

The Zooming Owl



By Kim Maslin

Illustrations John Field

The Tweeting Galah Series

Short stories about growing up in the digital age



All available in print via Amazon and
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The Zooming Owl

A short story about starting online learning

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This book is typeset in Helvetica, Print Clearly and Mountains of Christmas.

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Published on Amazon

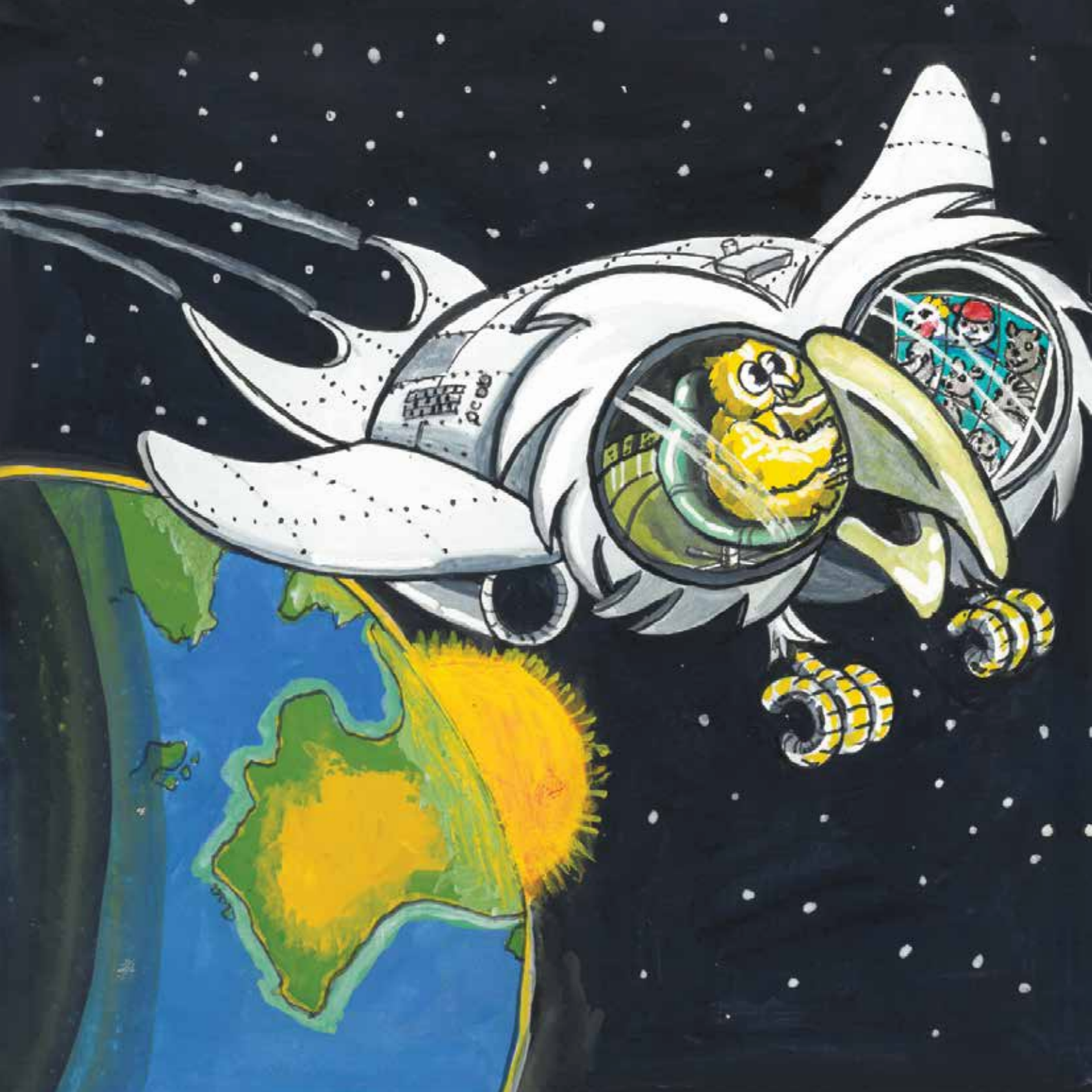
First Release 2020

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Dark times lie ahead of us and there will be a time when
we must choose between what is easy and what is right.

- Albus Dumbledore



The Zooming Owl

“Ok, that’s enough. Settle down now,” Wing Commander Grey squawked into his microphone.

Due to an unprecedented termite attack sweeping the region, many schools had temporarily closed while repairs were being conducted on their wooden classrooms. This meant the Flying Academy for Young Galahs was now holding all its lessons online.

Gabbo the Galah was so excited. Finally, he would be able to use technology in class without getting into trouble!

Today was their first lesson in Intergalactic Flying Operations, and due to the high interest, Wing Commander Grey had invited some extra students from neighbouring schools to join in.

“Good morning, and welcome to those who are new to our class. Can you all hear me?” he asked, facing his screen. A chorus of *yeses* chimed through his speakers, and he nodded.

“Very well. Pilot Wingstrong is an expert in intergalactic flying operations. She is currently zooming around the galaxy on a special mission for the National Animals’ Space Agency, but has agreed to join us today for a chat.”

There was a flurry of excitement through his speakers, and Wing Commander Grey glared at them until they fell quiet.

“Yes, it is exciting, but this is still a school lesson, and there are rules we must all follow. Firstly, please take a moment to mute your microphone. Press the *raise hand button* if you have something to say. Secondly, Pilot Wingstrong wants to see your face, not your crest, so remember to stare at your web-cam so she can see you. Finally, there should be no private chat rooms in use, only our whole class one.”

Everyone nodded quietly to show they understood.

A loud *ding* announced that Pilot Wingstrong had joined their lesson. All eyes turned expectantly to the new window that had appeared.

It flickered, it flashed . . . and then it went black.

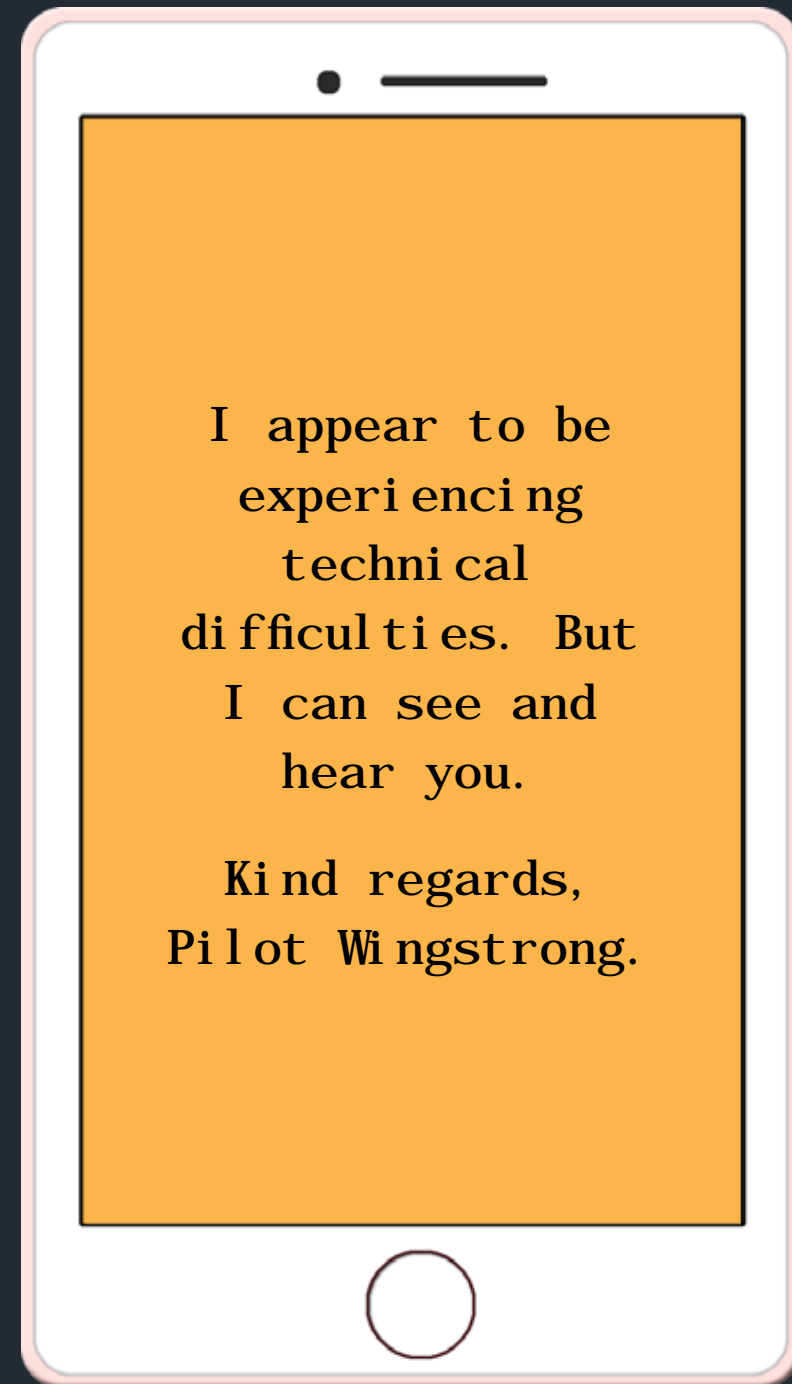
“Wing Commander Grey to Pilot Wingstrong, do you copy?”

There was no response.

“Sir, we have a problem,” Gabbo said solemnly.

His teacher glared at him. “I thought I told you to mute yourself, Gabbo.”

There was a ping from the group chat room. Pilot Wingstrong had sent them a message.



I appear to be
experiencing
technical
difficulties. But
I can see and
hear you.

Kind regards,
Pilot Wingstrong.

Edgar the Echidna hit the *raise hand button*. When Wing Commander Grey nodded, Edgar unmuted himself. “Her Wi-Fi connection might not be as strong up there. Perhaps she could plug into the wired network,” he suggested.

“Unfortunately, there aren’t many wires in space, Edgar,” Wing Commander Grey explained.

Balbina the Bilby hit the *raise hand button*. “She may need to check her audio and video settings. I could show her how by sharing my screen?”

Wing Commander Grey gave her the go-ahead, and she quickly tapped away. Her computer screen appeared for everyone else to see, and she demonstrated how to check the volume was turned up and the web-cam turned on.

They waited to see if Pilot Wingstrong would appear. Surely this would work! But nothing happened. Each face on the screen drooped in disappointment.

“Hmmm,” said Wing Commander Grey sadly. “It seems we may have to cancel today’s lesson if we can’t . . . ” He was cut off again by Gabbo, who had unmuted himself.

“Hey, wait! Has she tried turning it off and on again?” he yelled out.

His teacher ruffled his feathers at being interrupted but said, “Actually, Gabbo, that is not a bad idea at all. Let’s see, shall we?”

Everyone held their breath and waited.

A loud *ding* announced that Pilot Wingstrong had re-entered the lesson. All eyes turned expectantly to the window that had re-appeared. It flickered, it flashed . . . and there was Pilot Wingstrong!

The whole class let out a cheer.

“Well, hello there,” Pilot Wingstrong called out. “I was going to share with you the qualities that are needed to be a successful intergalactic flyer, but I can see you already have them!”

Pablo the Penguin raised his hand. “But we don’t know the first thing about intergalactic flying! We don’t know how to drive a space ship or navigate through the constellations or anything.”

Reflection Questions

Pilot Wingstrong gave a hoot of laughter. “Ah, all those things come in time. The more important qualities are those you showed today—being able to solve problems and work as a team. If you can do these things, you can do anything. The sky is the limit!”

“You mean, the Milky Way is the limit!” Gabbo called out, and the speakers were filled with the laughter of Pilot Wingstrong, his classmates . . . and even Wing Commander Grey.

1. Why were Gabbo and his classmates accessing their school lesson online?
2. List the troubleshooting suggestions the class came up with to fix Pilot Wingstrong’s connection issue.
3. Using video conferencing to listen to a guest speaker was one way for Wing Commander Grey’s class to continue their learning from home. Can you think of any other remote learning ideas?
4. Have you experienced technical issues when learning remotely? How were you able to resolve them?
5. How do you think Wing Commander Grey and his students responded to the technology issues? Could they have behaved differently? Explain your answer, using examples.
6. Create a list of dos and don’ts for your class to follow while learning online.

About the Creators



Dr Kim Maslin

Dr Kim Maslin is a digital technologies educator, researcher, and author. She has taught in early years, primary and secondary school contexts, and is the author of The Tweeting Galah series. Kim's research focuses on children's creativity with digital technologies.

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John Field was born in London, England. He has worked for many years in advertising and graphic design in both the United Kingdom and Australia. John currently lives in Perth, Western Australia.

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A short story about starting online learning

With a termite attack forcing the closure of the Flying Academy for Young Galahs, Wing Commander Grey is transitioning his class to online learning. Gabbo and his friends are looking forward to video conferencing with the acclaimed Intergalactic Flying Operations Specialist, Pilot Wingstrong as long as technology issues don't get in the way!

This special edition of *The Tweeting Galah* cyber safety series is a timely tale designed to help teachers and students feel comfortable with the changes online learning might bring, and includes a series of reflection questions at the end.

Praise for "The Tweeting Galah"

"If you are a parent or educator please consider getting this excellent picture book that explores cyber safety in a fabulous and child friendly way. Kim Maslin has written a wonderful resource to help educate our precious children"

- Maggie Dent, Parenting Author and Educator



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