

# HEAD SPACE

By Christine Harris

**Head Space** is a funny but tense tale of children, little aliens, suspicious adults and scientists in white coats. With echoes of 'ET', it picks its way delicately through tricky situations, negotiates obstacles and carefully bides time up to the climactic deliverance of the alien to its kind. Earth and its strange creatures, seen through the eyes of an alien, is once again a humorous subject.

## Synopsis

Narrator Tenille sneaks out into the bush on the last night of school camp to be by herself. She hears something crashing through the undergrowth towards her. Something invisible lands on her. She rushes back to awake the teachers, thinking someone is firing shots. Shots have indeed been fired. A group of scientific investigators have been tracking the sighting of strange beings. One has been spotted near a school camp. A shot was fired. Evidence shows the creature dissolved and research suggests it could have transferred its consciousness to a human body. Tenille is now indeed the refuge of alien Zem. No one knows although her dog senses Zem's presence. A strange voice tells Tenille that it is sharing her brain until it can be retrieved by its masters who are currently orbiting Earth. Many awkward situations follow as two minds occupy the one brain. Meanwhile, the sinister scientists are relentless and devious in their pursuit of Zem; everybody who was at the school camp is drawn into their dragnet. In a climactic twist, Zem bids farewell to Tenille, delivers the nasty head scientist his comeuppance and heads home.

## Characterisation

Two minds in one brain, two beings sharing the one body; it makes for very peculiar and amusing circumstances. No one can see or sense Zem however he does talk and he can be heard; speech that seems strange coming out of the mouth of a young girl. Tenille is a typical young girl with all the usual interests; Zem is a curious explorer, an alien scout investigating Earth as a potential home for his species. At times, the one girl – in her two modes – sounds and behaves like an 'odd couple'. Tenille needs to know what is going on; in Zem's responses she sees Earth and its humans through an amusing alien perspective. Her charitable interest in Zem is in marked contrast to the intense determination of the martinet head scientist, Dr Bones, to capture and examine Zem.

## Discussion Points

- In which ways is the story similar to 'ET'?
- Zem was a member of an alien scouting expedition. Why were they on Earth?
- ET climbed aboard a spacecraft to escape Earth. Zem uses a more sophisticated way of rejoining his crew (p.94). What is it?
- The idea of aliens sounds bizarre and impossible. Tenille herself finds it hard to come to terms with the presence of Zem. Apart from the scientists, how do the other humans, in whom Tenille has confided, respond to Zem's presence?
- Before he leaves Earth, Zem says '*There is a small matter to clear up*' (p.132). It is vital that he does so. What is 'the small matter'? Why is it so important? How does he clear it up?
- The manner of the pursuit of Zem by the people from the Scientific Research Centre is devious? What tricks do they employ to get information from people? How does this indicate that their interest in Zem and their intentions are not right? How does the director, Bones, justify their actions? (p.139)
- Dr Lowe is a dissenting scientist from the Research Centre. Why is he not supporting Bones but helps Tenille instead?
- The book uses three different text types (fonts). Why is this necessary?