

Story Time from Space: Astronauts getting new picture books

26 October 2015, by Marcia Dunn



This October 2015 photo provided by the Curren family shows Roraigh Curren in his home in Lancashire, England. The 7-year-old won a contest by London-based Lost My Name books with the prize of a personalized version of "The Incredible Intergalactic Journey Home" sent to the space station in December 2015 for a reading. (Ciaran Curran via AP)

Once upon a time, when NASA's shuttles were still flying, an astronaut read a children's story from space.

Thus was born Story Time from Space, a program that takes bedtime stories to new heights in its effort to get children excited about science.

The latest bundle of [picture books](#), mostly about [space](#), is scheduled to rocket to the International Space Station in just over a month, joining five bedtime stories already there. The astronaut readings are posted online, available at any time for children to see.

The delivery, targeted for December, was delayed a year because of a Virginia launch explosion. Another launch accident, this one from Cape Canaveral in June, destroyed a set of science experiments meant to supplement the stories.

As always, there's a moral to these hard-luck launch tales.

"One of the big takeaways from spaceflight is that it takes a fair amount of patience and just perseverance to make these things happen," said Alvin Drew, the astronaut who kicked off the Story Time project during space shuttle Discovery's final flight in 2011.

A cool plot twist: Two of the seven picture books going up—"Mousetronaut" and "Mousetronaut Goes to Mars"—were written by a former astronaut whose identical twin just happens to be spending a year in orbit.

If Mark Kelly's books arrive at the space station by year's end, his brother, Scott, should be able to read them on camera before his one-year space mission ends in March.

"It was such a neat opportunity," Story Time's creator, Patricia Tribe, said of the Kelly brothers' connection.

Also going up: ex-astronaut John (Danny) Olivas' "Endeavour's Long Journey." Author-astronomer Jeffrey Bennett's latest children's book, "I, Humanity" will join his dog-in-space Max series already at the orbiting lab.



In this March 26, 2015 file photo, U.S. astronaut Scott Kelly, right, a crew member of a mission to the International Space Station, stands behind a window next to his brother, Mark Kelly, after a news conference in the Russian-leased Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. Two of the seven picture books going up for the December 2015 "Story Time from Space" program, "Mousetronaut" and "Mousetronaut Goes to Mars"—were written by the former astronaut, Mark, whose identical twin, Scott, just happens to be spending a year in orbit. (AP Photo/Dmitry Lovetsky, File)

An English schoolboy will vicariously travel along as well.

Seven-year-old Roraigh Curran of Chorley in northwestern England won a contest by London-based Lost My Name books. His prize: a personalized version of "The Incredible Intergalactic Journey Home" sent to the space station for a reading.

The soon-to-be-space bound book shows satellite views of Roraigh's hometown, even his street and house, and stars in the sky spell out his name—Roraigh's favorite part. At school, he's already known as "The Space Boy," according to his father, Ciaran Curran.

"It's amazing," Roraigh said by phone this month. "I just like the fact that it's all about me!"

As part of the prize, he has been invited to the

books' launch from Cape Canaveral on Dec. 3. The books will ride along with 7,000 pounds of [space station](#) cargo.

Tribe said the beauty of the Story Time project—part of the nonprofit Global Space Education Foundation—lies in its simplicity.

"Everybody can relate to having books read to them," she said by phone from British Columbia, where she now lives.

Drew did his 2011 demo as a favor for Tribe, former education director at Space Center Houston, the tourist side of Johnson Space Center. She was trying to get NASA on board.

He picked Bennett's "Max Goes to the Moon," reading the story about the spacefaring dog from his laptop in the cramped cockpit of Discovery.

Parents loved it, kids loved it and, yes, NASA loved it, too, according to Drew.

"It was easy to go run with it after that," said Drew, who's temporarily assigned to the White House office of science and technology policy,

Next, NASA astronaut Michael Hopkins and Japanese astronaut Koichi Wakata read stories from the station's observation tower, or cupola, with Earth clearly visible out the windows.

Two of the stories are posted online; three are still being edited, including one in Japanese.

Through his [books](#), Bennett seeks to share his love of science and learning, and encourage children to dream about ways to make the world a better place. The Story Time project allows them to hear his stories read from space, Bennett said via email last week. "For me, this is a dream come true."

More information: Story Time from Space: storytimefromspace.com/

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