

# Lesson Plan 8

**COUNT DOWN by Ben Mikaelson**

**LESSON PLAN BY STUART SKOPIT - FLORIDA**

## **VOCABULARY FOR COUNTDOWN**

### **Chapter 1**

coaxed, bawl, NASA, ludicrous, consent, toga

### **Chapter 2**

feign, instinct, infirmary

### **Chapter 3**

implications

### **Chapter 4**

dumbfounded, frenzy, obedient, pummel, vigorously

### **Chapter 5**

gnaw, vicious

### **Chapter 6**

amateur, mischievous, overwhelmed, smolder

### **Chapter 7**

drone, hesitant, simulate, theoretical

### **Chapter 8**

infirmary, stubborn

### **Chapter 9**

jargon, proverbs, sulk, sullen, suction

### **Chapter 10**

gait, queasy, refracting

### **Chapter 11**

abort, acquisition, chide, dehydrated, galley, resent, seldom, utensils

### **Chapter 12**

buoyancy, submerge

### **Chapter 13**

boast, cringe, diabolically, evolve, physiology

### **Chapter 14**

dread, flurry, malfunctions, network, press conference, quarantine

**Chapter 15**

endeavor, intent, tense, wistfully

**Chapter 16**

ambassador, sporadically, trajectory

**Chapter 17**

blunt, blurt, and grimace

**Chapter 18**

halo, eerie

**Chapter 22**

concur, exotic, feverishly, grim, inlet

**Chapter 23**

garments, gnarled

**Chapter 24**

stow

**Chapter 25**

asphalt

**Chapter 26**

descend, maneuver

**Chapter 27**

deactivate, defeating, harness, terminal

**Chapter 28**

dreaded, egress, tarmac

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**QUESTIONS FOR COUNTDOWN**Chapter 1

1. Explain what the following quote on page two means: "Daydreams wreck ranches."
2. What did Elliot save his money for each month?
3. What exciting announcement did NASA make?
4. Explain what the following quote on page three means: America did not become great by tiptoeing on dreams?
5. How will selection of the first child be made?
6. Why weren't Elliott's parents excited about the announcement of the Junior Astronaut program?

7. Explain the quote on page four: Tonight dreams will be planted.
8. How would you react if you were chosen as the first Junior Astronaut? Why?
9. There are many similes on page nine. Write one of them.

#### Chapter 2

1. What was Old Crowleg and how did it get its name?
2. Why was Dalton against Elliot being a pilot?
3. Write a simile used on page eleven.
4. What is Vincents native language? What language did he learn at school?
5. Why do you think Vincents father was looking for him?

#### Chapter 3

1. What does NASA stand for?
2. Do you think anyone in Vincents village would know anything about the selection for the Junior Astronaut program? Why?
3. What are Vincent and his father arguing about on page 21-22?

#### Chapter 4

1. What was the first question Elliot asked Ms. Lopez? What would your first question be?
2. If the story is about Elliot being the first youth to go to space, why do you think that each chapter also tells about a boy named Vincent living on the other side of the earth?
3. What simile is on page 28?
4. Explain the quote on page 31: If you make more noise than my shadow, I will throw my spear at you.
5. So far, both Vincent and Elliot have hunted for one great animal. What were they?
6. At the end of chapter four, what do you think will happen in the hunt for Olarni?

#### Chapter 5

1. Explain the quote on page 34: Remember where home is.
2. What space center was Elliot traveling to in Houston?
3. Why was Vincent upset that the boys killed Olarni?

#### Chapter 6

1. What do SAREX stand for?
2. On page 40, what three things are Elliot told that he'd be doing?
3. Why was Elliot annoyed at meeting Mandy for the first time?
4. Which of the two kids do you think will be selected to go to space? Why?
5. Do you think that killing Olarni showed courage? Why?
6. What do you think shows courage?

#### Chapter 7

1. Why does Mandy always wear white socks?
2. In Washington D. C., what did the guide say Elliot and Mandy's mission was?
3. What is the name of the space center in Maryland?
4. What is the name of the research center in Virginia?
5. What is the name of the space center in Mississippi?
6. What is the name of the space center in Florida?
7. What is the name of the research center in Ohio?
8. What is the name of the flight center in Huntsville, Alabama?
9. What is the name of the flight center in California.
10. Are the majority of the space centers located in the East or West of the United States.
11. Would you rather live in the United States or Maasailand in Kenya? Why?
12. What do you think the black box on the table is in the end of chapter seven?

#### Chapter 8

1. What kind of training does Elliot and Mandy do in Washington State?
2. Which kid do you think would be best to go to space and represent the United States?
3. Why did Vincent feel like Potato Maasai?

#### Chapter 9

1. Why is teamwork important?

2. How did the toilets work in space so that waste didn't float around?
3. What is the engigwana?
4. What is Embolata Olkiteng and during it what must each boy do?

#### Chapter 10

1. What is Earth's nearest star?
2. By the end, do you think Vincent will be a warrior or a scholar? Why?
3. How do you think Vincent will do against the bull? Why?

#### Chapter 11

1. Who do you think Elliot may end up talking to on SAREX?
2. How did Vincent prove himself as the strongest of the boys?
3. What simile can you find on page 107?
4. Explain the quote on page 107: My spear will hunt for me. Not my mouth.

#### Chapter 12

1. If you were acting like Elliot would you have suggested that Mandy could take our place? Why?
2. Why did the committee decide to let Elliot continue to be the first Junior Astronaut?
3. Do you think it is worth it to go to space if it means doing so much hard training, doing experiments that make you very sick and having medical experiments done? Why?

#### Chapter 13

1. What exciting thing happened to Elliot and Mandy in this chapter?
2. What bad thing happened in the Maasai village?

#### Chapter 14

1. What is the name of Elliot's mission?
2. Fill in the blank for this quote taken from chapter 14: Elliot's mission would help study Earth and its \_\_\_\_\_.
3. What was one of the responsibilities of the first Junior Astronaut?

#### Chapter 15

1. Why do you think Dalton changed his mind about Elliot working the ranch?

2. What did Mandy give Elliot? Why do you think so?
3. How would you spend the night before going to space?
4. What is the name of the shuttle that Elliot is going in?
5. For fifteen chapters you have read about Vincent and Elliot leading their own lives on opposite ends of the earth. Now, how does it seem that their lives may finally cross?

#### Chapter 16

1. What task does Elliot have aboard the shuttle?
2. Who does Elliot reach first on the SAREX?

#### Chapter 17

1. Why was Elliot and Vincents first conversation cut short?
2. How well did their first conversation go? Why?
3. Do you think the boys will talk again? Why?

#### Chapter 18

1. What color team was Elliot on?
2. If you talked to Elliot on the radio what would you ask him?

#### Chapter 19

1. In their third conversation what do Elliot and Vincent discover they have in common?
2. If Sambeke were a doctor, why would the elders be upset if he tried to help Tome?
3. Is Vincent brave or foolish to run through dangerous ground to get Sambeke? Why?

#### Chapter 20

1. What changed Elliots mind to talk to Vincent again?
2. Do you think if Elliot ever met Vincent that they would hold hands? Why?

#### Chapter 21

1. Why is Sambeke upset with Vincent?
2. Do you think the boys will talk again? Why?
3. Do you think there is any good coming from the boys talks or is it just a waste of time?

## Chapter 22

1. Read page 122. Now, why do you think this book is called Countdown?
2. Think about what Commander Beaman has told Elliot about the Maasai, the Earth and no boundaries. Then read the quote right before chapter one. What does it all mean?

## Chapter 23

1. Why do you think Vincent has been asked to meet Elliot?
2. What emotions do you think Elliot and Vincent will have when they meet after having so many arguments on the radio?

## Chapter 24

1. Would you go into space if you knew that you weren't coming back? Why?
2. What do you think will happen to the Endeavour as it tries to make an emergency landing? Why?

## Chapter 25

1. Who do you think was more scared, Vincent in a flying machine for the first time or Elliot making an emergency landing? Why?
2. What comparison is made on page 223 about how quickly the Endeavour travels?
3. What does the last sentence in chapter 25 mean?

## Chapter 26

1. On page 228 Vincent says that Elliot is not his friend. Do you believe him? Why?
2. Explain the quote on page 229: After today, there will be many ways to pay for your school. You will not need cows.
3. On page 230, how do the ways of saying hello differ for the Maasai and white man?

## Chapter 28

1. Explain the quote on page 243: Your world is one of magic. You are very different.
2. Did the boys decide to be friends?
3. What did Elliot do to show his friendship? How did Vincent react and why?
4. What did Vincent do to show his friendship? How did Elliot react and why?
5. If two very different boys from different cultures and parts of the world could find a way to get along and become friends then what does that mean for the rest of the world?

## POST READING ACTIVITIES FOR COUNTDOWN

1. Homeland Pictures: Draw a picture of what you think it looks like in Kenya, Africa. Be sure to include people, homes and objects used. Then draw a picture of what a typical city in the United States looks like including people, buildings and objects used.
  2. Letter to Elliot: Write a one page friendly letter to Elliot. Ask him all about his trainging, space travels, and what it was like to be the first ever Junior Astronaut.
  3. Letter to Vincent: In one paragraph try to get to know Vincent. Ask him about his way of life in the first paragraph. In the second paragraph tell him everything about our world.
  4. Letter to Author: Write a friendly letter to Ben Mikaelson and tell about parts you liked and/or disliked. Ask about parts of the story and how he came up with certain ideas.
  5. Mobil: Make a mobile depicting a scene either from Kenya or one of Elliotss adventures.
  6. Diary: Make a diary for one of the characters. Write as if you were the character. Write at least one paragraph for each chapter.
  7. Coming Attraction: Pretend that you have been selected to make a movie poster for the book Countdown. Be sure to include the title, author, characters, actors to play the characters, draw a scene from the movie and a one-paragraph summary of the story.
  8. Below is a list of adjectives that describe Vincents personality. Select three adjectives that are the best and then write about three events from the story that reveal his three traits.
    - smart
    - courageous
    - wise
    - friendly
    - imaginative
    - closed-minded
    - fearful
    - aggressive
    - athletic
  9. In the story there were times when the boys had to be brave. Write about a time when you were brave. Write who was involved, what happened, how you felt, and more.
  10. Write ten interview questions for Elliot about his space travels and write ten interview questions for Vincent about his lifestyle in Kenya. Then try to answer five questions for Elliot and five for Vincent (ten in all) about how you think they would answer.
  11. Pretend Vincent came to the United States to visit. Write a story about what the two of you would do. Write everything you would see and experience together. Remember that this may be his only chance to see how we live.
  12. Ben Mikaelson has asked you to continue his story. Write chapter 29 describing what will happen next.
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## **WORLD MAP**

Elliot talked to numerous countries on the SAREX. Label each country that he talked to by placing the first letter of the country's name on the country.

1. Label: Saudi Arabia, France, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, Portugal, Argentina, Spain, and Israel.
2. Label: the Atlantic, Pacific, & Indian Oceans.



## UNITED STATES MAP

Elliot visited numerous states during his training.

1. Label each state on the map: Texas, Florida, Virginia, Ohio, Alabama, California, Washington D.C., Washington State, Maryland, Mississippi.
2. Color Texas, Florida, Maryland, Mississippi, and Alabama red to represent space centers.
3. Color the rest blue.
4. Label Montana, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Atlantic Ocean.



## **AFRICA MAP**

1. Label Kenya
2. Label the capitol of Kenya.
3. Label Senegal, Tanzania, & Madagascar.
4. Color Kenya, Madagascar, Tanzania, & Senegal green.
5. Label the Indian Ocean.
6. Label South Africa, Egypt, Libya, Angola, Ethiopia, Algeria, & Morocco and color them yellow
7. Label Nigeria, Somalia, Uganda, Chad, and Zambia and color brown.