

# A Message From Space

A heartfelt story about a teen who learns to see herself in a new light

## About the Story

**Lexile:** 980L (captions)

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

**Learning Objective:** to write an email from the point of view of the main character in a drama

**Key Skills:** text structure, key ideas and details, inference, character

**Essential Questions:**

- How can we gain self-confidence?
- How can we cope with fear and anxiety?
- How is the way we see ourselves different from the way others see us?

**Standards:**

The article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.5, R.7, R.10, W.3, W.9, SL.1, SL.2, L.4, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



## Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of support materials at [scope.scholastic.com](https://scope.scholastic.com).

**Audio:**

- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary

**Video:**

- Life on the ISS

**Connected readings from the**

**Scope archives:**

- Fiction: "The Mission"
- Fiction: "The Message"
- Fiction: "Good Enough"
- Fiction: "Bearing Up"
- Fiction: "Aftershocks"

**Skill Building Activities to print, project, or share digitally:**

- Preparing to Write: Naya's Turning Point
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
- **Core Skills Workout:** Inference
- Choice Board
- Quiz\*
- Contest Entry Form

\*Available on two levels

# Step-by-Step Lesson

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

## 1. Preparing to Read

10 minutes

**Do-Now: Respond to a prompt. (5 minutes)**

- Project or digitally share the following sentence starters:
  - *Traveling to space would be \_\_\_\_\_.*
  - *Having a loved one travel to space would be \_\_\_\_\_.*
- Give students a few minutes to fill in the blanks. Let them know they do not need to limit their responses to one word. Then invite students to share and discuss their responses.

**Preview Vocabulary (5 minutes)**

- Project or screenshare the **Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice**. Review the definitions as a class. (Optionally, have students complete the practice activity for homework.)  
Highlighted words: *burrows, potential, reluctantly, talisman*

## 2. Reading and Discussing

45 minutes

- Have a volunteer read the As You Read box on page 14 of the magazine or at the top of the digital story page.
- Assign parts and read the play as a class.
- Break students into groups to discuss the following close-reading and critical-thinking questions. *Tip: If you're remote, you can have each group respond in a shared doc or discuss the questions in their own chat rooms; you can also make the questions an asynchronous assignment.*

### Close-Reading Questions

(10 minutes)

*The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.*

1. **What is the purpose of the prologue?** (text structure) *The prologue introduces the main character, Naya, and establishes that she loves owls. The prologue also hooks the interest of the audience by raising the questions of why Naya is googling "space disasters" and why she seems worried or upset.*

2. **Based on what happens in Scenes 1 and 2, how does Naya feel about the fact that her mom is a famous astronaut?** (key ideas and details, inference) *Naya feels conflicted about her mom's job. In Scene 1, she reacts uncomfortably when two parents begin asking her questions about her mom. When one parent asks if Naya wants to be an astronaut too, Naya shrugs. When the same parent remarks that Naya must be excited about the launch, Naya has to force a smile. These reactions suggest that Naya does not like being compared with her mom and does not enjoy thinking about her mom going to space. In Scene 2, Naya reacts in a similar way when JJ brings up Naya's mom's profession. She says, "I just wish everyone would stop expecting me to be like her." This tells you that Naya doesn't feel like she and her mom are similar, and that she feels pressure to be as successful and talented as her mom.*
3. **How is Naya feeling in Scene 4? How can you tell?** (character, inference) *Naya is worried and anxious about her mom. You can tell Naya is nervous because while everyone else is talking, laughing, and snacking, "Naya stands in a corner, biting her lip." You can also tell that Naya is worried because she "slips out of the room" while her family is watching the launch on TV. You can infer that Naya is so worried about her mom's space mission that it's hard for her to listen to the announcers talk about it.*
4. **What can you infer about Naya's relationship with Abuelo?** (character, inference) *You can infer that Naya and Abuelo are very close. In Scene 5, Abuelo goes to Naya's room to check on her after she quietly leaves while everyone else is settling in to watch the launch. When Abuelo asks Naya what's wrong, she says, "I'm just working on stuff for school." In response, Abuelo says, "Hmmm, really?" This exchange shows that Abuelo can sense how Naya is feeling without her telling him. He knows that Naya is concerned about her mom, and he tries to comfort her. Naya seems to feel better after talking with Abuelo and rejoins the family to watch the launch. This shows that Naya listens to Abuelo and takes his advice to heart.*
5. **At the end of the play, why does Naya say she needs to make more flyers?** (key ideas, character, inference) *When no one showed up to Naya's first burrowing owl club meeting, she became discouraged and threw away all of her flyers. Being constantly compared with her famous mom made Naya feel like her own interests and passions would never be good enough. After hearing her mom express how much she admires Naya and her devotion to burrowing owls, however, Naya feels more confident. She realizes that it is OK that she is not exactly like her mom and that there are many things about her own personality that she should be proud of. Hearing her mom's message helps Naya see herself in a new light and gives her the confidence to continue on with her club.*

### Critical-Thinking Questions

(10 minutes)

*The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.*

1. In Scene 2, JJ tells Naya, “You’ve got success in your blood.” Why might someone like Naya find this statement troubling? *Answers will vary. Students may say that Naya would probably find the suggestion that success gets passed down from parents to children troubling because it creates an unrealistic expectation that children should always be at least as successful as their parents. For Naya, the suggestion that she should be successful because her mom is successful puts an enormous amount of pressure on her and makes her feel like she is constantly being compared with her mom. In reality, children can end up being very different from their parents. They may have different interests and passions and may not necessarily want to pursue the same kinds of careers or goals that their parents have pursued—and that’s OK.*
2. Why do you think Naya’s mom selected a burrowing owl stuffed animal as the capsule’s talisman? *Answers will vary, but students may say that Naya’s mom chose to bring a burrowing owl stuffed animal as the talisman as a way to let Naya know she was proud of her and her dedication to the owls. Her mom may be suggesting that although Naya’s passion is not as well-known and admired as space travel is, her commitment to these small creatures still has enormous value and is worth pursuing.*

### 3. Skill Building and Writing

30 minutes

- Have students complete **Preparing to Write: Naya’s Turning Point**. This activity will help them organize their ideas in preparation for the writing prompt on page 17 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page.
- Alternatively, have students choose a culminating task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of differentiated activities.

#### Connected readings from the *Scope* archives that explore self-perception and self-confidence:

- Fiction: [“The Mission”](#) (September 2018)
- Fiction: [“The Message”](#) (September 2019)
- Fiction: [“Good Enough”](#) (November 2019)

#### Connected readings from the *Scope* archives that explore coping with fear:

- Fiction: [“Bearing Up”](#) (February 2018)
- Fiction: [“Aftershocks”](#) (February 2020)