

Between Planets Lesson Plans

By
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Introduction:

Between Planets is the fifth of the juveniles Robert Heinlein wrote from the late forties through the early sixties. The series is widely regarded as the finest science fiction ever written for young people; many, including Grandmaster Jack Williamson, believe them to be the best science fiction Robert Heinlein ever wrote.

We hope you find the following lesson plans helpful, and that you will choose *Between Planets* or another Heinlein work to use in your classrooms. We would like to hear from you about your own experiences using Heinlein's works. Please email us!

Edition Used:

I have used the Del Rey paperback, as that is the most widely available.

Date of Publication / Dedication:

Between Planets was finished in February 1951, and published for the Christmas trade in 1951.

Chapter Summaries / Discussion Notes:

Each chapter will be summarized, and pertinent details and issues explicated. Any of the details might be turned into extra credit questions, which require the student to do research on the internet or in a library. Heinlein often inserted historical, scientific, and literary references into his novels, as a way of gently urging the reader to explore these references. Vocabulary words which students may have difficulty with will be suggested, with particular attention paid to words Heinlein invented (which, unless we've adopted the word, won't be found in a dictionary).

I strongly urge that students learn vocabulary not by checking the dictionary, but by the following procedure: 1) say the word aloud (this begins to fix the word in long-term memory); 2) look for roots (Spanish speakers often have an advantage here, since the longer Latinate words in English often have a simple Spanish root, as in the word "facilitate"); 3) use context to make TWO guesses as to what the word means; 4) then, and only then, check the dictionary. Students need to be reminded to learn new vocabulary words, because they will often choose to simply skip the word they don't know, or in running to the dictionary, will fail to permanently learn the new word as they only place the definition into short-term memory. I require my students to learn at least seven new words a week; in this, Heinlein is very helpful, because he actually used a more sophisticated vocabulary in his juveniles than in his adult fiction. If teachers do not encourage students to acquire the new vocabulary, students often have a hard time with Heinlein's juveniles for precisely that reason: they are more difficult than today's more controlled, simplistic vocabulary in most young adult novels.

CHAPTER ONE

Don Harvey is riding his pony Lazy in New Mexico. He gets teased about the fancy saddle his parents sent him. The other boys call him “Don Jaime.” There’s a big rattlesnake that Don shoots and kills. At this point, this could be a western.

But the gun he uses shoots a beam, not bullets. Heinlein has pulled a fast one again, and put us into some future with a matter-of-fact divergence from reality. Another one comes fast: Don’s phone rings, out in the middle of nowhere. He has a mobile phone – decades before such things existed. Don’s parents sent a radiogram; he needs to be back pronto. They will send the copter if need be. Don heads back quickly.

His parents want him to come home immediately; they’ve reserved passage for him on the *Valkyrie*. Mr. Reeves, the headmaster of the school, thinks his parents want him home fast because they expect war soon. Don would rather wait; Mr. Reeves says he should follow his parents’ wishes, because if war breaks out, Don will be in a very difficult position here on Earth.

Don’s father is from Earth; his mother is from Venus; they met on the Moon; Don was born in outer space. Where do his loyalties lie? With the System itself, not with any one planet.

Mars is neutral territory – Don will be safe there. Don thinks the whole thing is ridiculous, and that Earth is bleeding Venus. He cites Chamberlain’s *Theory of Colonial Expansion* – which is a banned book: the headmaster wants to know if Don has been to a...booklegger! This is a marvelous Heinlein invention.

There’s a second message for Don: see your Uncle Dudley before you leave.

His uncle is Dudley Jefferson, who isn’t actually related, and Don doesn’t know him well. There is something odd about the message.

Don starts packing; he will only be allowed 50 pounds in space. His friend comes in and wants to know what’s going on. Don explains. Don gives the fancy saddle to Jack. He refuses to let another student, Rupe, have it. Rupe then wants his horse Lazy. The horses belong to the school, but graduating students have the right to ‘will’ the horses to the next student. Don tells him no, it’s going to somewhere else; Rupe says he doesn’t have that right, and he’s a “fog-eater” anyways – an insult towards Venusian. Rupe leaves. Jack suggests willing the horse to the new kid, Squinty. Jack explains to Don about the headmaster being a reserve officer; he’s being called back up, which explains his attitude. Jack tells Don he’s signing up to be a pilot on his birthday, but it won’t matter to Don, since he’s going to Mars. Don says goodbye to Lucky.

CHAPTER TWO:

The school copter drops Don off at the spaceport. Don takes off; unbelievably, he gets space sickness; his immunity has worn off. He throws up.

He lands in Chicago spaceport. He makes sure of his ticket on the *Valkyrie*. The agent challenges him about his security clearance; he doesn’t have one, and is told to be back in the morning.

Don needs to check into his hotel, and find Dr. Jefferson. Don contacts him, even though he hoped Dr. Jefferson would be too busy, so he could have fun on his last night

on Earth. Dr. Jefferson asks about a package Don was supposed to get; Don has no idea about it. Dr. Jefferson tells him to come and meet him.

On the way, Don meets Sir Isaac Newton, a Venerian dragon. They speak in Venerian. Don's name in Venerian is Mist on the Waters. Sir Isaac wants to speak in English, so he can practice. Don says goodbye.

Don takes a robot taxicab to Dr. Jefferson's house. He realizes he forgot to get coins; the cab won't open. Dr. Jefferson comes to save him.

Dr. Jefferson asks if he knows how important Don's father is in archeology; now they know there was a first stellar empire (centered on the planet that is now the Asteroid Belt). His mother is as important; they are a team.

Dr. Jefferson is going to take him out to eat; Don is worried it will be some stuffy men's club. Dr. Jefferson will have him stay the night. Then he realizes the mail must have been forwarded to the hotel, and Dr. Jefferson looks worried. They go out to the *Back Room*. Dr. Jefferson tips his way in – with a huge bribe. The waitress is incredibly beautiful. Dr. Jefferson orders dinner for them, after offering Don a drink (surprisingly, Scribners published a juvenile with the word “fleshpots” intact). The ceiling shows the night sky (a simulation).

War is about to break out; Venus has rejected Earth's demands. The show starts; the showgirls are so stunning Don forgets to eat. Don finishes most of the food when he asks what it is: baby move-overs, harmless Venusian creatures. Don feels like a cannibal.

Don notices somebody is watching them. Don asks Dr. Jefferson if he knows Sir Isaac Newton – he starts to whistle his name, but Dr. Jefferson stops them. He thinks the man watching them is the man who noticed him talking to Sir Isaac. Dr. Jefferson tells him not to pay attention, but do what he says. Dr. Jefferson orders Don a Mount Etna, which is both hot and cold simultaneously, and delicious. Dr. Jefferson tells him there will be a Second Empire, with six planets – Uranus and Pluto will be moved in to get warmer, and Mercury will be moved out to get cooler.

They daydream about going on the *Pathfinder* to the stars. Don will need a bride; Dr. Jefferson suggests the blonde. Dr. Jefferson hands over another bribe to have her come over and sing. Then a space raid warning happens.

CHAPTER THREE:

The next act comes on, asks them all to calm down, and offers them all a free drink as soon as the lights come on. Dr. Jefferson puts a hand around his wrist and tells him to be quiet. Someone tries to grab Don; he strikes out and gets free. Dr. Jefferson explains how they could have followed Don, using the cab number. When the power comes on, they won't be able to talk freely; each booth is miked. Dr. Jefferson tells him they have to find the package, and get it to his father. Don has to be on the rocket tomorrow, and he won't be staying with Dr. Jefferson. Don wants to know what is going on; Dr. Jefferson tells him he can inspect the package if he wants. They discuss his political beliefs. He says he doesn't have any; Dr. Jefferson suggests using his parents for the time being. He points out his mother thought it was important to do this.

They switch cabs. Don calls for his package. It's not there. Dr. Jefferson tells him they will go to a different hotel, and they will have to work all night. When they go back to Dr. Jefferson's house, two strange men are there. Dr. Jefferson sends Don away,

but two more men stop Don. Don gets angry. Don is kept under guard. He remembers a cat toying with a mouse; now, he's the mouse.

Don falls asleep; the guard wakes him up. Don wants to know where Dr. Jefferson is; Don is put into the back of a car, and kept paralyzed. They take him to headquarters. He wants to see a lawyer. The lieutenant ridicules the idea. Don is threatened with a variety of interrogation techniques. They settle on threatening to hurt his horse, Lazy. Don spills everything. After that, they send Don on his way, and clear up his security clearance.

Don asks to say goodbye to Dr. Jefferson, and is told he is dead. After he is released, Don decides he needs to wash the hand he used to shake the lieutenant's hand.

CHAPTER FOUR:

The title of the chapter is "The Glory Road." Heinlein has a later novel with that title. Just thought I'd point that out....

Don has no idea where his claim check to his baggage is. Don buys a lottery ticket, even though he doesn't really want one. He uses his last coin to get it.

Don goes to the hotel. He cashes his father's letter of credit and pays for his room. He asks for his baggage. He asks for his mail; there isn't any.

He suddenly realizes how tired he is. Don uses the fancy bath and massager; he falls asleep in the tub briefly.

Mail comes for him. Along with a courtesy gift and a card from his roommate, Jack has forwarded the package Dr. Jefferson was looking for – and that he apparently died for. Don wonders if Dr. Jefferson is really dead. Don gets angry over how the police behaved. He opens the package; it's a cheap plastic men's ring.

Don wonders if the paper around the package carries invisible ink. He thinks it's more likely the police have the real package, and this was a dummy replacement. Don calls Dr. Jefferson; the police answer. Don writes a fake letter on the paper to hide its importance (the ring is the real secret, but Don doesn't know that). Don sets the bed alarm to "earthquake" and goes to sleep.

The bed wakes him up violently. Don eats breakfast and goes to the spaceport, and tries to get his ticket. Don goes to get it, and the police take him again, and search him. Don fights back and gets a black eye. The lieutenant notices the ring; Don throws it at him and tells him to keep it. The lieutenant examines it and hands it back. Don realizes the paper with the letter is gone from his things.

He gets an anti-nausea shot. He thinks he sees Sir Isaac Newton going on board, but doesn't whistle to him in Venerian – he doesn't want the attention. On board, Sir Isaac greets him while the crew helps the Venerian on board. A woman sees him and screams; Sir Isaac wonders if he should assure her he doesn't eat people. The Venerian asserts a human epithet: "To understand all is to forgive all." Don doesn't agree (this quote comes up again in *Starship Troopers*; the quote is from Spinoza.)

The woman goes to complain; the crew come to move Don away; Don insists on staying with Sir Isaac. They take off, with accompanying music.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Don worries about Sir Isaac during the takeoff. He can't wake him up – not even by pounding on the Venerian's skull. Don tells a crewman Sir Isaac has blast shock, and asks for a cigarette to use the smoke to see if he's breathing. The smoke causes Sir Isaac to sneeze, which throws Don and the crewman back. Sir Isaac has crushed his voder, which lets him speak in English. The crewman takes it so it can be repaired. Don tells the crewman Sir Isaac wants an eighth of a barrel of sugar syrup (like maple syrup for waffles). Don administers the syrup. Sir Isaac falls asleep.

Don watches Earth from space. Don takes Sir Isaac the repaired voice box. Sir Isaac thanks him for saving his life. Sir Isaac's cockney accent thickens. Don wonders if the sugar has him drunk. They discuss the various meanings of the word "shucks." Sir Isaac offers to help him learn Venerian better, which Don realizes must be rusty. Don tells him about his father, and working with the Venerian Professor Charles Darwin. Sir Isaac is most impressed with who Don's parents are.

They change course. Don takes care of the voder; Sir Isaac is better prepared for the acceleration. Don gives him back the voder; they say goodbye and disembark.

Circum-Terra, the great satellite, is described.

Don goes to the hotel Goddard.

The Venerians take over Circum-Terra. They are sending the Terrans back to Earth. Venerians will go to Venus – after passing a loyalty check. A fistfight breaks out to the cry "Long live the [Venerian] Republic!" War has definitely broken out. Don realizes he almost didn't get off Earth. The Venerians talk about loading Sir Isaac. Someone who wants to go to the Moon complains about being sent back to Earth.

Don asks to go to Mars; they want to send him back to Earth. The *Valkyrie* has been commandeered; it isn't going to Mars. He insists on waiting on Circum-Terra; the soldier tells him he can't – it's going to be a radioactive cloud soon.

CHAPTER SIX:

Don claims Venus citizenship. He wants to go to Mars. The soldier passes him up the chain of command. He watches the soldiers play cards, and ponders his options. He thinks about going back to Earth, then rejects it: he's outgrown the school. The police have shown him "Earth is no longer his." If he can't go to Mars, he will go to Venus.

They are going to send Don back to Earth. They shove Don into a holding pen with the other Terrans, who are arguing about the war.

Don is called back out. Sir Isaac has spoken for him. He's going to Venus.

Sir Isaac is the Venerian equivalent of royalty: a Child of the Egg.

Commander Higgins takes over Earth's broadcasts, and tells Earth what Venus has done. They could easily bomb all of Earth to bits; they will not. Instead, they will destroy the satellite which has allowed empire. They blow up the satellite as a sign of freedom for the oppressed peoples of Earth.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

Don is on his way to Venus. He wants to send a message to his parents. They tell him his parents will figure it out.

The journey can be boring; many take the offer of cold sleep. They're worried about spies.

Don hurts his finger and goes to the doctor, but he gets lost and is caught on his way to the bomb room. The soldier, McMasters, detains him, and explains that he's lucky he didn't go back to Earth; Earth blew up the *Glory Road* thinking it was booby-trapped.

McMasters lectures him on Earth colonial history (Heinlein is drawing the parallel). McMasters points out that Venus has two-thirds of Earth on their side, in the name of freedom.

They interrogate Don; he freely accepts the lie detector. Don just wants to get to Mars; McMasters suggests joining the High Guard, getting duty as a clerk, and finagling his way to Mars.

Don daydreams about joining the High Guard. Men want freedom, but they also want to be part of a group.

Heinlein explains how the shuttles work.

Don arrives at New London, Venus.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

Don wants to go contact his parents, but the red tape is delaying his entry. He gets tested for Venusian diseases, but he's immune from living there when he was younger. The question his citizenship, since the Republic does not recognize his citizenship from his mother being born there. Don keeps insisting he is going to Mars; they keep telling him it's impossible.

Don tries to send a radiogram to his parents, but he only has Federation money to pay for it. Also, there's a two week wait, since the sun is in the way right now. The radio clerk offers her help if he needs any; her name is Isobel.

Don goes to the bank to exchange the Federation money. The banker offers to loan him fifty credits against the ring as security. Don declines, as the ring was so important to his mother and Dr. Jefferson. He says he will go find a job instead. The banker gives him a single credit so he can it; Don says he will pay it back; the banker says instead to "pay it forward." (This is a dominant theme of Heinlein's life).

Don is being trailed.

Don is without any support for the first time in his life. "...he began to grow up." He has no place to sleep, no home, no friends. Sir Isaac is someplace on Venus, but where? Don decides it's time to eat.

He gets bumped into by the man who followed him from the bank – Mr. Ling, who proceeds to recommend a restaurant, the "Two Worlds Dining Room." The owner Charlie greets Mr. Ling. Mr. Ling offers to buy him his meal. Don tells his life story to Mr. Ling while he eats. Mr. Ling offers to change his money on the black market, but only a small percent of what it's worth. He then offers to buy the ring. Don refuses. Mr. Ling skips out without paying; Don has to wash dishes to pay for his meal.

CHAPTER NINE:

Don now has a job washing dishes for Charlie.

He sleeps there on a pallet. He was supposed to notify the authorities where he was staying. He wakes up in the night almost smothered by two move-overs. He gets up and gets his money and ring, makes them safe, and goes back to sleep.

Then someone tries to rob him in the night; he fights them off. Charlie wakes up and comes in with a cleaver. Don wonders if the thief were after the ring, which is why the thief had his hand. Perhaps the ring is the real secret.

Don has one major character trait: he's stubborn. He swears to get the ring to Mars.

He goes to see Isobel, and asks her to keep the ring for him.

Charlie tells him he is saving to go back to China; if nothing else, he is saving "bone-money" to send his bones home. Charlie goes to sleep, grateful for a place. New London is crowded, with war fever raging.

Don comes to enjoy working with Charlie, and starts to feel like it's home. It's very busy, what with all the soldiers and growing government.

Isobel introduces Don to her father, the manager. Her father suggests writing a draft in his father's name to send the message. Isobel implies that her father did that because Don is a prospective husband (it's subtle, but it's there).

The customers in the restaurant argue about the need for a military draft. One of them is a Senator, and he says there's no need: #1, a large army isn't necessary in this war; #2: Venusians don't take to a draft temperamentally ("hardy individualists, almost anarchists"); #3: taxpayers won't support a large army; #4: they have more volunteers than they can afford to pay now.

Nothing is really happening in the war. If Earth tried anything, Venus has all their bombs from Circum-Terra to use against them. Not logical to attack...but what if Earth doesn't behave logically?

CHAPTER TEN:

The government passes a draft. Don goes to sign up. Don doesn't want the ground forces; he wants the High Guard, because he's a spaceman. Don gets sent home. Don thinks through his options. If he tries to duck out, Isobel would drop him. "What can't be cured must be endured." He decides to get in contact with Sir Isaac.

Mr. Costello hands him back his draft. Earth has seized Martian communications, so there will be no getting through. Isobel is going to sign up; Don tells her he tried this morning, although he doesn't tell her the whole story. Don decides to contact Sir Isaac, then enlist.

The Federation attacks.

The *Valkyrie* and the *Adonis* are destroyed.

Don goes out into the night to find out what's going on, with two move-overs following him. Don gets the news, but it is confused and contradictory. Don goes back to Charlie's place. Charlie is ready to defend his home. They go to bed. They eat breakfast, when the Terran troops arrive. Charlie kills one soldier, then the other soldier shoots him...and aims at Don.

CHAPTER ELEVEN:

Don wants to kill the soldier who killed Charlie, but he follows orders and leaves the restaurant. The soldier burns down the place.

Don and the other Venusians are herded into a prison camp. He tries to find Isobel and her father. The Terrans impose martial law – they will be released, but nobody can live in a town with more than a thousand people. They will have to follow Terran laws, hold no assemblies, and own no power weapons. When they process Don, he has a red flag next to his name. They separate him.

I.B.I. officer Bankfield is overjoyed to see him. He wants the ring. Don tells him it's destroyed; one of the soldiers burned down the restaurant, and Don tells him it was in there. Bankfield sends soldiers to sift through the wreckage, then proceeds to torture Don. Bankfield is sending for sodium pentothal; he sends Don back to the pen while he waits for it.

Don knows it's only a few minutes, then Bankfield will have the ring.

Don escapes, because the power has been burned out on the electric fence.

CHAPTER TWELVE:

Don continues running away – he 'walks' on the water. There is so much muck in it that he doesn't sink in very far. He steps into a deeper section. The pursuers hear and shoot an energy weapon into the water close by.

The soldier who fires gets into trouble; they want Don alive. Don takes off swimming – carefully trying to keep his face out of the water.

Don exhausts himself, but finally reaches a sand bar where he can rest. He swims again, then finds land, grateful not to have been attacked. He pulls off the mud lice. He can hear them searching for him; they find the piece of land he is on. Don hides, but two move-overs wanting to play almost get him caught. There's a whole herd of them. Don hides in the middle of them. Don then migrates with them, then leaves them when he finds a fence, which he crosses – and then gets caught. But by who?

CHAPTER THIRTEEN:

A soldier has caught him – but a Venusian soldier!

He is taken to Lt. Busby. The Terrans now have a problem: all they can do is fight the fog, which the Venusians know far better. It's a guerrilla war now. All they have to do is outwait the Terrans, and the Terrans will eventually go home (this is usually what happens in history).

Don decides to enlist; Busby refuses. Don says he can shoot, and knows how to speak Venerian – and can wash dishes. Finally, Busby relents and swears Don in. Don learns how to soldier, and serves as an interpreter with the Venerians, who hate the Terrans for their xenophobic prejudices.

The Terrans damage one dragon, and kill another one.

Don always asks for Sir Isaac. He also tries to find out about Isobel. He suspects she was killed. He is worried about her, not the ring. He goes back to thinking it was the paper. Then he forgets all about it.

Don is sent to talk to an important dragon. It turns out to be Sir Isaac.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN:

Don greets Sir Isaac by beating the dragon's sides with his fists. Sir Isaac introduces his family. It is a four-generation welcome – one away from the highest honor possible. Sir Isaac carries Don to the meeting.

Don is treated with courtesy, and given rooms and a great bath – followed by a great human meal (although the soup is in the coffee cup and the coffee in the soup plate). Don goes to bed, to sleep – after thinking about his friend Jack, his horse Lazy, and everything else that happened.

Don wonders who is doing the cooking, over breakfast.

He cleans up, knowing this may be a diplomatic meeting. Sir Isaac shows up, apologizing for acting the same way he would with one of his own children, and for being so impatient. Don realizes they must have him under observation.

The human Montgomery Phipps shows up; he knows Don, having spanked him once as a child for biting his thumb. They are waiting for Malath (whoever that is). Mrs. Philips cooked the meal for Don. Malath is a Martian, and he surprises Don when he comes in.

They want the ring.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN:

Don says he will only give the ring to his father. Phipps says that's impossible; Don wants some evidence that his father would want him to give up the ring. They begin to reason with him, then Don tells them he doesn't have the ring.

Malath passes out; without the ring, he will have no way to get home; high gravity will kill him.

Don reveals that he gave the ring to Isobel – who is here in the same place, along with her father!

Don wants them to explain what this is all about.

Sir Isaac reveals the existence of a group called The Organization. They are scientists dedicated to the preservation of freedom against the onslaught of the government and other forces.

Isobel arrives and throws her arms around Don. She gives it to Don. Phipps wants it. When he tries to take it, Don pulls a knife on him. Sir Isaac asks Don to put the weapon away, then tells Phipps to leave his house. Don tells Sir Isaac he is an adult – and if he wants the ring, he will have to know the facts. What is in the ring is the secret to manipulate space: force fields, fusion bombs, fast space travel. Don thinks there should be some way to do all this without requiring secrets.

Don is trying to decide who to trust. He trusts Isobel, but not her father. Don wants proof. If Malath has the other half, and if this half fits, that might do – but it won't keep them from having it then. Don asks what will happen if he refuses to give up the ring; Sir Isaac promises his safety. Mr. Costello then points out that it is impossible to lie in true speech – so Don can ask Sir Isaac what is going on and know it is the truth!

Don decides it isn't necessary – a man has to trust, sooner or later. Don gives Sir Isaac the ring.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN:

Phipps comes back – and he apologizes to Don. Don asks for the ring, then gives it to Phipps.

They need it to save their people on Mars, where they have a secret research lab, unknown and ignored by Terra. They have been trying to figure out how the first stellar empire's technology worked. Don's parents have been instrumental. The war interfered at the worst possible moment.

The Organization has been infiltrated, and a top member broken – and now, Terra is on her way to destroy their outpost on Mars. That means Don's parents will be killed!

Sir Isaac, who is a great physicist, goes to work on deciphering the ring's message. Phipps is a historian.

They rejoin the messages; they begin to make copies.

Don asks Isobel to join him. Phipps gives him back the ring – Don plans to give it to his father.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN:

They prepare the rescue craft with the new technology. They race against the Terrans on their way to Mars to kill their people.

Don has nothing to do. He worries about his parents. Phipps offers him a smoke. Don asks to go back to his unit. Phipps says no – he knows too much to leave.

The next day, they get a demonstration of the new technology: force field, time stasis,

Don starts making plans to escape.

Phipps asks Don to think about what changes will occur from the new technology. Faster space travel; force fields to protect against bombs; possibly even moving planets.

Phipps tells Don he knows he's getting ready to leave, so he offers him another alternative: come to Mars!

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN:

Don will have command of his own ship – or at least an executive position. But there's a problem: he's still on duty with the ground forces. Don gets new orders.

Don says goodbye – time for the mission!

The ships take off – and accelerate to twenty gravities without any discernible effects.

He'd like to take Isobel riding – but his home is in space. Maybe he will go on *Pathfinder*. He could marry Isobel and go.

Don will be in charge of the self-destruct switch, to protect the ship from the Terrans if need be.

They capture all three Terran warships in force fields.

Don looks forward to seeing his parents, and giving his father the ring.

Chapter Tests / Quizzes:

Personally, I do not care for many published textbook tests/quizzes, as I often find them to not fit what we have actually discussed in class, or what the students have themselves found in the text. I therefore tend to make up my own quizzes and tests, and I also rely heavily on questions about relationships, more than I do questions about specific details of the books. I teach very poor readers, and I am far more concerned that they understand what is happening between the characters, than I am in what color shirt a particular character is wearing, or some other pithy little detail that teachers dealing with very good readers might ask to make sure that their students have read. I check to make sure they've read by insisting that they answer the following kinds of questions using specific details (and by always asking a question about the end of the chapter), but I allow them to choose the details themselves to fit the question. I train them to answer questions this way by giving them several sample questions, then answering them on the board, using their input to craft a model response. I hope that the following questions are useful for quizzes and tests, as well as for classroom discussion. Again, I expect students to use specific details from the novel to answer these questions. If the extra credit questions seem appropriate for your class, you can add them to the quizzes, or use them as extra credit homework assignments.

CHAPTER ONE:

1. What two technological inventions let us know that we are not in a western novel?
2. What is a booklegger?
3. What does the first radiogram tell Don to do?
4. What attitude does the headmaster take towards Don?
5. What does the second radiogram tell Don to do?
6. What does Rupe want? How does Don answer him?

CHAPTER TWO:

1. What happens to Don on the rocket?
2. What has not reached Don yet?
3. Who does Don meet in the spaceport?
4. What happens with Dr. Jefferson?

5. How will humanity have six planets to live on?
6. What happens at the end of the chapter?

CHAPTER THREE:

1. What happens to Dr. Jefferson?
2. How do they convince Don to talk?
3. What do the police then do with Don?

CHAPTER FOUR:

1. What can't Don find?
2. What does Don do with his last coin?
3. What comes in the mail? What does Don think is the really important part?
4. What happens when Don meets the police again?
5. Who does Don see aboard the *Glory Road*?
6. What happens after the woman screams?

CHAPTER FIVE:

1. What goes wrong with Sir Isaac?
2. How does Don help him?
3. How does Sir Isaac respond?
4. What does Sir Isaac teach Don?
5. Describe what happens on Circum-Terra.
6. What is Don's problem at the end of the chapter?

CHAPTER SIX:

1. What almost happens to Don?
2. Who saves him?

3. What does Don learn about Sir Isaac that awes him?
4. What is the message Commander Higgins sends? What does he do after that?

CHAPTER SEVEN:

1. What is cold sleep? Why take it?
2. What happens to Don after he mashes his finger?
3. What does McMasters explain about the situation on Earth?
4. How does McMasters suggest getting to Mars?
5. What does Don think about joining? Why?

CHAPTER EIGHT:

1. Why is Don having trouble sending a radiogram to his parents?
2. What does the banker tell Don to do instead of paying him back?
3. What does Mr. Ling offer to do for Don?
4. What does Mr. Ling want from Don?
5. What does Don have to do to pay for his meal?

CHAPTER NINE:

1. What is Don's new job?
2. What wakes Don up?
3. Where does he hide the ring?
4. What is "bone money"?
5. How does Don feel about his new job?
6. Who does Isobel want Don to meet? Why?
7. What is the argument against the draft?
8. How is the war going?

CHAPTER TEN:

1. What happens when Don tries to enlist?
2. Who does Don decide to try and contact?
3. Why does Mr. Costello give back the message to his parents?
4. What does Isobel plan to do?
5. What does the Federation do?
6. What happens to Charlie?

CHAPTER ELEVEN:

1. What happens to the restaurant?
2. Where is Don taken?
3. What is going to happen to the Venusians?
4. What does Bankfield want?
5. What does Don tell him?
6. What does Bankfield do to try and persuade Don?
7. How is Don able to escape?

CHAPTER TWELVE:

1. What is water like on Venus?
2. What is swimming like?
3. What almost gets Don caught when he is hiding on the island?
4. How does Don avoid escape?

CHAPTER THIRTEEN:

1. Who has captured Don?
2. What is the Venusian strategy for the war?

3. What does Don want from Busby?
4. Explain Terran attitudes towards the dragons.
5. What is the purpose of a crazy wagon?
6. Who is waiting at the end of the trip for Don?

CHAPTER FOURTEEN:

1. How do the Venerians treat Don?
2. Who shows up at the meeting?
3. What do they want from Don?

CHAPTER FIFTEEN:

1. What does Don tell them about the ring?
2. Why do they want the ring?
3. Why is Malath so upset?
4. Where is the ring?
5. What does Phipps do that is so rude?
6. What does Don have to decide?
7. How does he finally decide that?

CHAPTER SIXTEEN:

1. What do they do with what's inside the ring?
2. What happens with the ring itself?

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN:

1. What does Don want to do?
2. Why does Phipps tell him no?
3. Describe Act One and Act Two:

4. What does Don start planning?
5. What are some of the changes Phipps predicts?
6. What offer does Phipps make to Don at the end of the chapter?

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN:

1. What kind of authority will Don have when he returns from Mars?
2. What problem is there with Phipps' proposal?
3. What is so special about the ship?
4. What is Don's duty aboard the ship?
5. Describe the battle.

Extra Credit Questions:

1. Why is taking a Martian flute to Mars like taking coals to Newcastle?
2. Explain "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin".
3. Why call Earth Sodom and Gomorrah?
4. What is the source of the quote, "To understand all is to forgive all"?
5. Why is the hotel on Circum-Terra named Goddard?
6. What is *lingua franca*?
7. Why does Don feel like "Toomai-of-the-Elephants" on Sir Isaac's back?

Vocabulary Words (these are all words I've had students ask me about):

- p.7: buttes; lather; gaudy; shied; dismounted;
p. 8: reassuringly; accusingly
p. 9: sufficiently; explicit
p. 11: soothe
p. 12: jitters; blitzing
p. 13: blandly
p. 16: fluoroscope; dopplered; gullet
p. 18: forlorn
p. 21: oscillating; convolutions; topology; dyspeptic; fretting; astray
p. 22: lavishly; grossly; indispensable; heartily

p. 23: sheafs; postulate; dismaying
p. 25: articulated; servo; coping; robust; pseudo; feeble;
p. 26: decadent; mirthless
p. 28: gayety
p. 29: genocide; swarming; hanker
p. 30: infinitely; utter; muted; whir; illuminating; nasal; trump; tension; rustled
p. 31: flabby; muffled; squeal; fretting
p. 32: modulation
p. 36: apathy
p. 38: dynamics; legalism; alternates; evokes; verbalisms
p. 39: operatives (I've omitted the drugs); clutter; rubbish; adjourn
p. 40: anachronism; inquisitor; horrid; implications; elaborate
p. 41: guff; sulky
p. 43: grifter
p. 44: groggy; annunciator
p. 45: confounded
p. 46: vulgar
p. 47: stylus; mollified
p. 50: anthropophagic
p. 51: suffice; contempt; anguish
p. 54: savvy
p. 57: halitosis
p. 59: aspirates; abandon; semantic; variable; nuances
p. 60: trajectories; elliptical
p. 61: invert; disembark
p. 62: preposterous
p. 63: petty; dumbfounded; scuttled
p. 66: simian
p. 71: wangle
p. 72: hyperboloid
p. 82: wangle
p. 84: expropriate
p. 88: coaming
p. 91: loitering
p. 92: jostled
p. 97: gruffness; disparaging; lingua franca; denied; improbable; pallet; oppression; bleated
p. 102: bickered
p. 103: vying; swarmed
p. 104: gondolas; lieu; precedent; durance vile
p, 106: doting; crimp
p. 107: malarkey
p. 113: ululation
p. 127: sibilant
p. 128: groped; contour
p. 129: repugnance; reconnoiter; precarious

p. 130: ubiquitous
p. 135: cadge
p. 136: palaver
p. 138: uncouth; ingratiate
p. 139: collaterally; belligerents; clandestine
p. 141: locus
p. 143: ambling; gait
p. 144: imperceptibly; rack; etiquette; wallowing; trough; dilly; twinge; napery; accordance; cavil
p. 146: esoteric
p. 154: rapprochement
p. 176: tensor
p. 179: inquisitors
p. 182: jig

Essay Questions and Projects:

1. On Earth, some books are banned. Heinlein suggests there will be bookleggers, who will sell banned books. Investigate which books are banned the most in various places in the United States. Which three books are the most banned? Why are they banned? Write an argumentative essay for or against banning books, particularly these books, and conclude by suggesting what Heinlein must have felt about banning books, and why.
2. The novel seems to take as one of its themes a refutation of the phrase from the philosopher Spinoza, "To understand all is to forgive all." Write an argumentative essay using examples from this book explaining how Heinlein is disagreeing with that argument; end with your own sense of whether or not you agree with Spinoza – or Heinlein – and why.
3. Write a compare and contrast essay, pointing out the parallels Heinlein makes between the Venerian Revolution and the American Revolution.
4. What does it mean to grow up? Compare your own definition and experience with that of Don Harvey, who when he is cut off from all his support network, begins to grow up (p. 91). Write a compare and contrast essay on the topic.
5. Write an essay about the military draft. Research the historical use of the draft in the U.S. Now, compare and contrast that to the Senator's arguments against the draft in Ch. 9. What do you think Heinlein was arguing about the nature of the draft? Do you agree or disagree?
6. Write a speculative essay to answer Phipps' question (pg. 177-78): what would the world be like with the new technology? Extrapolate three major changes in our world today if we had that technology.