

ALIEN IN MY POCKET

By Nate Ball

Discussion Guide



Book Talk

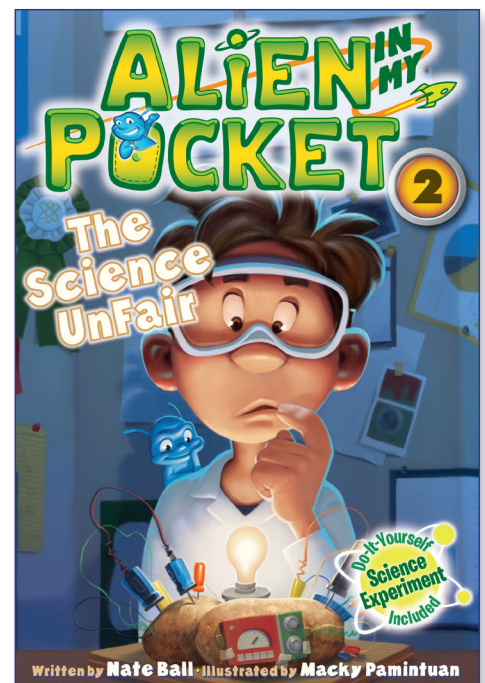
Alien in My Pocket: Blast Off!

At one time or another, almost everyone has wondered if life exists on other planets, but what would you do if a spaceship crash-landed in your bedroom, and an alien no bigger than your hand tried to take you prisoner? Zack attempts to keep a small blue alien, Amp, a secret, but when Amp travels to school with Zack and starts controlling what people say and do, the task proves virtually impossible. Now Zack with the help of his friend, Olivia, needs to find a way to get Amp back to his planet, Erde, to stop an alien invasion on Earth.



Alien in My Pocket: The Science UnFair

Zack needs to get an A on his science fair project so he doesn't flunk the class. If he doesn't, his parents won't let him be on the baseball team. When Zack makes a potato battery that doesn't really work, Olivia and the little alien, Amp, come up with a spectacular idea—make an electromagnet. The electromagnet is a great project—until Amp supercharges it and Zack nearly destroys the community center where the science fair is being held. To make matters worse, Zack's bratty little brother, Taylor, is getting wise to Amp's existence and creating big trouble. And Zack, Amp, and Olivia are still trying to find a way to send Amp back to Erde to stave off the invasion of Earth.



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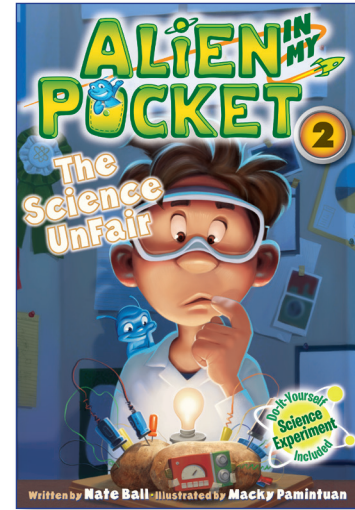
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Discussion Questions

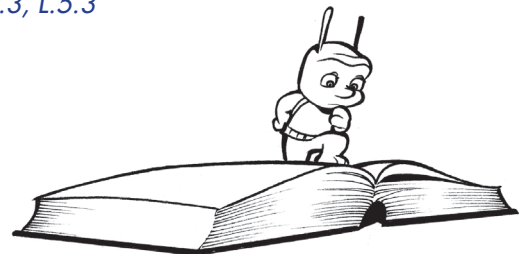


1. What does Zack hope to accomplish by keeping Amp's existence a secret? Why does it become necessary for Zack to tell Olivia? How does she respond?
2. What is Amp's special power? How does Zack hope to use Amp's power to his advantage?
3. An idiom is a word or phrase which means something different from its literal meaning. What English idioms do Olivia and Zack use that Amp does not understand? How do Olivia and Zack explain them to him?
4. What good comes from Zack, Olivia, and Amp's visit to the science lab? How is Zack's brother negatively impacted?
5. Amp tells Zack and Olivia he needs the initial launch system replaced on his spaceship in order for him to return to Erde and stop the invasion. What steps do Zack and Olivia take to launch Amp and his spaceship into orbit?
6. How do Zack's parents react to Zack after the failed rocket experiment? Why are they convinced Zack is going to have a good year?

The above questions correlate to CCSS (Writing & Speaking): SL.3.1, SL.4.1, SL.5.1; CCSS (Reading Literature): RL.3.1, RL.4.1, RL.5.1; CCSS (Language): L.3.1, L.4.1, L.5.1 and L.3.3, L.4.3, L.5.3

1. What does Amp do that makes Zack's life miserable? How does Zack respond to Amp's constant needs?
2. How does Zack's younger brother trick him into revealing information about Amp? What is Taylor's reaction when his attempts to discover Zack's secrets fail?
3. Why is Zack so disinterested in the science fair? Why is the potato battery project such a failure?
4. How do Zack's parents react to his bad grades and lack of interest in school? What connections does Zack see between his passion and school?
5. Why does Zack win the first science fair? How does Zack's project almost bring down the community center?
6. How does Amp save the day at the second science fair? How does Amp keep himself from being discovered?

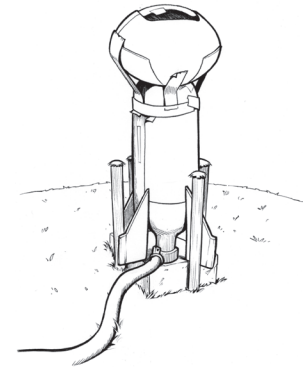
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Extension Activities



Periodically Revisit the Periodic Tale

Zack doesn't know much about the periodic table. Divide the class into six small groups and ask students to select and investigate one of the following research assignments: (1) Explain how the periodic table is arranged, (2) Explain how the elements are grouped, (3) Explain and define the terms *electron* and *proton* and how they pertain to the elements, (4) Define the periodic law and explain why it is important, (5) Explain atomic number and its relevance to elements, (6) Investigate tungsten and, based on what you learn, explain why Amp needed this particular element to repair his spaceship. Each group can present their information using 3D models, brochures, digital media tools, or other appropriate resources.

CCSS (Writing): W.3.2, W.4.2, W.5.2, W.3.7, W.4.7, W.5.7; CCSS (Language): L.3.1, L.4.1, L.5.1, L.3.2, L.4.2, L.5.2; CCSS (Speaking & Listening): SL.3.4, SL.4.4, SL.5.4, SL.4.5, SL.5.5.

Solving the Mystery of Life on Other Planets

Is it possible that a planet like Erde could exist? For many years astronomers have known that there are other planets in our solar system and also beyond our solar system, possibly planets that could sustain life. Ask students to select a partner and have the teams read a variety of reports, discussing the possibility of life on other planets both in and outside of our solar system. Students should also investigate the types of instruments used to discover planets and other objects in space. As students read, ask them to take notes on note cards for a discussion on the topic. After students have completed their research, form a circle and ask students to debate the possibility of the existence of other life-sustaining planets and the technology available to find them if they do exist.

CCSS (Writing): W.3.2, W.4.2, W.5.2, W.3.7, W.4.7, W.5.7; CCSS (Language): L.3.1, L.4.1, L.5.1; CCSS (Speaking & Listening): SL.3.4, SL.4.4, SL.5.4.



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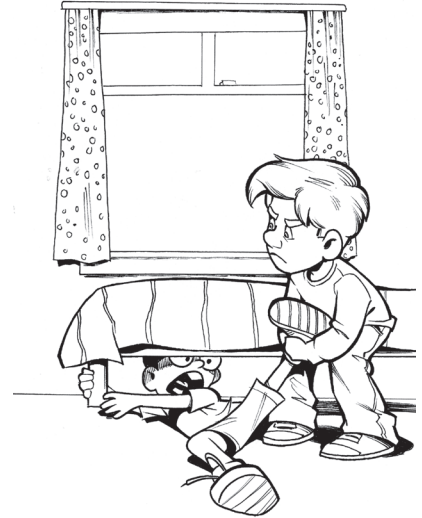
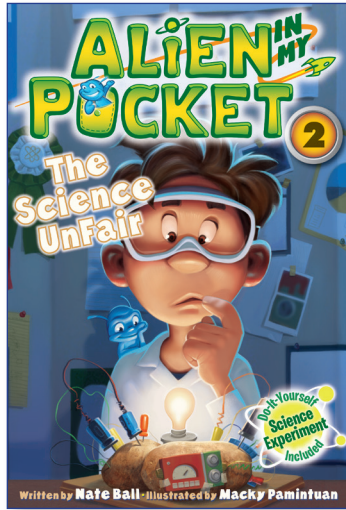
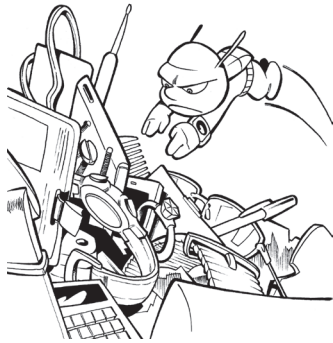
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You Can Be a Scientist!

With a partner, ask students to find a science experiment they can make with household items. Students can visit the following websites for ideas:

<http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/experiments.html>

<http://pbskids.org/designsquad/build/>

<http://www.stevespanglerscience.com/lab/experiments>

After conducting their experiment at home, the students can present to the class. Students should explain the scientific elements of their experiments, such as the implications or importance of chemical reactions.

CCSS (Language): L.3.4, L.4.4, L.5.4; CCSS (Speaking & Listening): SL. 4.5, SL.5.5



The Earth's Magnetic Field

On page 56, Amp attempts to explain to Zack why Earth is one big magnet. In small groups, ask students to investigate the Earth's magnetic field; students should investigate and explain why and how the Earth is a big magnet, as well as how this phenomenon helps humans. Have students present their information to the class using at least one visual aid.

CCSS (Language): L.3.4, L.4.4, L.5.4; CCSS (Speaking & Listening): SL. 4.5, SL.5.5

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