2

Give Me Stronger Gravity!

On Their Way

Mr. Eng looked up from his handheld Astrotracker. "Strap yourselves in, kids," he called to his fourth-grade class. "According to the **data** on my tracker, we enter the wormhole in five minutes. I see no evidence of wormhole traffic. This should be a really quick ride!"

Ashley slid into a seat next to her best friend, Rita. "We'll reach the asteroid in less than an hour," Ashley said. "I can't wait!" In the old days, this trip would have taken 40 months.

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Now there were faster, safer spaceships. Travelling across the solar system took a lot less time since safe wormholes were discovered.

Wormholes have not been discovered. The author is writing a story about an exciting future. What does this tell us about the author's purpose?

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Rita and Ashley started humming their class song. The rest of the class soon joined in. By the end, they all burst out singing the last line: "Give me stronger **gravity**!"

Ashley grinned. "We're going to win. I just know it!"

"There are a lot of other teams," warned Mr. Eng. "Students from every Earth colony in the solar system will be at the fair."

"But nobody has a better song!" Ashley insisted.

Mr. Eng smiled. "Hang on, **astronauts**. Here we go!"

5

The Grand Prize: Earth!

Ashley's stomach turned as the shuttle swooped into the wormhole. Even with the new **improvements** in travel, her stomach still did somersaults. They would come out at the other end of Asteroid D1, the Galactic School headquarters.

In this paragraph, the author uses some exciting action words like "swooped" and talks about the prize for the contest. How is the author trying to make you feel as you read this passage?
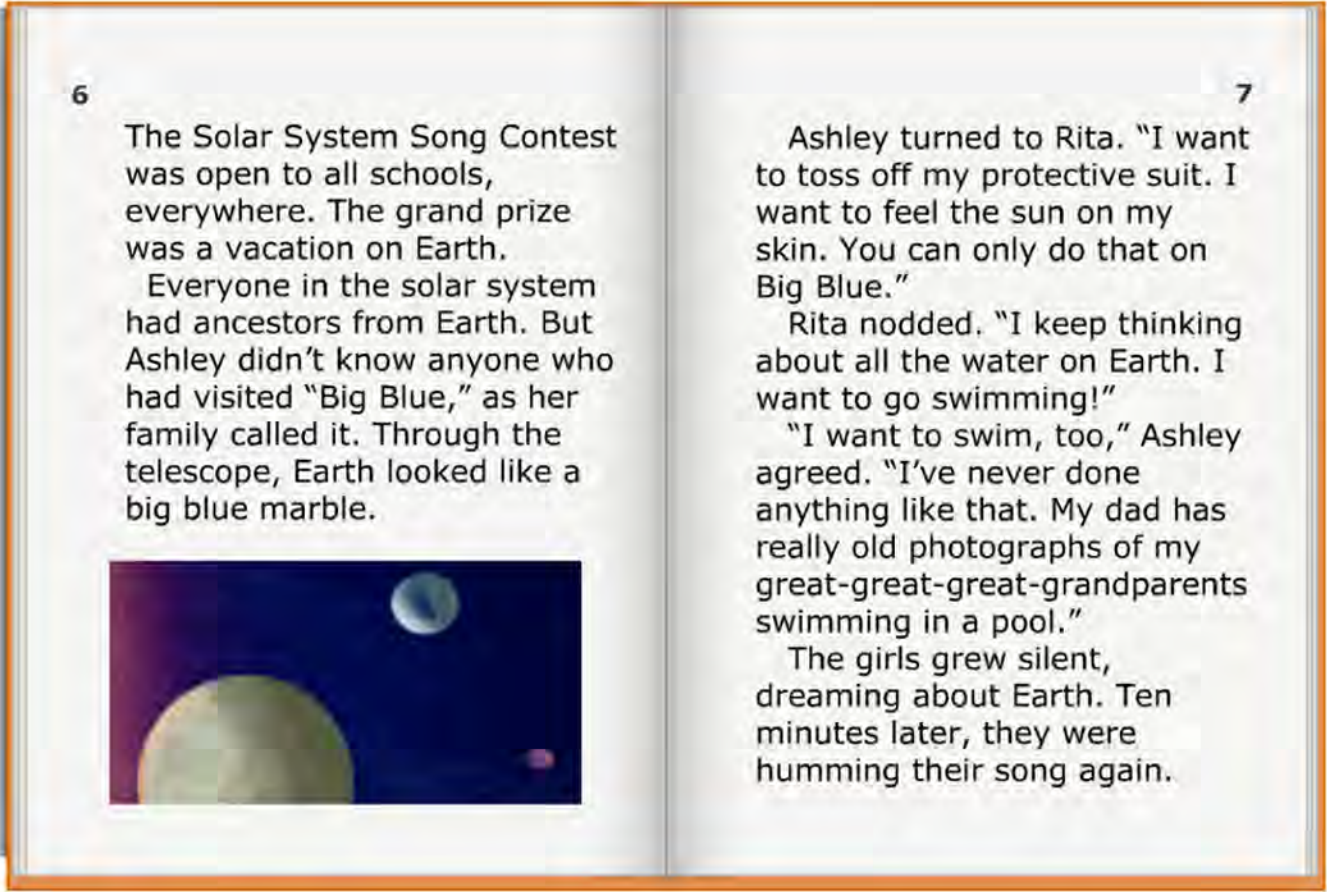
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The Solar System Song Contest was open to all schools, everywhere. The grand prize was a vacation on Earth.

Everyone in the solar system had ancestors from Earth. But Ashley didn't know anyone who had visited "Big Blue," as her family called it. Through the telescope, Earth looked like a big blue marble.

7

Ashley turned to Rita. "I want to toss off my protective suit. I want to feel the sun on my skin. You can only do that on Big Blue."

Rita nodded. "I keep thinking about all the water on Earth. I want to go swimming!"

"I want to swim, too," Ashley agreed. "I've never done anything like that. My dad has really old photographs of my great-great-great-grandparents swimming in a pool."

The girls grew silent, dreaming about Earth. Ten minutes later, they were humming their song again.

How would you describe what it feels like to swim to someone who has never gone swimming?

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Floating to Victory

When their class was called to the stage, Ashley and Rita walked out alone. They would sing the first few lines as a duet. Then, the rest of the class would join them. All students carried glowing, blue pods in their hands. The pods were their own invention. They were the result of a class **experiment** the previous year. Their song went like this:

Oh, Neptune is not comfortable,
And Saturn's rings get old.
Mars is way too dusty,
And Pluto's very cold.

9

Earth is the place we dream about,
The lovely hills and seas.
It's a long-lost home to us on Mars,
And other colonies.

On Earth you go without a suit,
Breathe oxygen every day.
H_2O falls from the skies,
And kids can run and play.

Earth birds fly through the air,
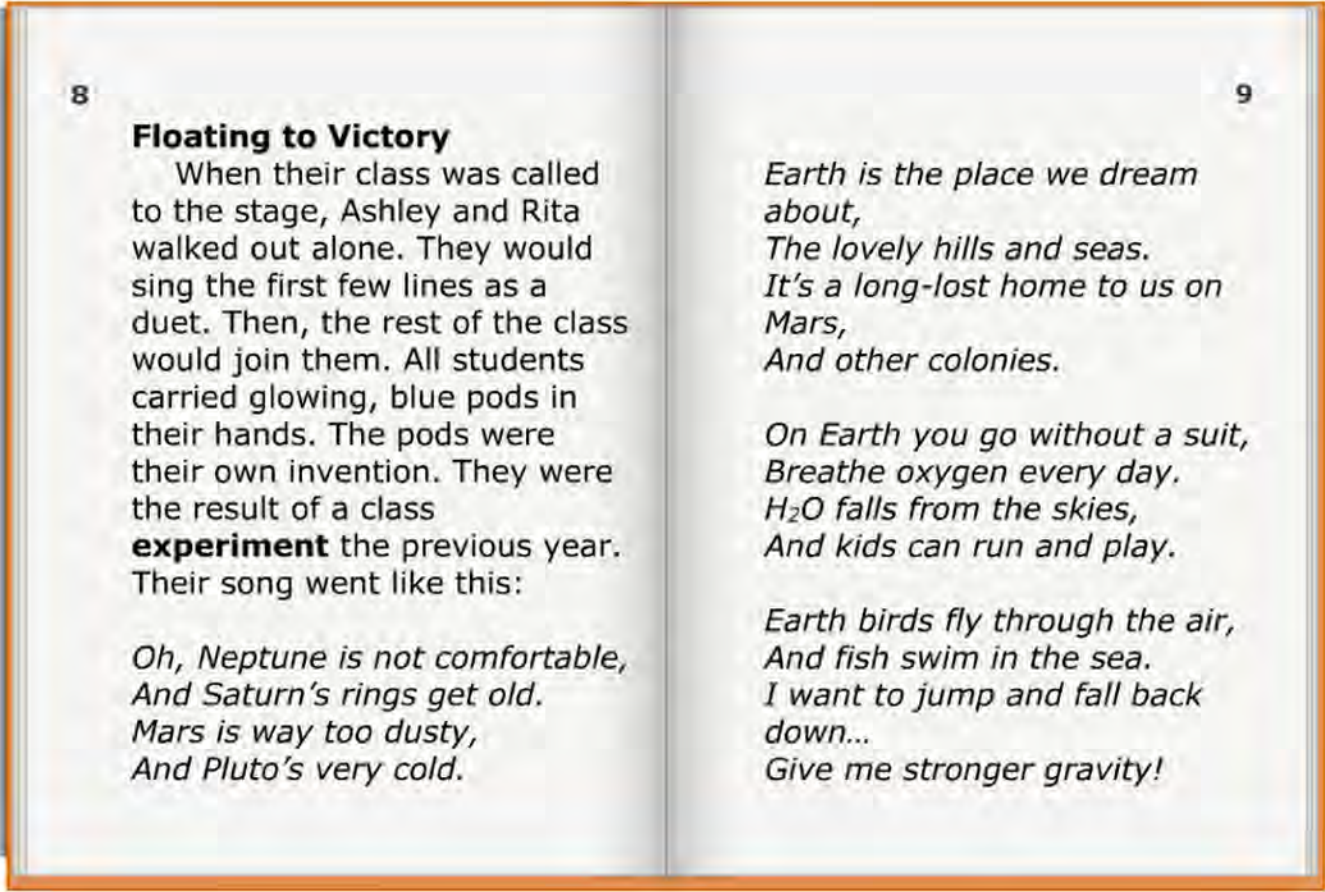*And fish swim in the sea.*
I want to jump and fall back down...
Give me stronger gravity!

▶ This song gives us some information about what different planets are like.   Remember what you know about gravity.

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They shouted out "GRAVITY!" together. Then the students pushed a button on their pods. The pods made all the students weightless. They rose 10 feet above the stage. While in the air, the students floated into an arrangement that spelled out EARTH.

The audience went wild with applause. Ashley smiled as she saw her entire class on the holograph screen above the stage.

Above the noise of the crowd, she shouted to Rita. "Earth, here we come!"

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If you had one of the blue pods that made you weightless, how would you use it?

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