



The Space Race

Part 1

Teacher Reads It's the year 2100 and time for the yearly space race. But the space race isn't a running race; it's a race across outer space. Merk and his friend, Zar, are excited to be in the race this year.

On planet Pax, it was the day of the space race. The
12 winner would get a big cash prize, and Merk was set on
24 winning the cash so he could take a star explorer class. Merk
36 also wanted to test out the speed of the rocket pack that he
49 got for his thirteenth birthday.

54 As Merk put on his space equipment, Zar, Merk's best
64 **friend**, zoomed into the yard with his rocket pack. Merk had
75 known Zar since they were little. "Are you all set?" called Zar.

87 "Hold on." Merk patted his pockets and then ran inside to
98 get his lucky truck **key**. When Merk came back, Zar teased
109 him, "You don't need a truck key to start a rocket pack.
121 Are you going to bring your other things too? Like that old
133 pencil?"

134 Merk frowned. He did not like being teased. Sure, he
144 had things from the old days, like the key, the pencil, even a
157 mouse trap. He knew there was no use for keys now. Every
169 lock could be unlocked with a face scan. But this key had
181 been his grandmother's key to her old pickup truck. She had
192 passed the key on to Merk. It was his good luck charm.

Part 2

Teacher Reads Keep reading to learn more about the space race.

204 Merk and Zar flew with their rocket packs to the race's
215 start line. They lined up with the other racers, who were
226 revving their rocket packs.



Part 2 continued

230 “Good luck, Merk,” shouted Zar. He wanted to make up
240 for teasing Merk about his key.
246 Merk held back before he forgave his pal. But then Merk
257 shouted back, “You, too.”
261 The blast horn sounded, and the racers were off. They
271 had all looked at the race map in advance—the race went
283 from planet to planet. So they knew the distance to each
294 planet and how long it would take to get there. When
305 the racers landed on each planet, they each had to grab a
317 flashing silver disk off the ground. It was proof they had
328 made it through that part of the race.

Part 3

Teacher Reads Merk has a plan to win the space race. Read on to find out about his idea.

336 The space race went on all day. At last, there was just one
349 more stop. Then the racers could set out for the finish line on
362 their home planet, Pax.
366 While zooming around an asteroid, Merk came up
374 with a way to take the lead. He could grab the disk while
387 still in flight, without landing. With that plan in mind, he
398 raced down to the planet. When Merk was within inches
408 of grabbing the disk, Zar made a loud noise. Merk had a
420 sinking feeling. He knew he was about to take the lead in the
433 race, but he had to check on Zar. What was going on?
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