

The Message

Astra receives a mysterious message—and faces an impossible choice.

About the Story

Lexile: 950L (pairing)

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective:

to write an expository essay analyzing structure and author's craft in a work of fiction

Key Skills:

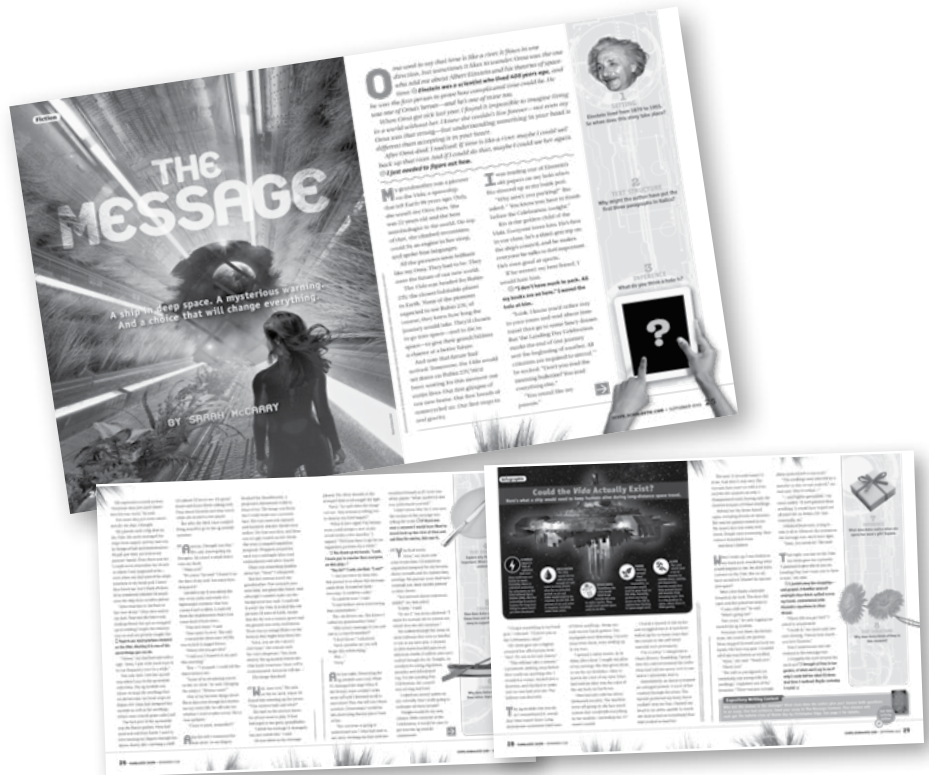
setting, text structure, inference, character

Essential Questions:

- How do we make difficult decisions?
- What is it like to feel that you don't fit in?
- How do we deal with the loss of loved ones?

Standards:

The texts and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: **R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.9, W.2, W.9, SL.1, L.4, L.5, L.6.** For more standards information—including TEKS—go to *Scope Online*.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Audio: Story and infographic

Slideshow: Greek and Latin Roots

Literature Connections: Ideas for connecting to curricular texts

Skill Builders to print or project:

- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Preparing to Write: What Happened?
- Quiz*
- **Core Skills Workout:** Inference
- **Literary Elements:** Theme Anticipation Guide, Character Thinking Tool, Genre Exploration
- Contest Entry Form

* Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1 Preparing to Read

Do-Now: Theme Anticipation Guide

(5 minutes, activity sheet online)

- Project the **Theme Anticipation Guide**. As students come in, have them write down whether they agree or disagree with each statement.
- Take a quick poll. Ask volunteers to briefly explain their responses.

Preview Vocabulary

(5 minutes, activity sheet online)

Project the **Vocabulary Slideshow: Greek and Latin Roots**. The slideshow will prepare students to understand some of the words they will encounter in the story, such as *astrobiologist*, *holo*, and *hydroponic*.

2 Reading and Discussing

(30 minutes, activity sheet online)

DIFFERENTIATION: Students who need more support should first listen to the audio version of the story.

- Read the story once through as a class.
- Divide students into groups to read the story again, pausing to discuss the close-reading questions that appear in the margins. Have students write their answers in the margins or on the **Close-Reading Questions** handout.

Answers to Close-Reading Questions

1. Setting (p. 25) *The story takes place in the first half of the 2300s—about 300 years from now.*

2. Text Structure (p. 25) *These paragraphs are in italics to set them off because they are a kind of prologue and not part of the chronological narrative.*

3. Inference (p. 25) *Students should infer that a holo is a device for digital reading, a more advanced version of a tablet or smartphone. The name “holo” suggests that the device projects holograms—which, later in the story, it does.*

4. Text Structure (p. 27) *These lines help you understand the significance of Astra’s decision to destroy the ag module because they show that food is a limited resource and that the colonists might starve to death.*

5. Character (p. 27) *As these lines reveal, Astra does not see herself as the brilliant person she is. Rather, she sees herself as a disappointment, as is revealed by what she says on page 26: “I could never remember my chores or where I was supposed to be . . .”*

6. Character (p. 27) *Astra likely wants Oma’s advice because Astra feels Oma understood her best. Astra says on page 26 that although her parents love her, she is very different from them. Astra may think that her parents, like Rio, will refuse to even consider that she should follow the instructions from the woman in the message.*

7. Inference (p. 29) *Astra realizes that the woman in the holo is Astra—a few years in the future. This tells her that she will succeed in finding a way to travel back through time, or at least send messages through time. That is how her older self was able to send her younger self the message.*

Grammar Alert!

On page 25, Rio quotes a morning bulletin. It’s a great example of how to use single quotes inside of double quotes!

8. Text Structure (p. 29) *Answers may include that Astra thinks of Oma because she has just realized that she, Astra, will realize her dream of traveling back through time and may see Oma again. Another possible reason is that Astra has realized that she made the right decision, and she is thinking of the one person who likely would have told her to follow her instincts.*

- Reconvene as a class to discuss the following.

Critical-Thinking Questions

Do you think Astra will see herself differently after the events in the story? Will others see her differently? Explain. *Answers will vary, but students are likely to say that by saving the colony Astra will gain confidence. Other people may have more respect and admiration for her and put more trust in her.*

What would be exciting or rewarding about being a colonist on the *Vida*? What would be challenging? *Students might say that it would be exciting to be the first to colonize another planet and rewarding to help build a new way of life. Challenges would include spending so long confined to the ship, dealing with unknowns, and knowing that mistakes could have major consequences. Like pioneers settling new lands on*

Earth, the settlers of Rubin 23V would face many struggles as they set up a society in a place where nothing has yet been established.

If you had the ability to send a message to yourself at a younger age, would you? What would you tell yourself? *Answers will vary.*

***Vida* means “life” in Spanish. Why might the colonists have called the ship *Vida*?** *They may have called the ship *Vida* because they hoped it would carry them to a new life.*

Should humans work toward colonizing another planet? Why? *Some students may say yes, because climate change and overpopulation threaten Earth; if we want to survive, we may need to go to other planets. Others may say no—we should devote all our efforts to saving Earth.*

3 Skill Building and Writing

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

Have students complete the featured skill activity **Preparing to Write: What Happened?** This inference activity will prepare them for the expository writing prompt on page 29. *For alternate culminating tasks, see the box below.*

Differentiate and Customize

For Struggling Readers

At the end of the story, Astra figures out who the woman in the message is. Write down who the woman is. Then make a list of at least three clues the author gives throughout the story.

For Advanced Readers

Imagine you are Astra 10 years from now. Write a journal entry about a day in your life on Rubin 23V.

For Creative Writers

Write a scene in which Astra travels back in time and talks with Oma. Tell the story from Astra’s point of view.

For Scientists

Research habitable planets beyond our solar system and how close humans are to being able to colonize another planet. Give a presentation of your research. Include visuals.