

172 HOURS

ON THE MOON?

curriculum connections

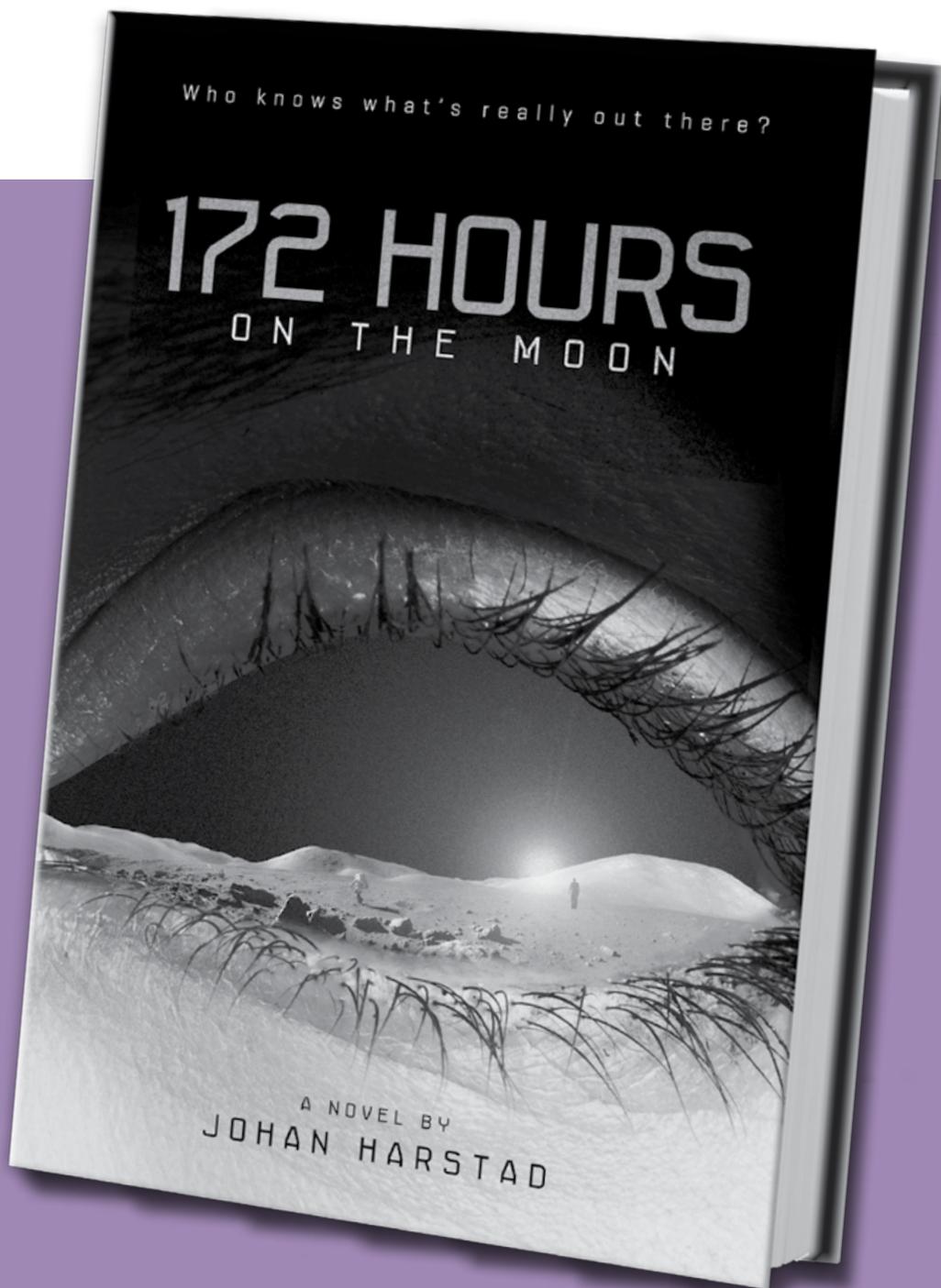
- ❖ English
- ❖ Technology
- ❖ Politics
- ❖ Religion

thematic connections

- ❖ Suspense
- ❖ Friendship
- ❖ Betrayal
- ❖ Death and dying

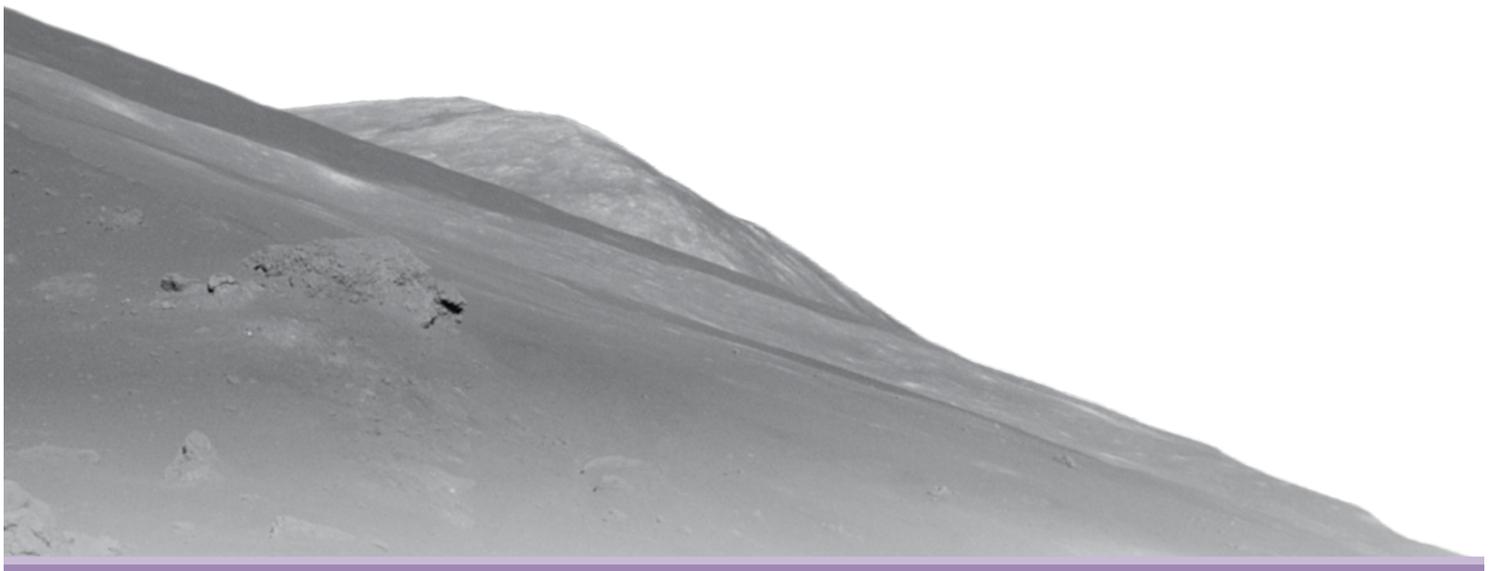
Ages: 14 & up

by
Johan Harstad



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Fifty years after Apollo 11, NASA launches a new moon mission. What is the official purpose of the mission? Why has the new space capsule been designed to resemble the original capsule? Why are teenagers onboard?
2. Millions from around the world apply for the moon trip lottery, but only three can win. What were Midori's reasons for applying? Why were Antoine's? Why didn't Mia want to apply? Why did her parents apply for her?
3. A plane with the letters QU on its tail crashes into the English Channel as Antoine watches in horror. Why does no one else see it? Why are there no news reports of missing aircraft? What do you think happened?
4. On their last night in New York City, Mia's father quotes John Lennon: "Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans" (page 101). What does this quote mean to you? How does it apply to the main characters in this novel?
5. During the training at the Houston Space Center, when Midori looks at Mia and Antoine, she "already got, even then, that they were different from her" (page 118). Is she right? What are the significant differences between Midori and the other two teenagers?
6. "God isn't here," Antoine thinks upon arrival at the DARLAH 2 moon station (page 177). "God doesn't even know about this place." What does he mean by that? Have you ever had a similar feeling?
7. Looking out at the beautiful lunar landscape, Midori tells the tale of Kuchisake-onna, the slit-mouth woman. What is the point of the story? When does the slit-mouth woman make an appearance in this novel? Why?
8. Moments before Oleg Himmelfarb dies at his nursing home, he understands: "This new moon mission had nothing to do with fund raising or public relations. It had nothing to do with scientific lunar research" (page 212). What does the old man realize? What is the mission really about?



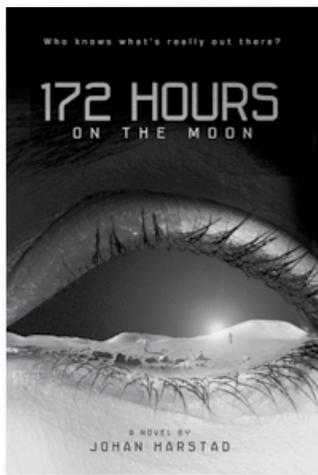
9. Take a closer look at the photographs and diagrams that appear throughout this novel. What information do they provide? How do they enhance the book's mood?
10. 6EQUJ5 is the last thing that Mr. Himmelfarb writes. It appears on DARLAH 2's computer screen and earlier its signal had been picked up by a giant radio telescope. What is it? Where does it come from? What does it signify?
11. What is a doppelganger? Why are they so dangerous? What is NASA prepared to do to keep them off the earth?
12. "I thought it would be best," Coleman tells Mia and Midori (page 300), "that you didn't know anything." Why did he lie to them for so long? Why did NASA? What else could NASA have done?
13. What happened to Coleman as a young boy in Manhattan's Central Park? How does it play out 50 years later on the moon?
14. In a plot full of twists, the last pages of this novel are perhaps its most surprising. At first, who did you think was in the capsule headed home to earth? Who was actually in the capsule? How did that happen?
15. More than seventy years pass between the north Atlantic splashdown of the DARLAH capsule and the moon landing of the RV Providence. What do you imagine happened on Earth in the interim?



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about the book



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ON THE MOON
by Johan Harstad

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A Norwegian punk rocker, a free spirit from Japan, and a handsome Parisian are the three lucky teenagers who win a trip to the moon. They'll be traveling with an experienced crew of NASA astronauts, cheered on by millions back on Earth. It's the chance of a lifetime, or so they are told. But nothing is simple when you're more than 200,000 miles from home, and little do they know that a sinister force awaits them on the desolate lunar landscape. As thought-provoking as it is chilling, this non-stop adventure will haunt readers long after they've turned the last page.

about the author



Johan Harstad, an award-winning novelist, short story writer, and playwright, was born in Stavanger, Norway in 1979. This is his first young adult novel and it is currently being published in Europe, Asia, and America.



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Educator's Guide prepared by Anne Quirk.