

**JACK AND THE SKYHOOK** ACTIVITY 3 **PLAIN TALKING WITH IDIOMS**

Idioms are expressions used in speech by people in different areas or groups. They help make meaning but usually only to people who are already familiar with them. To other people, they may sound weird and it may be a puzzle to try to understand what the person means.

1. Write the meaning of the following idioms from **Jack and the Skyhook**.

- *Then he'd been rescued in the nick of time ...*

\_\_\_\_\_

- *But hey, if you're too chicken ...*

\_\_\_\_\_

- *... she has to pick a little dweeb like you.*

\_\_\_\_\_

- *I want no horsing around, ...*

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Try to decipher the following common idioms.

- give in - \_\_\_\_\_

- an old hand - \_\_\_\_\_

- on the mend - \_\_\_\_\_

- short cut - \_\_\_\_\_

- keep cool - \_\_\_\_\_

- on foot - \_\_\_\_\_

- polish off - \_\_\_\_\_

- fall on deaf ears - \_\_\_\_\_

- steer clear of - \_\_\_\_\_

- fool-proof - \_\_\_\_\_

- breakneck speed - \_\_\_\_\_

**JACK AND THE SKYHOOK** ACTIVITY 2 **ACRONYM ACTION**

Acronyms are a type of abbreviation. An acronym is a word formed from the initial letters or parts of other words.

COW is an acronym: **Cyber-Organic Worker**

1. From the text of **Jack and the Skyhook**, find the meanings of the other acronyms:

RAT - \_\_\_\_\_

BEAN - \_\_\_\_\_

2. Acronyms are commonly used in speech and writing, especially for the names of organisations, processes and devices. The website [www.acronymfinder.com](http://www.acronymfinder.com) lists over 300,000 acronyms. Use the acronym finder or a dictionary to find the origin/meaning of the following acronyms.

Radar - \_\_\_\_\_

Epirb - \_\_\_\_\_

Qantas - \_\_\_\_\_

UNESCO - \_\_\_\_\_

ASEAN - \_\_\_\_\_

WHO - \_\_\_\_\_

NATO - \_\_\_\_\_

3. Acronyms are sometimes deliberately formed to help people remember names, especially names of organisations, for example: FIDO – **F**raser **I**sland **D**efenders' **O**rganisation, an environment conservation group.

Invent some acronyms.

\_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

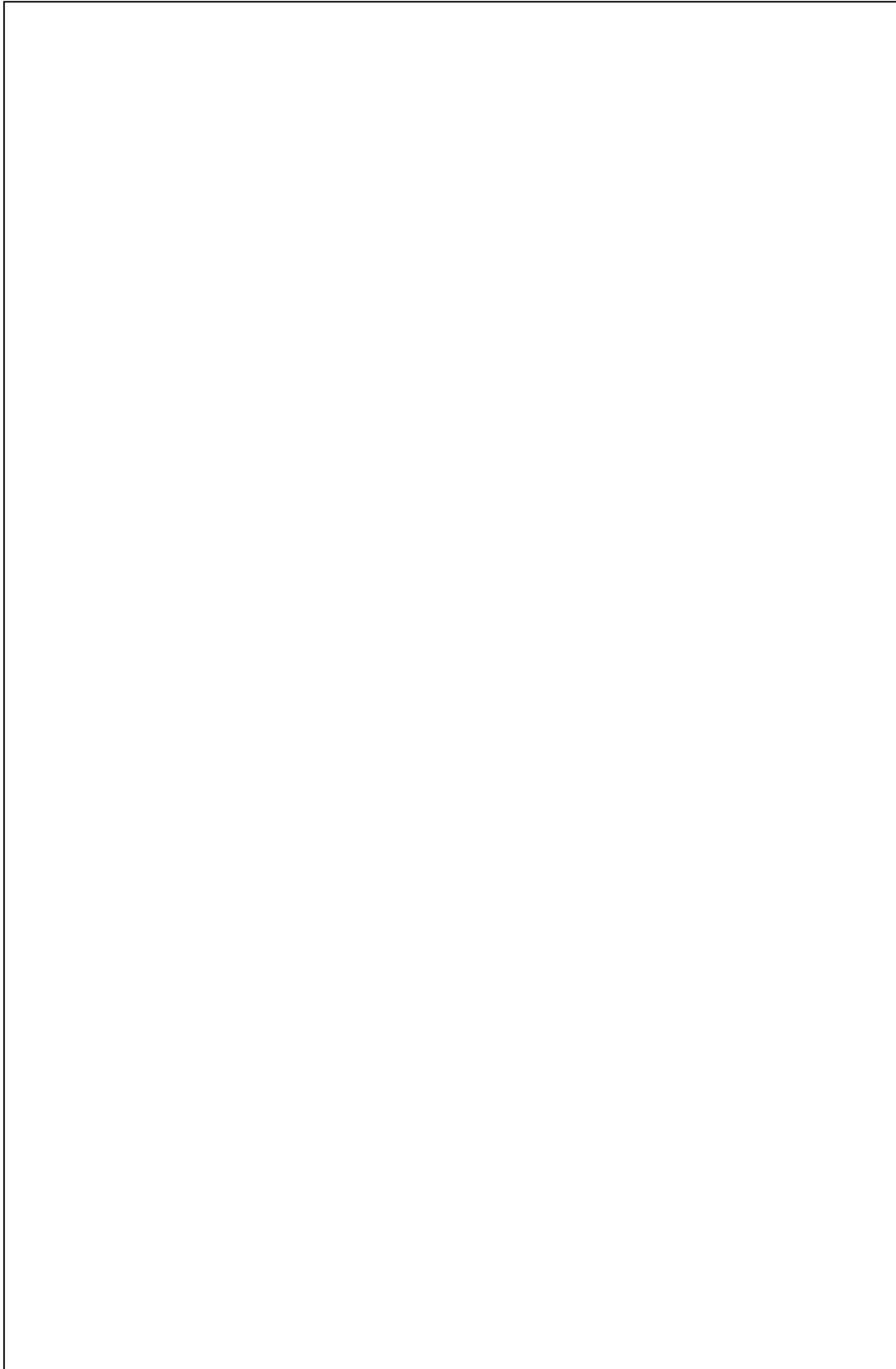
\_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

**JACK AND THE SKYHOOK** ACTIVITY 1 **PICTURE PERIL**

Take up an illustrator's challenge and draw a picture depicting the whole strange drama of the skyhook in the strange alien world of awesome Bargleplod and its five moons, including little Bink.



## Extension Activities

- Nanobes are the smallest known life form – ten times smaller than the smallest bacteria. They have only recently been discovered by Philippa Uwins at the University of Queensland. Check them out on [www.microscopy~uk.org.uk/nanobes](http://www.microscopy~uk.org.uk/nanobes)
- *It wasn't a tentacle around his waist – it was a tendril.* Look up a dictionary to find the difference between the two.
- To try to help readers visualise the extraordinary events in the novel the author uses many similes such as *like sliding tubes of darkness* and *as light as slippers*. Skim the text to compile a list of similes used in the novel.
- A big vocabulary of science words is spread throughout the text. Assemble a bunch of these words to produce a find-a-word – *interstellar, hypersonic, nanobes, pulverize, airlock, opaque,* etc. Make copies and distribute them among classmates.
- *Bargleplod* is an incredibly huge planet famous for its storms and multiple moons. It sounds similar to Jupiter. To get an idea of its scale, make a comparative study of the dimensions of Earth and Jupiter.
- Another way the author assists the reader in visualising the story is by using a lot of imagery – descriptive phrases such as *swirling clouds of the alien world*. Find some other examples of imagery.
- The author has obviously had a lot of enjoyment integrating into the story science and clichés of popular culture and fairy tales. What is the famous source of *Cadet Wong, we have a small problem?*
- Take another fairy tale and improvise your own modern version of it. Read any of Laurance Anholt's *Seriously Silly Stories* – a series of 'fractured fairy tales' – to see how it can be done.
- Use text clues to create a diorama of Jack marooned on the skyhook between *Bink* and *Bargleplod*.
- Describe how the novel breaks some gender stereotypes.
- Read about Jack on another perilous interstellar mission in the companion novel, ***Jack and the Aliens***.

# JACK AND THE SKYHOOK

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Teachers' Notes by Kevin Steinberger

***Jack and the Skyhook*** leaves planet Earth for outer space in an entertaining and highly imaginative improvisation of an old fairy tale blended with genuine up-to-the-minute scientific knowledge. But even out in the rarefied atmosphere of space common human rivalries and self-interest can get in the way of mission goals.

Space cadet Jack is one of the lucky few chosen to leave the starship to explore Bink, a tiny moon of the gargantuan planet, Bargleplod. As he leaves, he makes a dubious trade with a passed over cadet. Soon he will perilously discover that the nanobes he accepted quite literally represent groundbreaking science.

## Discussion

- To what extent does ***Jack and the Skyhook*** parallel ***Jack and the Beanstalk***?
- Are there any moral messages or lessons about character in the story for the reader?
- The circumstances of the skyhook are so bizarre as to be almost unimaginable. How effective are the illustrations in helping the reader visualise the awesomeness of the skyhook and the action that occurs upon it?
- How vital is the role of COW in the story?
- There is a lot of science and jargon woven into the story yet it does not affect the pace or excitement of the novel. Why?
- Jack's plight is deadly serious so why is the story funny?