



APOLLO

18
10



The Fairy
Penguins



Write a Book
in a Day



THE KIDS'
CANCER
PROJECT

Science. Solutions. Survival.

PARAMETERS FORM 2019

TEAM DETAILS

STATE: NSW
DIVISION: Middle School
SCHOOL/GROUP: NBSC Manly Campus
TEAM NAME: The Fairy Penguins
TEAM ID: 253

PARAMETERS AND RANDOM WORDS

Parameters

Primary character 1 Web developer
Primary character 2 Mathematician
Non-human character Crow
Setting Space station
Issue TV comes alive

Random words

Community
Skipped
Magic
Canvas
Sings

INSTRUCTIONS

- Start at 8am
- Write an original story:
 - based on all **five parameters** (above)
 - including all **five random words** (above), and in bold type
 - with some identifiable **Australian content** (in theme or setting or characters, etc)
 - keeping within the allowed word count (remember every word on every page counts)!
 - include this parameters form in your book **immediately after the front cover** in both the hard and soft copy.
- Remember: **Every** word on **every** page counts. This includes your front cover, back cover, blurb, acknowledgements and copyright form.
- **Be sure to give yourself enough time to submit your book and complete the following checklist before 8pm.**

Log on to the Team Coordinator Portal to:

- Check the spelling of your team name and team members' names (how these are spell on submission will be how they are displayed on certificates)
- Complete the Declaration
- Submit your finished book in **both** PDF and plain text format
- Mail a hard copy of your book on the next business day to:
Write a Book in a Day, The Kids' Cancer Project, PO Box 6400, Alexandria NSW 2015

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Published by The Fairy Penguins, NBSC Manly Campus, 138 Abbott Road North Curl Curl.
Eva Beaumont, Gemma Bones, Talia Cooper, Mischa McCulloch, Hannah Stephenson

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"All merchandise just half-price!"

"20% off every item store-wide!"

"Go to space for free!"

Advertisements blared from the dusty television as a woman dozed on an old leather armchair. Her head jolted up and she stared at the screen.

"Free trips to space! Appear on the brand new TV series 'Apollo 18 - Survival style'! Apply online at www.apollo18survivor.com.au!"

She grabbed her computer and quickly typed the website displayed on the screen. After skimming the website Aura filled in her details and was about to press submit when she paused. What were the chances of getting picked anyway? With a sigh, she closed her laptop and went to bed.



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The next morning she opened her laptop again and saw the open submission form for the Apollo 18 survivor show. Although she didn't think she would get chosen, she couldn't pass up the chance to go to space. Aura took a deep breath and pressed submit. A picture of an orbiting space shuttle popped onto the screen, captioned with the words: 'Good luck! We'll get back to you later.'

A few months later she routinely trudged in from her car, tired and bored from her work. She grabbed her mail, habitually throwing it on to the kitchen counter before opening her pantry when an envelope caught her eye. This envelope was different from the other mail, it looked perfect, with the name Aura Lynwood seemingly handwritten on the front. Aura couldn't fathom what this envelope held, her life was so commonplace - finally, there was a chance something exciting would happen.

Eagerly she ripped it open, pulling out the letter and dropping the envelope to the dusty floor.

Dear Aura Lynwood,

We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted as a contestant on our brand new show; Apollo 18!

There is a grand cash prize for the winner, so don't forget to turn up to 18 Watercross Avenue, Sydney at 10:00 am on the first of February.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Good Luck!

Yours Sincerely,

Ashton Ellory

A. Ellory

World-renowned
web developer
and entrepreneur



Excitedly, she skimmed the letter. Against all the odds, she had got into Apollo 18-Survival style! Aura couldn't wait. She had always had a fascination with the stars, and couldn't wait to meet Ashton, the host. Ashton was her hero; smart, successful and pretty much perfect, and in two weeks she would meet him! The days just couldn't go by fast enough.

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Two weeks later, Aura found herself in an empty parking lot. At first, it seemed like the wrong address, but her worries were eased as other people arrived. There were nine others, all carrying bags and looking around confused; Aura figured they must be the other contestants. After a half-hour of waiting, a van pulled up in the parking lot. It looked quite old and worse for wear, but there wasn't really another option, so Aura chucked her bag in the boot, and crammed herself through the door

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There were quite a few strange things about this van that caught her attention, namely that the van had thick, dark blinds covering every inch of the windows. Unsurprisingly, the van wasn't very well lit, so when she got on she took a seat towards the back of the bus, peacefully alone in her thoughts. The silence didn't last long, broken by shouts of "Wait!" and frantic footsteps increasing in volume, moving down the aisle. Aura rolled her eyes before feeling someone sit down next to her. *Are you kidding me?* Her thoughts turned from confused to annoyed. *There are quite a few more spare seats and this guy just had to sit next to me!* she thought.

"Hey, I'm Matt, what's your name? I'm so excited, are you? We're going to space - can you believe it?"

He sped through his words as if he only had a minute left to live. Aura responded hesitantly,

"I'm Aura, and yeah, I guess I'm excited." after that she mostly let Matt talk, only speaking when she needed to, she told him she worked as a web developer and other insignificant details to which he always had an essay worth of opinions to respond with. Aura was totally exhausted by the time they finally reached the launch base deep in the Australian outback.





Aura dragged her bag along, no longer caring that it was coated in red dirt. Attempting to get to the front of the crowd, she snuck behind a tall girl who was complaining about how the wind was ruining her hair. Just as she was standing right behind her, the girl flicked her long blonde hair into Aura's face. Spluttering, Aura detangled herself from the golden locks. Resisting the urge to knock the girl over with her tattered bag, she squeezed herself through the rest of the competitors toward the front of the crowd where the receptionist was handing out room keys. "Who do we have here?". The receptionist looked at her uninterestedly. "Aura. Aura Lynwood. I'm from Sydney." The receptionist looked down at her sheet.

"I don't seem to have a Laura here."

"No! Not Laura. Aura. A-U-R-A. I'm 28." Instantly, the receptionist's expression changed.

"Aura! Welcome to the Apollo 18 launch base. You will be in room five, with Sadie Crookby. She won't be arriving until later, but I think the rest of the twelve competitors have arrived. You'll be meeting everyone tomorrow."

"Cool, thanks!" Aura took the room key and slung her bag over her shoulder. She felt a new energy rush into her. She had dreamed of this for ages and finally, finally, her dream had become a reality. She wore a

smile to bed that night, the moon watching her as she drifted off to sleep.

As the moon slowly faded with the night, the Apollo 18 camp was awakening. Aura was redoing her auburn hair for the fourth time. She was nervous to meet Sadie and hoped that they could be close allies during the game. She didn't normally take this much time to do her hair, but she wanted to make a good first impression. A lock clicked from behind her, echoing around the empty room. Aura dropped her hairbrush and spun towards the door to find a small girl resembling a mouse softly closing the door. "Hi! I'm Aura. You must be Sadie?"

Sadie smiled shyly, stuttering "Hi Aura. Yeah, I'm Sadie. I'm a mathematician. Nice to meet you."

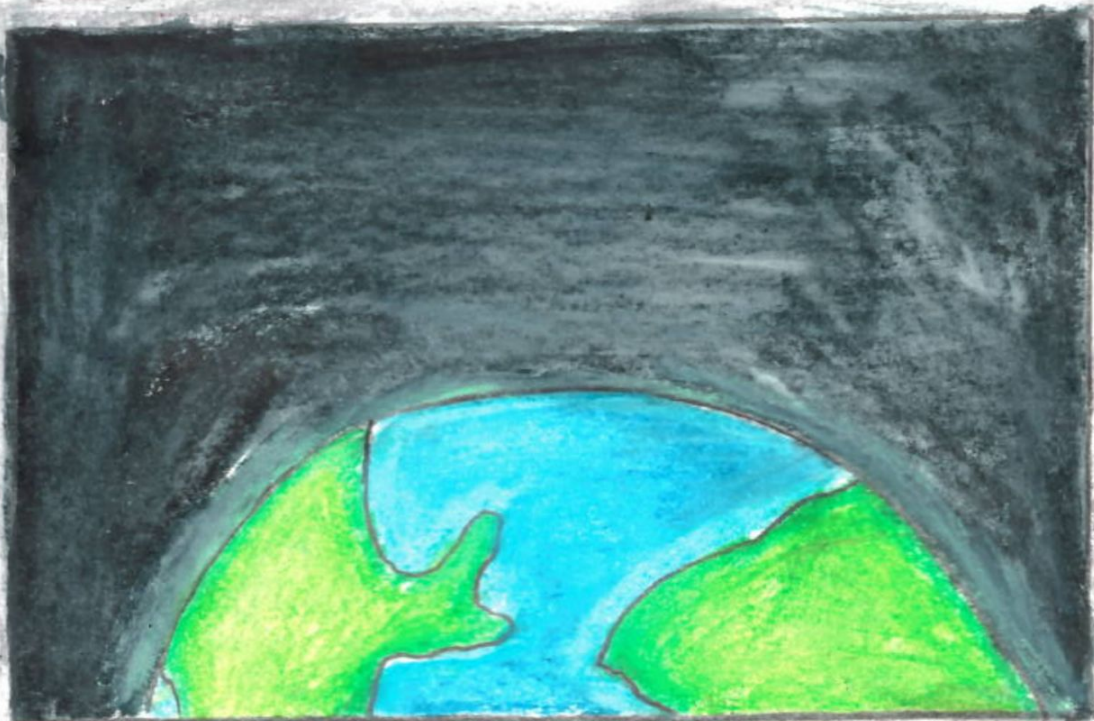
"Do you know that the host Ashton has a pet crow named Colby?" Aura asked, eager to make conversation. Sadie's face brightened. "I did know that! I have a pet too. Her name's Amanda, she's my duck"

"That's awesome! I don't have any pets, my apartment doesn't allow them" Aura commented. For the rest of the morning, Sadie and Aura were talking about any and every topic, ranging from the rather impressionist cosmos **canvas** on the wall of room five to the injustice of pets not being allowed in Aura's apartment. Lunchtime arrived, so Aura and Sadie headed down to the **community** room to meet the rest of the competitors, and their hearts **skipped** a beat as they saw the sleek metal launch pad outside. The hour of meeting the other competitors went by quite slowly, as Aura made an effort to avoid talking to the tall blonde girl, who she later knew as Brooke. The other competitors seemed nice. There was Kyle, a rather loud sports statistician from Adelaide, Willow, a girl who looked uncannily like the tree she was named after and Laurence, who was occupied trying to catch Brooke's attention. There were many more competitors, but Aura could barely remember their names. After the meet-and-greet was over, they were directed to a stage where they were talked through safety procedures. It was almost dark by the time they were let out to go to bed, though Aura and Sadie barely slept the entire night.

Aura squeezed Sadie's pale hand tight as the rocket engines roared below them. The cliché takeoff countdown blared through the speakers. "Ten, nine, eight, seven," they all counted in unison, "Six, five, four, three, two, one, blastoff!" Aura and Sadie screamed in delight as the rocket took off. After a few short hours, they were in orbit. They looked through the small window behind them and could see the Earth glowing in the sunlight. Brooke was live streaming to all her followers down on earth, hogging the window to give her followers a good view. A loud static noise came out of the TV speakers in front of them. A person wearing a mask appeared and Brooke shrieked as it started talking to them in a monotonous digital voice. "Hello contestants, welcome to space. We are currently orbiting approximately five hundred kilometres above the earth. Enjoy your time in orbit."



Aura floated to the food vault for the third time that day. At least she thought it was day. She had completely and totally lost track of time, but she thought it was about the sixth day she was in space. She had almost got used to looking at the window, and seeing Earth, though she still stopped to admire it every time she saw the dazzling view. It had just dawned on her that she had never really fathomed how huge space was, and how minuscule she was in comparison. Grabbing a pack of freeze-dried grapefruit, she strapped herself into a seat next to Willow. Aura ripped open the packet, and noticed the date the grapefruit was packaged. Apparently it was packaged yesterday. *That's weird* thought Aura. *How would they bring up the food if it was only made yesterday?* She shook it off, reasoning that it was probably just a machine malfunction. Aura was getting used to eating in zero gravity, but it was still very weird and extremely messy. Attempting to get the grapefruit in her mouth without dribbling it down her brand new white t-shirt, she tried to make conversation with Willow. "Hey Willow. What's your favourite space-food so far?" Willow smiled. "I like the vegetarian space pies. The texture is horrendous though." Willow started to say something about a hamburger, but then Laurence floated over to them, interrupting to ask if they had seen Brooke. Suddenly the TV switched on, and the droid said "You have no chance with Brooke, Laurence." Everyone started in surprise, but by the time they had figured where the sound had come from, the TV had already switched off. Laurence yelled "But she's amazing! Her beauty **sings** to me in an unspoken language!". Laurence looked to the roof like a saint, and walked off in a happy dream. Willow sniggered quietly. Aura finished her grapefruit, and with a shiver down her spine, she realised that the droid's messages couldn't have been prerecorded, and must be able to hear everything they say. She stood up and looked around quickly. She decided that she must be more cautious from now on.



“You will be given a challenge every week,” the TV droid prattled on. Sadie was still getting creeped out by the guy in a mask, though Aura kept on telling her that it was nothing to worry about. “One person will be eliminated after every challenge until there are two people left. The challenges will get gradually harder and will incorporate both physical and mental strength, as well as intelligence. In a few minutes, you will get another message telling you what to do. Good luck!” A few tense minutes passed, and then finally another video flashed up on the screen. The TV screen lit up again; “Welcome, contestants, I am here to guide you through your first challenge. As mentioned, we are starting simple with a physical challenge to test your ability to move around in a zero-gravity environment. You will have to collect three yellow stars among all the other floating debris. You will then put the stars in a box in the middle of the room. The last person to put three stars in the box shall be eliminated.” Sadie bit her lip. She was still not really accustomed to the zero-gravity environment. The figure on the TV continued “The challenge starts... now.”

Aura and Sadie held on tight to one of the many metal railings in the space station, preparing themselves for the sudden change into zero-gravity. The other contestants, in particular Brooke, looked fully confident until the zero-gravity was turned on and everything released from its binding. Objects flew everywhere, and all the contestants looked terrified and queasy. Aura still looked comfortable, she was prepared for this. Now all she had to do was find her stars and put them in the box. Laurence was the first to collect his stars, but when he saw Brooke without any, he immediately gave all his stars to her. Brooke then went and won the challenge, and Aura was close behind. Sadie and the others finished shortly after. Laurence was a long way behind after giving Brooke his stars and ended up coming last. The masked droid appeared on the screen, "Hello again. Laurence, as you were the last to finish, you are eliminated. You will be escorted off the space station by shuttle tomorrow morning. Goodbye Laurence," the droid said. Aura walked off, annoyed that Brooke had taken advantage of Laurence that easily.

Three weeks into the show and nine contestants were left. Laurence left in the first challenge followed by Leanna, then Hunter. Frankly, Aura was surprised she made it this far, physical challenges hadn't previously been her strong point, nevertheless, the only thing she could do was to wait for the next challenge. The show wasn't exactly fun, but at least she had Sadie, Matt and Willow to keep her company. Aura didn't really consider Matt a friend but it was clear that Matt considered her a friend, and because of that he never stopped talking. The more she thought about it, Matt and Sadie were similar, pretty close too. *Are they a couple?* Aura smirked and nudged Sadie. "So, how's it going with Matt?" she whispered.

"What!" snapped Sadie.

"You two are together right?"

"No, we're just friends," Sadie said blushing "I don't know why you'd think otherwise"

"Sure, sure Sadie." Aura laughed, finishing her oversized packet of freeze-dried grapefruit (apparently the only decent food in this place).

The next challenge came around, and the mysterious droid figure had told them earlier that during their next challenge they would get to leave the safety of the space station and venture out into the unknown. Aura was both excited and nervous, she had never been into space before. There were only seven contestants left, as Owen & Theodora had both gone home. Owen came last on the zero-gravity obstacle course, and Brooke shoved Theodora into one of the obstacles and she got a nasty concussion, so she had to go home too.

The remaining seven contestants lined up as the droid explained the challenge to them. They had twenty minutes before their oxygen tank ran out, and in that time they had to overcome several obstacles, collecting five yellow stars on the way, before retrieving a big red star at the end. They then had to navigate their way through a short maze to get back and put their stars in a box. Aura was particularly nervous as Brooke was finding new ways to get rid of people every time. She would do whatever it took to win. Aura was also worried as she wasn't particularly good at the physical side of things, she was much better at mental challenges and puzzles.

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The challenge started and Aura sprinted to keep up with the others. She may not have been the strongest, but she was agile and made it through the obstacles easily. She had collected four of the five yellow stars and was looking for the last one. She couldn't find it anywhere and she was falling behind. Eventually she found it wedged under one of the obstacles, but at this point she was way behind the others. Aura collected her large red star and entered the maze. She could just see the person in front of her, but she was running out of oxygen. Clarence, who was in front of her, suddenly fell to the ground. He sprained his ankle and forfeited the competition, meaning that even if Aura came last she would still stay at the space station. She bounced past Clarence and tried to find her way through the maze. Aura noticed her oxygen tank was worryingly low, and was about to run out. Nevertheless, she kept on navigating her way through the maze. Suddenly, a beeping sound started coming out of her oxygen tank. She started to panic when she realised her oxygen tank was empty, but calmed down again when she realised she was still able to breathe. *That's weird*, she thought. Apparently she was out of oxygen but she could still breathe. Aura sped through the rest of the course and ended up overtaking Matt and Willow.

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Later that day, Aura was about to tell Sadie about the oxygen tank, but she decided to keep it a secret until she found out what was going on.

Another transmission came in from the droid on the TV, but this time it didn't look intentional. A crow squawked in the background and the droid turned to look at it. Then, the video just glitched out. From the side Aura thought the figure looked suspiciously human-like, but supposed that it was supposed to resemble a person. *It's still weird that a crow is there though...*

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"Hey guys! Welcome to my Livestream!" Brooke's voice sang out, echoing down the corridor. Sadie groaned. "Why does Brooke always livestream? How does she even get reception?"

"I've been wondering that too," Aura mulled over the question.

"I'm seriously gonna ask her how she gets reception. She's sitting over there; in fact, I'll ask her now." Aura got up and walked semi-confidently down the corridor to Brooke, and tried to get her attention. "Brooke, BROOKE!"

"Aura, shuddup, I'm trying to Livestream." Brooke didn't take her eyes off the camera or the smile off her face. Aura rolled her eyes and stood between Brooke and the camera. "Brooke, how are you getting reception in space?" Brooke ducked and weaved, trying to get the camera to see her. "I dunno, it just works. Why?"

"Can you tell me what network you're on?" Aura pressed.

"Will you leave me alone if I do?"

"Yup."

"Fine." There was silence for a few seconds, as Brooke tapped lazily on her phone. "Huh. That's weird. I'm still connected to the guest network back in the hotel on Earth. Eh, it's free wifi" Aura turned pale.

"Can you go on a maps app on your phone and tell me where we are?" Aura begged. Brooke glared at her.

"Okay. But you owe me." Brooke tapped a few more times. "It says we're near the hotel. Pretty much exactly where we launched off. On the ground. Weird, must be a glitch." Brooke shrugged, and dodged around Aura to resume her live streaming.

Aura was walking back to Sadie when she was suddenly struck by the realisation that Ashton sent his message with Colby. Colby was his pet crow. That explained the weird, glitchy video. Suddenly she connected the dots. *Ashton must be on this "shuttle" with Colby. In fact, he must be directly behind the screen. That explains so much!* Aura's heart was racing as she ran back to where Sadie was sitting, and told her about what happened with Brooke and the strange transmission, and her theory about Ashton. By the end of her story, Sadie was as pale as Aura. "So it's true. We're probably not in space." Aura nodded.

"Everything is pointing to the fact that we are not in orbit"

Sadie looked gobsmacked. "But, but how did they create zero gravity! Or the launching pad. Why did Ashton trick us? What about the view of Earth!"

"I'm not sure Sadie, but almost anything is possible with science and technology." Aura said grimly.

"What do we do now?" Sadie asked desperately.

"We tell everyone else, and walk off to break the illusion."

Sadie had a new determination in her voice "Let's do it."

A few minutes later, the remaining contestants were gathered in a small semicircle around Aura. Having already received the news, they were all in shock, and totally silent. Then, Aura delivered the final line of her speech. "So, if we leave the shuttle, the illusion will break. So let's leave right now."

Brooke opened and closed her mouth like a goldfish. "But, but... What about the money?"

"There is none." Sadie stated bluntly. The six contestants looked at each other and made a silent decision. "Let's go."

The contestants walked to the door separating the shuttle from the outside world. Warning signs in red were plastered all over the door. Aura stepped up to the door, flicked a few switches, turned multiple wheels and pressed about seven buttons. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief when the shuttle door slowly opened to reveal a movie set in the middle of the Australian outback, with several very angry TV show producers.

It was a year after the scandal of the Apollo 18 show. An investigation was launched into the show, so now the producers were facing large fines. However, there was good news. Close after the conclusion of the show, Sadie and Matt had gotten married and recently had a child named Lilia. However when the wedding passed, Aura detached herself from society. It was just easier to hang out with family and close friends at home, because as soon as she showed her face in public, she would be swamped by a flood of journalists and news reporters. Aura also had become a much more outdoorsy person than she used to be. She regularly went on hikes and camped out in the open, in solitude. Her favourite place to camp was far away from the city and its news reporters, where she could see all the stars. Whenever she stargazed, she always dreamed of what it would really be like in space. One cool night, she was camping at Coonabarabran. It was late, and Aura had put out the fire and was just staring at the stars. She knew the constellations off by heart. Cassiopeia, the Southern Cross, Carina. There were an incomprehensible amount of stars and an uncountable amount constellations. Cicadas chirped quietly, harmonising with the frogs that croaked their songs throughout the night. Aura shivered. She felt so small and the universe felt so large. She sighed as she thought back onto the competition. *Who really needs money or fame when so much beauty surrounds us, both on Earth and among the stars? We just have to learn how to appreciate it.* The cicadas and frogs stopped for a second, and there was complete silence apart from the wind in the trees. The moon watched as Aura drifted to sleep, dreaming of the stars.



Aura is
thrilled
when she
has the
opportunity
to go to space.

but not all
is as it seems
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