

# JASPER SPACE DOG!

By Hilary Robinson. Illustrations Lewis James  
STRAUSS HOUSE PRODUCTIONS



## **Where did the idea for Charlie Tanner and Jasper come from?**

I had written a blog about an eco warrior, Charlie Tanner, and his dog and the Jasper stories became a natural extension of that. I have always been fascinated by space and the moon landings – and the astronauts themselves who made history, that it seemed quite natural for the first book in the series of ‘The Misadventures of Jasper’ to be about space and to combine facts with hilarious ideas about space travel. This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historic moon landings and the theme of his years Summer Reading Challenge is Space Chase, so it all fitted together well.



## **How many times do you redraft a story before you’re happy with it?**

Jasper Space Dog! was redrafted at least 17 times. There are 17 pdf versions of it but there are Word documents before that. I do love the redrafting process – going over and over the text, finding and replacing words, tweaking phrases and linking the threads of the plot together in a cohesive way. I came across an author who writes chapters 1,3,5,7 and then chapters 2,4,6,8 and I can understand why. A story is a tapestry of woven threads which, when structured effectively creates a beautiful product.



## **Why did you decide to combine fact, fiction, science and art?**

Some of us often tend to prefer fact or fiction books and some of us prefer the arts to science, and vice versa. I wanted to combine all these areas to establish an inclusive approach and a broad readership so that everyone, whatever their reading level, could share in the fun exploits of a loveable, hilarious hound and his owner as they enthusiastically explore fascinating subjects.



## **The illustrations are great – Lewis James conveys expressions really well – how did you find him?**

I have a friend who works for the Prince’s Trust Enterprise Scheme, a charity that helps young people. He mentioned Lewis to me. Lewis was mentored through the whole process by Mandy Stanley (creator of the Lettice Rabbit books) – a leading illustrator, designer and branding expert. Together they form a top team. Lewis has a gift for driving the narrative with expressive illustrations and his style complements the story well.



## **Did you send Jasper Space Dog! to experts and testers before it was published?**

Yes, we had a literacy advisor, Janet Gough and an astrophysicist, Dr Suzi Imber, as well as a team which included an editor, librarians, teachers, English examiners, parents and children. They all previewed the text and offered valuable advice.



## **You’ve used an unusual font - why was that?**

Dyslexie font is growing in popularity. It was designed by graphic artist, Christian Boer. We evaluated, in our trials, that many children who faced reading challenges found this font easier to read than others. We also considered the colour of the paper – so that the text and the background sit comfortably together. We also thought a lot about the layout – how the illustrations and text might work together and other key considerations even down to indenting the first line of paragraphs which, for some readers, helps them follow the progression of the story.

## Book Design

I was keen that the book should not only be an accessible read, but portable too. I always remind children that a book is a friend and you can never be lonely with a book in your pocket, in your bag or on the table or bookshelf. The size of the book was designed to sit comfortably anywhere, and so the reader has a permanent, loyal and, in the form of Jasper and Charlie Tanner books, fun friend wherever in life they go!

