Sam and the Sun-Saving Story

Visual lesson



The Hand Over the Lamp

Sam clicked on the reading lamp for story time, and Dad slid a hand halfway over the bulb. The room went dim — the light was still on, but less of it was getting out. "That," said Dad, "is the puzzle in a famous story called Project Hail Mary."





A Dimming Sun, a Chillier Earth

In the story, a science teacher named Ryland Grace wakes up alone on a spaceship called the Hail Mary. Scientists noticed the Sun growing dimmer, little by little — and a dimmer Sun means a chillier Earth. Grace's job: find what is blocking the light and fix it.

> **TALK ABOUT IT**
> Why is Earth getting chillier?

Tiny Sippers, Big Dimming

Grace discovers the blocker: microbes — living things too tiny to see without a microscope. These space microbes are called Astrophage, and millions of them soak up the Sun's energy the way Dad's hand caught the lamp's glow. Tiny sippers, big dimming!

> **TALK ABOUT IT**
> Find what is sipping the Sun's light.





Tap-Tap-Tap

Grace flies to a faraway star that is not going dim, hoping it holds the answer. Floating nearby he spots something amazing — another spaceship, and it is not from Earth. Something inside taps on the wall, tap-tap-tap, wanting to talk. Is it a scary monster, or could it be a friend? What do you guess?

> **TALK ABOUT IT**
> What do you guess is tapping inside?

Rocky the Engineer

It's a friend! Out comes Rocky, an alien engineer — an engineer is someone who builds and fixes things. Rocky has five legs, breathes different air, and talks in musical notes, but his sun is being dimmed by Astrophage too. Because Grace knows science and Rocky knows building, together they solve puzzles neither could solve alone.

> **TALK ABOUT IT**
> Why can they solve puzzles neither could solve alone?





The Tiny Eater

Then they find the real answer: near that bright star lives an even tinier microbe called Taumoeba — and Taumoeba eats Astrophage! Because the eater keeps the sippers away, that star stays bright, so the friends gather Taumoeba to send home to both their suns. And here's a true wow: sunlight takes about 8 minutes to travel to Earth — the sunshine on your face left the Sun 8 minutes ago!

> **TALK ABOUT IT**
> Find what keeps this star bright.

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Try It Tonight

You can see the whole story's big idea with a grown-up tonight. Shine a flashlight at the wall, then lay wax paper over the beam and watch the bright spot go dim — that's Astrophage sipping. Lift the paper away and the light jumps back — that's Taumoeba clearing the way!

> **TALK ABOUT IT**
> When you lift the wax paper away, what happens?



Check your wonder

1 **What was making the Sun go dim in the story?**

- **A.** Tiny Astrophage microbes sipping its light
- **B.** The Sun was running out of fire
- **C.** A giant storm cloud covering it

2 **What lets the light pour back to a dimmed sun?**

- **A.** Taumoeba, the tinier microbe that eats Astrophage
- **B.** Rocky pushes the Astrophage away with his ship
- **C.** The sun makes brand-new light to replace it

3 **How long does sunlight take to travel from the Sun to Earth?**

- **A.** About 8 minutes
- **B.** It arrives instantly
- **C.** About 8 days

ANSWERS 1-A 2-A 3-A

1. Yes! Millions of tiny violet sippers — tiny sippers, big dimming! 2. Exactly — the eater keeps the sippers away, like lifting the hand off the lamp! 3. Wow, yes — the sunshine on your face left the Sun 8 minutes ago!

THE END

Visual lesson



Put your child in this story

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