

Language Arts: *Countdown* by Ben Mikaelson

Student Worksheet

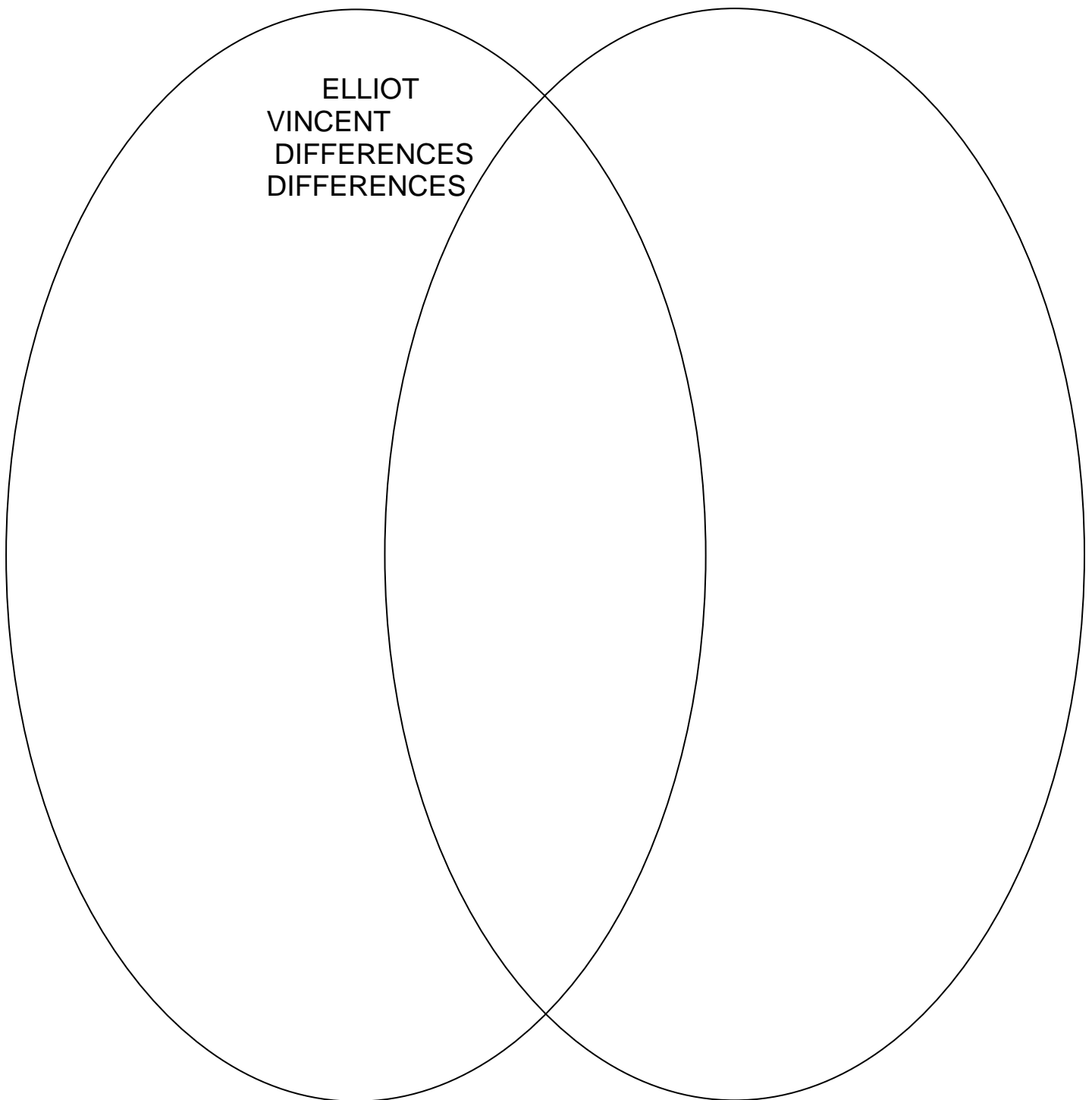
Please complete the following KWL Chart as we read the book. This tells what you K=Know, W=What you want to know, and L=Lessons you have learned. You need to complete the K sections BEFORE we begin reading.

K=What do you already know about NASA	W=What questions do you have about NASA	L=Lessons learned as you read about NASA
K=What do you already know about the Maasai people of Africa	W=What questions do you have about the Maasai people of Africa	L=Lessons learned as you read about the Maasai

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As we read, compare the characters of Elliot Schroeder and Vincent Ole Tome. Complete the following Venn diagram as we read. You will have ideas to add until the very last page, so just write them as you discover their similarities and differences.



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CULTURES

Elliot and Vincent come from radically different cultures. On this page keep track of what you learn about the cultures of each. For example, what do they do to show they are grown up? How do they interact with their parents or those who are older than they are? What religious practices are they involved in? How do people in their culture dress? Where do they live? Sleep? What do young people dream about? There are hundreds of ideas you could write about here. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers, only thoughtful ones.

Elliot's Culture	Vincent's Culture

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EXPRESSIONS

You can learn a great deal about a culture from the sayings or expressions of its people. Vincent and Elliot often quote and listen to their elders. This includes everyone from the Commander of a spacecraft to one of Vincent's mothers.

On this page, keep track of the expressions that are mentioned in the book. Discuss each one with your partner and write down your ideas after each. (You will have at least three sentences for each expression.)

Elliot's Culture	Vincent's Culture
<p>"We're all fellow travelers on a great spaceship floating toward a common future no one can imagine." -Commander Beaman p. 199</p>	<p>"A zebra does not lose its stripes because it walks a different path." -Sambeke p.65</p>
<p>"Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand. Whatever he does to the web, he does it to himself." -Quote from Chief Seattle p.200</p>	<p>"Honor must be earned. If not, it is like the drippings of the birds." -Tome p.87</p>

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READING 1:

With your partner, read pages 36-38. Answer the following questions in at least five complete sentences.

A. What are your feelings about the actions of the boys who hunted Olarani? Why? What do you think about Vincent's response to their actions? In your opinion, what should he have done? Why?

B. What similarities do you see between Vincent's feelings about Olarani and Elliot's feelings about Old Crowleg? How are the boys' actions similar and how are they different? (You may want to review pages 10 and 11 where Old Crowleg is mentioned.)

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READING 2:

With your partner, read pages 54-65. ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN AT LEAST FIVE COMPLETE SENTENCES.

A. Compare Elliot to Mandy. How are they alike? How are they different? What do you predict about their relationship as the story unfolds? Why? How would you respond to Mandy if you were Elliot? Why?

B. Vincent endures some painful events in this part of the story. What did you think and feel as you read about his father's response to the lion attack? Why do you think Vincent responded as he did? What would you have done if you were Vincent? Why?

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READING 3:

With your partner, read pages 98-107. Turn back to the Venn diagram on partner page 4. Add to the list of similarities and differences you now know about Vincent and Elliot. THEN ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN AT LEAST FIVE COMPLETE SENTENCES.

A. What do Elliot's actions in the altitude chamber show about him as a person? Why did he do the things he did? What would you have done in his place? Why? Why do you think Mandy didn't say anything to the instructor? What does this say about her as a person?

B. Describe your feelings as you read about the ceremony Embolata Olkiteng (page 104). Do you agree with the boys' opinion of Vincent or the Elder's opinion of his actions? Why? Think about the people you go to school with. Would one of them have performed this test like Vincent or like the other boys? Why?

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READING 4:

With your partner, read pages 108-116. Turn back to the Venn diagram. Add to the list of similarities and differences you now know about Vincent and Elliot. THEN ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN AT LEAST FIVE COMPLETE SENTENCES.

A. What do you think about how Elliot has treated Mandy? Do you think his new actions were necessary? Why or why not?

B. Why do you think Vincent has changed his mind about hunting the lion? Explain. Why do you think he should do? Why?

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READING 5:

With your partner, read pages 155-160. Turn back to the Venn diagram. Add to the list of similarities and differences you now know about Vincent and Elliot. THEN ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN AT LEAST FIVE COMPLETE SENTENCES.

A. Who is right? Why? How do you know? Did the encounter between Vincent and Elliot turn out the way you expected? Why or why not?

B. What similarities do you see between Vincent and Elliot? What do you know about them that they do not know about each other? What do you predict about their relationship? Will it continue? End? Why?

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READING 6:

With your partner, read pages 177-185. ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN AT LEAST FIVE COMPLETE SENTENCES.

A. Why do you think so many people are interested in Vincent and Elliot's conversations? Would you like to listen to them? Why or why not?

B. Turn back to partner page 6 and List some of the different customs the boys mention under each of their cultures. Be sure to react to each.

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Student Worksheet

READING 6 (continued):

With your partner, read pages 177-185. ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN AT LEAST FIVE COMPLETE SENTENCES.

C. Who is your favorite character? Why?

Character: _____

Reasons: _____

THE BOOK ENDS WITH AN INTERESTING PARAGRAPH: Reread it with your partner, and respond on the following lines:

With those simple words, on that morning in Senegal, two very different boys reached out and touched hands. Because of that moment, the future of a tiny planet named Earth, located in a distant spiral arm of a remote galaxy, glowed warmer against the cold black of a wonderful and undiscovered universe.

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Student Information

Project options to correlate with *Countdown* by Ben Mikaelson

Vocabulary Encounters

While reading this story, you may come across some words that are unfamiliar—technical terms used to describe part of the space program, words used to describe a foreign culture, or possibly words that you just have never seen before. Write out a list of these words (use at least 10), then look them up in the dictionary and record their definitions. Finally, after reading the novel, use these words to create your own story or poem based on the characters in the book or characters you invent.

Design an Astronaut Application

Elliott completed a six-page application for the Junior Astronaut program. What type of information do you think NASA wanted to know about the students interested in becoming the first junior astronaut? Imagine that you are an administrator at NASA and preparing to offer the same opportunity to students across the United States. Design a two-page application with at least 10 open-ended questions that would help narrow down the many applicants to the most qualified.

Draw a technical model of the Space Shuttle

During Elliott's training, he learned detailed information about the vehicle he would ride into orbit around the Earth. Research the Space Shuttle and its three main components and then provide a technical drawing and written descriptions of the parts and how they help the shuttle carry the astronauts to space.

Research the Maasai culture

Did Vincent's way of life seem very different from the way we live here in America? Research the Maasai people by using the Internet or resources from the library, then in a two-page report compare the Maasai culture to the American culture.

Continue the Story

The story ends on a runway in Africa. How would you continue the story? Will Mandy be assigned to a mission? What will Elliott do when he returns to school? What will it be like for Vincent to return to his Engai after seeing the sights outside his "world?" Write a sequel to *Countdown* on at least two pages.