

The Martian: a book review

Read a review of the book *The Martian* to practise and improve your reading skills.

Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the text and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Put the words in the correct groups.

author	botanist	scientist	scientific
story	astronaut	calculations	base
ship	character	planet	plot

books	space	science

Reading text: *The Martian*: a book review

The Martian tells the story of Mark Watney, an astronaut on the Ares 3 mission to Mars. After a terrible storm almost destroys the ship and the base, the crew of his ship believe he is dead.

1) Alone on the red planet, he has to survive until the next mission to Mars arrives.

While this novel is fiction, in some ways it feels like non-fiction. It is very scientific and packed with details about survival on Mars. Watney is a botanist and engineer, and he begins to grow food and produce water in his artificial camp. How does he do this? 2)

The author is Andy Weir, and this is his first published book. In it he has created a realistic character. There is a lot of humour in the story, and the reader can identify with the emotions (although no one can really imagine what it's like to be on Mars). Watney admits at the beginning that he is in deep trouble, but he never gives up. 3) Instead, what *The Martian* gives us is a realistic look at an intelligent person alone on a planet and trying to survive.

The majority of the plot takes place on Mars and is written in the form of Watney's journal entries. 4) Unfortunately, the other characters in the book (his fellow crew members, the scientists at NASA on Earth) do not get much development and so they often feel one-dimensional.

I should also mention that the book is thrilling to read. You will be on the edge of your seat until the very end. 5) It's good not only for space travel fans and scientists but for anyone who is looking for a unique and exciting story. *The Martian* was so popular that it was made into a film starring Matt Damon in 2015, but I recommend reading the book first.

Tasks

Task 1

Match the missing sentences (a–e) with the correct place in the text (1–5).

- a. The answers are explained with lots of very convincing calculations.
- b. But Mark does not die in the storm, and he has been left behind.
- c. I would recommend this book to all audiences.
- d. Without the character of Mark Watney, this book would only be a scientific look at survival on Mars.
- e. This diary style makes the character of Watney very real.

Task 2

Circle the best definitions for the words in CAPITALS.

1. It is very scientific and PACKED with details about survival on Mars.
 - a. filled
 - b. ready for a trip
 - c. empty

2. ... he begins to grow food and produce water in his ARTIFICIAL camp.
 - a. from the military
 - b. not natural
 - c. imaginary

3. Watney admits at the beginning that he is in deep trouble, but he never GIVES UP.
 - a. stops trying
 - b. escapes
 - c. begins

4. The majority of the plot takes place on Mars, and is written in the form of Watney's JOURNAL ENTRIES.
 - a. things you write in a diary
 - b. newspaper articles
 - c. types of transport

5. Unfortunately, the other characters in the book (his fellow crew members, the scientists at NASA on Earth) do not get much development and so they often feel ONE-DIMENSIONAL.
 - a. complicated
 - b. not deep, not realistic
 - c. interesting

6. I should also mention that the book is thrilling to read. You will be ON THE EDGE OF YOUR SEAT until the very end.
 - a. bored and sleepy
 - b. confused and lost
 - c. very excited, wondering what is going to happen

Discussion

What book would you recommend?

Answers

Preparation task

books	space	science
author	ship	scientist
plot	base	botanist
character	astronaut	calculations
story	planet	scientific

Task 1

1. b
2. a
3. d
4. e
5. c

Task 2

1. a
2. b
3. a
4. a
5. b
6. c