

## At home materials

### Year 5 Week 5 to 8

#### Week 5

I have carefully read the poem.

I have written 2 paragraphs sharing my opinion.

I have read and answered the grammar questions carefully.

I have practised the spellings and used some in sentences.



#### Week 6

I have carefully read the chapter and answered the questions.

I have written a balanced and detailed argument.

I have read and answered the grammar questions carefully.

I have practised the spellings and used some in sentences.



#### Week 7

I have answered the questions around the text.

I have written a detailed paragraph.

I have read and answered the grammar questions carefully.

I have practised the spellings and used some in sentences.



#### Week 8

I have answered the questions around the text.

I have written a detailed story.

I have read and answered the grammar questions carefully.

I have practised the spellings and used some in sentences.



This booklet consists of weekly tasks in all areas of English: reading, writing, grammar and spellings.

 **How do I use the booklet?**

- Set aside time each day to complete the weekly tasks. You don't have to do each one every day.
- Take your time to read and understand the extract. Ask an adult if you need help understanding the text.
- Read the instructions and questions carefully before you start a task.

 **How do the lessons work?**

Below are some suggested timings.

- **Reading** - 30 minutes (including time to re-read, look up words and ask questions)
- **Writing** - 45 minutes daily
- **Grammar** - 5 minutes daily
- **Spelling** - 10 minutes daily

**Can parents, carers and siblings help?**

Yes, of course! Family members can help in the following ways:

- Read the extracts with you aloud.
- Gather all the exciting and difficult words you want to find out about or use in your writing and put them on display.
- Help you with the planning of the story.
- Write a story at the same time as you. You could then compare your stories and check each other's writing.

 **What else can I do if I love writing and I want more of a challenge?**

- Keep writing stories using your own ideas.
- Explore [www.lovereading4kids.co.uk](http://www.lovereading4kids.co.uk) or [www.newsela.com](http://www.newsela.com) to find other extracts to read and write about.

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These packs include the wonderful resources from:

## Week 5: Reading and writing prompts

### Be the Change – Richest Boy in The World

#### Reading

#### Read the Poem 'Richest Boy in the World'

1. What did John give the writer?
2. Were you surprised by this? Why? Why not?
3. Why do you think John says, 'If I do get rich...I won't forget you'?
4. Was Miss Moss's way to show the class how the wealth in the world was divided a good idea? Why? Why not?

#### Writing

**Do you think rich people should help poor people by giving them money?**

**Write at least two paragraphs explaining your reasons for this.**



## Week 5: Grammar and Spelling prompts

### Grammar

**Insert the missing inverted commas.**

Roman life was unlike modern life, the archaeologist said.

**Underline the modal verb in this sentence.**

I might go to George's party later.

**Insert a pair of brackets into this sentence.**

The scientist who worked at NASA made a startling discovery.

**Insert a semi-colon in the correct place in this sentence.**

Harry tiptoed through the creepy house the floorboards echoed unsettling noises.

**Insert the two commas in the correct places.**

I stumbled across the sand carrying my bucket and spade a packed lunch my shoes and a bottle of water.

### Spelling

**Practise each word. Choose two and write their definitions.**

**Choose two to write in sentences.**

system

temperature

thorough

twelfth

variety

vegetable

vehicle

yacht



## Week 6: Reading and writing prompts

### My Cousin is a Time Traveller – Chapter 1

#### Reading

**Before reading:**

Predict what you think the story might be about based on its title.

**During reading:**

Collect the names of every new character you meet.

**After reading:**

Which character do you think is the most important and why?

#### Writing

**Write a balanced argument. In paragraph 1, give 3 reasons why it would be good to be a superhero. In paragraph 2, give 3 reasons why it wouldn't be good.**

**In your conclusion, decide whether you would rather have superpowers or not.**



## Week 6: Grammar and Spelling prompts

## Grammar

**Which sentence should end with a question mark?**

- a) What we ate for dinner was very unusual
- b) Can you guess what we ate for dinner
- c) Ask me what we ate for dinner

**Replace the underlined words with the correct pronoun.**

When Sara came to the end of the road, Sara turned right.  
The pavement had a large hole and Sara fell into the hole.

**Rewrite the underlined words in their contracted form.**

I cannot believe we won!

Mum said we should not eat sweets before dinner.

**Circle the adverbs in this passage.**

Silently, I wandered down the lonely road. I could hear the wind howl loudly as I passed through the trees.

**Insert the correct coordinating conjunctions.**

I like coffee \_\_\_\_\_ tea \_\_\_\_\_ I don't like hot chocolate.

## Spelling

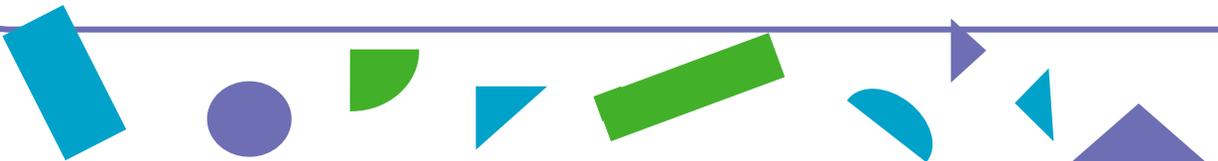
**Practise each word. Choose two and write their definitions.**

**Choose two to write in sentences.**

available  
awkward  
bruise  
cemetery

average  
bargain  
category  
committee

competition  
conscience  
community  
communicate



## Week 7: Reading and writing prompts

### My Cousin is a Time Traveller – Chapter 1

#### Reading

##### On page 1:

1. What is Star Lad's real name?
2. Write down two things Star Lad saved Earth from.

##### On page 2:

1. Who gave Zack his superpowers?
2. What two things would Zack do when he returned home?  
a) smile      b) grunt      c) eat      d) sleep

##### On page 3:

1. What is Lara Lee's superhero name?
2. The word 'inefficient' is closest in meaning to:  
a) great      b) useless      c) skilled

#### Writing

**Imagine you are given superpowers by Zorborn. Write a paragraph to describe the superpowers you are given and how you are given them.**

What are your superpowers? How do you feel about them?

Who gave you your superpowers? How?

Who can you now help using your superpowers?



## Week 7: Grammar and Spelling prompts

### Grammar

**Rearrange the words given to make a question. Use only the words given.**

Statement: They are listening to music.

Question:

**Write two sentences. The first sentence should use the word 'point' as a verb. The second sentence should use the word 'point' as a noun.**

**Circle the two words that show the tense in the sentence below.**

They went to the theme park – the car journey home was difficult.

**Underline the subordinate clause in each sentence below.**

Although it was getting late, Dan still hadn't finished his homework.

If you get hungry, help yourself to a snack.

**Change the underlined verbs into the simple past tense.**

It was a cold day when we play handball.

My friend throw the ball to me and catch it.

### Spelling

**Practise each word. Choose two and write their definitions. Choose two to write in sentences.**

conscious  
convenience  
criticise  
develop

controversy  
correspond  
curiosity

definite  
desperate  
determined



## Week 8: Reading and writing prompts

### My Cousin is a Time Traveller – Chapter 1

#### Reading

##### On page 4:

1. Why does Luke say he 'liked living in a world with Zack'?
2. Why do you think Luke would never tell Zack to his face that he liked living in a world with him?

##### On page 5:

1. What time did Zack return home after the 'emergency'?
2. Why wasn't Zack needed?

##### On page 6:

1. The word 'unease' is closest in meaning to:  
a) happy    b) sad    c) nervous    d) excited

#### Writing

**Write a story about a superhero mission (aim for at least 2 paragraphs)**

What is your superhero's name?

What is their superpower?

Who or what do they rescue?

Which villain do they stop?



## Week 8: Grammar and Spelling prompts

### Grammar

**Insert a semi-colon into this sentence.**

It was a beautiful day I felt so lucky.

**Complete this sentence.**

I climbed the tree while

**Insert a pair of commas in the correct place in the sentence below.**

I enjoy sitting in my bedroom even though it is quite small and listening to music.

**Insert full stops and capital letters in the passage below so it is punctuated correctly.**

Declan has always been fascinated by animals he has read many books about exotic creatures jellyfish interest him the most and he would like to study them when he is older

**Circle the conjunction in each sentence.**

We like to eat popcorn when we go to the cinema.

Although my sister likes salted popcorn, I prefer sweet popcorn.

### Spelling

**Practise each word. Choose two and write their definitions.**

**Choose two to write in sentences.**

dictionary

embarrass

equip (-ped, -ment)

exaggerate

disastrous

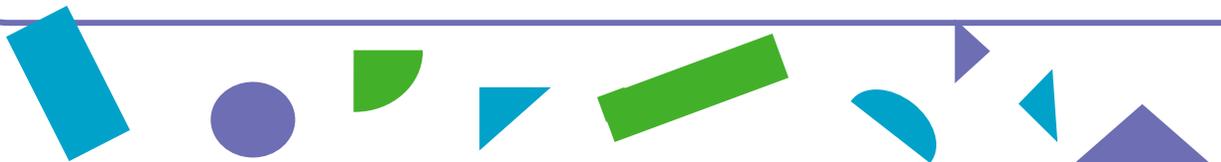
environment

especially

existence

explanation

excellent



# Extracts

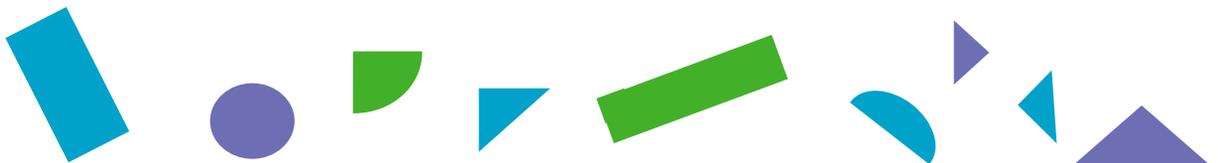
## Be The Change Poems

Extract from [lovereading4kids](#): find out more about the book and the author



## My Cousin is a Time Traveller

Extract from [lovereading4kids](#): find out more about the book and the author



# Be the Change

**Liz Brownlee** does readings and workshops, with her assistance dog, Lola, at schools, libraries, literary and nature festivals. She has fun organizing poetry retreats, exhibitions and events, and runs the poetry website Poetry Roundabout. She is a National Poetry Day Ambassador.

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**Roger Stevens** visits schools, libraries and festivals, performing his work and running workshops for young people and teachers. He is a National Poetry Day Ambassador, a founding member of the Able Writers scheme with Brian Moses and runs the award-winning poetry website [www.poetryzone.co.uk](http://www.poetryzone.co.uk) for children and teachers.

*Other poetry titles from  
Macmillan Children's Books*

*The Same Inside*

*Reaching the Stars*



**BE  
THE  
CHANGE**  
POEMS TO HELP  
YOU SAVE THE  
WORLD

by

**Liz Brownlee,  
Matt Goodfellow  
Roger Stevens**

MACMILLAN  
CHILDREN'S  
BOOKS

*For Bob Alderdice and Rob Bostock, educating the  
next generation – M. G.*

*For Emmelie and Jem and all our children's children – L. B.*

*For the bees. Good luck! – R. S.*



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# Ways to Change the World

## Start Now

be the change  
you want to see  
walk the walk  
stand with me

take the challenge  
spread the word  
we can make  
our voices heard

every single  
action helps  
with a friend  
or by yourself

be the change  
you want to see  
walk the walk  
stand with me

*Matt Goodfellow*

# Captain Save-the-Planet

I am Captain Save-the-Planet

I am GREEN

Not green like The Green Lantern

Not green like The Incredible Hulk

No, I am green like the forests

like grass, like ferns

and the green, clean air

that blew across the planet

long ago

I am Captain Save-the-Planet

I am strong

Not strong like my arch enemy Radioactive

Man

who burns the sky

with invisible rays

Not like Coal Power Man

who spews out deadly fumes

No, I am strong like the wind

turning a million wind turbines

I am strong like the sun

heating a million homes

I am Captain Save-the-Planet  
and I am looking for an assistant  
Would you care to apply?

*Roger Stevens*

What would your planet-saving superpower be?

# Munch, Crunch, Packed Lunch . . .

Your packed lunch can  
if you plan it  
help to save our  
ailing planet,  
you'll be saving  
just by scrapping  
straws and packets,  
plastic wrapping,  
get an eco  
box or two  
made of wheat straw  
or bamboo,  
put in your lunch  
and with no oil  
the shut-tight lid  
won't let it spoil,  
banish crisps  
and juice in boxes,  
fill with wraps

and nuts and coxes,  
sliced ham rolled up  
(roast or parma),  
blueberries, grapes  
or a banana,  
carrot slices  
eggs and cheese,  
pizza pieces  
pickled peas,  
naan bread sarnies,  
carrot crunch,  
sustainable  
sustaining lunch!

*Liz Brownlee*

Packed lunches contribute to a lot of unrecyclable waste products. **You can help!** See how creative you can become making lunches with no plastic packing whatsoever. Have a competition each week to see who has brought the greenest lunch to school! Use a reusable water bottle for drinks. Sometimes a reusable plastic box is the only solution; but these can last a long time.

# Couch Superstar

If changing the world seems far-fetched and  
crazy

because, frankly, my dear, you're incredibly  
lazy

more likely to yawn and stretch on the sofa  
than strap yourself in to the change  
rollercoaster

here's an idea you mustn't forget:  
there are ways you can help without breaking  
a sweat

put on a jumper, keep thermostats low  
get a blanket and rug – feel that warm, cosy  
glow

switch electrical equipment off at the wall  
now you're part of the change with no effort at  
all

just two tiny things, but look what you are:  
a champion of change - a couch superstar

*Matt Goodfellow*

**You can help!** Check out the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals website for more tiny things you can do which make a big difference.

# Promise

You see them in doorways  
you see them in parks  
there are so many of them  
that after a while  
you don't even notice them  
We were in Nottingham  
and one of them  
played a tune on a toy xylophone  
and Mum put a five pound note  
in his cup  
Mum says  
as you grow up  
you'll find that life doesn't always turn out  
as planned  
You have to help people  
if you can

*Roger Stevens*

Crisis, a charity for the homeless, says the latest figures showed that 4,751 people slept rough across England on any given night in 2017.

# Are You Flushed?

Flushing loos will use a quarter  
Of your day's amount of water  
'If it's yellow, let it mellow'  
Science says just let it be  
Save the planet, save your wee!

*Liz Brownlee*

**You can help!** Yes, it's true – scientists say that it is fine to leave your wee in the loo, and saving water saves energy as well as water, because it has to be pumped through pipes every time you turn on a tap or flush the toilet. You can also save water by turning off the tap in between rinsing your toothbrush.

# Richest Boy in the World

Miss Moss divided the class  
proportionally  
by the wealth in the world  
John was one of the hundred multi-billionaires  
who owned half  
of all the world's money  
Six of the class were reasonably well off  
The rest of us were the millions  
of really poor people  
and some of us couldn't even afford a place to live  
After the lesson, at playtime, I asked John for a  
    crisp  
and he gave me the whole packet  
and he said,  
If I do get rich, when I'm grown up, do you know  
    what?  
I won't forget you.

*Roger Stevens*

The richest 1% of the population in the UK own as much as  
the poorest 55% of the population.

# Funny Fruit and Wonky Veg

make a change  
with a simple pledge:  
pick funny fruit  
and wonky veg

different looks  
same great taste  
now none of it  
need go to waste

*Matt Goodfellow*

1.3 billion tonnes of food is wasted in the world each year. In a pile it would be roughly the same size as the mountain Ben Nevis. Wonky fruit and veg tastes the same! Does it matter? Food production takes a massive amount of the planet's resources such as oil and water. Disposing of waste also uses energy. **You can help!** Embrace ugly fruit and veg!

# Ways I Have Raised Money for Charity This Year

*(or attempted to)*

Shaved Dad's eyebrows and half his  
moustache off

*(in hindsight it would have been better to ask him  
first and not do it while he was asleep the night  
before an important business meeting with his new  
boss)*

Dyed my hair pink and wore pyjamas to school  
*(again, possibly should have checked with the  
Headteacher, Mrs Jones, that this was OK – she  
nearly fainted when she saw me)*

Did a sponsored run around the school field  
with Stephen  
*(who had to stop after one lap because the cut  
grass was playing havoc with his hay fever and he  
got stung by a wasp)*

Made 12 iced fairy cakes to sell at playtime  
*(left them on the kitchen worktop where they were  
gobbled up by Frankie, the French Bulldog, who  
was then violently sick on Mum's fluffy slippers)*

*Matt Goodfellow*

Please protect your mum's slippers before raising  
money for charity.

DAVID SOLOMONS

MY COUSIN  
IS A  
TIME TRAVELLER

AND MY  
TOASTER IS  
TAKING  
OVER  
THE  
WORLD...

BY THE  
WINNER OF THE  
WATERSTONES  
CHILDREN'S  
BOOK PRIZE



nosy  
crow

MY COUSIN  
IS A  
TIME TRAVELLER



## OUT OF THIS WORLD REVIEWS FOR MY BROTHER IS A SUPERHERO

“I even think my dad would like reading this book!” ★ ★  
*David, The Book Squad, The Beano*

“Cosmic! Amazing! Outstanding! Probably the funniest book  
I have read for a long time.” ★  
*Alison A. Maxwell-Cox, The School Librarian*

“I was so addicted to it that my mum had to make me put it down.” ★  
*Calum, aged 11*

“Funny, fast moving and deftly plotted, it’s the best thing to hit  
the superhero world since sliced kryptonite.” ★  
*Damian Kelleher, Dad Info*

“You know a book is going to be good when you’re giggling after  
five minutes... Ideal for comic readers and superhero experts.”  
*Nicola Lee, The Independent*

“An excellent adventure story with real heart that’s also properly  
funny.” ★ ★  
*Andrea Reece, Lovereading4Kids*

“You’ll laugh until you fall out of your tree house!”  
*Steve Coogan*

“A brilliantly funny adventure with twists, turns, crazy characters  
and a really hilarious ending. Fantastic!”  
*Sam, aged 11*

“Brilliantly funny.” ★ ★ ★  
*The Bookseller*

# MY COUSIN IS A TIME TRAVELLER

DAVID SOLOMONS



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1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2



*For Luke and Lara*

*and their cousins Daniel and Ridley.*



# 1 THAT'S THE WAY THE WOOKIE CRUMBLES



I leaned on my bedroom windowsill and gazed out at the searchlight's vivid beam reaching up from the roof of the Civic Centre, illuminating the underside of the clouds with the letters "SL". They stood for Star Lad. To the wider world he was a superhero, but I knew him as Zack Parker, my big brother. So far, during his short career, he'd saved Earth from, in order: a giant asteroid and a comic-book-store-owning supervillain; alien invaders disguised as my gym teacher; a world-eating Top Trump card; my Evil Twin; and a particularly annoying brain-in-a-jar and her sister. Those were his big, end-of-the-world missions, but in his role as



Earth's saviour he also carried out a host of lesser duties in between. He was out there now, no doubt rescuing some small child from a rampaging robot, or catching a falling plane, or rounding up some criminal kingpin and his henchmen.

There was a distant rumble and the horizon burst into light, the explosion sending bright-orange flames into the sky to silhouette the rooftops of our home town of Bromley.

Had to be Zack.

I might learn the details of tonight's adventure when he returned later, but in all likelihood the only thing I'd get from him would be a grunt as he pushed past me to the fridge for a snack. He was always hungry after a mission. That was his style: peckish after, and reluctant before. He'd never wanted the responsibility of being a superhero, not from that first moment when a purple-caped, egg-headed alien called Zorbon the Decider had chosen him to save the world. Zack couldn't see the point of having powers and it was never far from his thoughts. Earlier that evening he'd brought it up for the gazillionth time.

"And another thing," he'd said as we washed up the dinner dishes together. "Superheroes are expensive."

"But you don't get paid," I reminded him. "You're a

free service. Like that antivirus software Dad uses."

"Yes, but there are costs associated with my exploits. Have you read the council's latest annual report?"

"Is this a trick question?"

He scrubbed vigorously at the bottom of a pot. "It's all in there. Itemised. The clean-up bill from just one interdimensional monster attack means they've had to find savings elsewhere in the budget. Did you know we're down to a fortnightly bin collection?"

I did not. And I didn't care.

"That's not all." He was getting into his stride. "I am just one hero, which means I can only deal with one incident at a time."

"But you're not alone. You've got Dark Flutter." That was the superhero identity of our neighbour Lara Lee. She too had been turned into a superhero by Zorbon, but her powers were rather more limited than Zack's. Essentially, she could talk to fluffy animals.

"Fine, so there are two of us. Great." He shrugged. "So let's take firefighting, just as an example. Think how many more fires twenty new firemen could deal with compared with just two superheroes. See, we're expensive and inefficient."

Studying the blaze on the horizon I caught a whiff of burning in the night air and I thought about what



Zack had said. Were superheroes a waste of money? But without Star Lad, Earth would've been flattened by a giant asteroid, invaded by aliens, swallowed whole, or ripped apart by quantum forces. That stuff was more important than a weekly bin collection. And anyway, I liked living in a world with superheroes.

I yawned. My best friend, Serge, says that I sound like an exhausted Wookiee when I yawn. It had been a long day; I'd expended a great deal of effort in avoiding a significant amount of maths and English homework. Before I went to bed I made sure to leave the window wide open for Zack to fly through when he did eventually come home. In that regard he was a bit like Peter Pan, but without the green tights and the curious attachment to fairies. Like the rest of the world, I felt safe with him out there. But unlike them, I realised as I rested my head on my Spider-Man pillow, I felt safe with him in here too. And as I drifted off into a superhero dream-filled sleep it struck me, not for the first time, that I liked living in a world with Zack. Not that I'd ever admit it to his face.

"Wake up."

I was flying in my dreams when Zack's voice brought me down to earth like a well-aimed kryptonite-tipped

arrow. I sat up in bed, startled by the urgency of his tone. My eyes slowly adjusted to the fuzzy dark. The streetlight outside my still-open window splashed an orange glow across the bedroom floor where I saw Zack pacing anxiously. He was wearing his Star Lad costume and his cape flicked out as he turned. His mask was pushed off his face and rested against his forehead. I glanced at my Green Lantern alarm clock on the bedside table. Three a.m.

"Must have been some night," I said. "You want to tell me about it?"

He peeled off the cape and folded it neatly into a square, tucking it under one arm. "False alarm. They didn't need me."

"But what about the explosion and the fire?"

"Someone was burning rubbish in their garden and it got out of control." He removed his mask. "The fire brigade dealt with it."

I propped myself up on my elbows. "So what have you been doing all this time?"

"Thinking," he said. I didn't like the way he said it. "I sent a message to Zorbon using my telepathic power. I've asked him to come over tomorrow."

That was weird. Usually Zorbon showed up unannounced with a dire prophecy about the end of the



world, which inevitably led to a mission for Star Lad and the rest of us. To my knowledge this was the first time that Zack had called him. I felt a creeping sense of unease.

“Luke, I’ve made a decision.” Zack paused, and by the light of the streetlamp I could see his face knot up with concern. “I’m getting rid of my superpowers.”

## 2 AVENGERS ASSEMBLY



“Are they transferable?”

That was the first question Serge asked me at school the next morning when I told him about Zack’s terrible decision.

I shook my head sadly. It had been my question too when Zack informed me of his intention. If my brother didn’t want his powers, then I was happy to take them on. But when I’d said that last night he had shown only irritation, and then he’d stormed out of my bedroom. Though not before pausing in the doorway to drop another bombshell.

“Things are about to change,” he’d said.



“Well, *duh*,” I’d snapped.

“I’m not just talking about the superpowers,” he’d said. “Other stuff too. Big stuff.”

What could possibly be bigger than giving up being Star Lad?

“Listen to me,” Zack had said. “As much as you want it to, the world can’t stay the same forever.”

He was speaking in riddles. “Is this about another invasion? Is Earth about to fall off its axis? What did Zorbon tell you?”

For a moment I’d thought he was about to say more, but he stopped himself. His expression softened and he fixed me with a kindly smile.

“G’night, Luke.”

The door clicked as he closed it behind him.

I was no clearer about his puzzling words the following day, as Serge and I filed into the gym alongside the rest of our year group for a special assembly. We sat cross-legged on the floor while teachers patrolled the lines, watching beadily and calling for silence whenever it was broken.

“Is Zack certain that Zorbon *can* remove his powers?” Serge pondered.

“He bestowed them in the first place,” I said. In comics, superpowers were always “bestowed” not

simply “given”.

“*Oui*, but it is not like receiving a gift of, for example...” Serge hummed as he contemplated the most fitting comparison. “A pineapple. You cannot simply say: please now remove my pineapple.”

Serge was right – Zack’s powers weren’t like a pineapple. They were as much a part of him now as his love for algebra and dislike of comics. Leaving aside the finer points of superpower removal, there was still time before Zorbon arrived at the weekend for me to do something. Between now and then I had to persuade Zack to change his mind.

“I’m calling an emergency S.C.A.R.F. meeting,” I whispered. S.C.A.R.F. was the Superhero Covert Alliance Reaction Force, an organisation set up by Serge and me to work alongside Star Lad and Dark Flutter. This might very well be its most important mission yet. “Today, after school, in the tree house. Zack will listen to all of us if we put on a united front.”

Serge glanced along the line of seated classmates. I followed his gaze to a girl with short dark hair and a lightly freckled face. Her hands were folded neatly in her lap and her bright, intelligent eyes peered straight ahead at the stage. She was Lara Lee – friend, neighbour and Dark Flutter.



“I am not sure how united we will be,” Serge said quietly.

I understood what he meant. During our latest adventure, on a fateful minibreak to Great Minds Leisure Park, we had encountered an evil brain-in-a-jar with incredible mind powers. There had been a lot of body-swap shenanigans, in the course of which Serge and Lara had briefly occupied one another’s bodies. That wouldn’t have been so bad, but they were boyfriend and girlfriend at the time. Their relationship hadn’t survived the switcheroo, and now things between them were awkward, to say the least.

“C’mon, Serge, pull yourself together. This is more important than all that lovey-dovey stuff, this is about something deep and meaningful.” I laid a hand on his shoulder and fixed him in the eye. “*Superheroes.*”

He offered me a faltering smile and then looked down at the floor with a sigh.

Our headteacher, Mr Hines, took to the stage and clapped for our attention. Lingering conversations dwindled into silence. Standing beside Mr Hines was a man I didn’t recognise. He had thick dark hair with a white streak down the middle of his head, as if he was wearing a badger. He was dressed in a stripy shirt and jeans and slung over one shoulder was a canvas bag with

the words “Books Are My Bag” on the front. Even from where I was sitting near the back of the hall I could tell that he was sweating.

“Who’s this guy?” I asked Serge.

“You do not know?” He sounded surprised. “The posters have been up all over school for some time. Did you not receive the letter to take home to your parents? And the two subsequent reminder letters?”

Now that he mentioned it I vaguely remembered tucking a series of correspondence from the school office in my bag. I was fairly confident the letters were still in there, possibly next to a month-old banana.

“He is Arthur Veezat,” said Serge, lowering his voice so as not to attract the attention of a nearby teacher.

“Is he French then?”

“Hmm?” Serge gave me a strange look. “*Non*, I said that he is our *author visit.*”

Now I understood. The school occasionally drafted in children’s authors in an effort to inspire us with their stirring personal stories of how they came to write a book none of us had ever heard of. Mr Hines introduced him and I listened for about five minutes as the author jumped about the stage, gesticulating wildly and shouting out words like “plot”, “character” and “royalties”. But I was too busy thinking about Zack



and our important S.C.A.R.F. business to take in much of what he was saying. After a while he calmed down and read a chapter from his book. I felt myself lulled to sleep as his monotonous voice drifted over the hall.

When the reading was finally over Serge turned to me and said, “Our adventures are far more interesting than his. Per’aps we should write them down also.”

He was forgetting one thing. “But then everyone who reads them would discover Star Lad and Dark Flutter’s true identities.” I still cared about that stuff, even if Zack was ready to throw it all away.

“We could change the names. Instead of Luke and Serge, we will be Lionel and Steve. And instead of Star Lad and Dark Flutter...” He frowned in silence. Superhero names were tricky, all the good ones having been taken. “I will get back to you on that.”

In fact, recording our adventures was something that had occurred to me some time ago. A lot had happened since Zorbon’s first visit to the tree house and I would hate to forget a single detail, so I had been writing down our missions in a series of superhero-themed notebooks that Serge had given me for my last birthday. I’d already covered our first adventure with the Nemesis asteroid, the invasion by alien gym teachers, Gordon the World-Eater, and my trip to a parallel Earth to confront my Evil

Twin. One day I would be as ancient and forgetful as my dad, so it would be nice to have a record.

The author didn’t exactly finish his presentation with a bang. It sort of just fizzled out and then the teachers realised it was over and we clapped a bit and the assembly came to an end. As the classes filed out in their usual disorderly fashion, the author took a seat at a table piled high with his books. He uncapped a pen and watched the departing children with an expression of sad resignation. The hall emptied until there was just me and a handful of others, including Serge and Lara. We trickled over to his table, forming a short queue, and a minute and a half later I was at the front, face-to-face with Arthur Veezat, or whatever his name was.

His features creased into a question. “Have we met before?”

“I don’t think so.”

“You look familiar. Maybe when I visited your school last year?”

I shook my head. “You’re the first author I’ve ever met.”

“That’s not true,” Lara interjected. “You’ve met my aunt Farah.”

“I thought she was a dentist.”

“She’s an author-dontist. She says there’s no money



in books, so she fixes people's teeth for cash and writes stories for fun."

I could see a confused expression appear on Arthur's face. Lara had that effect on people. But there was no point arguing with her. He plucked one of his books from the top of a pile, opened it and hovered his pen above the page.

"So what's your name, young man?" he enquired.

"Luke," I said.

He beamed up at me. "That's my son's name too." He began to write it in the book. "To Luke," he said as he scribbled.

Standing in front of a real author, even one as lame as Arthur, got me thinking about my own writing. Maybe Arthur could offer me some tips.

"I'm writing a book," I said. "Any advice?"

"You mean apart from all that insightful writing advice I imparted during my fun-filled presentation?"

"Exactly." I leaned in. "I want the good stuff. The under-the-counter advice. The *secret* to writing."

"I don't think there's a secret, but one thing I would say – know how it ends." He gestured to the stack of books. "This is the last in my series. I knew how it would end way back when I began the first one." He paused. "I wrote them for my children. For my Luke, and my

little girl, Lara."

"That's my name," said Lara delightedly, and then she caught Serge's eye and they scowled at each other.

"My kids are grown up now," Arthur said with a deep sigh, "so it's time to bring these stories to a conclusion." He laid a hand on the cover and a glazed expression came over his face. Not glazed like a doughnut – the other kind where you stare unfixed into the distance. Either he'd forgotten what he was about to say again, or he was lost in thought.

Serge cleared his throat. "Do you *per'aps* have a third child whose name is Serge?"

Arthur laughed. "Sorry, Serge." He slid the book he'd been writing in across the table to me. "Six ninety-nine."

"Excuse me?"

"For the book." He tapped the price, which was clearly labelled on the back cover.

"Why would I want a book?"

He looked baffled. "You're in the signing queue."

Serge stepped in front of me, unzipping a small leather wallet and producing a wad of notes from inside. "Please forgive my friend. I should like to purchase your complete *oeuvre*." He handed over the cash and we waited while Arthur happily signed each of the five books in the series.



“Here,” Arthur said, pushing the same book into my hands. “It’s already signed to you – you might as well have it.”

I hesitated, staring suspiciously at it. “Does the main character’s dad have a silver filigree pocket-watch that’s been handed down through the generations?”

Arthur looked puzzled. “Is that important?”

I nodded. “It’s a sure sign that the dad’s going to die. And I can’t be doing with any of that.”

“Just take the book, Luke,” he said through gritted teeth.

After that, Lara bought the latest one, saying they were her favourites, which I knew was a lie because I’d seen her bookshelves and they’re full of miserable novels about growing up, which, to give him credit, Arthur’s were not. We thanked him and headed out. I could feel his eyes on us as we crossed the gym, and when we reached the door he called out.

“Goodbye, Luke, Lara and Serge. It was lovely meeting you all. And remember, we are all the heroes of our own stories.”

He smiled at us and we waved back.

“He’s a bit strange,” I muttered to the others. “Probably all that time spent alone in a room talking to imaginary people.”

We left the gym and made our way along the corridor to our next class. Know the ending, Arthur had advised. Useless. I was writing down real life, so there was no way of knowing. But at that moment, not in my wildest imagination, could I have pictured how my own story would end.

