

BAEN BOOKS
TEACHER'S GUIDE TO *THE STAR BEAST*
BY ROBERT A. HEINLEIN

Contents:

- recommended reading levels
- Heinlein biographical material and links
- background of the book and plot summary
- character sketches
- chapter guides include a more detailed plot summary and may also include some of the following:
 - Prepare to read...
 - vocabulary
 - focus questions or initiating activity
 - plot summary
 - quiz/reading comprehension questions—multiple choice/short answer questions to testing reading comprehension
 - reflection and discussion questions—may be used to initiate classroom discussion, as short writing assignments, or as test questions
 - suggested activities/inquiry-based exploration—suggestions for activities and projects

Recommended reading levels: Heinlein's young adult or "juvenile" fiction appeals to readers of many ages, from early middle-school readers to adults, and much of his earlier work can also be read by young adults even if they were originally marketed to older readers. For use in the classroom, *The Star Beast* is probably most appropriate for readers in grades 5-10. *The Star Beast* has been listed on several recommended reading lists for children and young adults, including those of The Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society ("Recommended Reading for Children and Young Adults" by the staff of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, revised December 2007, http://www.lasfsinc.info/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=95&Itemid=260#RRList) and The Golden Duck Awards for Excellence in Children's Science Fiction recommended reading list (<http://www.sff.net/rff/readlist/goldduckrl.htm>).

Biographical information on Robert Heinlein:

Robert Anson Heinlein is considered to be one of the best, if not the best, writers of science fiction of all time. He was a prolific, commercially and critically successful, and at times controversial, contributor to the genre. He was born in Butler, Missouri on July 7, 1907, and graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1929. Heinlein served in the Navy during the 1930's, but was forced to retire from the Navy because of tuberculosis. He decided to try writing and sold "Lifeline", a short story, in late 1939 in *Astounding Science Fiction*, which was a "pulp" magazine. These were periodicals

published on cheap (pulp) paper that catered to popular tastes for genre fiction (mystery, romance, detective, adventure, horror and science fiction). He was a regular contributor to science fiction pulp magazines for the first several years of his career. He hit his stride as a novelist after World War II, publishing fourteen “juvenile” novels aimed at the young adult market as well as many novels for adults. Some of his most popular works are *Double Star* (1956), *The Door into Summer* (1957), *Starship Troopers* (1959), *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961), *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* (1966), and *Time Enough for Love* (1973), and four of his novels won the Hugo Award, which is presented at the annual World Science Fiction Convention. Heinlein wrote the screenplays for two movies: *Destination Moon* (1950) and *Project Moonbase* (1953), and two of his novels have been adapted into films: *The Puppet Masters* (book, 1951; film, 1994) and *Starship Troopers* (book, 1959; film, 1997). His novel *Space Cadet* (1948) also inspired the television show *Tom Corbett, Space Cadet* (1950-1955). Heinlein died in Carmel, California on May 8, 1988. For more biographical details, see the following articles:

- The Robert Heinlein Society offers a biographical essay by William H. Patterson, Jr. (*The Heinlein Society*, <http://www.heinleinsociety.org/rah/biographies.html>) and further information about Heinlein’s life and work (*The Heinlein Society*, <http://www.heinleinsociety.org/rah/FAQrah.html>).
- Carlos Angelo, “Heinlein,” *Robert A. Heinlein: Dean of Science Fiction Writers*, <http://www.wegrokit.com/bio.htm>

Suggested class activity: Have your students read the information on Heinlein above before they begin the book.

For further information on Heinlein and his work:

- The most current and extensive website dedicated to Heinlein is that of The Robert Heinlein Society (<http://www.heinleinsociety.org/>). In addition to the biographical information linked above, the Society website includes news, essays, forums and many other interesting areas to explore.
- Another useful website is *RAH: The Robert A. Heinlein homepage* by James Gifford (<http://www.nitrosyncretic.com/rah/>). Although this web site is not currently being updated, it contains useful FAQs, essays and links on Heinlein’s life and work.
- Another website that is not currently being updated, but which provides some interesting essays and biographical information is *Robert A. Heinlein, Dean of Science Fiction Writers* (<http://www.wegrokit.com/>).
- There are several critical studies of Heinlein’s work that are available in book form. The first and still one of the best is *Heinlein in Dimension* by Alexei Panshin (Chicago: Advent: Publishers, Inc., 1968). Panshin devotes two pages to *The Star Beast* and refers to it elsewhere in the book. A study that focuses exclusively on Heinlein’s young adult fiction is *Heinlein’s Children: The Juveniles* by Joseph T. Major (Chicago: Advent: Publishers, Inc., 2006). There is a chapter on every Heinlein’s book that can be classified as “young adult,”

including *The Star Beast*, and Major contrasts and compares them with each other as well as Heinlein's other work. Another critical study that, unfortunately, does not mention *The Star Beast* is *Robert Heinlein* by Leon Stover (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987).

Background: Heinlein wrote *The Star Beast* in 1953. Scribner's published it in hardcover in 1954, and a slight abridgement was serialized under the title "Star LummoX" in *The Magazine of Science Fiction and Fantasy* in the May, June, and July 1954 issues.

Plot Summary: John Thomas Stuart XI's great-grandfather was a crewperson on *The Trail Blazer*, one of the first human starships. After the ship's second voyage, he brought home a pet the size of a Chihuahua that he had smuggled aboard during a visit to an alien planet. The pet, later named LummoX, is still alive after one hundred years, but has grown to be larger than a hippopotamus. One day LummoX escapes from the Stuart family home and rampages through the neighborhood and the downtown area of the nearest city. Although he does not hurt anyone, he destroys a considerable amount of property. Deciding LummoX is dangerous, the authorities give the local police chief permission to put LummoX down, but he finds that LummoX is really hard to kill. John Thomas rescues LummoX before he can be put to death, and they escape into a nearby mountain range. Meanwhile, an alien starship appears in orbit around the Earth. The aliens demand that the humans return a member of their species who was kidnapped a century earlier or else they will destroy our planet. Eventually, it is determined that LummoX is a member of that alien species and that he is the one for whom they are looking.

Characters:

- **LummoX** is the pet of the Stuart family and is at least one hundred years old. A member of the Stuart family found him on an alien planet and brought him home. He is bigger than a hippopotamus, has eight legs, talks, is impervious to bullets and anti-tank projectiles, and is hungry almost all the time. (He once ate a Buick.) He is also intelligent, although no one knows how smart he really is.
- **John Thomas Stuart XI aka "Johnnie"** is the most recent scion of the Stuart family, whose ancestral home is in the town of Westville, which is somewhere in the western part of North America. He is a high school senior who has a girlfriend and wants to go to college to become a xenologist, someone who studies alien species.
- **Mrs. Stuart** is a single stay-at-home mother whose husband never returned from a space voyage.
- **Betty Sorenson** is John Thomas's girlfriend. She divorced her parents and wants to become a lawyer.
- **Chief Dreiser** is the police chief of Westville as well as a deacon and Sunday school teacher at Betty's church.
- **Henry Gladstone Kiku** is Permanent Undersecretary for Spatial Affairs, meaning he is the highest ranking civil servant on Earth in charge of all matters relating to

outer space. A native of Kenya, a country in Africa, he was educated at Oxford University, is married, and is close to retirement age.

- **Roy MacClure** is Secretary for Spatial Affairs and Mr. Kiku's official boss.
- **Ftaeml** is a Rargyllian, an alien species whose most pronounced physical characteristic are tendrils that emanate from their heads. He is a professional translator who also mediates disputes between different species.
- **Sergei Greenberg** is one of Mr. Kiku's subordinates. He is a human who was born on Mars but returned to Earth to attend Harvard Law School.
- **Judge O'Farrell** is the district judge of Westville and also a graduate of Harvard Law School.
- **Mr. Perkins** represents the Exotic Life Laboratory of the Museum of Natural History.
- **Beulah Murgatroyd** is the creator of Pidgie-Widgie, the hero of the best-selling children's stories of the time, and the founder of "The Friends of LummoX."
- **Wesley Robbins** is the Special Assistant Secretary for public relations and used to work in the media.
- **Hovey** is a newspaperman in Westville.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Chapter I—L-Day

- prepare to read:
 - vocabulary
 - scaffolding
 - tarpaulin
 - vertical
 - horizontal
 - caterpillar
 - viaduct
 - metabolism
 - greenhouse
 - Focus question/initiating activity: How good a pet is LummoX? He is obviously quite intelligent, because he recognizes that John Thomas will grow up one day. On the other hand, LummoX causes a great deal of trouble for John Thomas when he escapes from his enclosure. Ask if any of the students' pets have ever run loose and caused trouble for them and/or their family.
- Chapter summary: In this chapter, we are introduced to LummoX, John Thomas, his mother, Betty, and Chief Dreiser. We learn that LummoX's chief motivations are boredom and hunger, that John Thomas is spending less and less time with LummoX and more and more time with Betty, and that LummoX can talk. Both John Thomas and Betty are old enough that they are thinking of life after high school and just had an argument over where to go to college. During LummoX's escape, he destroys a great deal of property, including a flower bed, a vegetable farm, several cars, a few lamp posts, and a mall. However, he does not hurt

anyone, and people frighten him just as much as he frightens them. When the police bring John Thomas to take him home, LummoX is hiding in a viaduct. John Thomas rides LummoX home with a police escort. During the trip, Betty joins them. Betty plans to become a lawyer and advises John Thomas as if he were under arrest.

- quiz/reading comprehension questions:

1. LummoX is a native of what planet?

- (a) Mars
- (b) Vulcan
- (c) Tatooine
- (d) unknown

2. When the reader first meets John Thomas, he is

- (a) Taking a nap
- (b) Playing chess with LummoX
- (c) Getting home after an argument with Betty
- (d) Watching television

3. Mrs. Stuart is

- (a) A single stay-at-home mother
- (b) A doctor
- (c) An engineer
- (d) A bus driver

4. When does John Thomas know he is in trouble?

- (a) When the police arrest him
- (b) When his mother calls him “John Thomas” rather than “John” or “Johnnie”
- (c) When LummoX destroys the Stuart house

Answers: 1-d, 2-c, 3-a, 4-b

- Suggestion for reflection and discussion: Heinlein introduces two important female characters. Contrast and compare Betty and Mrs. Stuart.
- Suggested activities/inquiry-based exploration: Both John Thomas and Betty have personal helicopters, and the police have flying cars. Have the students research the history of flight.

Chapter II—The Department of Spatial Affairs

- prepare to read:
 - vocabulary
 - extra-terrestrial
 - tentacles
 - medusa
 - cephalopod
 - focus questions or initiating activity
 - Have you students research the history of space exploration. Using the second and third paragraphs in this chapter, discuss how much farther human beings will have travelled in the time period of this book.
- Chapter summary: The second chapter introduces Kiku, Greenberg, MacClure, and Ftaeml. Kiku is a very busy man and has grave responsibilities, including matters of life and death. He has gone as high in civil service as he can go and reports directly to a political appointee. One of his weaknesses is a fear of snakes, and one of his upcoming appointments is with Ftaeml, a Rargyllian. This alien species is distinguished by tentacles attached to their heads, which look like snakes to Kiku. One of his new problems that day is what to do about LummoX, and he assigns Greenberg to handle it.
- Quiz/reading comprehension questions:
 1. When Mr. Kiku's boss visits him, what do they discuss?
 - (a) Baseball
 - (b) Project Cerberus, a power proposal for the research station on Pluto
 - (c) The importation of Martian sand grass into the Tibetan Plateau
 - (d) Whether to provide police protection for a group of students from another planet
 2. Where is Mr. Kiku considering spending his retirement?
 - (a) In a condominium in Florida
 - (b) At a ski resort in the Himalayas
 - (c) On a farm in Kenya
 - (d) On a cruise to see the rings of Saturn
 3. What is Greenberg's official position?
 - (a) chief of System Trade Intelligence
 - (b) Governor of a state
 - (c) Chief inspector of mines
 - (d) Head translator

Answers: 1-b, 2-c, 3-a

- Suggestion for reflection and discussion: Like Indiana Jones, Kiku is afraid of snakes. Ask the students if they are afraid of snakes and why.
- Suggested activities/inquiry-based exploration: A starship has been named for Simon Bolivar. Have your students research the man and explain why he deserves to have a ship named after him.

Chapter III—“An Improper Question”

- prepare to read:
 - vocabulary
 - intervention
 - gymkhana
 - tumor
 - postponement
 - homestead
 - jurisdiction
 - girders
 - Focus question/initiating activity: In this chapter, Greenberg has to decide whether to treat LummoX as an animal or as a person. As a person, he automatically has rights. Under Federation law, the three criteria are whether (1) the being can talk, (2) has hands, or some equivalent, to use tools, and (3) keeps records, oral, pictorial, or written. LummoX can talk, but has no hands or any evidence of keeping records of any kind, so Greenberg decides to treat him as an animal. Is Greenberg making the right decision?
- Chapter summary: Greenberg requests the use of the local courthouse for the hearing to determine LummoX’s fate and asks Judge O’Farrell, the local district judge, to have all interested parties and witnesses there at 10 AM the following morning. Since LummoX is too big to enter the building through the doors, a special pen is constructed to hold him for the day, and he is already inside it by the time Greenberg arrives. John Thomas is checking on two swellings on LummoX where his shoulders would have been if he had arms when Betty joins him. Judge O’Farrell arrives and introduces John Thomas and Betty to Greenberg who examines LummoX and talks to him, but tentatively concludes that his legal status is that of an animal since he has no hands. He recommends postponing the hearing to check his conclusion, but Judge O’Farrell talks him out of it on the grounds that all the interested parties and witnesses are present and that it would be unfair to make them return the following day.
- quiz/reading comprehension questions:
 1. Chief Dreiser and his men arrive at 4 AM to escort LummoX and John

Thomas to the courthouse, but they do not actually leave until 7 AM.
What was the cause of the delay?

- (a) Mrs. Stuart and John Thomas shoot Chief Dreiser
- (b) John Thomas insists on eating breakfast first, and Chief Dreiser and his men join them for coffee.
- (c) LummoX runs away

2. What materials is LummoX's pen at the courthouse made of

- (a) Steel girders
- (b) Straw
- (c) Wooden sticks
- (d) Bricks

3. Who orders LummoX to stay in the pen?

- (a) John Thomas
- (b) Judge O'Farrell
- (c) Chief Dreiser
- (d) Betty

Answers: 1-b; 2-a; 3-d

- Suggestion for reflection and discussion: What is the difference between a person and an animal? Do animals have rights?
- Suggested activities/inquiry-based exploration: There have been attempts to teach animals such as gorillas and chimpanzees to talk. Have the students research the Internet to read about the latest findings.

Chapter IV ---- The Prisoner at the Bars

- prepare to read:
 - vocabulary
 - babble
 - paraphernalia
 - bailiff
 - preliminary
 - preposterous
 - chattel
 - transcript
 - exemplary

- Chapter summary: Greenberg calls the hearing to order, but his style is very informal. Among the parties represented are the mall and its insurance company, John Thomas and Mrs. Stuart, their next door neighbor, the vegetable farmer, and the city. Witnesses include two police officers. Betty asks to represent John Thomas, although she is younger than eighteen and not a lawyer. Then Betty reveals that she has just bought a half-interest in LummoX. Greenberg finally gives in and allows John Thomas and Betty to represent themselves. One organization that Greenberg does not allow to participate is the Keep Earth Human League, who are anti-extraterrestrial. Greenberg then allows testimony from the interested parties and the witnesses. At the end of the day, he concludes that he has enough information to make a decision. Greenberg dismisses all criminal charges against LummoX and the Stuarts as well as all punitive charges against them in civil lawsuits. The Department of Spatial Affairs will, Greenberg decides, pay for all real damages caused by LummoX. On the other hand, he orders that local authorities take possession of LummoX from John Thomas. Meanwhile, LummoX has gotten lonely for John Thomas so he breaks out of his cage, breaks through the wall of the courthouse, and enters the courtroom.
- quiz/reading comprehension questions:
 1. When the representative from the Keep Earth Human League asks to speak, Greenberg grants him his wish. Where does he allow him to speak?
 - (a) In the courtroom
 - (b) On the courthouse lawn
 - (c) On television
 - (d) Over the Internet
 2. Greenberg uses a kind of lie detector. What is it called?
 - (a) Truth meter
 - (b) Falsehood sensor
 - (c) Fib finder
 - (d) Untruth gauge
 3. How does LummoX know that John Thomas is inside the courtroom?
 - (a) He watched the proceedings on cable TV
 - (b) Chief Dreiser told him
 - (c) He heard John Thomas's voice
 - (d) LummoX has X-Ray vision

Answers: 1-b, 2-a, 3-c

- Suggestion for reflection and discussion: Betty argues that she is the one best qualified to represent John Thomas, because she is the only one with his best interests at heart. Why would his mother not be the most qualified?

- Suggested activities/inquiry-based exploration: The hearing proceedings are unorthodox according to the local attorneys, including Judge O’Farrell. What would have happened if Greenberg had conducted the hearing in a more conventional manner?

Chapter V—A Matter of Viewpoint

Prepare to read:

- vocabulary
 - memorandum
 - prejudice
 - intervention
 - psychiatrist
 - subconscious
- Focus questions/initiating activity: As you read, note how Mr. Kiku acts toward the people under him in the civil service, including the Bureau of Engineering, Wong, and Greenberg.
- Chapter summary: Kiku is sitting in his office and reading his mail, including a report from the Bureau of Engineering, another about “The Friends of LummoX”, a memo about a food virus, and finally Greenberg’s field report. He summons Greenberg to discuss the report in person and criticizes Greenberg’s decisions. The reader learns that after LummoX had interrupted the hearing by crashing through the wall, Greenberg orders his destruction. The reader also learns that Chief Dreiser has tried to both drown and poison LummoX, but LummoX is still alive. However, Kiku does not reverse Greenberg’s decision. In the meantime, a hypnotherapist has arrived to prepare Mr. Kiku for his meeting with Dr. Ftaeml and orders Greenberg to take over for him for a while. After thinking about LummoX for a few minutes, he modifies his decision in the matter to postpone LummoX’s destruction until he is studied by scientists. He also reviews a report on a new alien species called the Hroshii whose spaceship is in orbit around the Earth and who are convinced that one of their people is being held prisoner by humans and are demanding his release. Greenberg considers whether LummoX is a Hroshii, but rejects the idea because LummoX has no hands and is too stupid to be a member of a species capable of interstellar travel.
- quiz/reading comprehension questions
 1. Greenberg concludes that LummoX is not intelligent, because he has no hands. Does Mr. Kiku agree?
 2. What unusual item has LummoX eaten since the hearing?
 - a. a car

- b. a reservoir intake valve
- c. a desk
- d. a chair

Answers: 1-No. Mr. Kiku suspects that someday they will meet an intelligent species without hands. At the very least, Greenberg should have postponed his judgment pending further study. 2-b.

- Suggestion for reflection and discussion: Mr. Kiku hates snakes. Have the students discuss any animals that they don't like to get close to, such as insects or spiders.
- Suggested activities/inquiry-based exploration: Mr. Kiku refers to the time "Solomon ordered the baby sawed in half." This is a story from the Bible (First Kings, Chapter 3, Verses 16 to 28). Have the students look it up on the Internet.

Chapter VI—"Space Is Deep, Excellency"

- prepare to read:
 - vocabulary
 - compatriot
 - bifurcate
 - urbane
 - auxiliary
 - mercenary
 - hegemony
 - geocentric
 - Initiating activity: Discuss with the students the concepts of diplomacy and what ambassadors do.
- Chapter summary: Kiku finally has his dreaded meeting with Ftaeml and has Greenberg join him. Having grown up on Mars, Greenberg learned to get along with aliens, so he is not bothered by Dr. Ftaeml's appearance. They learn that the Hroshii do not take pictures, so Dr. Ftaeml does not have one to help Mr. Kiku locate their missing person. He does describe them, but they do not resemble Lummox. Kiku and Greenberg also learn that the Hroshii vessel in orbit around the Earth is a military ship. They have been searching for the kidnappers, and their only clue was their physical appearance. Dr. Ftaeml provides information on the location of the Hroshii home planet, and Mr. Kiku orders his department's best astrogator to see if he can match it to a voyage of a human starship. Mr. MacClure, Mr. Kiku's boss, interrupts their meeting with another problem so Greenberg and Dr. Ftaeml go out to dinner and visit a nightclub. After leaving Dr.

Ftaeml at his hotel, Greenberg returns to the office to find Kiku still working. After reviewing the astrogator's work, they conclude that LummoX must be a Hroshii.

- quiz/reading comprehension questions:

1. When Greenberg and Dr. Ftaeml are at a night club, Ftaeml makes a remark that bothers Greenberg. What is it?

2. Why do Kiku and Greenberg conclude that LummoX must be Hroshii?

Answers: 1—Dr. Ftaeml implies that the Hroshii can easily destroy the Earth if they so desire. 2—The time period when the missing Hroshii disappeared coincided with the second voyage of the *Trailblazer*, which is when John Thomas's ancestor brought LummoX home.

- Suggestion for reflection and discussion: The officers and crew of the *Trailblazer* obviously kept poor records. What would have happened if they had kept good records, especially about any extraterrestrial animals they brought home?
- Suggested activities/inquiry-based exploration: There is a reference to the "Great Martians". Have the students research the search for life on Mars.

Chapter VII—"Mother Knows Best"

- prepare to read:
 - vocabulary
 - electrocution
 - Focus question: Would any of the students sell their pet to a zoo or museum?
- Chapter summary: LummoX gets tired of Dreiser's attempts to kill him, so he walks home. The reader learns that Greenberg's order postponing LummoX's execution has been sent to the wrong address. John Thomas and LummoX finally get to spend some time together, but a Mr. Perkins pays them a visit. He represents a museum that wants to buy LummoX. One of Perkins's selling points is that the museum can hire lawyers to protect LummoX from the authorities. Another is that the museum will hire John Thomas to take care of him, although Mrs. Stuart wants John Thomas to go to college instead. Finally, John Thomas agrees to the sale.

- quiz/reading comprehension questions:
 1. Instead of Westville, Greenberg’s modification of his order goes to
 - (a) Walla Walla, Washington
 - (b) Pluto
 - (c) Kalamazoo, Michigan
 2. What is the price that Mrs. Stuart negotiates for LummoX?
 - (a) 30 pieces of silver
 - (b) one million dollars
 - (c) \$20,000 after all insurance claims are settled

Answers: 1-b, 2-c

- Suggestion for reflection and discussion: Ask whether the price for LummoX is a fair one. Explain to the students the concept of price inflation.
- Suggested activity/inquiry-based exploration: Have the students research the history of zoos and museums.

Chapter VIII—The Sensible Thing To Do

Prepare to read:

- vocabulary
 - submarine
 - emigrate
 - sentimentality
- Focus question/initiating activity: John Thomas and Betty do not have cell or smart phones, personal computers, or the Internet, but they do have personal helicopters. Which would the students prefer and why?
- Chapter summary: John Thomas is unhappy about the situation, so he retreats to his secret room in the attic, where he stores some of his possessions and where he has secretly built his own phone extension. His great-grandfather had kept a paper diary of the second voyage of *The Trailblazer*, and John Thomas re-read the parts that deal with LummoX and the planet he is from. The reader learns about the history of the Stuart family, which includes a sea captain, an early aviator, a submariner during World War II, a member of the first expedition to the Moon, a colonizer of Mars and a leader in that planet’s struggle for independence from Earth, and interstellar space explorers. One of the previous John Thomases spent the last fifteen years of his life on a penal colony on Triton, a moon of Neptune, and another had been forced to resign from the space service as an alternative to a

court martial. Just before John Thomas goes to bed, Betty calls him, and he explains what he has done. Betty argues that he did the wrong thing.

- quiz/reading comprehension questions
 1. What were John Thomas, Junior, John Thomas III, and John Thomas doing when they died?
 2. Where was John Thomas VII when he died?

Answers: 1- J.T. Junior was flying an early airplane, J.T. III was serving on board a submarine during World War II, and J.T. IV was exploring the Moon. 2—He was in prison on Triton, a moon of Saturn.

- Suggestion for reflection and discussion: Ask the students how much they know about their ancestors.
- Suggested activities/inquiry-based exploration: Heinlein mentions the Einstein barrier, which is a reference to Einstein's Theory of Relativity. Have the students look it up.
- NOTE: Many editions of *The Star Beast* omit one page of the original hardcover and magazines versions. It is from this chapter and the passage in which John Thomas is reading the diary. It concerns *The Trailblazer's* visit to what John Thomas concludes is Lummo's home world. Be aware of this in case the students are reading different editions of the text.

Chapter IX—Customs and an Ugly Duckling

- prepare to read:
 - vocabulary
 - transcontinental
 - expressway
 - gargantuan
 - inchworm
 - Focus question/initiating activity: Asked the students whether they ever considered running away from home and why.
- Chapter summary: John Thomas decides that he and Lummo need to run away from home. Careful not to wake up his mother, he assembles all his hunting and camping gear, all his cash, and as many groceries as he can carry. He wakes up Lummo and crawls on top of him, and then Lummo starts walking. The Stuart

house is only a few miles from a branch of the Rocky Mountains, so they follow an old highway in that direction. When the sun comes up, they find a hiding place in a grove of trees and settle in for some sleep. Meanwhile, Kiku is already awake and tries to call Ftaeml, who has left for the space port. Kiku goes there himself to meet him. Kiku tells Ftaeml that they may have located the missing Hroshii, meaning LummoX, and Ftaeml tells him that the single Hroshii spaceship in orbit is capable of destroying the Earth. Kiku gives Ftaeml permission to tell the Hroshii that they may have found their missing person and hopes that they have. After returning to his office, Kiku then calls Greenberg, who has already returned to Westville only to find that John Thomas and LummoX have disappeared.

- quiz/reading comprehension questions

1. John Thomas's sleeping bag has

- (a) A gps
- (b) A cell phone
- (c) A DVD player
- (d) A thermostat and power pack to provide heat

2. How are the Hroshii planning to demonstrate their power?

- (a) Make a mark on the moon that would be visible to the naked eye on Earth
- (b) Melt the polar ice caps
- (c) Alter the orbit of the Earth around the Sun.

Answers: 1-d, 2-a

- Suggestion for reflection and discussion: Ask the students what they would take with them if they ever had to leave home in an emergency.
- Suggested activities/inquiry-based exploration: Heinlein refers to the time when Native Americans greeted Columbus. Have the students research the voyages of Columbus and their effect on Native Americans.

Chapter X—The Cygnus Decision

- Prepare to read:
 - vocabulary
 - hogshead
 - malignancy
 - inchoate

- acquisition
 - boa constrictor
 - bivouac
 - uranium
 - radiation
- Focus question: It is time to revisit a question from a previous chapter. Except for Kiku, everyone assumes that an intelligent being has to have hands. Would dolphins qualify as intelligent?
 - Chapter summary: When John Thomas wakes up, he finds that LummoX has killed a grizzly bear that had disturbed their camp and is having it for breakfast. John Thomas does not join him but has a meal-ready-to-eat of ham and eggs. It is still daylight so they continue to hide. However, one of LummoX's swellings itches so he rubs it against a pine tree. Suddenly it breaks open and out pops an arm. Realizing what has happened, John Thomas uses his knife to nick to the other swelling, and another arm pops out. After sunset, they continue deeper into the mountains. At sunrise, they look for another hiding place, but are unable to find a suitable one. Then John Thomas sees a personal helicopter. The pilot also sees him and LummoX and lands. Fortunately, the pilot turns out to be Betty. They update each other on the developments. Betty informs him that every police officer in the area is looking for him.

- quiz/reading comprehension questions

1. What is the Cygnus decision?
2. How many digits do LummoX's hands have?
3. How did Betty know where to look for John Thomas and LummoX?

Answers: 1—A legal case that established that a being that talks and has hands is assumed to be a person and has same rights as humans until proven otherwise. 2—seven; 3—She knows him well enough to know how he thinks.

- Suggestion for reflection and discussion: Ask the students what it would be like to live without hands.
- Suggested activities/inquiry-based exploration: One of John Thomas's ideas is for him and LummoX to join a carnival. Have the students research carnivals, side shows, and the life of P.T. Barnum.

Chapter XI—"It's Too Late, Johnnie!"

- Prepare to read:

- vocabulary
 - abacus
 - slip stick
 - subversive
 - octagon
- Focus questions/initiating activity: The police/military forces need to capture LummoX without hurting him. Ask the students how they would try to catch him.
- Chapter summary: For the first time in several days, John Thomas and Betty spend some quality time with each other with LummoX as a chaperone. Then they hear an airship and conclude that the police and/or military are searching their area of the forest. They tell LummoX not to move and try to be still themselves in case the authorities are using motion detectors. Then there are two flashes of light. Next, they hear at least four airships surrounding them. Finally, the searchers use some kind of gas to immobilize them. Fortunately, they learn that the searchers are under strict orders to capture them without hurting them.
 - quiz/reading comprehension questions:
 1. John Thomas's Aunt Tessie believes in what?
 - (a) scientology
 - (b) astrology
 - (c) psychology
 - (d) epistemology

Answer: (b) astrology.
- Suggestions for reflection and discussion: Why have the authorities changed their attitude about wanting to kill LummoX?
- Suggested activities/inquiry-based exploration: Betty discusses having divorced her parents. Have the students research the lawsuit of Kimberly Mays, who in 1993 sued to divorce her parents.

Chapter XII—Concerning Pidgie-Widgie

- Prepare to read:
 - vocabulary
 - stereovision
 - precedent
 - protocol
 - Focus questions/initiating activity: For those students who have cats for

pets, ask them if they really “own” their cats.

- Chapter summary: Kiku thinks he has solved the Hroshii problem when Greenberg and Ftaeml arrive to inform him that there have been complications. First, LummoX is not a “he” but rather a “she.” Second, LummoX does not consider herself to be John Thomas’s pet. Instead, she considers John Thomas to be her pet. She is demanding that her people produce John Thomas to accompany her back to her home planet. It also turns out the LummoX is a person of such great importance that her whims have the status of imperial commands. The Hroshii in turn are demanding that the humans hand over John Thomas or they will destroy the world. Kiku asks Ftaeml to convey two messages. The first is to the commander of the Hroshii expedition that their demand is rejected. The second is to LummoX that her people are threatening to kill John Thomas. After Ftaeml leaves, Kiku orders that John Thomas and his mother be brought to the space port. Then Secretary MacClure interrupts him to tell him that Beulah Murgatroyd, the most popular children’s book author of the time and founder of “The Friends of LummoX”, is there to interview him. Kiku feels he is too busy and has an argument with MacClure over his authority and his handling of the situation. Then Kiku informs him about the new Hroshii crisis. MacClure is ready to do battle with the Hroshii rather than turn over John Thomas, but Kiku talks him out of it, citing an example from human history about a battle between forces with different levels of technology. Then he persuades MacClure that he has a plan to resolve the crisis.

- quiz/reading comprehension questions:

1. Is LummoX an adult?
2. What is a hunkie?
3. How many people joined the Friends of LummoX within the first 24 hours of its founding?
4. How many sexes to the Hroshii have?

Answers: 1—No, she is actually still a child by the standards of the Hroshii; 2—the best-selling breakfast food in the world; 3—three million; 4—six.

- Suggestions for reflection and discussion: Kiku had never heard of Pidgie-Widgie until the author of the stories became involved with LummoX. Ask the students if they know anyone who has never heard of Sponge Bob Square Pants.
- Suggested activities/inquiry-based exploration: As a native of Africa, Kiku cites an event from African history. Have the students research the colonization of Africa by European countries in the 19th century.

Chapter XIII—“No, Mr. Secretary”

- Prepare to read:
 - vocabulary
 - insolent
 - xenophobic
 - beachcomber
 - inflammatory
 - paternalistic
 - squib
 - severance
 - expediency
 - lascivious
 - dispersal
 - fringe
 - Focus question/initiating activity: Ask your students to look up the phrase *reductio ad absurdum*. How does Kiku use it in his argument with MacClure?
- Chapter summary: When Kiku goes into his office the following day, Special Assistant Secretary for public relations Wesley Robbins is waiting for him. The previous night, MacClure leaked the story of the Hroshii and their demands to the media without checking with either Robbins or Kiku. This has created a media uproar that threatens to escalate the crisis to an all-out war between the two species. They go to MacClure's office to confront him. Kiku and MacClure have another argument, and Robbins sides with Kiku. MacClure fires Kiku, but then Robbins points out that that MacClure's superior, the Secretary-General of the Federation, will almost certainly fire MacClure and re-hire Kiku, assuming anyone is still alive after the crisis passes. Another scenario is that the Federation Council fires the Secretary-General, who in turn fires MacClure and re-hires Kiku anyway. Instead, Robbins persuades MacClure that he needs to resign and make it look like it was his decision all along.
- quiz/reading comprehension questions
 1. When MacClure fires Kiku, what does Kiku do?
 - (a) He calls a press conference.
 - (b) He gets drunk.
 - (c) He begins to leave MacClure's office, but Robbins stops him.
 2. Who blackmails MacClure into resigning?
 - (a) Robbins

- (b) Kiku
- (c) Greenberg
- (d) Murgatroyd

3. When will MacClure's resignation be announced?

- (a) Immediately
- (b) After the Secretary-General resigns
- (c) After the Hroshian crisis is resolved
- (d) In two weeks

Answers: 1-c; 2-a; 3-d

- Suggestions for reflection and discussion: Would the students be willing to sacrifice John Thomas's freedom to prevent a war between the humans and the Hroshii?
- Suggested activities/inquiry-based exploration: In this future, there are still newspapers. Have the students research the history of newspapers.

Chapter XIV—"Destiny! Fiddlesticks"

- Prepare to read:
 - vocabulary
 - *persona non grata*
 - transcending
 - aggregation
 - Cro-Magnon
 - Neanderthal
 - Initiating activity: Have the students research the common flatworm. Kiku compares the Hroshii to them, because they both grow when fed, shrink when not fed, and are hard to kill.
- Chapter summary: Greenberg is back in Westville to persuade John Thomas and Mrs. Stuart to travel to the Capital Enclave, where Kiku hopes to persuade them that John Thomas should accompany Lummox back to the Hroshii home world. Unfortunately, Mrs. Stuart follows the news and has no intention of surrendering John Thomas to the Hroshians, so she refuses to see him. While he is waiting, a local newspaperman named Hovey interviews him. Greenberg says that the Federation is not going to give John Thomas to the Hroshians but rather that since John Thomas has special knowledge of the species from his long association with Lummox, they want him to help with the negotiations. Then Chief Dreiser calls to tell him that John Thomas is missing and that Greenberg had better not have kidnapped him. Finally Betty calls him and, using a code, asks if John Thomas

travels to the Capital whether he will be able to see LummoX. Greenberg answers in the affirmative and arrangement for a time and place for him to give Betty the money necessary. After a few hours, he calls Mrs. Stuart and asks if she would like to accompany him back to the Capital on his private plane. Realizing that John Thomas was already en route, she reluctantly accepts Greenberg's offer. Kiku meets with John Thomas after he arrives and asks whether he would be willing to accompany LummoX back to his home world. John Thomas immediately agrees, because LummoX wants and needs him. Kiku then meets with Mrs. Stuart and has a much more challenging time persuading her to let John Thomas go. He informs her that he wants to send John Thomas to the Hroshii home world as part of a large cultural and scientific mission. She refuses, saying that John Thomas needs to go to college to study law. Kiku points out the mission will be staffed by experts in their fields, so if they tutor John Thomas, he will receive an education equal to or better than any college or university on Earth. When she argues that he will need a degree, Kiku counters that they can always create an organization to bestow a degree. He also points out the John Thomas and LummoX have a special relationship and that if John Thomas does not accompany LummoX to her planet, then LummoX will accompany him back to Westville. Finally, Kiku points out that John Thomas could divorce his mother, as Betty divorced her parents. Nonetheless, Mrs. Stuart refuses to give in.

- quiz/reading comprehension questions
 1. Where does Greenberg meet Betty?
 2. Why does Kiku assign a bodyguard to John Thomas?
 3. How long ago did the Hroshiiian plan begin?
 4. When was LummoX's part in the plan conceived?
 5. Why are children allowed to divorce their parents?

Answers: 1—a snack shop called *The Chocolate Bar*; 2—to keep him from reporters; 3—about 38,000 years ago; 4—about 2,000 years ago; 5—to prevent an abuse of parental power.

- Suggestions for reflection and discussion: Ask whether any of the students have discussed their future with their parents.
- Suggested activities/inquiry-based exploration: Have your students research animal breeding programs.

Chapter XV—Undiplomatic Relations

- prepare to read:
 - vocabulary
 - powwow
 - lavish
 - rostrum
 - barricade
 - plenipotentiary
 - sovereignty
 - baleful
 - prerogative
 - Initiating activity: Ftaeml claims that the Hroshii can destroy the Earth. Ask the students if they have seen any movies such as *Independence Day* which feature alien invaders.

- Chapter summary: The following morning, Kiku meets with the Hroshii at the ground floor auditorium of the Spatial Affairs building. He is joined by Greenberg, MacClure, and an actor doubling for the Secretary-General. Ftaeml serves as translator for both sides. The leader of the Hroshii's main item of business is for the humans to hand over John Thomas. Kiku insists that the two sides must establish embassies on each other's home worlds. The Hroshii eventually agree, and they work out the details. Then they discuss the status of John Thomas. Kiku insists that John Thomas will be free to come and go whenever he wishes, as befitting a free person, but the Hroshii insist that John Thomas can only come and go at the pleasure of Lummox. On this point, negotiations stop.
- quiz/reading comprehension questions
 1. Who will become the ambassador to the Hroshii?
 2. Who will be the deputy ambassador?
 3. Where will Ftaeml serve?

Answers: 1—MacClure; 2—Greenberg; 3—He will stay on Earth as interpreter for the Hroshii mission.

- Suggestions for reflection and discussion: The Secretary-General does not attend this conference, but sends a double instead. Why would he do this?
- Suggested activities/inquiry-based exploration: Have the students research the history of diplomacy.

Chapter XVI—“Sorry We Messed Things Up”

- Prepare to read:
 - vocabulary
 - Puritans
 - barricade
 - magnification
 - binoculars
 - Initiating activity: Ask the students if they have ever played checkers and, if not, explain the basics of the game.
- Chapter summary: John Thomas is in his hotel suite playing checkers with his bodyguard when Betty and her bodyguard show up. They decide to go for a flight. John Thomas asks the taxi driver to fly over to the space port so that he can see LummoX. They cannot go through the barricade that surrounds the Hroshii ship, but John Thomas can see LummoX from a distance. He shouts a greeting, which LummoX hears and runs to him, crashing through the barricade. They are re-united and LummoX takes John Thomas and Betty inside the barricade so they can talk. By the time Kiku, Greenberg, and Ftaeml arrive, the situation is calm but tense, because of the breach of security. They are allowed to go inside the barricade to see John Thomas, Betty, and LummoX. The leaders of the Hroshii are also there. John Thomas introduces LummoX to Kiku, who asks Ftaeml to inform LummoX of the course of negotiations in the Hroshii language. She angrily informs the Hroshii that she and John Thomas are friends and that John Thomas will have the right to come and go as he pleases.
- quiz/reading comprehension questions
 1. LummoX has lost weight since John Thomas last saw her. Why?
 - (a) The Hroshii have stopped feeding her
 - (b) She is exercising more
 - (c) She has had a liposuction
 - (d) She hasn't lost weight. John Thomas is just imagining it.
 2. Where is Mrs. Stuart during this time?
 - (a) Meeting with her lawyers
 - (b) Trying to get through the barricades
 - (c) back in Westville
 - (d) She is out shopping

3. Where do they find the air taxi?

- (a) On the street
- (b) In front of the hotel
- (c) On the roof of the hotel
- (d) At the bus station

Answers: 1—a; 2—d; 3—c

- Suggestion for reflection and discussion: The relationship between John Thomas and LummoX is no longer one of owner/pet or pet/owner. They are friends and equals. Discuss what this means.
- Suggested activities/inquiry-based exploration: Betty's bodyguard carried a "bodyphone" which is the equivalent of today's cell phone. Have the students research the history of mobile communications.

Chapter XVII—Ninety-Seven Pickle Dishes

- Prepare to read:
 - vocabulary
 - composure
 - discretionary
 - attaché
 - avarice
 - ambassador
 - matriarchy
 - Initiating activity: In the relationship between John Thomas and Betty, are they equals or is one partner dominant?
- Chapter summary: Kiku and Betty meet to discuss her place in the new embassy to the Hroshii. He informs her that LummoX's hobby for the last hundred years has been to "raise John Thomases." He inquires whether she would consider marrying to John Thomas and starting a family. She replies that this has been her plan for years, although she has not told John Thomas yet, but the events of the past few weeks have caused her to accelerate her timetable. With that matter settled, she has an agenda of her own, and she negotiates a grander title and higher salary for John Thomas than Kiku had originally planned. A few days later, John Thomas and Betty get married and spend the honeymoon on the Hroshii ship en route to LummoX's home world.
- quiz/reading comprehension questions

1. What is Betty's legal status at the beginning of the chapter?

- (a) A Free Child. She had divorced her parents.
- (b) An adult
- (c) A slave
- (d) An army officer

2. How did Kiku propose to his wife?

- (a) He didn't. She proposed to him.
- (b) He took her to a restaurant and arranged to place a diamond ring in her dessert.
- (c) He didn't. Her father negotiated it with his father.
- (d) He took her to a ball game and arranged to have to the proposal scroll across the scoreboard.

Answers: 1—a; 2—c

- Suggestion for reflection and discussion: Betty's remarks imply that it is customary in this time period for the woman to propose to the man. Ask the students how they feel about this.
- Suggested activities/inquiry-based exploration: Have the students research the history of marriage and relationships.

Suggestions for more extended papers/projects, which allow students to reflect on major themes in the book as a whole:

- In his book *Heinlein in Dimension*, Alexei Panshin discusses recurring character types in Heinlein's fiction: Stage 1, Stage 2, and Stage 3. A Stage 1 individual is young and competent, but naïve. A Stage 2 individual is older and knows how things work. A Stage 3 individual is much older and not only knows how things work but why, so he or she is better able to cope when things fail. Have students contrast and compare John Thomas (Stage 1), Sergei Greenberg (Stage 2), and Henry Kiku (Stage 3).
- Heinlein is usually associated with the political right. However, Mr. Kiku is a wise and benevolent bureaucrat. Furthermore, while there are still states, there is no United States of America in this story. It appears to have been absorbed into something called The North American Union, which in turn is part of a Federation of seventeen planets. The title of the chief executive of the Federation is Secretary-General, the same as today's United Nations, which implies that there was a connection between the two organizations. There are also references to a Fourth World War and the "riots of '91". Have the students speculate on what must have happened between now and then.

- The central theme of the story is the nature of friendship. Ask the students how far they would go for a friend?
- Computers and cell phones are largely absent from this story, but flying machines are ubiquitous and space flight is routine. Have the students contrast and compare the present to this future.