

# Follow the Water

A teen on Mars longs for the life she left behind on Earth

## About the Story

**Lexile® Measure** 630L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to *Scope Online*.

**Learning Objective:** to analyze a character in a work of short science fiction

**Featured Skill:** character

**Additional skills covered in this lesson plan:** inference, interpreting text, theme, genre

### Essential Questions:

- What is the value of hope?
- How do we decide what risks to take?
- Should humans colonize other planets?

### Standards:

The article and its suite of support materials support these Common Core Anchor Standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.6, R.9, W.2, SL.1, L.4, L.5, L.6

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



## Your Teaching Package

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

### Audio:

- Story read-aloud
- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary

### Podcast:

- Scope It Out!: Journey to Mars

### Slideshow:

- What It Would Take to Live Here

### Connected readings from the Scope archives:

- "The Mission"
- "She Lived on Mars (sort of)"
- "The Message"
- "What We Saw"

### Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Do Now: Theme Anticipation Guide
- Podcast Transcript
- Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Genre Explorations
- Writing Spotlight: Dialogue
- Featured Skill: Character
- Choice Board
- **Core Skills Workout:** Inference
- Lesson Plan Slide Deck
- Quiz\*

\*Available on two levels

# Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Featured Skill

## 1. Prepare to Read (20 minutes)

### Do Now: Theme Anticipation Guide (5 minutes)

- Project the **Theme Anticipation Guide** (available in your Resources tab). As students enter the classroom, have them write down whether they agree or disagree with each statement. Alternatively, share the interactive version of the activity, so students can respond digitally and view their classmates' responses in graph form.
- Invite volunteers to share and explain their responses.

### Listen to a Podcast (5 minutes)

- Listen to **Scope It Out!: Journey to Mars**. You can find the link in the story's Resources tab at Scope Online. (Students may access the podcast from the story page in Student View.)
- Let students know the story they are about to read is about a teenager living on Mars.

### Preview Vocabulary (10 minutes)

- Project the Google Slides version of **Vocabulary Definitions and Practice** on your whiteboard. Review the definitions and complete the activity as a class. Highlighted words: *core samples, inconceivable, ration, serene, sidles, sustain, rehydrated, undertow, warren*. Audio pronunciations of the words and a read-aloud of the definitions are embedded on the slides. Optionally, print the PDF version or share the slideshow link directly to your LMS and have students preview the words and complete the activity independently before class.

## 2. Read and Discuss (45 minutes)

- Read the As You Read box on page 26 or at the top of the digital story page.

- Point out the directions at the top of the column on the far-right side of page 27 and read them aloud to your students.
- Optionally, for students' first read, have them follow along as they listen to the **audio read-aloud**, located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.
- Divide students into groups to read the story again, pausing to discuss the close-reading questions that appear in the margins of the print magazine or by clicking on the bolded words on the digital story page. Have students record their answers in their own document or on the **Close-Reading and Critical-Thinking activity**.

### Close-Reading Questions

(30 minutes)

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

1. **How does Georgie feel about being on Mars? How do you know?** (inference) *Georgie hates being on Mars. She calls it "a deserted rock out in space" and "this dumb planet." She describes the discomfort of living there: the "crazy weather, the subzero cold, the dust storms" and the "stale, musty air." The compound where the colonists live she describes as "a rabbit warren of connecting plastic tunnels." She complains of being a "lab rat," of being the only teenager and having no friends, of eating rehydrated food. She also says, in the second section of the story, that she cannot stop thinking about water, which Mars does not have. That Georgie dislikes Mars is also revealed through how the story begins, with Georgie dreaming of being back on Earth, floating in the water with her grandmother and enjoying the "freedom of the waves" and the peacefulness. Georgie's feelings are clear: She would rather be on Earth.*
2. **What does Georgie mean by "Which is why it's called science fiction and not reality"?** (interpreting text) *Georgie is commenting that the science fiction novel she read, about life for the first colonists on Mars, gets a lot wrong—and that life on Mars is much less pleasant than it's made out to be in the novel. She has just said that in the novel, colonists live "a comfortable life in beautiful domed cities that have amazing views of the landscape," and that the novel's author makes life on Mars "sound not half bad." When she comments "Which is why it's called science fiction and not reality," she is making the point that in reality, life on Mars is pretty bad.*
3. **What can you infer about how Georgie views humanity? Does she seem hopeful for humanity's future?** (inference) *You can infer that Georgie doesn't have much confidence in humanity or hope for humanity's future. She seems to think people will make the same mistakes on Mars that they made on Earth, such as polluting the environment and consuming all the natural resources.*

4. **What role does water play in Georgie's memories? In her current reality?** (theme) *Water plays a large and positive role in Georgie's memories. She remembers fondly the many summers she spent on the Jersey Shore with her grandma, swimming in the ocean. In fact, she associates her grandma—whom she loves fiercely—with water; when Georgie thinks about Nana, she pictures the two of them floating like “two mermaids in the ocean.” Water plays a very different role in Georgie's current reality. On Mars, not only is there no ocean, there's very little water available, period. Water must be strictly conserved and recycled; Georgie describes the water on Mars as tasting awful and being so limited that there's never enough to do anything more than take a sponge bath. So while in Georgie's memories, water is plentiful and soothing, in her present reality, water is scarce and a source of anxiety. Water is also the reason Georgie is on Mars at all: Her parents came to Mars to search for underground water.*
5. **Compare Georgie's relationship with Nana to her relationship with her parents.** (character) *Georgie feels closer to Nana than to her parents. Georgie says that Nana knows everything about her and that she tells Nana things she would never tell her parents. She refers to Nana as “the only person in the whole world who's ever believed in me,” revealing that Georgie does not feel that her parents believe in her. Georgie seems to deeply admire and respect Nana, and she seems to have an easier time relating to Nana than to her own parents. In Georgie's dreams, she and Nana are “two mermaids in the ocean,” which suggests that Georgie sees herself and Nana as alike. On the other hand, Georgie does not seem to relate to her parents' love for geology, and she says “This is how they talk” in a critical way when her dad explains why he and Georgie's mom are not planning to return to Earth.*
6. **Why do you think Georgie's parents brought her to Mars? What gives you that idea?** (character) *Answers will vary, but it is likely Georgie's parents brought her to Mars because they love her and did not want to be apart from her. Georgie notes that when her father was asked to return to Mars, his one condition was that Georgie come too. Also, however, it seems likely that Georgie's parents really did not think through what could happen to Georgie's body on Mars and what that would mean in terms of her returning to Earth—or perhaps they did think about it, but simply did not imagine how different Georgie's feelings about Mars would be from their own. Georgie's parents, as she describes them, are obsessed with their work and thrilled to be on Mars; it may well have never occurred to them that their daughter would feel otherwise. When Georgie asks how she will ever return to Earth, her dad seems to genuinely not understand why she would ever want to.*
7. **How does the outing in the rover begin to change Georgie's view of her parents?** (character) *During the outing, Georgie begins to appreciate what it is about her parent's work that they find so exciting. Georgie describes the canyon her parents take her to as “winding and wild, like something out of a movie” and says that it's the most beautiful thing she has ever seen. She compares it to the ocean and says it gives her a sense of peace. When her parents tell her they believe they have found water, Georgie feels a thrill and observes, not critically, the pride her parents feel in their discovery. And then Georgie's dad says that nothing is ever certain and that*

*you just have to have hope. Georgie says she is shocked when her dad says this; she did not understand until this moment that her dad grapples with uncertainty but is motivated by hope to keep going.*

8. **Why does Georgie say “I know that I am my father’s daughter after all”?** (inference, character) *Georgie’s statement is a reference to her earlier comment that she sometimes wonders if she’s someone else’s baby that her parents picked up in the hospital by mistake. Now she is repeating the exact words her father said to her earlier about nothing ever being certain and having to have hope; in saying these words, she is acknowledging that she and her father are alike in that they are both able to maintain a sense of hope in the face of great uncertainty.*
  9. **At the end of the story, how does Georgie feel about returning to Earth? How do you know?** (character) *At the end of the story, Georgie seems to have mixed feelings, but she is ultimately confident in her decision to return to Earth, and she is full of hope. The day before leaving, Georgie is struck by the enormity of what she is leaving behind. She looks at her parents and thinks, “Suddenly, all these little things seem so important—this candy, those smiles, these two strong legs. How can I possibly give this up?” It’s also clear that Georgie understands that things may not go the way she wants them to; she tells Buddy that she’s not certain she’s making the right decision but that “you just have to have hope.” On the morning before she leaves, Georgie hugs her parents hard because, we can infer, she is going to miss them. However, as the shuttle’s engines start up, Georgie thinks of Earth and “all that blue water ahead.” She thinks about Nana and how happy Nana will be to see her.*
- As a class, discuss the following questions.

### Critical-Thinking Questions

(10 minutes)

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

1. **Do you think Georgie makes the right decision at the end of the story? Why or why not?**  
*Answers will vary.*
2. **Do you think Buddy does the right thing in helping Georgie stow away and return to Earth? Why or why not?** *Answers will vary.*
3. **What role does hope play in this story?** *Hope motivates everything that happens in the story. Humans colonize Mars because they hope to keep the human race going. Georgie’s parents continue to search for water because they have hope of finding it. Georgie takes the great risk of returning to Earth because she has hope that she will not lose her ability to walk and because she has hope that her grandma will still be alive when she arrives.*

### 3. Connect to Science (30 minutes)

- Project the **What It Would Take to Live on Mars** slideshow, available in your Resources tab at Scope Online or on the story page in student view.
- Optionally, project the **Genre Explorations** activity found in your Resources tab. It begins with a hunt for the genre-defining characteristics of sci-fi, one of which is being grounded in actual science. The second part of the activity prompts students to synthesize information from the **What It Would Take to Live Here** slideshow and “Follow the Water” to explore how Jennifer L. Holm draws on real science in her story.

### 4. Write About It: Character (45 minutes)

- Have students complete the **Featured Skill Activity: Character**. This activity prepares them to respond to the writing prompt on page 31 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page:

***Explain the title of the story. Who “follows the water,” and in what way? What makes them willing to follow it? Answer both questions in a short essay. Use text evidence.***

- Alternatively, have students choose a task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of culminating tasks. (Our Choice Board options include the writing prompt from the magazine, differentiated versions of the writing prompt, and additional creative ways for students to demonstrate their understanding of a story or an article.)

### 5. Writing Spotlight: Dialogue (20 minutes)

- Project the **Writing Spotlight: Dialogue** activity, available in the Resources Tab, on your whiteboard for a minilesson on writing dialogue, using mentor sentences from the article. Read Slides 1-5 as a class.
- Have students complete the You Try It on Slide 6 on their own. Then ask volunteers to share their dialogue.

**Connected readings from the Scope archives about humans inhabiting other planets:**

- Fiction/Informational Text: [“The Mission”](#) and [“Could You Be a Mars Colonist?”](#)
- Short Read: [“She Lived on Mars \(sort of\)”](#)
- Fiction: [“The Message”](#)
- Fiction: [“What We Saw”](#)