

 SCHOLASTIC

**Book  
Talk**



**AGES 8+**

**Engage and inspire your  
pupils with a Book Talk!**

© 2009 Frank Cottrell Boyce, published by Macmillan.



Look out for this book at your Fair!

AGES 8+

Price	£6.99 / €8.40
Case	Read On
Author	Frank Cottrell Boyce
Publisher	Macmillan

## Using this book in your classroom

### Themes

This extremely funny book provokes serious thought about **father-son relationships**, and **what it means to be a grown-up**.

### Summary

Liam Digby is unusually tall for a twelve-year-old. He even has the beginnings of a beard. This, together with his outstanding intelligence and self-confidence, enables him to pose quite easily as a grown-up. He becomes the only child ever to be allowed to go on the amazing Cosmic thrill ride, and on his first day at secondary school he is mistaken for a teacher. With his friend Florida (also aged twelve) pretending to be his daughter, he enjoys the freedom of the local shopping centre and even manages to persuade the salesman in the car showroom to let him test-drive a new Porsche Boxter ... until his dad turns up to put a stop to it.

One day Liam enters a competition run by the powerful and secretive Drax organization. It's a competition to find the Greatest Dad in the World, and the prize is the opportunity to visit Drax's new Infinity theme park in China, and ride on the biggest thrill ride in the history of the world – The Rocket. By an amazing set of coincidences, Liam ends up as one of the four winners of the competition. The only problem is that he's not actually a dad, let alone the greatest one in the world. He convinces his parents that he's going on a school trip to the Lake District, ropes in Florida to pretend to be his daughter again, and they're off to China. When The Rocket turns out to be a real rocket, Liam and Florida end up joining three other children on a journey into space. A disastrous miscalculation strands the children in space, out of radio contact and with only their intelligence and teamwork to help them get back to Earth...

### Did you know?

- Frank Cottrell Boyce began writing children's novels when he turned his screenplay, *Millions*, into a novel. This book went on to win the Carnegie Medal in 2004.
- He lives in Liverpool with his wife and seven children.

## The Story Session

### 1. Introducing the story

Ask the children whether they think it would be fun to be mistaken for a grown-up. What kinds of things do they think grown-ups can do that children aren't allowed to do? What would be the advantages and disadvantages of being grown-up?

### 2. Reading the story

- Read the first three chapters. Ask: "What kind of person do you think Liam is? How do you think he feels about being lost in space? How do you think he got there in the first place?" Encourage the children to predict what will happen for Liam in the story, and how the story might end.
- Liam feels it's unfair that people think he should 'know better' just because he's big for his age. Do the children think he's right about this? What do they think is the main difference between adults and children – is it height, or age, or experience?
- If possible, encourage the children to read the rest of the book. At the end, ask who they thought was the best dad in the book – for example, was it Liam (even though he wasn't actually a dad)? Or was it Liam's dad, or someone else? What do the children think makes a good dad? Do they think the other children at Infinity Park were right to choose Liam rather than any of the other dads in the story to go into space with them?

### 3. Follow-up

- The astronaut Alan Bean features in the book, and the author describes him as "one of the most inspiring people on Earth". Encourage the children to find out more about Alan Bean (search at the NASA website, [www.nasa.gov](http://www.nasa.gov)) and to look on the NASA and other websites to find out more about manned space flights.
- Liam lives near Waterloo in Liverpool, and he discovers that there are other places called Waterloo all around the world. Later in the book he meets Samson One and Samson Two, who come from Waterloo in Sierra Leone and who have quite a different experience of life from his own. Ask the children to research whether there are other places around the world which have the same name as their own town or a nearby town or city. Can they find out something about the life of people in these other places?

### YOU TELL US

- Did you use these notes to have a Book Talk in class?
- Were they helpful?
- Are there any changes you'd like to see to make them more useful?

We're always happy to hear your comments, so please email us!

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