them for this.

- **My favourite gravity... My Invisible Friend (pages 10–48)**

Here we learn more about Liam, his unusual growth spurt between Y6 and Y7 over the summer holidays and his very first memorable day at secondary school where his first tiny lie has rather spectacular consequences. Pages 27-33, where Liam is mistaken for the new Media Studies teacher and leads a bit of a rebellion, is a brilliantly funny section to read aloud and then re-enact with a whole class. Discuss the topic of being different, those nerves on the first day of secondary school and the nature of lies – here Liam's lie of omission is a whopper! This is a perfect time to set up some new conversation stations which might stay for the whole project each with emerging themes from the book to explore together (friendship/truth/parenthood/identity). Add a new station as pupils identify a new potential theme.

- **My Planet Panda Pop... You'll like it when you get there (pages 49-94)**

Add a character profile for Florida, Liam's partner in crime. Discuss the role of 'celebrity', Florida's total obsession. Pages 85-88 provide a great scene to role play in pairs as Liam tries to persuade Florida into joining him on his winning competition trip to China...as his daughter. Liam also discovers his dad's parenting book 'How to Talk to Your Teens' in his training to act like a parent. Challenge pupils to create their own version of such a book – the five headings on page 80 are a good place to start!

- **Hello Lucky Winners... Competitive Dadliness (pages 95–114)**

We are introduced to the other competition winners and their dads, Infinity Park and our first mention of the idea of a moon trip – albeit that Florida confuses Buzz Aldrin with Buzz Light Year, providing a prompt for your class to do some more research into those pioneers of space exploration and profile the astronauts from each of the Apollo missions. The NASA resources here are excellent: <https://www.nasa.gov/specials/apollo50th/> Profiles of each of the dads, their respective children and their differing relationships is an interesting one to compare, track and discuss. The idea of what makes a good parent is a key theme also in the book.

- **In Chinayouidiot... Thrill Ride of the Century (pages 115–133)**

As we get more of a glimpse of Infinity Park, the extraordinary space theme park, the idea of children astronauts (taikonauts) and the vision of Dr Drax, we also have an introduction to the ‘Infinite Possibility’ – the main attraction (which just happens also to be a real working space rocket). Pages 130–131 give a great stimulus for debate about the importance and reason for space travel as Dr Drax gives an apology for her generation’s destruction of the planet. Use Kennedy’s famous space speech that relays the idea of the importance of scientific discovery but also considers the inordinate monetary cost.

<https://www.space.com/11772-president-kennedy-historic-speech-moon-space.html>

- **I am the Space Daddy... The Vomit Comet (pages 134–200)**

Competition to be the chosen ‘dad’ to accompany the taikonauts into space continues fiercely with Liam desperate to win. We learn about astronaut training techniques and tasks - a great opportunity to research and explore and compare training for real astronauts. NASA even provide a few training games to test your own pupils’ skills:

[https://www.nasa.gov/kidsclub/text/extras/Game\\_Descriptions\\_National\\_Standards.html](https://www.nasa.gov/kidsclub/text/extras/Game_Descriptions_National_Standards.html)

Or try out these explorer activities:

<https://www.nasa.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/forwardmoonexploreractivities-1.pdf>

- **Astrogossip... Last Chance to Vote (pages 201–230)**

Astronaut training then advances in the ‘Infinity Dome’, where our explorers learn all about gravity. We also hear about some of the other ‘rides’ in this extraordinary park: the Giant Leap, Lake of Fear, Sea of Storms and the Vortex. Pupils might like to design and illustrate a map of the Infinity Park, just like some of those they may have visited, adding new rides and areas from their imagination: <https://www.altontowers.com/useful-info/resort-maps/>

Continue to work on character logs – we learn more about Hasan’s background and his turbulent past. A new character – a space expert is introduced, Mr Bean, who seems very knowledgeable, and Florida becomes obsessed with researching space travel trivia (page 201). In teams, pupils could research and write a true/false trivia quiz of space facts for each other based, taking some of the statements and facts given in the book and researching their truth – who was the first ever woman in space and did she, as Florida says, marry another astronaut and have a ‘cosmonautette’ baby?

- **I am a Half World Away...Quest Orange (pages 231–260)**

As the reality of the trip comes nearer, fears begin to arise (particularly for Liam who realises that he is responsible for Florida, even though he isn't really her dad which is multiplied by the fact that he doesn't win the dad competition to go with the taikonauts into space, despite his brilliant simulator skills. The children and Mr Bean discuss the very real dangers of space exploration as they discuss the Columbia and Challenger crews. Pupils may want to revisit their debate on space exploration and the human cost that has been part of the history of space travel. Reagan's video speech to the nation on the night of the Challenger disaster where he speaks directly to school pupils could be explored and discussed: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qa7icmogsow>

- **Launch Minus 48... I Want My Daddy (pages 261–275)**

As the launch approaches and Liam finally gets his wish, the taikonauts have to pack their PIPs – Personal Inflight Packs. Alongside their special Wristations from Draxcom they can pack anything they want which will fit. Liam decides that taking his dad's 'How to Talk to your Teens' book might be a good idea. What gadgets/personal momentums might the pupils take? Encourage them to design new gadgets and think about what is precious to them if they were to pack their own PIPs. Pages 268–270 give us a touching section where the knowledgeable Mr Bean gives Liam some extra advice about the beguiling power of space and we find out that he is in fact the real Alan Bean from Apollo Mission 12 who went into space in 1969. Sadly Alan passed away last year after giving Cottrell-Boyce the permission to use his name in the book but pupils can research and find out more about this intrepid explorer and his part in the moon landings who was inspired to become an artist after his space experiences: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZkTyEe7DfY>

- **The Moonyouidiot ... An Unscheduled Diversion (pages 276–315)**

Into space, disaster, communications lost, games of hide and seek, even an unscheduled space walk, and Florida emerges as the actual unlikely genius of the group where her knowledge of the film Apollo 13 saves the day (pages 288–289) and her plan for a *free-return trajectory round the moon*. Actual footage of the Apollo 13 disaster and those immortal words 'Houston we have a problem' can be found here:

<https://www.nasa.gov/specials/apollo50th/videos.html>

The 1995 film of the event also has some useful clips to help bring Liam's dilemma into perspective: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZTH3HdE8Sg>

- **Dark Side of the Moon... This is Not a Simulation (pages 316–343)**

A few trips around the moon, an actual moon walk, a water fight on the moon and a triumphant re-entry. As the adventure comes to a close, Liam becomes the responsible adult and sacrifices his own moon walk – but unknown to him, his fellow travellers have left him a little surprise. A lovely time to reflect on the lessons the characters have learnt and how they have changed as the book has progressed; which themes overall have been the strongest and how much they have learnt about space exploration?

- **We got a bit lost ... (pages 344–357)**

Full circle is complete and we come back to Liam’s space diary that started the book and finally discover the special surprise Florida had left for him.

## The Eagle has Landed

### The Bonus bits (page 359)

The author notes and interview are also a great read. They are a great prompt into further research and to inspire pupils into defining their subject/area of interest to explore and present informally at the Moon Party.

The idea of a living science museum where the pupils are the source of information for visitors can help develop their confidence and bring their learning together as they explain and inspire others in their chosen interest.

Encourage pupils to produce a small display of visuals, posters or any props they might need to help talk about their expert area. You might want to create some NASA selfies to make into badges for extra impact! <https://www.jpl.nasa.gov/apps/#nasaselfies>. This free software lets you put your photo in a virtual spacesuit in front of some of NASA's most captivating space images – genius!

Share images of your display with parents and the wider community though the school’s email newsletter, social media channels or other means you are using to communicate with families. Examples of amazing work can be shared with the secondary teachers and schools that will be welcoming your students in to Year 7.

### Possible areas of interest:

- Women in space
- Lunar Legends  
(lunacy/werewolves/blood moon/  
blue moon/hunter’s moon)
- Barbara Canright / Katherine  
Johnson – NASA’s human computers
- The 12 men who walked on the  
moon
- The moon and popular culture
- Apollo 11 mission and events
- Moon phases
- Alan Bean – Artist & Astronaut
- Travel to Mars
- Map of the Moon
- Space Walks
- Animals in space
- Lunar Eclipses

## Transition Audio Diary

Finally, inspired by Liam’s successful audio diary, get pupils to plan and prepare a short one-minute audio diary to record for their new form tutor telling them a little about their proud moments from primary school and their dreams, aspirations and future hopes for secondary school and beyond. Use the accompanying audio diary planning grid available to download with this resource to help focus ideas. Try to avoid too formal a presentation; this

should be in the style of a diary – more conversational in nature. Platforms such as Audacity <https://www.audacityteam.org/> or a simple laptop recorder can be used to record and store as an MP3 to easily send up to secondary schools as part of transition events.

### Further Links & Resources

- Find a science centre near you to see how your local area is celebrating the moon landings anniversary <https://www.sciencecentres.org.uk/centres/>
- Register your own event and find out about national events <https://www.sciencecentres.org.uk/projects/50th-Anniversary-of-the-Moon-Landing/>
- Find out more about what the National Space Education Centre offers <http://education.spacecentre.co.uk/>
- Find out about the London Moon Festival Events <https://moonfestival.co.uk/>
- NASA has its own comprehensive 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary resources and archives, jam-packed with extraordinary photos, video and audio footage to explore <https://www.nasa.gov/specials/apollo50th/>
- The Lunar Planetary Institute resources <https://www.lpi.usra.edu/apollo50/>
- The fascinating NASA Science Earth's Moon Site <https://moon.nasa.gov/about/in-depth/>
- *Curiosity: The Story of a Mars Rover* by Markus Motum
- *Hidden Figures: The True Story of Four Black Women and the Space Race* by Margot Lee Shetterly (Author), Laura Freeman (Illustrator)
- *The Skies Above My Eyes* by Charlotte Gullain (Author), Yuval Zommer (Illustrator)
- *Hello, is this planet Earth?: My View from the International Space Station* (Official Tim Peake Book)
- *To the Moon and Back: My Apollo 11 Adventure* (National Geographic Kids) by National Geographic Kids (Author), Buzz Aldrin (Author), Marianne Dyson (Author)

*"I'm coming back in... and it's the saddest moment of my life."*

Ed White expresses his sorrow at the conclusion of the first American spacewalk during the Gemini 4 mission on 3 June 1965.

*"I didn't feel like a giant. I felt very, very small."*

Neil Armstrong on looking back at the Earth from the Moon in July 1969.

*"When I first looked back at the Earth, standing on the Moon, I cried."*

Alan Shepard talking about his time on the lunar surface during the Apollo 14 mission in February 1971.

*"Contact light."*

The actual first words spoken from the surface of the Moon, by Buzz Aldrin on 20 July 1969 when Apollo 11 landed. Over six hours later, Neil Armstrong stepped onto the lunar surface and uttered the immortal line

*"That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind"*