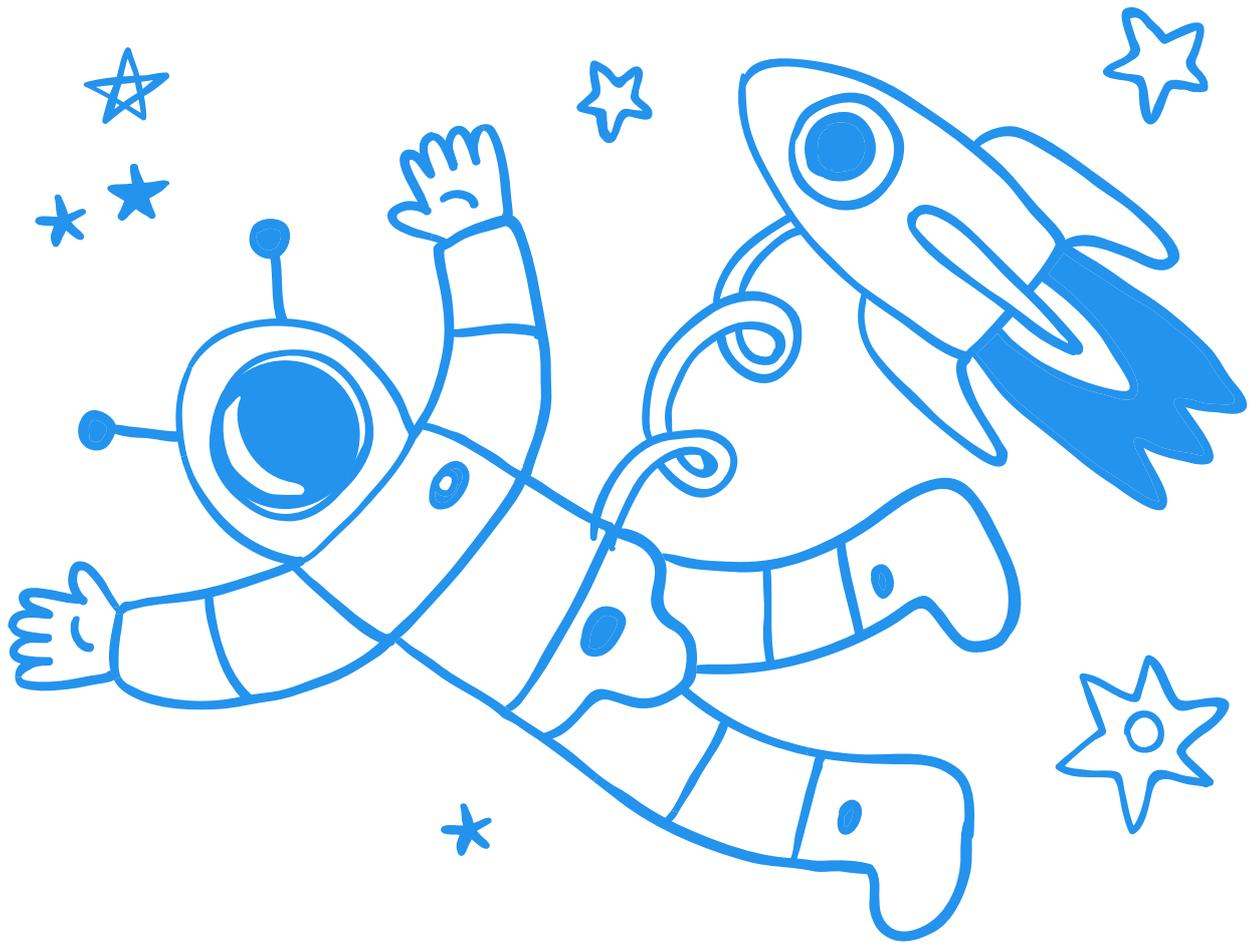


# Adventures in Space: Intergalactic Poetry



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# Activity Plan

(c.35-45 minutes)



## *How Big is the Universe* (p.12) Poem by Rachel M Nicholas

Introduce the session with this short poem that explores how weirdly enormous the universe is. If the group might be interested in a few mind-blowing facts before you read the poem, try these for size:

- ◆ The universe began over 13 billion years ago.
- ◆ The observable universe is 93 billion light years big (1 light year is over 5 trillion miles big...) i.e. the universe is mind-bendingly massive.

Then read aloud the poem. Notice how the poem isn't very big on facts, but uses more creative language to capture this sense of hugeness, particularly the refrain 'big, bigger, biggest' which conveys this feeling of something continually growing, just like the universe itself...

## *Comet* (p.4) Poem by Kate Wakeling

From here, move to a more interactive performance poem. You could introduce the *Comet* poem by briefly discussing what a comet is... (Comets are big lumps of ice and rock that zoom around in space. When they travel near the sun they develop a 'tail' of gas and dust that streams out behind them.)

You might like to play the group this video of the poem being read aloud by the poet...

Link: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZ40TGo6hgc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZ40TGo6hgc)

From here have a short discussion about exactly how the poem is being read aloud (i.e. it's really really quick) – and how this might relate to the idea of a comet...

This resource explores some creative and interactive approaches to writing and responding to poems on the theme of space for SEND groups (particularly those with ASD) with a reading age/ability from phase 5 upwards.

The theme of space is a strong one – it both lends itself to the visionary and imaginative world of poetry, while also grounding poems in something concrete and clear, with rich appeal across a range of ages.

This resource provides you with an activity plan that draws on the Emma Press anthology of space poems for children, *Watcher of the Skies: Poems about Space and Aliens*. It features black holes, a zooming comet, instructions on how to clean your teeth in space, and the chance to conjure up a brand new alien...



Mention that the poem actually comes with an instruction that it has to be read as quickly as possible, and in as few breaths as can be managed. With this in mind, watch the video again, now inviting the group to count how many breaths are taken during the performance and then compare notes at the end...

Alternatively, if you fancy getting your mouth round 'Comet', a fun game to play with this poem is to invite a 'Comet Controller' to come and interact with (or 'conduct') the poem as you read it aloud. Ask for a volunteer and instruct that when they lift their hand high in the air, you'll read the poem more quickly, and when they lower their hand, your pace will drop accordingly. The results (for all parties) usually seem to be enjoyably hilarious.

## ***The Hungry Galactic Plug Hole (p.89)***

### **Poem by Suzanne Olivante**

This poem explores the idea of black holes with some really expressive and playful language. Don't worry about every word being understood, it's the overall feel of the poem that makes this text so enjoyable.

Introduce the idea of black holes as areas of space that have collapsed in on themselves and that suck light deep inside them.

This poem works really well with an interactive parachute game that encourages everyone to listen really closely throughout (and to have some fun along the way)...

Stand in a circle with everyone holding a section of the parachute.

Depending on the dynamics of the group, add the instruction that every time the group hears the words 'BLACK HOLE', everyone is (carefully) to lift the parachute high up and then duck under the parachute and swap places. Alternatively, suggest that each time you say 'BLACK HOLE' everyone is to lift the parachute and that you will then point at two

members of the group who are to swap places as quickly as possible.

Once everyone's ready and in position, read aloud the poem and after every 3-line verse, add in the word BLACK HOLE, e.g.:

*'star swallower  
gas guzzler  
gulping garbage feeder  
BLACK HOLE'*

and let the games begin...

## ***How to Brush Your Teeth in Space (p.1)***

### **Poem by Sohini Basak**

As a calming and gentle activity to follow the black hole poem game, introduce this poem by saying it was inspired by a video made by Canadian Astronaut Chris Hadfield:

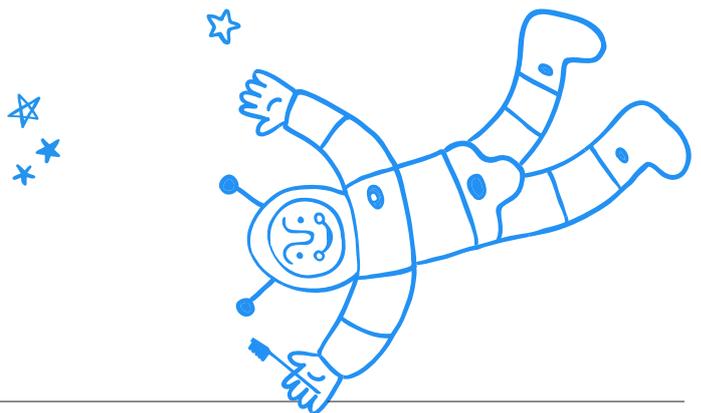
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bCoGC532p8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bCoGC532p8)

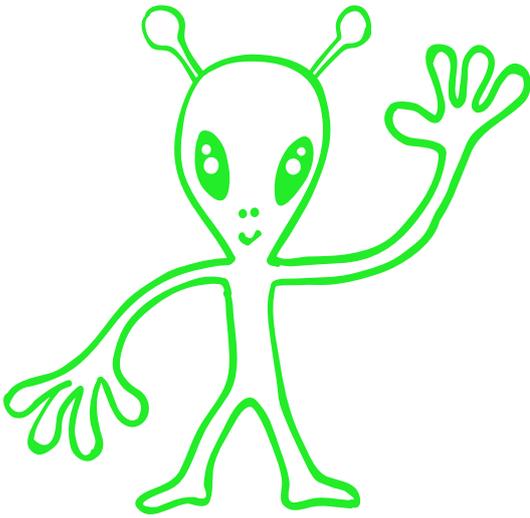
First watch Chris Hadfield's video together. It's 3 minutes long and offers a lovely and engaging illustration as to exactly how you clean your teeth in space.

After watching, have a quick discussion about the video:

- ◆ Why were things floating about?
- ◆ What did the water in space remind the group of?
- ◆ Would people like to clean their teeth in space? (Or was swallowing the toothpaste each time just too yucky?)

Next read Sohini's poem aloud, asking the group to listen out for some of the same details they observed in Chris Hadfield's video.





## **An Alien Dropped by Group poem-writing activity**

Ask if anyone heard when an alien was mentioned in Sohini's poem...

*'...it would be a shame  
if an alien dropped by but didn't talk for  
long because of bad breath...'*

Introduce the activity with the title 'The Alien from the Planet...,' and explain the group is going to create a brand new alien altogether.

Together agree on a planet name to complete the title of the poem, and then answer the following questions as a group to construct a piece of creative writing on the board...

- ◆ How big or small is this alien? (Try and introduce a comparative so the line runs 'as large/small as a...')
- ◆ How does it move?
- ◆ What sort of noise does it make?
- ◆ What does it smell like?
- ◆ Where does it keep its brains?
- ◆ What is it frightened of?
- ◆ What does it eat for breakfast?
- ◆ What does it dream about at night?

Encourage the group to keep adding in further details in these answers wherever possible, coaxing out suggestions for extra pieces of description (e.g. colour, size, number, or any other details) to enrich and refine each idea that's suggested.

So, your group poem might read something a bit like this...

***The Alien from The Planet Zog  
The alien from the Planet Zog is as huge  
as 27 elephants.  
It moves as slowly as a steamroller.  
When it talks, the alien rumbles like an  
earthquake,  
and it smells like hamster droppings,  
mashed potato and daffodils.  
It keeps its brains in its knees, its fingers  
and in its ninety-nine bottoms.  
It is terrified of laughter.  
The alien from the Planet Zog eats space  
rockets, asteroids and bright green mashed  
potato for breakfast.  
It dreams every night of exploring the  
universe and one day finding a friend.***

This can be followed up with a drawing activity, where children illustrate the alien as they wish (which also gives individuals a chance to add in any features or details that couldn't be incorporated into the group poem).

