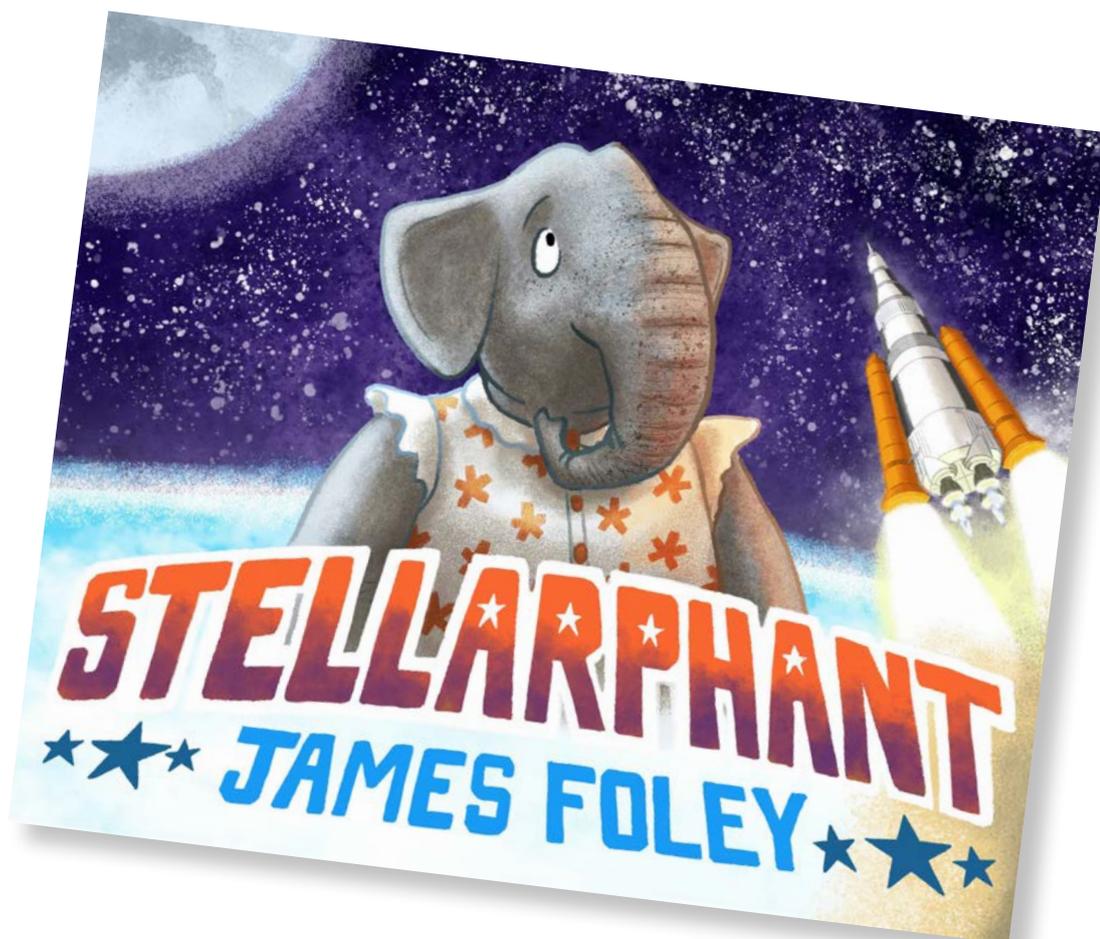


Meerkat
Productions



TEACHER RESOURCE PACK

FOR TEACHERS WORKING WITH STUDENTS
IN GRADES K/P – 6

CONTENTS PAGE

INTRODUCTION TO THIS RESOURCE PACK	3
CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES RATIONALE	4
ABOUT STELLARPHANT	5
SYNOPSIS	5
THE SHOW	5
BEFORE OUR VISIT	7
ANALYSING THE BOOK.....	7
PREPARING FOR THE PLAY	8
AFTER OUR VISIT	9
ACTIVITIES TO EXPLORE THE THEMES OF THE PLAY.....	9
ABOUT MEERKAT PRODUCTIONS	12
RESOURCE A	13
RESOURCE B	15
RESOURCE C	16
RESOURCE D	17

INTRODUCTION TO THIS RESOURCE PACK

This resource pack is designed to deepen your students' engagement with both the book and the theatre experience before and after our visit. It includes photographs of the creative process, context for the play and in-depth classroom activities.

For teachers, this pack will:

- provide material to guide discussion about the book
- give you strategies to explore the learning potential offered by a theatre visit and how to develop children's responses
- enable you to use drama to develop literacy, particularly with reluctant writers
- increase your confidence in using drama in the classroom

The classroom activities have been designed to support and extend your students' experience of the performance and offer teachers ways to pick up on and explore the themes in the play, before and after our visit.

We use drama and storytelling as ways of exploring ideas that are relevant to the play. We employ characteristics such as **playing and exploring, active learning, creating and thinking critically** to enable effective learning. There are also links to key areas of learning:

- **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT;**
- **COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE;**
- **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT;**
- **EXPRESSIVE ARTS AND DESIGN, AND**
- **UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD**

While the activities will not take an objective led approach, teachers will be able to establish links to the relevant curriculum objectives for their particular year group and can adapt them for their particular educational setting. Our teacher resources always put drama at the centre of our activities. Working through drama allows children to explore subjects that matter to them within a fictional context, draw on their prior knowledge and apply it to new situations, develop language as they give expression to new understandings and develop **emotional intelligence and critical thinking** as they see things from different perspectives. It will also allow the students to take responsibility, make decisions, solve problems and explore possibilities from within the drama.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES RATIONALE

AIM

To allow the students to engage with the themes of the book and the play by exploring their own understanding and experience of feelings.

TEACHER ROLE

Many of the activities are teacher led and will require the teacher to go into role. This is not about performance, or being an actor, more about speaking from a different perspective to enable the students to enter the fictional world.

Facilitating whilst in role encourages students to explore the themes more deeply and extends the impact of the theatrical experience back to the classroom and long beyond the end of the show.



ABOUT STELLARPHANT

SYNOPSIS

STELLARPHANT by James Foley.

Heroes come in all shapes, sizes and species. Stella wants to be an astronaut. There is only one problem: Stella is an elephant. Every time she applies to Space Command, they come up with a new reason she can't join. But where there's a will, there's a way, and Stella is determined to reach for the stars. Does she have the right stuff?

THE SHOW

Our adaptation of Stellarphant seeks to flesh out the story written by James Foley. We have focused on the themes of being determined, problem solving, not giving up and dreaming big. We follow Stella's journey from when she first applies to Space Command. Using James's illustrations as inspiration, we chose to explore the characters of the octopus and the sheep more deeply.

We decided that Stella and the sheep would be represented by costumed actors, and that the octopus would be a puppet. As the story is told through Stella's eyes, using an actor rather a puppet allowed us to hear Stella's voice, and connect with her. We have endowed the octopus as Stella's best friend who, unlike Stella, is concerned about stepping outside of their comfort zone. The octopus is puppeteered and voiced by the other performer.

The show is performed by two actors, and they will play multiple roles. The performers use a variety of drama techniques such as: naturalistic acting, direct audience address, audience interaction, puppetry, mime and movement, plus original songs, music, and sound effects to support the story, create place and clearly demonstrate what is happening.

In our adaptation Stella has dreamed of being an astronaut ever since she was a child, at first, she is unperturbed by the obstacles the man at Space Command presents, but as the story develops, she begins to question if she can keep trying to jump through their hoops. Finally, she questions why she is trying so hard to fit in with them.



We wanted Otto, the octopus character, to learn from Stella. The octopus is happy to champion Stella in achieving her goals but is frightened of change himself. We wanted to show how Stella teaches Otto about himself and challenges him to be better, to shake things up when he is not happy.

Both friends encourage each other when things are tough and celebrate each other's success.

At the show's climax our protagonist, Stella, realises that she doesn't need the approval of the men at Space Command, that she already is enough and already has everything inside of her that she needs to be an astronaut.

She launches her own aerospace.

The show can be used as a great conversation starter and demonstration around growth mindset (Stella) v fixed mindset (the man/Space Command).

The themes we explore are:

- Courage
- Perception
- Happiness
- Resilience
- Problem solving
- Determination
- Goal setting



BEFORE OUR VISIT

THESE ACTIVITIES ARE DESIGNED TO EXPLORE THE STORY AND THE THEMES IN THE BOOK. THEY WILL HELP STUDENTS TO ENGAGE WITH THE PLAY.

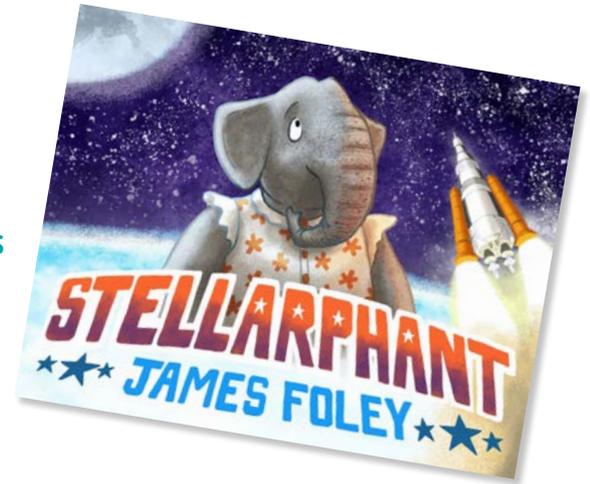
ANALYSING THE BOOK

ACTIVITY 1:

BEFORE READING LOOK AT THE COVER OF THE BOOK AND DISCUSS

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

1. What do you see on the front cover?
2. What do you see on the back cover?
3. Why do you think the book is called Stellarphant?
4. What do you think this book might be about?
5. Do you think this is a fiction book (a story) or a non-fiction book (facts)?
6. Is this a book you want to read? Why/why not?
7. What do you know about being an astronaut?



ACTIVITY 2:

AFTER READING

With the whole class, go around in a circle with each child taking it in turns to recap a part of the story. By the time everyone has spoken the entire story must have been retold. Each child may say as much as they can remember. Try and piece the story together in chronological order.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

1. Did you enjoy this story? Why/why not?
2. What do you think the story is about?
3. How would you describe Stella?
4. How would you describe the man at Space Command?
5. What feelings did you have when the man at Space Command rejects Stella's application?
6. Have you ever been rejected from doing something you wanted to do? How did it make you feel?
7. What other animals did you notice in the illustrations?
8. Look at the illustration of the sheep on the front inside page, look for all the other times the sheep features in the illustrations. What does that tell you about the sheep's story?
9. What does the saying, "the elephant in the room" mean?
10. Why does Stella launch her own aerospace?
11. Look at the illustrations on the fold out page. Which animal is your favourite?
12. What is your dream job?

PREPARING FOR THE PLAY

These activities can be used before watching the show to explore some of the themes and feelings in the book. It prepares students to work together using discussion, research and drama techniques.

ACTIVITY 3: INVESTIGATING THE THEMES OF THE PLAY

Start the session by having a discussion around being determined:

- What have you done that required you to be determined and not give up?
- When in the book did Stella need to be determined and persistent?
- When you think about all the times that you did not give up, how did it make you feel? Happy? Strong?

What does the word discrimination mean?

- Who is discriminated against in the book?
- Why?
- Have you ever felt discriminated against?
- How did it make you feel?

ACTIVITY 4: INTERPRETING THE ILLUSTRATIONS

Much of our adaptation will take inspiration from the illustrations in the book.

- Discuss how you think the theatre company will show Stella the elephant.
- What do you expect them to look like?
- Do you think there will be an actor pretending to be an elephant? Or do you think they will make a puppet?

ACTIVITY 5: ADAPTING THE STORY

- The book is very short, and the show will be 40 minutes long. What parts of the story do you think we might find out more about?
- Which of the words in the book do you think are the most important? Why?
- What are you most looking forward to about the show?



AFTER OUR VISIT

THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES ARE DESIGNED TO EXPLORE STUDENTS' RESPONSE TO THE PLAY.

SECTION 1

ACTIVITY 1: IN YOUR OWN WORDS

In a circle, go around and each tell us a little bit about the story from the play. Remember to describe the atmosphere and mood of each setting/scene:

- The sheep narrating the beginning of the story
- Meeting the man at Space Command
- Meeting Stella
- Stella applying to be an astronaut and being rejected
- Meeting Otto
- Meeting Professor Arboreus, Kingy and Dr Panthera Tigris
- Everyone agreeing to be on Stella's Crew
- The Big Boss of Space Command and Stella's epiphany
- Stella and her crew going into space
- Stellarphant Aerospace is launched
- The end song, Dream Big

Which were your favourite bits?

Which were your favourite characters?

ACTIVITY 2: SOUNDSCAPES

Some of the show takes place at the rocket launch. What sorts of sounds might you hear from the rocket, from the people in the crowd, from the crew themselves, from the media?

Everybody in the class is to think of who might be there, and what sounds they would hear. (You can use the pictures from the page that says "T-Minus 10" through to "We have lift off!" for inspiration.)

Use your voices and sounds to create this scene.

Teachers you can conduct this scene and bring people in one by one; slowly building the sound to a crescendo.

ACTIVITY 3: MAKE A PLAY - YOUR VERSION OF STELLARPHANT

1. Split the students into small groups
2. Allocate a few pages of the book to each group
3. Ask them to prepare a play about their pages
 - a. What is happening on the pages?
 - b. Which additional characters would you create and how? E.g. costume, puppets, etc.

ACTIVITY 4: REVIEW THE PRODUCTION (USE RESOURCE A)

Template 1 for Kinder to grade 2 students

Template 2 for grade 3 to grade 6 students

Share with the class

We'd love to read your reviews! Send them to us at admin@meerkatproductions.com.au

SECTION 2: THEMES ASSOCIATED WITH THE PLAY

ACTIVITY 1: COURAGE

ROLE PLAY

Otto is scared to leave the aquarium and try something new. With Stella's support and encouragement he agrees to join her team and go into space.

In pairs – take it in turns to role play a situation where one of you is scared to try something new and the other one uses encouragement.

EG: One person might be scared to try a new sport and they should give all the reasons they are worried about it.

The other person can explain how they are going to support them, what things they can do in advance to be prepared and what the benefits might be of them trying something new.

Take turns to share your role plays with the class.

ACTIVITY 2: HAVING A BIG DREAM

IMPROVISATION

In small groups improvise the conversation where Stella told her Mum and Dad that she wanted to be an astronaut when she grows up. What are all the things Stella is looking forward to about being an astronaut, how do her Mum and Dad support her, what do they say? What steps do they suggest she needs to take to fulfill her dream?

ACTIVITY 3: PERCEPTION

CONSCIENCE ALLEY

The teacher (or a student) goes into role as Stella. The rest of the group forms two lines with a gap down the middle. Each person in the line is one of the men from space command. The students can use their face masks for this activity. As Stella passes by, each person must say why they can't allow her to be an astronaut.

At the end "Stella" can discuss how it made them feel.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY FOR STUDENTS IN GRADE 4 TO 6:

As a whole group discuss the word discrimination – what does it mean? In what circumstances might a person feel discriminated against?

In pairs share with a friend if there was a time that you were discriminated against.

What can we do to support somebody who is experiencing discrimination?

ACTIVITY 4: CHARACTER INTERVIEWS

Use this video to show students how to create a mask of your favourite animal from the book:

<https://meerkatproductions.com.au/shows/book-week-2022/stellarphant-animal-faces/>

Using their animal face masks. The teacher can go around the class and asking each animal:

- What was it about Stella's story that inspired you to become an astronaut?
- What was your favourite thing about going into space?
- What would you say to other animals who are thinking of following their dreams?

ACTIVITY 5: DETERMINATION AND GOAL SETTING

Discuss as a class what it means to be determined and have a dream or a goal. Like Stella in the story, there may be obstacles to overcome on the way to achieving your goal.

CHOOSE YOUR GOAL

- What's something you wish you could achieve?
- What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail?

Eg: I want to get a higher mark in my maths test

DISCUSS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR GOAL

- What do you think is the greatest benefit of doing well?
- How can working towards your goal help others?

Eg: I want to do better in science so that I can make discoveries or inventions that help people

BREAK YOUR GOAL DOWN INTO SMALLER STEPS

• Use a goal ladder to break down your goal. At the top of the ladder write down your big goal, then work your way through the steps it would take to achieve it

Eg: if your goal is to ride a bike by yourself.

Step 1 might be: watch how somebody else rides a bike

Step 2 might be: learn to ride a bike with training wheels on

Step 3 might be: pedaling on the bike while a grown up holds on

Step 4 might be: practice riding on your own

BRAINSTORM POTENTIAL OBSTACLES OR SETBACKS TO YOUR GOAL

- Talk about bad habits or negative thoughts including a desire to give up.
- If you feel like giving up, what will you do instead?

If you want to give up on your goal, remember the story of Stellarphant who kept trying even though there were so many obstacles presented to her. You can follow these steps:

- Remind yourself of the purpose of your goal
- Remind yourself how you decided to deal with obstacles
- Recognize as you climb each step on your goal ladder
- Ask a grown up for help, ask them of any obstacles they faced at your age
- Focus on how you can continue to improve
- Celebrate your effort, determination and persistence
- Practice positive self-talk like "I can do this" or "I'm working hard to reach my goals"

Now use **Resource B** or **Resource C** to write down your Big Dreams and display them in your classroom!

You might like to listen to the song *Dream Big* while you are working

ACTIVITY 6:

Use the link in **Resource D** to listen to the music from our song *Dream Big* and sing along with the words printed at the back of this pack in **Resource D**.

You might like to make posters to put up in your classroom about having Big Dreams.

ABOUT MEERKAT PRODUCTIONS

At Meerkat Productions our goal is to provide a theatrical experience that makes students and teachers alike lean forward and engage rather than sit back and watch passively. We want the memory of our performance to be long lasting; we want the work we do to be inspirational and we want you to be counting down the days until our next visit!

Our Book Week shows aim to support Literacy in the classroom, and we have found during our 20 year history that most Primary school teachers identify an impact, particularly in engaging lower ability children as well as increasing enthusiasm for and motivation to write.

OTHER SHOWS

DID YOU KNOW MEERKAT PRODUCTIONS ALSO OFFERS OTHER IN-SCHOOL PERFORMANCES?



BOOK WEEK: YOUNGER READERS BOOK ADAPTATION



ANTI-BULLYING: BULLY BULL RING



**STORYTELLING & PUPPETRY:
GOOD THINGS COME IN THREES & FRACTURED FAIRYTALES**



MINDFULNESS, MANAGING ANXIETY, RESILIENCE: MR HUFF



CHRISTMAS SHOW: RUDOLPH'S RECRUITS

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT OUR WEBSITE
MEERKATPRODUCTIONS.COM.AU
OR GIVE US A CALL ON 1300 308 311**

RESOURCE A

TEMPLATE FOR STUDENTS IN GRADE 3-6

Here are some phrases that people might use to describe the experience of watching a piece of theatre. For each pair, please mark a point on the scale towards whichever is closest to your experience of watching the performance today.

My concentration was wandering	<input type="radio"/>	I was completely absorbed by what was happening				
I didn't feel like I was learning anything	<input type="radio"/>	My eyes were opened to some new ideas				
It didn't really get me going	<input type="radio"/>	I was gripped by the sights and sounds of the performance				
There wasn't much sense of atmosphere	<input type="radio"/>	I noticed a real buzz in the audience				
I didn't feel much connection with the characters/story	<input type="radio"/>	I felt I could really identify with the characters/story				
It felt like time was passing slowly	<input type="radio"/>	I hardly noticed the time passing				
I was mostly in my 'comfort zone'	<input type="radio"/>	I felt challenged and provoked				
I felt tired and uninterested	<input type="radio"/>	I felt lively and enthusiastic				
I didn't feel much connection with other audience members	<input type="radio"/>	It felt good to be sharing the experience with other people				
There wasn't really much that touched me	<input type="radio"/>	I found aspects of the performance very moving				
The performance didn't really hold my attention	<input type="radio"/>	I was often on the edge of my seat				
There was nothing much new for me	<input type="radio"/>	It got me thinking about things differently				
I felt flat	<input type="radio"/>	I felt tense and excited				
I don't feel much urge to discuss the performance	<input type="radio"/>	I will be talking about the experience for some time to come				
It didn't say much about my life or experiences	<input type="radio"/>	Some aspects of the performance seemed relevant to my own life				

TEMPLATE FOR STUDENTS IN KINDER/PREP TO GRADE 2

ENGAGEMENT AND CONCENTRATION

TIME PASSED...

REALLY
SLOWLY

--	--	--	--	--

REALLY
QUICKLY

LEARNING AND CHALLENGE

NEW IDEAS

I HAD NO
NEW IDEAS

--	--	--	--	--

I HAD LOTS OF
NEW IDEAS

ENERGY AND TENSION

EXCITEMENT

I NEARLY FELL
ASLEEP

--	--	--	--	--

I WAS REALLY
EXCITED

SHARED EXPERIENCE AND ATMOSPHERE

LOVED BEING HERE

I FELT LONELY

--	--	--	--	--

I LOVED BEING HERE
WITH EVERYONE

PERSONAL RESONANCE AND CONNECTION

FEELINGS

I DIDN'T FEEL
ANYTHING

--	--	--	--	--

I FELT REALLY
EMOTIONAL



RESOURCE B

TEMPLATE FOR DETERMINATION AND GOAL SETTING

To be successful at something, we need to be determined to achieve our targets. Determination can make a big difference between success and failure.

Think about and decide on 3 goals that you would like to achieve. The first goal needs to be something that you can do quickly (within one week). The second goal needs to be something that may take a little bit longer (within one month). The third goal needs to be something that can take a long time (within a year).

Write about what you will do to try and meet these goals. Remember to keep looking back at your targets to remind yourself what you are aiming to achieve.

For example:

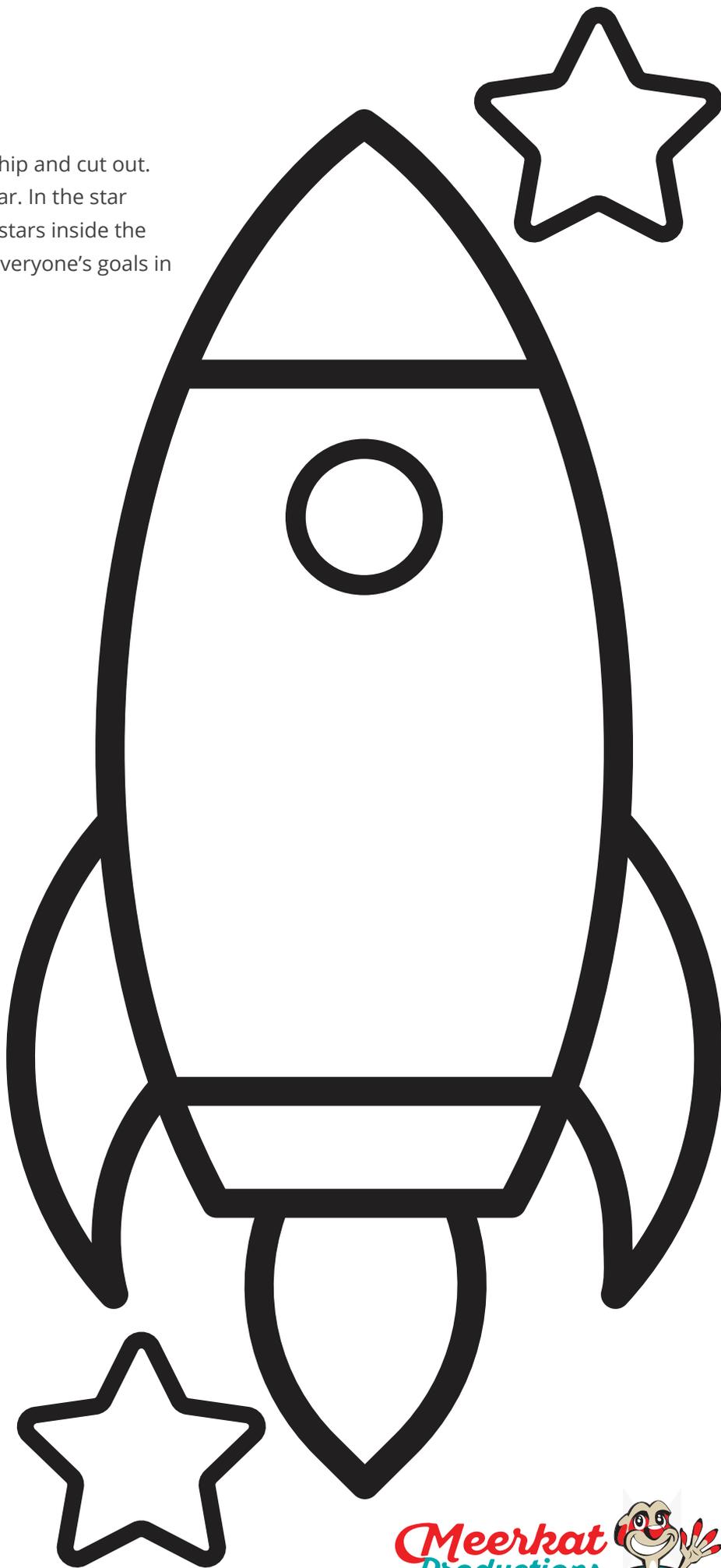
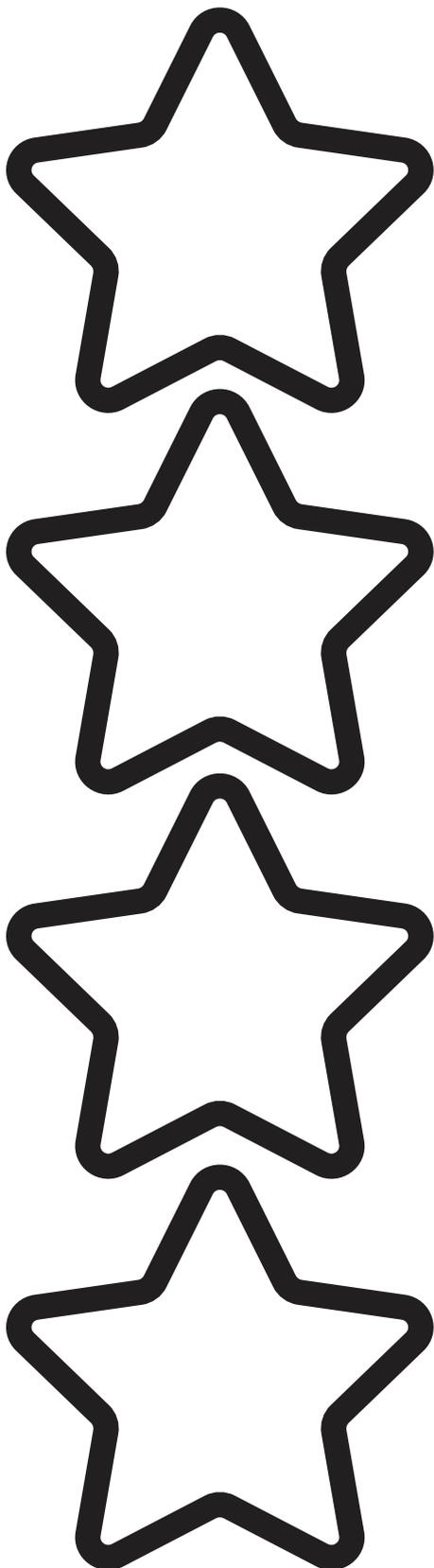
Goal: I will not get into trouble this week

What I will do: I am going to listen carefully to the teacher and try to always do what I am asked to do



RESOURCE C

Teacher draw the outline of a rocket ship and cut out. Each student cut out the shape of a star. In the star write your goal or dream. Stick all the stars inside the rocket. Display your rocket ship with everyone's goals in your classroom.



RESOURCE D

SONG: DREAM BIG

Here is a link to the song:

<https://meerkatproductions.com.au/shows/book-week-2022/dream-big-backing-track-with-vocals/>

VERSE 1

Voice 1: When I was young and just like you
(*indicating students*) I dreamed of being an actor

Voice 2: You worked out what you had to do

Both: 'cause I/you had the X-factor!

Voice 2: You went to class to learn to sing
then you practiced every day

Voice 1: My skills began to grow

Both: You've got a goal
You're on a roll
Now see how far you go
You're flying now

CHORUS

Voice 2: Dream big

Voice 1: You won't give up

Voice 2: Dream big

Voice 1: You won't give in

Voice 2: Dream big

Voice 1: You'll find a way to give it all you got

Voice 2: When you dream big

Voice 1: Yeah, you won't stop

Voice 2: Dream big

Voice 1: You'll come out on top

Voice 2: Dream big

Voice 1: You're stronger when you give it your best
shot

Both: When you dream big

VERSE 2

Voice 2: When I was young and just like you
I dreamed of going trav-ling

Voice 1: You went to England and Peru

Both: And saw sights so dazz-ling

Voice 1: You made new friends along the way
And soon you found your own crew

Voice 2: The first step's say

Both: Hello!
You've got a goal
You're on a roll
Now see how far you go
You're flying now

CHORUS

Voice 2: Dream big

Voice 1: You won't give up

Voice 2: Dream big

Voice 1: You won't give in

Voice 2: Dream big

Voice 1: You'll find a way to give it all you got

Voice 2: When you dream big

Voice 1: Yeah, you won't stop

Voice 2: Dream big

Voice 1: You'll come out on top

Voice 2: Dream big

Voice 1: You're stronger when you give it your best
shot

Both: When you dream big

BRIDGE

Voice 2: Do you have a goal or dream
That you've found too hard to do?

Voice 1: Think of the best thing that can happen
Not what you've got to lose

Voice 2: Step up and take the first step
Ask for help, don't be shy

Voice 1: Put a plan into action

Both: If you try you might just fly

CHORUS (with words change)

Both: Dream big,

Voice 1: I won't give up

Voice 2: Dream big,

Voice 1: I won't give in

Voice 2: Dream big

Voice 1: I'll find a way and give it all I've got

Voice 2: When I dream big

Voice 1: Yeah, I won't stop

Voice 2: Dream big

Voice 1: I'll come out on top

Voice 2: Dream big

Voice 1: I'm stronger when I give it my best shot

Both: When I dream big

Vamp for "OK everyone let's learn the dance moves..."

1 x instrumental chorus for dance moves, etc.

Chorus (x 2 with students)

Both:	Dream Big	I won't give up
	Dream Big	I won't give in
	Dream Big	I'll find a way and give it all I've got
	When I dream big	Yeah, I won't stop
	Dream Big	I'll come out on top
	Dream Big	I'm stronger when I give it my best shot
	When I dream big	
	When I am brave	