

Short Story: The Astronaut from Bolero

Level: A1-A2

I decided to become an astronaut when I was four years old. It was a magazine clipping that triggered this passion for space. I am now fifteen years old and I still believe that I will be part of a spaceship crew one day.

In fact, I am not the only one to have such high ambitions. My best friend, Mwiza, is passionate about planes. He spends his free time making Boeing models that he sells to us. You will not see him wasting his energy on useless things because he wants to be a pilot in fifteen years' time. Fifteen years, not less, not more. He talks about this day in and day out. Aircrafts are his whole world.

My own brother wants to be a scientist. Each month, he invents plays in which someone from Bolero discovers the treatment for Aids or another incurable disease. We like his plays because they give us a lot of hope and strength. He has a special heart, my brother. He will do great things for us one day.

I should also mention Takondwa. We call her 'The Tomboy' because she is always fighting with us. She says that she is going to be an architect. She is really pretty and intelligent. I am sure she will transform Bolero into a five-star village and more than that. I know she will do it. Takondwa has a tough spirit.

We live by our passions. I have several pictures of telescopes, spaceships and space shuttles. You will see them on the walls of the bedroom I share with my two younger cousins. On the floor, I have a collection of space-related objects. One of them is a miniature of Jupiter planet that Mwiza gave me a year ago. I was so surprised when he showed me this that I could not speak for several minutes. In the end I cried because what he did was very beautiful.

Being an astronaut is all I ever think of. At night the stars seem very far but they still retain their shining beauty. I wonder how it would feel like to be near them, to touch them, to admire their radiance. I recently read about the man who walked on the moon. His surname is Armstrong, I have forgotten his first name. I even saw his photograph where he is dressed in what they call a space suit, I think. I will wear one of those one day, surely. I wonder what my mother will think of her handsome son 😊.

Our teachers are always encouraging us to think of the impossible. They stretch our minds and horizons. My favourite subject is Geography. The teacher is a walking encyclopaedia, I tell you. We are all fascinated by what he knows about faraway countries, but it is his jokes we love the most. If he catches you dozing off in class, he screams at the top of his voice, calling your name: " Wake up Vitumbiko! The Express bus for Blantyre is leaving without you!" You can imagine the culprits' reactions and our hilarity! We cannot stop laughing in Mr. Nyirenda's class.

Next month, I will no longer be in Bolero. I have to go to a better secondary school in Lilongwe. I will live with my mother's brother, Mr. Kayira. He works as an accountant in a bank. He is very hardworking and thoughtful so I do not want to disappoint him by being careless. His wife is also very kind. She is a Science and Mathematics teacher- what a nice surprise! I will learn as much as I can from her.

My future guardians stay in Kawale, in a three-bedroom house with running water and built-in toilets. They even have a fridge and a cooker. It will be a big change from my life here. Forget the paraffin, forget the candles-I will be able to read as many books as I want at night thanks to the electricity. I will have no excuses if I fail. Mr Nyirenda warned us anyway-"If he catches one of us on a lousy job in the future, he will drag us back to school, even if we have our own children or we are sporting gray hair on our heads!". I think he was not joking this time round.

I am going to miss my family and friends a lot. It is the price to pay for my burning ambitions. I will come back here though. I cannot imagine staying away from my place of birth forever. I will come back to see Mwiza and Mr. Nyirenda. I will come back to be with my old and well-deserving parents. By then, they will be calling me 'the Astronaut from Bolero'. To say the truth, I will not mind this nickname. Not at all. Not for a single second!

Reading Comprehension

1. GENERAL COMPREHENSION

- a. Give the title of the short story:.....
- b. Can you imagine another title for this short story?:.....
- c. Who is the narrator?:.....
- d. Who are the main characters? Describe them briefly:.....
.....
.....
.....
- e. Where are these characters?:.....
- f. Name the places that are mentioned:.....
- g. Find two Adjectives to describe these places:.....
- h. What are the jobs that are mentioned?:.....
.....
- h. What is the story about?:.....
.....
.....
- i. What is your opinion about this story?:.....
.....
.....

2. DETAILED COMPREHENSION

- a. **VOCABULARY:** What do the following words or expressions mean: i) Astronaut ii) To trigger iii) Aircraft
iv) Spaceship v) Space shuttle vi) To retain vii) Radiance viii) Space suit ix) Built-in x) Lousy
- b. **TRUE or FALSE:** Say if the following sentences are TRUE or FALSE. Justify your answer.
- i. The narrator has a strong belief in himself:
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.....
- ii. The narrator wants to be an architect:.....
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.....
- iii. Mwiza is afraid of planes:.....

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- iv. The narrator's brother loves science:.....
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- v. The narrator keeps several objects in relation with architecture:.....
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- vi. The narrator's favourite subject is Science:
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- vi. Their teachers want them to succeed:.....
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-
- vii. The narrator is going away to another place:.....
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-
- viii. The narrator is optimistic :
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WRITE FULL ANSWERS FOR THESE QUESTIONS

- a. How do you feel after reading the story?.....
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- b. Why did the narrator decide to become an astronaut?.....
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- c. What are Mwiza's talents?.....
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- d. What are the narrator' talents?.....
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- e. What are the talents of the narrator's brother?.....
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- f. Where does the narrator draw his inspiration from?.....

- g. How does Mr. Nyirenda motivate his pupils?.....

- h. What does the narrator think of his move to Lilongwe?.....

- i. How does the narrator describe his future guardians?.....

- j. What is the nickname that the narrator's parents will give him when he goes back to Bolero as an adult?
 What do you think of it?.....

3. WRITING:

- I. Imagine what the boy will do once he arrives in Lilongwe. Write at least 100 to 150 words. Give as many details as possible.

Suggestion: *You can start the short story with the following sentence: " Welcome Wongani, feel at home."*

- II. Imagine the boy on his first day as an astronaut. What will he think about his future job? Write at least 200 to 250 words. Give as many details as possible.

Suggestion: *You can start the short story with the following sentence: " I'm finally an astronaut."*

POINTS YOU HAVE TO PAY ATTENTION TO

Correct subject	Teacher's Notes:
Correct structure (paragraphs)	
Presentation (neatness, pictures, illustrations, etc)	
Punctuation (full stops, commas, question marks, etc)	
Grammar (correct tenses, syntax, etc)	
Vocabulary (simple, elaborate, varied, etc)	
Originality (interesting, unusual, etc)	

