4.5 A Book Review

George's Secret Key to the Universe

George's Dad is an ardent environmentalist. In fact, both his parents are convinced that modern inventions of science and technology have caused a lot of damage on the earth. They are committed to the cause of saving the planet. They use a bicycle instead of a car. There is a ban on TV and computers in their house. They don't buy things like bread and biscuits. They eat only vegetarian and home cooked food. They even use candles to light the house to avoid using electricity. Poor George has to suffer a lot of jeering and ridicule from his friends because of all this.

Actually, George doesn't think that either the TV or the computer is a bad thing. He has tried to tell his parents that it's possible to save the earth using the computers and the internet. But no ! In their house, there can't be ANY discussion on that issue. George always likes to know 'why'. But who is to answer his questions ? His parents think that he is still too young to understand global issues.

One day, however, George unexpectedly acquires a new friend and next door neighbour - Annie. Annie's father Eric is a brilliant scientist and ever willing to answer all of George's questions. Eric has built a super super intelligent computer named Cosmos. Cosmos has incredible powers. It can literally open windows

on the universe and take you to any planet, star, comet and even to a black hole ! And of course Cosmos can also bring you back from there. However, Cosmos depends entirely on the information that is fed into it by people like Eric who do the research and thinking that can make Cosmos work.

Science can be used for a good cause and a group of good scientists like Eric have vowed to use it for people's welfare. Unfortunately, there is one odd angry scientist who wants to use science for his own selfish motives. He is planning to steal Cosmos and all of Eric's research so that he can establish his own rule on another planet. It so happens that only George can do something to overcome the wicked plans of the nasty scientist. If you want to know what adventures he undertakes and what strategies he has to use to stop the power hungry scientist, you have to read the novel, 'George's Secret Key to the Universe'.

The author of this wonderful adventure is Lucy Hawking. The story of the novel is imaginary but it also includes plenty of charts, photographs, boxes that give you hard facts about our solar system, galaxies, space and the whole universe. This information has been presented in a very simple, easy to understand manner by none other than Stephen Hawking, who is

said to be one of the greatest scientists of our times. His achievements are all the more astounding as he is a victim of many physical ailments. He has to use a wheelchair to move about and uses a computerised voice system in order to 'speak'. The story of Stephen Hawking's triumph over his physical disabilities is itself an inspiring adventure.

The book includes very attractive and expressive sketches drawn by Garry Parsons.

It is true that excessive use of science and technology can give rise to certain problems. But turning away from technology is not the solution. That is why the Hawkings have given an important message in this book - more research, more studies and a commitment to use them not for selfish gains but for the welfare of the entire living world !

●●●

- **Universe :** Here, it means a system of stars, planets, etc.
- **ardent :** very enthusiastic, working hard for something
- **environmentalist :** a person who feels strongly that our environment must be protected
- **are convinced :** are sure
- **committed :** pledged to do something
- **cause :** work
- **suffer a lot of jeering and ridicule :** face a lot of teasing
- **issue :** important problem
- **global :** about the whole world/earth
- **brilliant :** very intelligent
- **literally :** actually, in reality
- **vowed :** promised

- **establish his own rule :** be the king or master (of)
- **astounding :** wonderful, extra-ordinary
- **victim :** a person who has to suffer from something, who is harmed or hurt
- **triumph :** victory
- **gains :** benefit, profit
- **welfare :** health, happiness, safety, etc.
- **excessive :** more than necessary

POINTERS

1. Answer the following questions :

(a) What do George's parents do to save the planet ?

(b) What planet do we live on ?

(c) Does George agree with his parents? Write what he thinks.

(d) Who is George's friend and neighbour ?

(e) Who is Eric ? What does he do ?

(f) What can Cosmos do ?

(g) What does the nasty scientist want ?

2. Name the following with the help of the passage.

1. The book that is reviewed
2. The author of the book
3. The person who has presented the information in the book
4. The person who has drawn pictures for the book

3. Read the following :

- expect → expected → unexpected → unexpectedly
- fortune → fortunate → unfortunate → unfortunately
- able → ability → disability → disabilities

4. What are the various things we find in the universe ? List them from the passage.

5. Write an informal letter from George to his parents. In the letter, George tells his parents what he thinks.

6. Hold debates on the following issues in your mother tongue and then write the main points in English.

- Is science and technology good for us ?
- Can we avoid electricity ?
- What are the major problems in today's world ?

7. Note the following points which are used to write a book review.

- Name of the book
- Name of the author
- Name of the illustrator or artist who draws pictures
- What the book is about
- Your opinion about the book

Using the above points, try to write a simple book review on any book of your choice in about 10-12 lines.