

Project Dot

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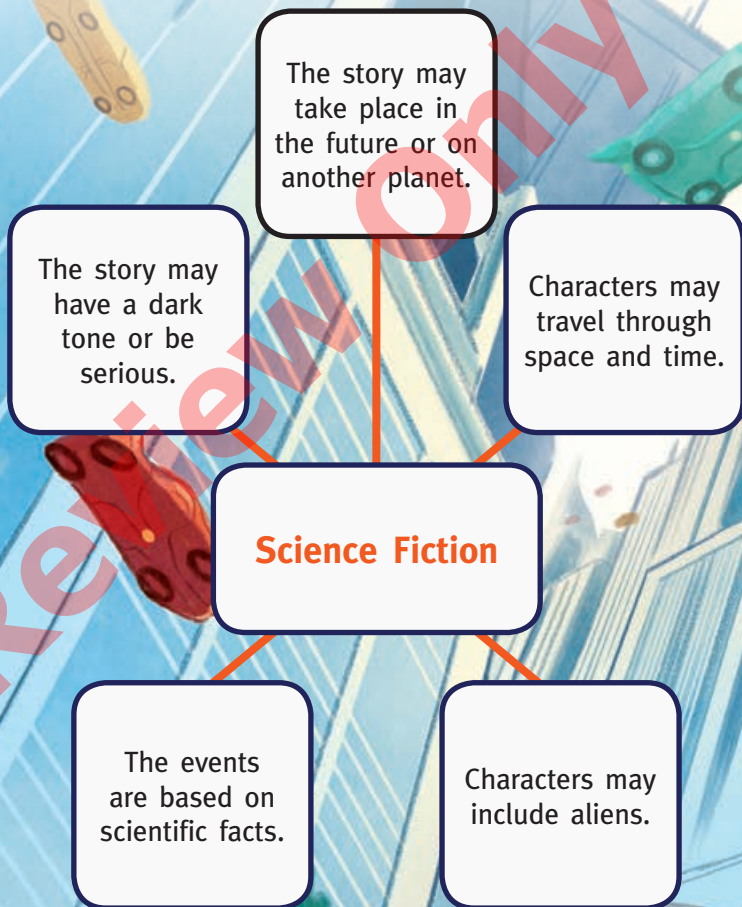


SCIENCE FICTION
LITERATURE

Level **R/40**
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Science Fiction

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Meet Dot

Samantha Stone squinted at Dot. Something was not quite right.

“Anish!” she called out.

“What, Sam?” Anish asked. This was Anish’s favorite time of the day—when he got to hang out in his parents’ basement workshop with Sam. And for the past six months, they had been building Dot, their time machine.

Anish glanced at Dot. She wasn't one of those fancy time machines you see in movies. She looked more like a DIY (Do-It-Yourself) robot.

They had used the latest tablet for her chest, connected two wires to the tablet for her arms, and used a tripod to form her legs. It had been Sam's idea to name her after the dots that make up Morse code.

"Dot is missing something," Sam said.

Anish was watching the latest episode of his favorite show, *DIY STEM* with Dr. Burt Donovan, the cool scientist who always wore suspenders and a green bow tie. Anish didn't want to tinker with Dot right now.

But then he got interested when Sam grabbed a metal colander off one of the shelves.

"What are you going to do with that?" he asked. "Tell me. I can make it better."

Sam rolled her eyes. "Dot needs a head."

"Good idea." Anish handed the colander back to Sam.

Sam firmly taped the colander on top of Dot's chest with duct tape.

"Now Dot looks like a real robot," she said proudly.

Anish reached into a cabinet and pulled out two large screws, which he placed into two holes at the top of the colander. “Now Dot has eyes! Even better!”

Sam frowned. “Why do you always have to be the smartest person in the room, Anish?”

“I like to win.” Anish shrugged. “Wait, I almost forgot.”

Anish grabbed a marker and wrote some words on a large self-stick note, then slapped it just below Dot’s eyes.

“Imagination is more important than knowledge,” Sam read. “Nice, Einstein.”

Albert Einstein was the reason that Sam and Anish had become friends. While working together on a biography project about the famous scientist, they had discovered that they both loved STEM. STEM stood for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

That was three years ago, and they had worked together on every class project ever since.

Project Dot combined everything they loved in one creation. They dreamed of traveling back in time to see medieval castles or traveling forward to see all the cool technology that the future promised.

Sam smiled and put the self-stick note into her pocket. She fiddled with the wires that connected to the tablet and asked, “Why do you think it’s going to work this time?”

“Because of this,” Anish said, showing her a shiny object the size of a small battery.

Sam squinted. “What is that?”

“It’s the new heatproof connector that will keep Dot from getting too hot. That’s why she didn’t work on our last try.” Anish removed the old connector and gently inserted the new one into the machine.



“Should we see if it works?” Anish asked.

Slipping the old connector into her pocket, Sam ran up the basement stairs.

“I’ll race you to the baseball field!” Sam called.

The field was empty when they arrived. Anish pulled out Dot's tripod legs to make the time machine stand taller. "You ready?"

Sam felt a burst of excitement. "Should we go into the future or the past?"

"I'm setting the date to one week in the future," Anish said. "That will be a good test."

He placed a connector wire inside the palm of one hand and grasped it tightly to hold it in place. Then Sam did the same.



When the GO button on the tablet began to glow a bright green, Sam felt a knot in her stomach.

They stepped back from the machine and began to count down: “Five ... four ... three ... two ... one ...” Anish pressed the green button.

Sam closed her eyes and waited. Nothing happened. She opened one eye and saw Anish tapping the GO button again and again.

“Nothing happened!” Anish said.

They started examining every part of their time machine. Anish started tinkering with the tablet. Sam noticed one of the pins in Dot’s back was bent. She firmly snapped it back into place.

“I think I fixed it,” Sam said.

“Hmm. We’ll see about that,” Anish said. He tapped the green button several more times.

Suddenly, Sam noticed what was happening. Anish kept pressing the button, and the year had changed to 2037.

“Anish, wait!” she cried. But it was too late. Anish hit the GO button. Suddenly, she couldn’t feel the ground anymore.



This Is the Future

“Please get up. This is not a place to sit or sleep.”

Sam opened her eyes. *Who said that?* she wondered. The baseball field was gone. Anish was sitting on a sidewalk next to her. Dot was next to him, motionless. The sidewalk felt like rubber under Sam’s feet.

Sam grabbed Anish’s hand. They looked around. The buildings had no windows, just transparent walls of glass. Then Sam looked up. She couldn’t believe her eyes. Floating above them was a long, narrow building.

“Please get up,” the voice spoke again, “or we will have to call the police.”

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Sam and Anish screamed. Three blurs sped past them, but they were gone before Sam and Anish could make out what they were.

“Where are we?” Sam asked.

Before Anish could answer, a deep, gravelly voice said, “You! Young man! What’s the matter? Is your chip not working?”

Sam and Anish turned and saw a man with white hair walking with his hand out toward the street.