

## Tess and The Star Traveller

Jane McKay

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### Plot Outline

Star Traveller Elkon from Pole Star 7 is slightly distracted when he sets his hoverfoil's co-ordinates for Gefrem and ends up instead in Tess's pencil case in Rosalie Park, Perth, Western Australia, Southern Hemisphere, Planet Earth, Milky Way Galaxy, the Universe.

It is the life work of Star Travellers to collect the wishes from all the First Stars and make sure those wishes come true — a simple job really, if it weren't for seriously bad dudes called Triloboids, who go around stealing wishes to power their planet.

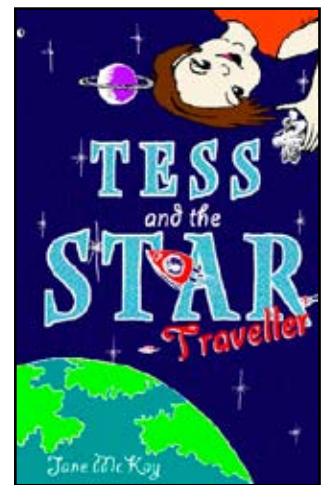
When Tess and Elkon finally track the Tiloboid down they realise he has a few tricks of his own to try out — and it looks like he may outsmart them. Tess learns that being a superhero is not all fun and games, but at the same time she has the biggest adventure ever.

### Author Inspiration

I started with some ideas for the character of Tess as a 'wannabe' superhero. There seemed to be lots of action and adventure books for boys and not many for the 'save the world' type girls out there. I remember how I used to sit in boring lessons at school which required copying lots of writing from the blackboard and thought about things that could happen to liven up the day. Things like an alien appearing in your pencil case!

Some of the things Tess does were things I did as a child like writing out my entire address and memorising number plates on the way to school. Some of my own neighbours provided inspiration for characters such as Mr Bates and Freddy Spinks.

I wanted the theme of one person being able to change things and make a difference to come through the story. I made the situation where Elkon is captured look hopeless for Tess and for her to rise to the challenge and be able to save Elkon with her cunning and intelligence.



## Author Biography

Jane McKay is a qualified primary teacher with ten years classroom teaching experience in Tasmania, New South Wales and Western Australia. *Tess and the Star Traveller* is her first book.

Jane is an award winning artist and has completed a degree in Fine Art from Curtin University. Her colourful, abstract landscape paintings have been exhibited in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, throughout Western Australia, New York and Los Angeles. She has also worked on numerous public art commissions and projects.

Jane currently works as an artist, author and graphic designer, in her own business, Red Griffin Art.

## Educational Adaptability

*Tess and the Star Traveller* is an illustrated junior novel of 45 pages which makes it a good early novel for those making the transition from picture books.

There are many themes that are touched on in *Tess and the Star Traveller*:

- Making wishes, self reliance, overcoming difficulty and the emotions — anger, despair and triumph.
- Ideas of space travel, super heroes, spying, practical jokes and self defence also form a basic premise for the story.
- Geographical location — ‘where am I in the universe’ is a concept mentioned and provides opportunities this age group could explore. Stealing and diet are also minor topics covered.

## Topics and Issues for Classroom Discussion

Look at a map of the universe and find where Earth is in the Milky Way galaxy.

- Find out about stars, what are they made of and how old are they. Research shooting stars.
- Make models or pictures of the planets and display them using their relative size and distance from the sun.

## Activities

- Make a star mobile; decorate your stars with glitter and sequins.
- Cook some star and planet shaped biscuits to eat.
- Have a super hero dress day where each child dresses up as their favourite super hero.
- Make a model of Elkon’s spaceship, try using polystyrene from packaging and recycled plastic materials such as drink bottles.

## Wishing

- What do the children in the picture on page 19 wish for?
- If you could have three wishes what would they be?

## Activities

- Make a class wishing picture. Have each child draw a picture of themselves and then a picture of one of the things they wish for. Display the wishes in clouds connected to the picture of the right child with colourful string or wool.
- Write a poem about your three wishes e.g.

*'If I could have a wish, a-wishing I would be  
I would wish to ride an elephant and be up high as a tree*

*If I could have a wish, a-wishing I would be  
I would wish to be a colourful bird and fly away free*

*If I could have a wish, a-wishing I would be  
I wouldn't wish to be anything else at all; I would wish to be me.'*

## Chores

- What chores did Tess have to do at the end of the story?
- What chores do you have to do at home?
- What do the other members of your family do to help each other?
- What does doing chores help you learn?

## Design/Technology

- Design a new space suit for Elkon. What features do you think it should have and why.
- Draw a For Sale poster for the latest model hoverfoil, list all the features you think it should have for inter-planetary travel.

## Writing Workshop

This is a very easy way to get children stimulated and to give them ideas to begin writing their own stories.

Steps 1-3 are to do as a class:

1. Put Tess's name on top of the sheet of paper.
2. Write 5 things that describe her character eg. plays tricks on people, likes spying, is active, is cunning and smart

Write an example from *Tess and the Star Traveller* that shows how Tess is like her

description.

e.g. Tess tricks her dad when he uses her fake foaming toothpaste, spying when she sees Ms Wilkins watering the garden in her pyjamas, active when she chases the Triloboid, cunning when she finds the hideout and smart when she thinks up a plan to save Elkon.

Steps 4-7 are for each child to do (modelled on steps 1-3):

4. Make up your own character: an elephant, a boy, a villain, or a talking dog.
5. Write five things that describe your character eg. likes eating, is energetic, rides a bike, lives in a cave or talks a lot.
6. Write a sentence about each characteristic e.g.
  - a) The energetic elephant raced around chasing warthogs away from the watering hole.
  - b) The elephant liked nothing better than to jump on his unicycle and travel across the grassy plains to see his brother.
  - c) The elephant went to a cool dark cave to see the wise baboon.
  - d) The elephant talked so much that even his friends had to block their ears to stop the noise.
  - e) The elephant was a noisy eater with terrible table manners.
7. Now use the sentences to start your story ...

*Frederich the elephant liked nothing better than to talk. He would talk all day if only someone would listen. Even his friends were tired of listening to him, they even had to block their ears with great wads of mud just so they could sleep at night as Frederich just talked on and on and on.*

*One day as the energetic elephant raced around chasing warthogs away from the watering hole the flying eagle gave him a message. Frederich was invited to visit his brother, so Frederich hopped on his unicycle and headed across the grassy plains to his brother's herd.*

*While Frederich was away the animals decided to have a council to see what could be done. They had even had enough of Frederich's non-stop talking ...*

Keep writing your story till you get to the end, have other people read it and tell you what they think of it. They may provide ideas for you to improve it or tell you what they like or dislike about your story.

You may want to include some details such as who, what, why, when and where.