

The Child from Mars

For many years, Tom had been fascinated with space: he always imagined what life would be like if he was from Mars. Every night, before bed, Tom would sit with his mother in the garden and gaze through his antique telescope. The sights were astonishing: he would see shooting stars, constellations and even vague glimmers of light coming from other planets. Tom was no expert, but he was convinced one of the planets was Mars; he needed a giant telescope to be certain. "Okay, Tom, time for bed." "Oh just one more look please, Mum," pleaded Tom.

"You will have plenty of time to stargaze tomorrow, little one," replied Mum as she tucked Tom into his space-themed bed. Mum switched on his nightlight: it lit his room up with wondrous images of the night sky.

Tom admired the beautiful projections on his ceiling. He counted the four bright stars that made up the Crux constellation, "One, two, three and four. All there and accounted for. Goodnight world." Tom dozed off in no time.

During breakfast, Tom and Mum were watching the news. There had been reports about new images of Mars. Tom sat right up against the television to get a closer look. "Mum, pause the TV." Tom gasped, "Look there. In that picture. That looks like a person." Paying no attention to Tom's wild imagination, Mum smiled and dusted off Tom's bike. "Here you go, little one. Take your bike and get some fresh air: you can watch more television later." Tom sighed and went off for a bike ride. He saw lots of children playing outside together, but Tom was always a bit of a loner. He did not feel that other children understood him, so he preferred to keep to himself. Cycling furiously, Tom could not get the images from Mars off his mind: he was sure he saw the outline of a child.

As night fell, Tom followed his usual rituals. He glanced through his telescope; this time he was keen to focus on the lights he thought were coming from Mars. Tom struggled to focus the image until a sudden flash of light filled the eyepiece. Stunned, Tom blinked and shook his head frantically. Once his vision returned, Tom peered through the eyepiece again. His jaw dropped. Tom saw a shooting light bursting from the planet he assumed was Mars. The light was getting closer.

"Tom. Tom..." a voice called. "Tom, to bed immediately!" yelled mum. He had lost track of time: it was way past his bedtime. Tom had no choice but to leave his telescope, but his imagination was running wild with ideas about what the light was.

Tucked into bed, Tom counted the lights on his ceiling as usual. "One, two, three and..." Wide-eyed, Tom jumped out of bed. The fourth star was not there. His projector was obstructed by an outline. An outline just like the one from the images of Mars. He heard the scattering of feet in the corner of his room. CRASH. The projector was knocked over. Reaching for his light switch, Tom launched across his room. Once the lights came on, a small figure was revealed. Oval-eyed and blue-skinned, the figure quivered as though it was frightened.

Lesson 3

Can I answer a variety of comprehension questions?

- 1) Describe what Tom can see coming from other planets in the first paragraph.
- 2) What phrase lets us know that Tom doesn't know a lot about space?
- 3) What did Tom see in the images of Mars?
- 4) What did mum make Tom do to get him out of the house?
- 5) Tom doesn't have many friends. What word lets us know this?
- 6) What does the word "obstructed" in the fifth paragraph mean?
- 7) Who do you think is in Tom's room?