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A ROVER'S STORY

by Jasmine Warga

BOOK TALK

Resilience is a Mars rover who journeys from creation to launching into space, and then finally returning to Earth. The poignant character of Resilience allows readers to experience the “observations” and the “human feelings” a rover might feel. The emotions of isolation, courage, and friendship are all themes that will move readers to consider what a rover must endure to do the work it has been programmed to do.

A Rover's Story brings to light the long, arduous journey by NASA scientists to design and gather information from space unknown. Resilience shows us through landing on space, the perspective of how a rover might see the “heart” of space exploration tasks. The indelible friendships forged between Resilience and the other robots in the novel, Journey, Fly, and Guardian, bring persona to the technical gadgets sent into space and the integral work they are expected to do for human “hazmats.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LEARNING

In *A Rover's Story*, Resilience is the Mars rover launched into space and he is always learning. He says, “I have spent all my time observing. Learning everything that I possibly could. But never creating” (p. 24). How does Resilience learn and make sense of the encountered surroundings? What are the ways in which he uncovers new words and emotions? Do you believe he is truly observing and learning? What does Resilience mean when he says he is “never creating”? Do you agree or disagree with this assessment that Resilience has of himself?

COMMUNICATION

Throughout the chapters, there are layers of communication significant to Resilience's launch into space. How are the NASA scientists Xander and Rania communicating with one another as they prepare Resilience and Journey? How do they inadvertently and overtly communicate with Resilience and Journey? What are the messages they impart to Resilience that are meaningful while waiting to launch? In addition, Sophie, Rania's daughter is in constant communication with Resilience through her letters. From Sophie's letters, what evidence can we glean about Rania's relationship with her daughter?

HUMAN EMOTION

Resilience is a Mars rover, and therefore a robot. Human emotions are not included in a rover's programming; however, Resilience takes these qualities in as learning and can tuck them away. In what ways does Resilience show evidence that he understands human emotion? For example, Resilience says, “I know Journey says Mars is no place for human emotions, but I can't help it” (p. 136). Resilience registers specific emotions such as excitement, nervousness, and loneliness.

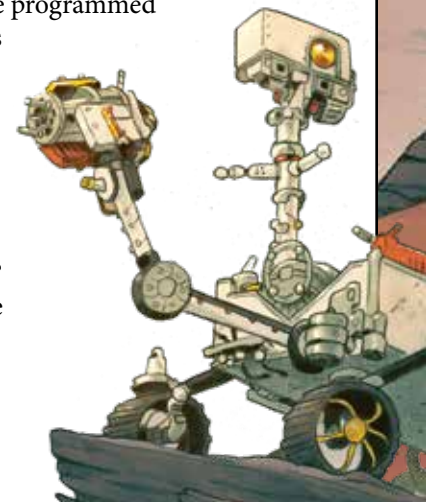
Give examples of Resilience's observations of human emotion and how it is channeled to help accomplish the space mission.

FRIENDSHIP

Although a rover is a robot without emotions, Resilience shows time and time again throughout the novel that friendship and companionship are integral to the success of a Mars rover. As Resilience is being created, Journey is by his side. How do they lean on one another in the lab? How do they develop camaraderie? As Resilience is launched into space, how does Fly act as a companion to Resilience? How do they lean on one another for hope and strength during periods of isolation and waiting? What are the coping mechanisms they have as friends?

MEMORY

Throughout the novel, Resilience “remembers” Xander and Rania. In fact, both of their presence in Resilience's journey to space almost appear to be like parental figures. Resilience feels a draw to return to them, and a responsibility to do as they have programmed and expected. What are examples throughout Warga's writing, where Resilience's memory give courage and purpose for the mission at hand? How do memories of the lab and Xander and Rania help Resilience accomplish his mission in space? What mentions does Warga write that bring Resilience “hope” and strength throughout his space mission?



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