

DESIGN A TIME MACHINE!

In **COUNTDOWN TO YESTERDAY**, James travels back in time to his favourite memories. Where would you go in your time machine?



A STUNNING STORY ABOUT
FAMILY LOVE, FRIENDSHIP AND HOPE

Copyright © Usborne Publishing Limited, 2024 Illustrations by Sian James



DISCUSSION NOTES

- When James first finds out about his parents' divorce, his mum comes upstairs to comfort him. But instead of talking about their split, she tells him that she's planning to make the Rocket Cake. Discuss why you think she does this. Why is the cake competition so important to Mum?
- After they separate, James is surprised to discover lots of new things about his parents i.e., his dad's love of music and his mum's enthusiasm for all things bright and colourful. Do you think James would have found these things out if his parents had stayed together? Why/why not?
- James tells Yan that he wants to "live inside a memory." What do you think this means? Why does James want to do this?
- If you could only choose one, which of your memories would you live inside?
- What does it mean to belong? Discuss how each of the characters in the book struggle with the idea of belonging. How can we help someone to feel like they belong?
- James says, "when I think about myself, all I see is a dotted outline around a white space with a question mark in the middle." How did reading this make you feel? Why do you think James might feel this way about himself?
- When James goes back in time, he discovers that his Top Ten memories aren't as perfect as he thought they were. Why do you think he misremembered them in the first place?
- As soon as James terminates *Mission Major Tom* and chooses to live in the present, the time machine malfunctions and throws Yan and James forward in time instead. Why do you think the author chose to flash-forward in time? What do you think they are trying to show the reader?
- At the beginning of the book, James is struggling, torn between Mum and Dad, between his two lives and between the past and present. What does James realise by the end of the book?



A STUNNING STORY ABOUT
FAMILY LOVE, FRIENDSHIP AND HOPE