

Meanwhile Back on Earth...

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR
OLIVER JEFFERS

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Primary



SYNOPSIS

A father takes his two children on a thrilling out-of-this-world adventure into space and invites them to look back at Earth and the conflicts that have taken place since the beginning of time. This becomes a brief history of the world and a whistle-stop guide to the universe, all rolled into one—and told with Oliver Jeffers’s inimitable perspective, wit and exquisite artwork.

ABOUT THE CREATOR

Oliver Jeffers graduated from The University of Ulster in 2001 with First Class honours. His outstanding talent has been recognised by several high-profile awards, including the Nestlé Children’s Book Prize Gold Award. ‘Lost and Found’ animation was broadcast on Channel 4. Oliver lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

STUDY NOTES

- All distances in *Meanwhile Back on Earth...* are given in miles. One kilometre is 0.6 miles. Can you convert the distances of the sun and planets from Earth into kilometres?
 - What is the average speed the car is travelling at in kilometres?
- There are many references to the creator’s two children, Harland and Mari, in the book. Which ones can you find? Why do you think he has included these?
- The word space is used in several ways throughout the book. What are all the ways that it’s used, and how does the meaning of the word change?
- Throughout the book, Oliver Jeffers refers to battles and wars that have happened, without telling us specifically where they were. However, he does give us clues, like the shape of a continent, animals, flags and uniforms. Work out where each of the wars that are referenced took place, and who was fighting using the clues you are given.
- At the end of *Meanwhile Back on Earth...*, we meet early humans, who were too busy surviving to fight. Then, by the time the family have arrived home, the children are asleep. Why do you think Oliver Jeffers chose to end his story this way?
- *Meanwhile Back on Earth...* completes the loose trilogy that Oliver Jeffers has written for his children. The other two books in this trilogy are *Here We Are* and *What We’ll Build*. Read these two books, and then go back and reread *Meanwhile Back on Earth...*. What message do you think Oliver Jeffers is trying to pass on to his children, and to the reader?