The theme for Children’s Book Week Australia 2013 is **Read across the universe.** Which universe? Is ours the only universe? If we read across the universe, we need to know how far it is across. And it seems that nobody knows. Beyond a certain distance, light hasn't yet had time to reach us. Maybe a universe could exist under your bed or inside your backpack! While NASA looks for ripples inside the fabric of space, you might find answers inside a soggy banana sandwich. After you finish looking, try some of these activities!

### MISSION #1

You’ve been chosen to represent Earth in a space ship travelling to the planet Draxnar, in the outer limits of the Milky Way. You may take only ten things with a combined weight of one kilogram to remind you of home. What would they be?

Luckily, the space ship has a tiny library. Choose five books that will help entertain and inform you on your journey.

The space ship’s mission is to make contact with the Drax, an alien race who have recently sent a message of good will to Earth. You and your fellow astronauts have been tasked with choosing art work, music, literature, games and TV shows/movies that will show the Drax what life on Earth is like. What would you choose and why?

It is very cramped in your space ship. What rules do you think you might need to help the crew live happily together?

Part way through your journey, you receive a communication from the planet Gorgasauron. How many names can you invent and write down for an alien from Gorgasauron? You have five minutes so write fast!

Draw some of the Drax and give them names.

On Draxnar it’s your job to persuade one of the Drax, a creature about your age, to come back to Earth with you. How do you persuade this Drax to leave Draxnar and visit Earth?

### MISSION #2

A portal has opened in the space-time continuum, allowing you to travel to another galaxy. What are you doing when you discover the portal? Which galaxy is it? Describe what happens when you arrive at a new world.

What problems might arise for people from Earth who encounter aliens? Would it ever be possible for us all to get along?

The alien race you meet offers you a video camera to record a message to send back to Earth. In your video, briefly explain what has happened to you, and include some clips or still photographs of your new home.

The zoo near your new home is full of strange species. Draw, label and describe some.

### MISSION #3

Your school has just won a competition. The first prize is a trip into space with Virgin Galactic on SpaceShipTwo. The principal has decided that the student who creates the best application will take the trip. Convince your principal that you are the one!

Think creatively, considering how best to persuade your principal, what format to choose, how to make your presentation stand out from the crowd.
ACTIVITIES

Do super heroes read? You betcha! What problems might a reading super hero have in our Universe or another? What problems might a villain encounter? Develop your story and share it with friends.

Design and create a card for a creature from another galaxy, inviting it to join you in reading across the universe.

Write a list of all the books you can find about space in your library in two minutes. Rules: you can't touch the books, and you don't want anyone to see you looking at them.

Generate an avatar with a space theme at Red Kid.

USE COOL TOOLS

Design a logo for the theme, Read across the Universe. You could go alone, or try an online logo generator like CoolText, the way I did above.

Make a poster for the theme at a website called Poster My Wall.

Create your own book plates with a Read Across the Universe theme. Here's some free downloadable bookplates that might give you an idea.

Mix and match some animals at Switch Zoo and create a strange world for them to live in.

Get together with your friends and draw some cartoon aliens. Fold your aliens in half and mix and match them. Include them in your Read across the Universe display. Or print out these Cosmic Combos from PBS Kids, cut, then mix and match.

Discuss: would you rather go on a journey into space or to the bottom of the ocean? Why? Write a letter to a friend, persuading them to go with you.

Here’s another PBS Kids site where you can create your own alien. Have fun!
Choose a soft toy, or a vegetable, and decorate it to look like one of your favourite book characters.

On the next page, you’ll find a simple scene. Create a similar scene that could be from a different world. Fill each section with patterns. Now draw an amazing fantastical alien creature and put it into that scene.

Set up some minifigs, toys or objects in scenes so they re-tell a story, or part of a story from a short-listed book. You can also choose to retell a story from a favourite book. Take photos of the scenes and develop a Five Frame story. See an example at The Book Chook.

Take me to your readers!
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