5,4,3,2,1 ... Blast off to Literacy

It’s almost impossible not to be awed and curious about outer space. Children and adults alike are fascinated by the mysteries of our solar system, and naturally want to know more about planets, space travel, astronauts and rockets. As you share stories and non-fiction books about space, be sure to talk about places and objects your child may not have encountered yet. During read-alouds, include context for new ideas and vocabulary. For example, you could point out that a rocket flies in the sky like an airplane or helicopter, but can travel farther away, even to the moon! Many children’s books about outer space are non-fiction. Children are eager to learn about the world we live in, including our solar system. Non-fiction selections help build background knowledge and vocabulary, but remember it isn’t necessary to read a non-fiction book from beginning to end. Select a portion that interests your child and read those pages. Try reading about one planet each night, studying the illustrations and photographs carefully. Breaking a big subject into small parts will keep your child interested and ready to come back for more! One of the best ways to get children excited about reading is to choose books about topics of interest. Allow your child to select fiction and non-fiction books about outer space, and you and your child can read and learn together.

By Jan Harrod

Books About Outer Space and Our Solar System

Find these and many other space-related books at your neighborhood library branch.

**Dinosaur Rocket!** by Dale Penny
A group of adventurous dinosaurs blast off on a journey into outer space to explore the Moon.

**Eight Little Planets** by Chris Ferrie
To the tune of “Ten Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed” comes a bedtime story to get little ones excited about the solar system while learning new facts about each planet.

**Going Around the Sun: Some Planetary Fun** by Marianne Berkes
Our Earth is part of a fascinating planetary family: eight planets and other solar system bodies that spin, roll and whirl around the Sun. To the tune of “Over in the Meadow,” young ones get a glimpse of our remarkable neighborhood.

**A Kite for Moon** by Jane Yolen
A young boy, seeing that Moon is lonely, sends up a kite to cheer her then, after growing up and learning many things, he becomes the first human to visit her.
Dedicated to Neil Armstrong and written in recognition of the fiftieth anniversary of the first U.S. moon landing.

**Light Up the Night** by Jean Reidy
In this cumulative, rhyming story, a young boy takes a nighttime ride from the distant stars in the Milky Way galaxy to his cozy bed, as his blanket becomes a rocker, a plane and a skateboard.

**Oh No, Astro!** by Matt Roeser
Astro, an asteroid that wants nothing more than for his personal outer space to be respected, is hit by a passing satellite and takes a great adventure.

**Penguinaut!** by Marcie Colleen
Orville is a little penguin who lives in a zoo and dreams of big adventures, like going to the Moon. The other animals are skeptical, but Orville is determined, so he builds a spaceship and sets out all by himself—and discovers that real adventures are best when they are shared with friends.

**The Rooftop Rocket Party** by Roland Chambers
Finn has many questions about such things as the moon and rockets while visiting Dr. Gass, who always has a scientific explanation. Now Dr. Gass tries to explain a party invitation from the Man in the Moon.

**Space Boy** by Leo Landry
Having decided not to go to bed because his home is too noisy, Nicholas flies his spaceship to the Moon, where he enjoys a snack, takes a moonwalk, and enjoys the quiet—until he realizes what he is missing at home.

**Non-Fiction**

**Me and My Place in Space** by Joan Sweeney
An out-of-this world introduction to the universe for children. With Earth as a starting point, a young astronaut leads readers on a tour past each planet and on to the stars, answering simple questions about our solar system.

**Little Kids Big First Book of Space** by Catherine Hughes
Introduces basic concepts about outer space, from the sun and the moon to the planets and space exploration.

**Looking Up!: The Science of Star-Gazing** by Joe Rao
Become an expert on the stars in the sky.

**Solar System** by Jill McDonald
Every young child loves to look up at the moon in the night sky. Now here's a book that can teach toddlers about the sun, moon, stars and planets—with colors, shapes, sizes and super-simple facts. It's a perfect way to bring natural science into the busy world of a toddler, where learning never stops.

**Space** by Simon Holland
Describes the Earth, the moon, the sun, the planets of the solar system and other outer space phenomena, and discusses equipment used to explore outer space.

**Sun Up, Sun Down** by Gail Gibbons
Simple language and bold illustrations make this a fun and informative book about the sun.

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**Library Shout Out: Music And Movement Kits / Summer Reading**

Early Literacy Services recently added several Music and Motion early literacy kits to the Fairfax County Public Library catalog. Preschool teachers and daycare providers can now check out egg shakers, animal jingle bells and scarves. The kits must be reserved online for branch pickup. The egg shaker kit contains 24 shakers, and can be reserved by clicking here. To reserve the bells, click here, and for scarves, click here. Kits can be checked out for three weeks.

This year’s Summer Reading Challenge, “It’s Showtime at Your Library” runs from June 13 to August 31. Children can sign up online or at any branch. Summer reading also includes special programs at all FCPL branches. Magicians, puppet shows and the ever-popular Dinorock will be offered around the county. The summer schedule comes out in early June with more information.

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