NEWS LESSON

The Space Hero Who Is Often Afraid



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Would you rather explore space or the bottom of the sea?
2. What makes a film about science exciting?
3. Who would you want beside you when a plan goes wrong?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**weapons**	☐	A	work with numbers to find an answer
2	**enemies**	☐	B	living things that are too small to see
3	**calculations**	☐	C	tests that you do to learn something new
4	**experiments**	☐	D	to share ideas or information with someone
5	**alien**	☐	E	a living thing from another planet
6	**communicate**	☐	F	things like guns that people use to hurt others
7	**microorganisms**	☐	G	people who want to hurt or beat you
8	**critic**	☐	H	a person whose job is to give opinions about films or books

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

A film about a science teacher who must save the Sun has become a big hit. What makes it different from other space films?

1 Imagine waking up on a spaceship with no memory of how you got there. Worse still, you may be the only person who can save Earth. That is how Project Hail Mary begins. Ryland Grace is a school science teacher, and he is the one who has to find a way to stop the danger. The science-fiction film, released in March 2026, stars Ryan Gosling in the role. It is based on a novel by Andy Weir, the author of The Martian.

2 In the story, strange microorganisms are taking energy from the Sun. If nobody stops them, Earth will become too cold for people to survive. Grace travels towards a distant star to look for an answer. He is not a typical action hero. He is frightened, confused and often unsure what to do next. Instead of fighting enemies with weapons, he tries to solve problems using experiments, calculations and ordinary scientific knowledge.

3 Some of the science comes from the real world. The stars mentioned in the film, including Tau Ceti, really exist. The filmmakers also spoke to NASA experts about space travel and life on a spacecraft. But the tiny organisms that threaten the Sun are invented. Scientists say the way they store energy does not match real physics. The film mixes facts with imagination, rather than showing what could happen tomorrow.

4 Grace also finds out that he is not the only traveller looking for a solution. He meets an alien he calls Rocky. The two come from completely different worlds and cannot communicate easily at first. Yet they slowly learn to understand each other. Their unusual friendship brings warmth and humour to a story that begins with a frightening problem.

5 The film was directed by Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, who are known for mixing comedy with adventure. Audiences responded enthusiastically, and the film earned hundreds of millions of dollars around the world. Not every critic loved its jokes or its long running time, but its combination of science, danger and friendship attracted considerable attention.

6 Perhaps its cleverest idea is making a science teacher the hero of a major space adventure. Grace does not always have the right answer, and he makes mistakes along the way. He succeeds by asking questions, testing ideas and accepting help from someone very different from himself. You do not need to understand advanced physics to enjoy Project Hail Mary. You only need to be curious about what might be possible.

Sources: Scientific American. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. Andy Weir wrote the screenplay himself. T F NG
2. The filmmakers asked space experts at NASA for information. T F NG
3. In the film, the person who must stop the danger is a teacher. T F NG
4. The organisms that threaten the Sun are based on real science. T F NG
5. Grace and Rocky understand each other easily at first. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

curious	humour	invented	rapid	survive	typical	wealthy

1. Without enough heat from the Sun, plants and animals cannot _____ on Earth.
2. Grace is not a _____ action hero: he is scared and often confused.
3. The tiny organisms in the film are _____ , but the stars are real.
4. A good comedy should fill the cinema with laughter and _____ .
5. You do not need to be a scientist to enjoy the film, but you should be _____ about new ideas.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. The science-fiction film, _____ in March 2026, stars Ryan Gosling. (RELEASE)
2. Strange microorganisms _____ energy from the Sun. (TAKE)
3. If nobody stops them, Earth _____ too cold for people. (BECOME)
4. The film _____ by Phil Lord and Christopher Miller. (DIRECT)
5. Audiences responded enthusiastically, and the film _____ millions of dollars. (EARN)

7 Language focus: phrasal verbs

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. A phrasal verb is a verb plus a small word. The small word often changes the meaning completely, so learn them together.

down **into** **off** **on** **out** **over** **up**

1. Grace wakes _____ on a spaceship and cannot remember anything.
2. He must find _____ why the Sun is getting weaker.
3. The spaceship takes _____ from Earth at the start of the story.
4. Grace carries _____ with his experiments even when he is scared.
5. The old engine broke _____ in the middle of the journey.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Would an ordinary person make a more interesting hero than a superhero?
2. What could make people trust someone very different from them?
3. Which everyday skill might be surprisingly useful in space?

9 Role-play: the book or the film first?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the reader
You want your friend to read the novel before you both see the film. Explain why the book is worth the time. Listen, then agree on a plan.

Student B · the film fan
You want to see the film this weekend, before people tell you the story. Explain why. Listen, then agree on a plan.

Useful phrases

I'd rather read the book first.
That's a fair point, but it's a long book.
What if we watched it and then read it?
I don't want anyone to spoil the ending.
I'm not sure the film can explain all the science.
Let's agree on a plan.

Afterwards, tell the class what you decided and why.

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 F · 2 G · 3 A · 4 C · 5 E · 6 D · 7 B · 8 H

4 True, false or not given

1 NG · 2 T · 3 T · 4 F · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 survive · 2 typical · 3 invented · 4 humour · 5 curious

6 Verb forms

1 released · 2 are taking or take · 3 will become · 4 was directed · 5 earned

7 Language focus

1 up · 2 out · 3 off · 4 on · 5 down

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