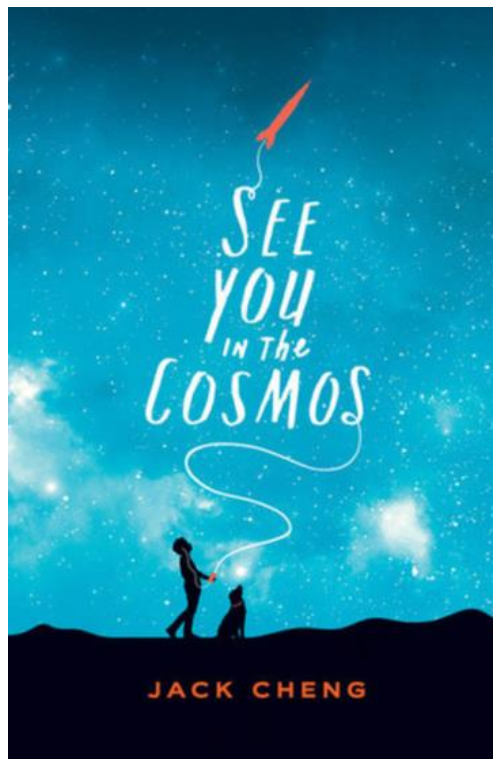


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JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE & LITERACY EDUCATION

Review of *See You in the Cosmos* Written by Jack Cheng

Adult/Educator Reviewer: Brittany Thurmond
The University of Georgia, Athens, GA
Student Reviewer: Janiah Holmes, 6th grader



Cheng, J. (2017). *See you in the cosmos*. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers.

ISBN: 978-03-99186-37-0

Adult Review: Brittany Thurmond

See You in the Cosmos by Jack Cheng follows the story of eleven-year-old Alex Petroski as he travels across the southwest United States on his own. Alex travels to a rocket convention in New Mexico from his home in Colorado in an effort to send his Golden iPod into space so that the aliens can get it. This book follows his journey of traveling alone or, rather, with his dog, Carl Sagan, as they make it to the rocket launch and then the aftermath of meeting a long lost relative, Alex's half-sister, Terra. This book shows how with the right support, Alex can survive anything. Alex's story shows how the effects of a parent suffering from mental illness may result in behavior not consistent of a person of Alex's age.

I think this book would be a good book to teach for a rocket or space unit or as part of a coming of age unit. Alex builds a rocket with a D-class motor and uses a simulator to test the flight path of the rocket, which ultimately fails him. *See You in the Cosmos* may be a good book to talk about space because Alex talks throughout the book as if he is talking directly to the aliens on a recording that he intends to send to space. Alex also talks about his favorite author Carl Sagan (also the name of his dog) and creating a human civilization on Mars. This book might also be a good book for life skills or lessons because it follows Alex's journey as he tries to find out more about his deceased father, deals with a brother who lives far away, a long lost half-sister (whom he did not know existed), and also dealing with a parent who has a mental illness and what those effects might be on a young person. Alex learns a lot throughout the book as he encounters many different people and experiences that a young person may not be expected to be able to handle. As he works through these experiences, Alex becomes a young adult and learns about love, responsibility, bravery, and community. A teacher may need to consider that this book makes a seemingly positive spin on the department of child services.

This book was reviewed because we do not have enough science novels that we use in our classrooms, especially the ones that address space and rockets as well as showing a coming-of-age story. This book is important in the middle grades classroom because it shows a different way of writing. The author divides the story into a series of short chapters that are the script versions of the recordings that Alex takes on his Golden iPod. In this way, the characters are exclusively listed when they are talking unless Alex is retelling an event after it has happened. The author uses a lot of live recordings, meaning that the characters are all together at the same time instead of recording events that have already happened like a diary or a journal.

I believe students of all backgrounds would enjoy this book because it shows how the main character deals with real life circumstances, which the author treats with humor. This book also relates well to middle grades students because Alex communicates a lot through the internet on his group chat and visits ancestry.com often. Also, Alex does not have a cell phone, which is a strange thing for students nowadays but the author shows that you can still survive without one.

Student Review: Janiah Holmes

This story is about an eleven-year old boy named Alex Petroski who loves space and rockets. The only family members that Alex has are his mother, Karen, his older brother, Ronnie, and his older half-sister Terra. In the beginning he finds a dog who is hungry but also has a sensitive digestive system. Alex names the dog Carl Sagan, after his hero, the real-life astronomer. In fact, Alex has some astronomer jokes, too. All that Alex wants to do is to launch his rocket and Golden iPod into outer space.