

# “Long Journey to the Stars” and “Invictus”

Astronaut José Hernández’s inspiring journey to space

## About the Story

**Lexile® Measure** 750L

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

**Learning Objective:** to synthesize key ideas from a nonfiction article and a poem

**Featured Skill:** synthesis

**Additional skills covered in this lesson plan:** key ideas and details, figurative language, critical thinking, poetry analysis

### Essential Questions:

- How are success and failure measured?
- How are the paths of our lives decided?
- Why do we explore space?

### 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.9, W.2, SL.1

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:

- Article and poem read-alouds
- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary

### Differentiated Article:

- Lower-Lexile version

### Connected readings from the *Scope* archives:

- Special Collection: “The Wonders of Space”

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

- Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
- Discussion Questions
- Poetry Analysis
- Featured Skill: Synthesis
- Choice Board
- Lesson Plan Slide Deck
- Quiz\*

\*Available on two levels

## Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

### 1. Prepare to Read (10 minutes)

#### 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: *astronomy, din, humble, lean, lunar, malfunctions, migrant, persevere*. 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 to your LMS and have students preview the words and complete the activity independently before class.

### 2. Read and Discuss (45 minutes)

#### “Long Journey to the Stars”

- Invite a volunteer to read the As You Read box on page 27 or at the top of the digital story page.
- Read the article once as a class. (*Differentiation: Share the lower-Lexile version of the article.*) Optionally, have students listen to the audio read-aloud of the article while they follow along. The **audio read-aloud** is 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 article again and respond to the following **Discussion Questions**, also located in the Resources tab.

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#### Discussion Questions (15 minutes)

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

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- The author writes that when Hernández was sitting on *Discovery*’s launch pad, “A thought flashed in his mind: *How did I get here?*” How *did* Hernández get there? What key character traits enabled him to arrive at that moment? (key ideas and details) Hernández applied to NASA’s astronaut program 11 times before his 12th application was finally accepted in

2004. His incredible persistence and determination are what enabled him to overcome the challenges and rejection he faced on his long journey to space.

2. **What people played a role in Hernández becoming an astronaut? How did they contribute to his achieving his dreams?** (key ideas and details) *Hernández had a very supportive family. By making the sacrifice to stay in Stockton rather than continue their work as migrant farmers, his parents paved the way for Hernández to learn English, flourish in his studies, and eventually go to college. His father’s encouragement and belief in his son’s potential was especially crucial throughout Hernández’s journey. His second-grade teacher nurtured his love of astronomy and advocated for his family to stay put in Stockton. The astronauts at NASA inspired Hernández; it was watching their first lunar missions on television and seeing Franklin Chang-Díaz, a Spanish speaker with a background similar to his own, that made Hernández believe that he too could go to space.*
3. **Hernández says that he hopes his story inspires other people—especially kids—to reach for the stars. What does it mean to “reach for the stars”?** (figurative language) *To reach for the stars is to try to do something that is very difficult. Hernández is not saying that he hopes his story inspires all kids to become astronauts; he is saying he hopes his story inspires kids to try to achieve their goals even if they seem difficult or impossible to achieve.*
4. **Have your ideas about failure or rejection changed after reading this article? Explain.** (critical thinking) *Answers will vary. Students may offer that a failure or rejection is often seen as an endpoint, but Hernández used every failure and rejection as a new beginning—a learning experience and a motivator to get him closer to his dreams. No matter how difficult the path was for Hernández, his attitude and confidence kept the light of his dreams from being extinguished and led to them eventually coming true.*

## “Invictus”

- Have students listen to the read-aloud of the poem while they follow along. The **audio read-aloud** is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.
- Break students into pairs to reread and discuss the poem using the following **Poetry Analysis Questions**. A print and digital version of these questions can be found in your Resources tab. It includes a version of the poem with numbered lines and additional annotations to scaffold their analysis.

## Poetry Analysis Questions

(10 minutes)

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

1. **What is the poem's rhyme scheme, or pattern of rhymes? Use an example to support your description.** *This poem has an ABAB rhyme scheme; in each stanza, the first line rhymes with the third, and the second line rhymes with the fourth. For example, in stanza 1, the line "Out of the night that covers me" rhymes with the line "I thank whatever gods may be," and the line "Black as the pit from pole to pole" rhymes with the line "For my unconquerable soul."*
2. **Find two examples of alliteration, the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of two or more neighboring words.** *There is repetition of the "p" sound in "Black as the pit from pole to pole" and repetition of the "b" sound in "Under the bludgeonings of chance/My head is bloody, but unbowed."*
3. **Take turns listening to your partner reading the poem aloud. What feelings do the rhymes and rhythm of the poem create for you?** *The poem has a musical quality. As you read, it feels like a steady and unwavering beat. This beat creates momentum that feels like moving forward, just like the speaker moves forward despite his circumstances.*
4. **The poem describes difficult and painful experiences the speaker endures.**
  - a. **Find an example of Henley using metaphor to describe the speaker's hardships.** *In stanza 1, Henley uses metaphor to compare the speaker's experiences to night and a black pit. This emphasizes how dark, deep, and inescapable his struggles are.*
  - b. **Find an example of Henley using personification to describe the speaker's hardships.** *In stanza 2, Henley personifies "chance" and "circumstance" as forces that physically beat or strike the speaker, suggesting that events outside of his control have tried to break him.*
5. **Choose one of the following word pairs to describe the speaker's tone in this poem: cheerful and amused, depressed and doubtful, defiant and determined, bitter and disappointed. What words, phrases, or lines contribute to the tone you chose?** *The speaker's tone is defiant and determined. The words "bloody," "unafraid," and "unbowed" contribute to this tone.*
6. **What phrase does the speaker repeat in the final stanza? What does this repetition emphasize the importance of?** *The speaker repeats the phrase "I am" twice. This repetition emphasizes the importance of personal responsibility in the path your life takes. The speaker has not let his hardships define his life; he has shaped his own life through strength and determination, even when faced with seemingly impossible odds.*
7. **Invictus means "unconquerable" or "undefeated" in Latin. How does the title "Invictus" relate to the overall message and mood of the poem?** *The poem is about showing strength,*

*defiance, and resilience in the face of hardship. It leaves the reader feeling inspired and empowered. The poem's overall message and mood mirrors the meaning of invictus.*

8. As a child, Henley (1849-1903) suffered from tuberculosis, a disease that affected his bones and required the amputation of one of his legs when he was 16. He wrote "Invictus" during an almost two-year stay in the hospital. How might the poet's personal experiences relate to the poem's message? *Henley's personal struggles with illness likely influenced the poem's themes of enduring hardship and maintaining strength.*

### 3. Write About It: Synthesis (45 minutes)

- Have students complete the **Featured Skill Activity: Synthesis**. 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:

***What does "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul" mean? Based on the article, how is José Hernández the master of his fate and the captain of his soul? Answer both questions. Use text evidence to support your ideas.***

- 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 article.)

#### Connected readings from the Scope Online Library:

- Special Collection: "[The Wonders of Space](#)"
- Paired Texts: "[The Power of Failure](#)"