

# LITTLE HARE

## SEND SIMON SAVAGE TEACHER NOTES

by

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Teacher Notes by STEPHEN MEASDAY



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\*Please note that the recommended age range is a guide only and this book may be suitable for use outside of this recommendation.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Stephen Measday** was born in Adelaide, South Australia and lived there until he was 12. Then his parents moved the family to a country town named Crystal Brook, about 200 k's north of Adelaide where Stephen's father ran the local chemist shop.

Stephen got the reading bug at an early age and enjoyed reading Enid Blyton's *Secret Seven* and *Famous Five* books, as well as all 102 *Biggles* books (stories about an adventurous pilot) by Captain W.E. Johns. At the age of eleven, he started to read science fiction and also book and comic adaptations of such famous stories as *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* by Jules Verne, and *The Three Musketeers* by Alexandre Dumas.

Stephen wrote his first story when he was nine years old and it was called 'The Caterpillar and the Prince' (according to his Mum). It has been lost to posterity.

Stephen seriously started writing while a student at Port Pirie High School. At 15, he edited the school paper and magazine. At the age of 16, he got interested in journalism and was appointed the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's correspondent for his home town of Crystal Brook (his English teacher was friends with the local ABC journalist in Pt Pirie). Stephen's job was to send in local news items to the ABC Office in Port Pirie for broadcast over the regional radio network.

Soon after, Stephen joined the national broadcaster full-time and worked for ten years as a reporter, sub editor and news director, before turning to professional writing.

Since then, his scriptwriting work has included *Enyo*, *Erky Perky*, *The Ferals*, *Ship to Shore*, *Mirror Mirror 2*, *Sky Trackers*, an original children's feature

film, *The Time Game*, and *Blue Heelers, GP* and *A Country Practice*. He has written three plays, *Blow Fly Blow*, *The Plainclothes Hamlet* and *Mark Twain Down Under: The Most Beautiful Lies*. Since 2001, he has worked as Script Editor on the television series, *Hi-5*.

Send Simon Savage is Stephen's sixteenth book. *A Pig Called Francis Bacon* and *The News They Didn't Use* were nominated as Notable Books by the Children's Book Council of Australia.

Stephen lives and works in the Blue Mountains of NSW.

## SYNOPSIS

Simon Savage is a thirteen-year-old boy living at Bondi in Sydney. He comes home from surfing one afternoon to find that his father, Hale Savage, has drowned under mysterious circumstances.

While the police investigate, Simon and his mother and sister are approached by two men from a secret government agency. Simon learns that his father worked for the Time Bureau (based in the UK). When the Bureau announces an enquiry into Hale's disappearance, the family are persuaded to move to England.

Simon's mother, Glenda, and his sister, Lily, go to live in Bristol, while Simon himself is offered a free education at a top-notch, well-equipped boarding school called Mayfield Manor.

We learn that Mayfield Manor is merely a 'front' for the Time Bureau, which is contained in an underground complex behind the school and employs 500 people. Simon discovers that his father invented the Bureau's most important asset, the 'time accelerator', which is capable of sending time travellers (or temponauts) to the past and future.

The Bureau informs Simon that he has the perfect DNA for time travel, and that is the perfect age for surviving the harshness of travel through time (they only recruit temponauts between eleven and fifteen years old).

Simon is joined by four other temponaut recruits – Taylor Bly, Nick Spenser, Ivan Ho, and Danice, who has come to the Bureau from the 24<sup>th</sup> Century.

We learn that the 24<sup>th</sup> Century is a changed world, where Earth has been ravaged by climate change, disease and war. A time machine is also being operated in the 24<sup>th</sup> century, in northern California, under the control of a tribal chieftain. He is sending travellers back through time to plunder gold from Europe and Asia.

Simon becomes the first temponaut to travel into the future, and it is in the 24<sup>th</sup> Century that Simon unlocks a mystery that takes him by surprise.

### **WRITING *SEND SIMON SAVAGE***

I have always liked adventure fiction—stories that focus on a hero or heroine who faces great challenges and insurmountable obstacles, and who overcomes them and triumphs against an often strong foe. For example *Harry Potter*, *Horatio Hornblower*, or the *Indiana Jones* movies.

In writing this book, I wanted to create two pictures of planet Earth in two different times—that of the 21<sup>st</sup> century ‘in the near future’, and that of the 24<sup>th</sup> Century. To do this, I also had to explore what might have happened to the planet in the intervening three centuries.

Time travel by a ‘time accelerator’ is the link between these two worlds.

In creating the world of *Send Simon Savage*, I wanted to create a key term that fitted the situation in which Simon finds himself. The word *temponaut* sums up Simon's new circumstances, and at first I fancied I had invented it! The word 'temponaut' comes from the Latin word *tempus* (time) and part of the word 'astronaut'. I initially thought up this word without reference to other sources, but I later discovered that it has been used for some time in both science fiction films and books.

## CHARACTER AND PLOT

First and foremost, I wanted to set up a mystery story. I needed a strong opening to the book to give motivation to the main character, Simon Savage. I did this through raising a series of questions: what has happened to Simon's father? Will Simon discover the truth about his father's disappearance? Will his family ever get back together? The answers to these questions are important to Simon and become the basic foundation of his character.

I also had to begin thinking in more detail about Simon. He goes to the local high school, he's a reasonably good student, he's athletic, and he's a good surfer. But what is he actually like? I wanted him to be headstrong, impulsive and able to make quick decisions under pressure: quick decisions that would either solve the problem at hand, or that would possibly create new ones.

Then I thought about a character that would link Simon's story to the 24<sup>th</sup> Century. It had to be someone of roughly Simon's own age, so I created Danice. Danice is twelve and she comes from a society that has become 'primitive', a society that is only just surviving in the world of the 24<sup>th</sup> century. Many kids have little or no education, and they are forced to work at finding basic food and shelter. As a foil for Simon, I made Danice more thoughtful than he is, so that she is cautious and thinks before she acts—

unlike Simon. Danice works as a temponaut for the Chieftain who is sending gold-finding missions out of the 24<sup>th</sup> century.

Simon and Danice are contrasting personalities who must learn to work together at the Time Bureau. At first, they don't get on well, but by the end of the book they grow to respect and like each other. 'Character arcs' were very important for these two. They had to grow as individuals by the end of the story.

A good story needs a good plot. I wrote out a detailed sixty-page outline before even starting to write *Send Simon Savage*. When I began writing the novel itself, I changed things as I needed to, and I allowed inspiration to take me in new directions, but basically I stuck to my original outline.

This storytelling technique comes from my background as a television drama scriptwriter, where plot is very important in keeping the viewer's attention. However, unlike television writing, novel writing is more dependent on creating 'mind pictures' for the reader, and less dependent on dialogue.

## SCIENTIFIC BACKGROUND TO THE STORY

Some fairly detailed research was needed to write this story, especially in relation to climate change between the 21<sup>st</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> centuries. Genetics plays some part in the story. Reference is made to Simon's DNA being perfect for time travel. This is a long-held interest of mine. My books *A Pig Called Francis Bacon*, *My Friend Roger Bacon*, *Roger Bacon Reporting* and *Bringing Home the Bacons* concern a family of genetically-engineered pigs with human-like brains, who can read, write and talk—so ideas involving DNA are familiar to my work.

I also read books such as *How to Build A Time Machine* by Australian physicist, Paul Davies (Penguin Press 2001).

So science is an important backdrop to this novel, but I have followed the old adage 'never let the facts interfere with a good story'. I tried to ensure that the science simply creates the setting, and that Simon Savage and his friends are the ones who give flesh to the adventure. Fortunately, the fiction writer is free to cast a wide net and to paint their own picture of the world.

## DISCUSSION AND COMPREHENSION

- 1) There are 36 chapters in this book. Each chapter has an important role in telling the story. What is the main plot point in each chapter, and how does this advance the story and keep the reader interested? Create a plot summary as you read.
- 2) In Chapter 1, the news of his father's disappearance is a shock to Simon. Late at night, what does he do, and what does he find when he goes into his father's study? Make a note about what he sees in his father's study, as this is important later in the story.
- 3) In Chapter 2, what is Simon's motivation for going to England? Why is this important to him?
- 4) What does Simon discover at Mayfield Manor? And what role did his father play in this?
- 5) In chapter 5, the story moves to North America. What are the differences between this world and the everyday life in Australia of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Make a list to show the contrasts.
- 6) Simon encounters a different life at Mayfield Manor in Chapter 6. How is this different to his life back home? Why is Simon unhappy about Danice's sudden appearance?

- 7) Damien is on the defensive in Chapter 7. What facts has he hidden from the Chieftain about Danice's disappearance?
- 8) What is the purpose of the training missions in Chapters 8 to 12? What do Simon and Danice have to do in each location to prove they have carried out their mission successfully? What is Simon's attitude on both missions, compared with Danice's approach?
- 9) We start to get some idea of Ivan Ho's personality in Chapter 9. What is he like?
- 10) Chapter 10 gives some idea of how the wormholes and timelines are created. What technology is used for this?
- 11) In Chapter 11, why is Simon so keen to get into the Command Centre and see how it operates?
- 12) We get a closer glimpse of Damien's family in Chapter 13. Who are they? What is their life like? What sort of person is the Chieftain? Can we trust a character like his assistant, O'Bray? Why is Bigdad (Danice and Damien's father) living in Old City?
- 13) There is an athletic 'springing' sequence in Chapter 14. What do we learn about Simon and Danice here? How do the 'springers' in their shoes work?
- 14) Earth in the 24<sup>th</sup> century is a very different place to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. What are the main points about climate change that Sandra Creele brings up when she briefs Simon and Danice? What does Danice reveal about her own society? At the end of Chapter 15, Simon also discovers something interesting about his father's disappearance, when working with Harry. What does he find out?
- 15) Chapters 16 to 33 follow Simon and Danice's adventures in the 24<sup>th</sup> century. Where do they first arrive? What goes wrong straight



away and how do they get out of the situation? How do they end up in Old City?

- 16) Damien's family escapes to the Fire Caves. What are they and why do they go there? What ideas are we getting about Damien's character?
- 17) In Chapter 19, Simon and Danice enter the nuclear power station. Robots play a part in this book. What type of robot helps them here?
- 18) What is Bigdad's real name? From Chapter 20 onwards, what is his role in helping Simon and Danice carry out their mission? What are his aims as leader of the Resistance in Old City? Why doesn't he just escape?
- 19) Getting hold of gold is an important part of the Chieftain's activities. Why does he need this gold? Why is gold so important in the world he lives in? What does he do with it? (Chapters 13, 21, 23).
- 20) In Chapters 22–25, Simon and Danice are in captivity. How are they treated once they are captured? What sort of duel do they have to fight at the Prison Farms? What do we know about electric eels? Are they really this deadly? How do Simon and Danice get away?
- 21) After Simon and Danice escape, who captures them again in Chapter 27?
- 22) Simon enters the Chieftain's cave in Chapter 28. What is the revelation in the plot at the end of this chapter?
- 23) In Chapter 29, Simon faces the truth about his father. What is this truth?
- 24) In Chapter 30, what do we discover the Chieftain has been setting up as a gift to the 24<sup>th</sup> Century? How does this link to Chapter 1?

- 25) The Chieftain has to escape, and Simon and Danice have to return to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. What happens in Chapters 31 to 33? What plan does Bigdad put into operation? What do Danice, Damien and Alli each decide about their futures?
- 26) The mission is over. What does Simon learn back at the Time Bureau in Chapter 34? What decision does Simon now have to make about his future?
- 27) Why is the novel called *Send Simon Savage*?

## WRITING AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

### 1) TIME TRAVEL AND TIME MACHINES.

Discuss Time Travel. Assuming this is possible:

- a) Where would we go?
- b) How would we get there?

We could visit the past or the future. We might choose Ancient Rome, Victorian England, Don Bradman's first test century, or the world in 2200.

How would we get to the time of our choice? Is it a big machine like the Hadron Collider in Geneva, is it like a wrist watch, is it some other technology that looks like a car, or a plane, or a train? Is it a magical mirror-like device? Create a picture of the time travel machine/device using words or an illustration.

WRITE A ONE-to-TWO PAGE 'TIME TRAVEL' STORY.

You step into the time machine and go on an adventure to the time you have chosen. Is the story mainly about getting there? Is it about the dangers faced in the journey and how you overcame them? Or are you mainly interested in the time you're writing about, or meeting an interesting character, or finding an interesting place?

## 2) STUDY OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE DAILY PRESS.

(see *Chapter 15* to start discussion)

Every day, there are stories in the newspapers, magazines about climate change.

Collect stories about climate change from your local or state newspaper for an agreed period of time.

- a) What is the focus of each story? What examples do they give? How does the journalist write the story. Is it factual, or sensational?
- b) Who has written the article? Is it a journalist reporting on what other people are saying, or is it an academic, a politician, or someone giving a personal opinion? Do people quote facts, or merely express their own personal opinions?
- c) How many of the articles agree that climate change is happening? How many do not agree?
- d) Are the stories presented mainly with pictures and illustrations? Or are they factual pieces, mainly presented in words?
- e) Research climate change and write a short article for a newspaper. What is your headline? What is the opening paragraph to get the reader interested? What is your conclusion?
- f) Present a television report about climate change. Be a reporter in the school yard discussing ways the school is handling climate change.

- g) Draw two maps--one map of the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and one of the world as it might be in the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> or 24<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## **GOLD AND SHIPWRECKS**

The search for gold across the ages is part of the story in *Send Simon Savage*. (For example, chapters 13, 21, 23).

Shipwrecks today are of immense interest to people still searching for gold. Big companies are now using underwater exploration vehicles to explore the bottom of the oceans. Find out as much as you can about this modern search for gold.

Many shipwrecks occurred in the Caribbean Sea and South America. Why is this? Look into Spanish history to see how much gold and silver was mined in South America and taken back to Europe in the early days of colonisation.

The search for gold also gives rise to piracy. Who are some of the main pirates who went after gold and treasure?

The Dutch and Portuguese took much gold from Malaya, Indonesia and other parts of South-East Asia. Investigate some of the major shipwrecks in Sumatra and other neighbouring areas.

Read a book like *TREASURE ISLAND*, by Robert Louis Stevenson.

## **SCRIPTWRITING EXERCISE:**

Stephen Measday is a scriptwriter as well as a novelist, and might one day write a film script of *Send Simon Savage*.

How would you go about taking a chapter, or section of a chapter of this book, and writing it into a short script?

Here are some things to think about:

- How do you set out a script and how is it different to a page from a book?
- How much action description do you need to include with the dialogue. How much do you think you have to tell the actors **WHAT** to do **WHILE** they are speaking the dialogue?