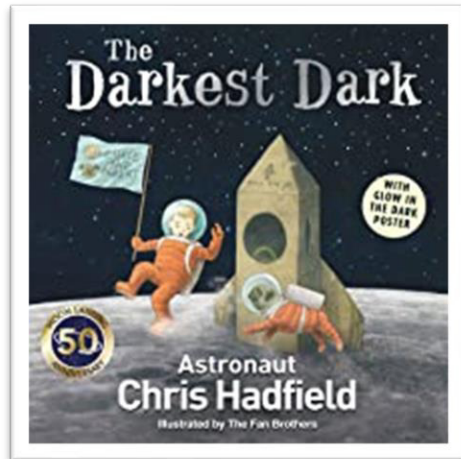


Read for Pleasure

The Darkest Dark

By Astronaut Chris Hadfield



The story of a boy who faced his fears and went on to reach for the stars.

Chris loves rockets and pretending to be an astronaut. There's just one small problem, at night he is afraid of the dark.

Title Talk

The title of this story is: The Darkest Dark.

- How scary do you think this story might be? Why do you think this?
- Where might this story be set?
- Where exactly might the darkest of darkness be?



Cover Chat

Now look at the cover of this picture book.

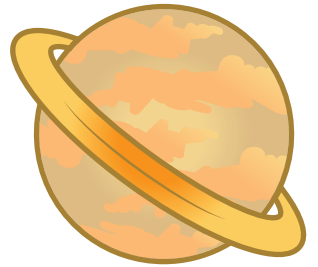
- Here we see a boy stood on the moon, together with his pet pug. Look at the flag the boy is holding. What are these two characters called?
- Did you notice that this boy's name is the same as the book's author: Chris Hadfield? Why might this be?

Interestingly, we see a photograph of Chris on the back cover. Might this be significant?

- If this is indeed a true story, why do you think it has been written?
- Does this make you more inclined to want to read this story? Discuss.

Page 1-4

- When Chris was younger, what did he like to pretend to be?
- When did he like to save the planet from aliens?
- When did he like to travel to Mars?
- As a young astronaut, what did Chris not like to do?



Page 5-6

- Why do you think young Chris did not like to sleep?
- Why do you think Chris' dad tells him that he is old enough to have to sleep in his own bed?

Page 7-8

- When it grew dark, what was it that frightened Chris and made it so he found it hard to sleep?
- Have you ever felt scared of the dark? Discuss.
- Can you see Chris' vivid imagination on these pages? How many aliens can you see in the dark? What might Chris be A] thinking and B] feeling at this time? Might this be why he pulling up his bed cover and has hids pet pug by his side?

Page 9-10

- What did Chris do when he became scared of the dark?

Chris. Was. Going. To. Sleep. In. his. Own. Bed. Tonight.

This is a very strange looking sentence, one that is made up of lots of one-word sentences. Why do you think it has been written like this? Why do you think the word TONIGHT has been written in italics?

- How would you read this sentence? Why would you read it in this way?
- Why do you think mum and dad check with Chris to make sure there are no aliens in his bedroom? Do you think they believe in aliens too? Discuss.

Page 11-12

- What else did Chris' parents do to try and reassure him that the dark is not something to be afraid of?

- Which of these things did they eventually take away from him? Why do you think they did this?
- How many clangs can you see in the first of the four pictures on page 12? How is it written? How many clangs can you see in the second picture on page 12? How are these clangs now written? Why might this be? How many clangs can you see in the third picture on page 12? How are they now written? Why might this be? Why are there no clangs written on the fourth picture on page 12? Discuss.

Knowledge: During this time, the first men to walk on the moon had been launched into space. Take a look at the newspaper that we can see.

- * At what time did they blast off?
- * How fast would their spaceship be travelling?



Page 13-14

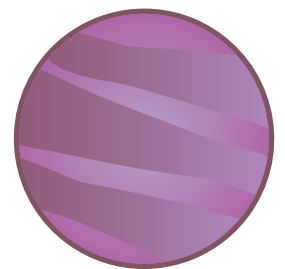
- How did Chris' dad finally get Chris to stay in his own bed and fall fast asleep?
- We are told by Chris that that night he had his favourite dream. What do you think his dream was?

Page 15-16

- What was Chris' favourite dream?
- Did it surprise you that Albert accompanied Chris in his dream of walking on the moon? Why not?

Page 17-22

- When did Chris and his family visit their neighbour?
- Why were they visiting them?
- Were they the only neighbours to be sat there watching TV?
- What special event were they all there to watch?
- How might they have felt when watching such an historical event?



Page 23-24

- It is here that we discover how this book got its title: THE DARKEST DARK. What exactly was the darkest dark? Discuss.

Page 25-26

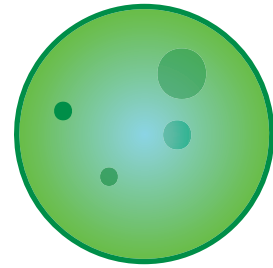
- The next two pages are wordless. Might this be significant?
- Why are Chris and others staring up at the moon on this of all nights?

Page 27-28

- When Chris went to bed that night, what experiment did he do?
- Why do you think he turned out all the lights, including the night light, in his bedroom before he got into bed?
- How dark and scary would this have been for Chris knowing that on the previous night he had been afraid of the dark and the shadows within it?
- We read here two important sentences. Which of these two sentences is the most important? Why is this? Discuss.

Nothing had changed.

But Chris had changed.



Page 29-30

- What had Chris seen that was deeper and darker than the darkness in his bedroom?
- How dark would this have been and why? Discuss.
- How is this darkness illustrated on these two pages?

Interestingly, we see Chris describing this darkness in a positive light on page 30. He talks about the POWER and MYSTERY and VELVETY BLACK BEAUTY of the darkest dark. Why might this be? Discuss.

Page 31-34

- What does Chris allow himself to dream about once he realises, he has conquered his fear of the dark?
- How is this illustrated on these final few pages?
- Why do you think the final sentence in this book is as follows? Discuss.

Dreams that actually can come true.

Think about the book as a whole?

What would Chris' life had been like if he hadn't watch the TV that night and had gone home determined to conquer his fear of the dark?

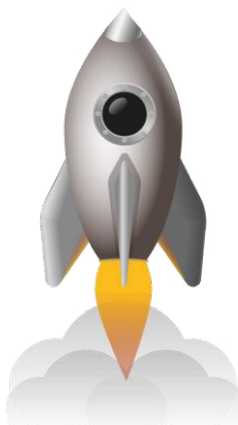
Also featured in this book:

- I. A letter written by astronaut Chris Hadfield that will help you contextualise this story and anchor it in reality.
- II. A brief biography of Chris' life in terms of him achieving his dream of becoming an astronaut.
- III. A message from Chris together with family photographs that picture his journey of being a young boy with a big dream to hm launching into space.

A Message from Chris:

Being in the dark can feel scary... but it's also an amazing place. The dark is where we see the stars and the galaxies of our universe. The dark is where we find the Northern Lights shimmering and get to wish on shooting stars. And it was quietly in the dark where I first decided who I was going to be and imagined all her things I could do. The dark is for dreams - and morning is for making them come true.

Chris Hadfield



The perfect companion to
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John Murray

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John is a recognised specialist in developing children's reading and comprehension.

The creator of Reading Explorers, Top Class Comprehension and Reading Rocketeers, his seminars and CPD training focus on the teaching, learning and enjoyment of reading.

An independent Literacy consultant, he aims to support schools to improve their performance and secure best practice. Above all, it is to ignite within us a passion for books and a genuine love for the written word.

His enthusiasm and expertise can be seen throughout his work and his resources and training are used in classrooms worldwide.

“You know you've read a good book when you turn the last page and feel a little as if you have lost a friend.”

Paul Sweeney