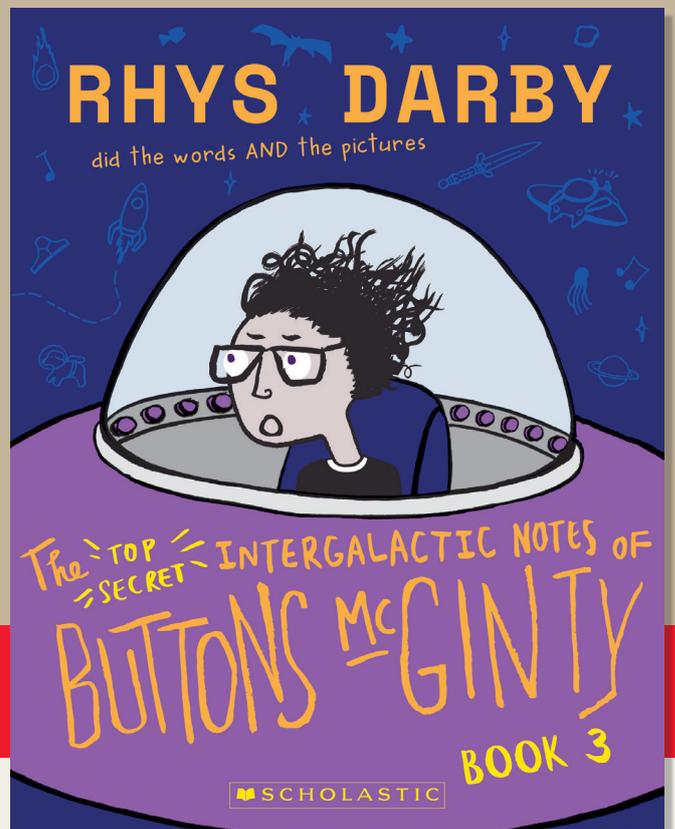


# The Top Secret Notes of Buttons McGinty #3

By Rhys Darby

• Reading • Writing • Art • Thinking Skills •



## Synopsis

Buttons McGinty is back, and once again he's travelling through space and time. He found Dad in Book 2, but now they're on the trail of Mumsy, who is being held by the evil Queen Zankerflorna! He must pilot a spaceship and find planet Rootskibango where Queen Zankerflorna is heading on a terrible mission. She intends inserting the Blade of Runsun into the hand of a statue, which will then give her all the power in the Universe.

Buttons and his team fly to Planet Birk to hide from some battleships that are in hot pursuit. In the cave Buttons finds a message which he jots down. He heads towards a lake to fill up their water bottles, but two police spaceships appear out of nowhere and inform him they intend to arrest him. Luckily for Buttons, the Kraken attacks them so Buttons can make his getaway.

Buttons and his friends continue their voyage to Rootskibango and split into three groups on landing. Buttons soon finds his mother, but in the process is arrested and has to hand over the second lot of coordinates that will tell the evil queen where the statue is hidden.

The friendly robot – Brobot – rescues Buttons, but the Queen once again captures him, and he's forced to hand over the blade. However, when she inserts the blade into the statue's hand, nothing happens. While everyone is sniggering, Buttons takes the opportunity to shove the real Runsun blade into the hand of the statue. A great light pours out of the sky, the queen freezes (literally), and the giant bat guards fly away, leaving the team safe and sound. The final twist reveals that the old man De Classified is really Buttons' grandfather, and he has been secretly helping Buttons the whole time.

## About the Author

**Rhys Darby** is an internationally recognised actor and comedian from New Zealand. He rose to fame as the lovable but inept Murray Hewitt on HBO's *Flight of the Conchords*. He has gone on to star in films like *Yes Man*, *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle*, and his kids' favourite, *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*. Rhys is a regular feature on several animations, from *Barefoot Bandits*, *Voltron: Legendary Defender*, *Star vs. the Forces of Evil* and the brand new TMNT reboot. He is an amateur cryptozoologist and in his spare time hosts a podcast on the subject, *The Cryptid Factor*. Rhys is never far from his stand-up comedy roots and still treads the boards, bringing his energetic storytelling style to stages all over the world. Having grown up in Auckland, Rhys Darby now resides for the most part in Los Angeles with his family, returning home to New Zealand as often as he can.

## Writing Style

This time Buttons and the gang are solving mysteries with Morse Code *and* cryptic hieroglyphs! A full-on mystery-comedy series that will keep 10-14-year-old readers riveted to the last pages. This is the third book in the action-journaling series. It's an action-packed sci-fi adventure laid out to look like a real handwritten journal with Rhys's illustrations, diagrams, secret messages, and clues.

The author has used several techniques to keep the readers hooked throughout the book. For example, cliffhangers, raising questions, using cue words such as 'suddenly', 'emergency update', 'warning', etc., and pictures showing the danger unfolding.

To keep the reader amused, the author has included jokes and puns, funny illustrations, and playing with words, such as anyhoo, earservations, etc. The author has also made the book interactive with Morse code messages and cryptic hieroglyphs and given the reader a key in the back of the book in order to decipher them.

The author has written the story in the first person, and it skips between past tense, when he is updating his journal with what's just happened, and present tense, when he is journaling as he travels. There are no chapters or date headings as it wouldn't fit with an action journal. The book has 186 pages with the first eight pages given up to summarising the action in the first two books so that readers who haven't read them can follow the third book.

In the back section there are two pages of code keys, a double-page spread message from the author, and six pages with reviews about the first two books.

Themes include adventure, mystery, working together as a team, and forgiveness.

## Shared Learning and Discussion Points

During the shared sessions encourage students to ask questions to clarify their understanding of characters and events. Have them make predictions, inferences and relate to their own experiences. Also encourage students to identify themes and explain how they are developed in the novel. Read the passages aloud and or students read alongside or by themselves.

### ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

Look at the cover and read the blurb.

- When and where is this story set? How can you tell?
- Who is the main character in the story?
- What do you think this story is about? Why do you think that?
- The story is told in diary format. What can you expect from a novel written like this?
- What do you already know about the *Buttons McGinty* series?

### Comprehension questions

- Why has the author recapped the first two books?
- Who is in the spaceship and where are they going?
- Who is writing the diary and how does her style differ to Button's style? p.6
- How did Silky get on the spaceship? p.15
- What do you think will happen to them if they run out of fuel? p.19
- What do you think the tractor will do to them once it has drawn them in? p.21
- Why do all the characters leave their spaceship? pp.25-26
- What is a 'shameless plug' and can you give an example of it? p.27
- What does T121 do and why did he pull their spaceship into his spaceship? p.32
- What does GB and RAM mean? p.36
- What has the map given them directions to on page 39?
- What do you think the prong is? p.47
- Why has Buttons reminded the reader of the catch phrase? Do you think it will have significance later on in the story? p.51
- How does T121 come to the rescue when they are at the diner? p.57
- Who did they see at the service window and what valuable information did he give them? p.59
- Why is Ahu's hat vibrating? p.62
- What do you think they'll find on planet Birk? p.66
- Why can't they get out of their spaceship on planet Birk? p.70



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- Who do you think will wear the spacesuit and what will they find? p.73
- What do you think the hieroglyphics say? p.76
- How did Buttons avoid being captured by the Space Police? pp.80-81
- What do you think the coordinates are for? pp.88-89
- What do you think the blips on the radar are? p.92
- Why was Buttons 'overcome by sadness' on page 101 and what does that mean?
- What does Buttons' Morse code message say on page 107?
- Who did Buttons find in the cave and what do you think will happen? p.110
- Why did Buttons hand over the coordinates? p.115
- What secret information has De Classified told Buttons? p.120
- Why didn't De Classified untie Buttons and his mother? p.123
- If you were in the spaceship with Buttons, what option would you choose? p.127
- Where do you think the statue is in the crater? p.134
- What is the next Morse code message? p.135
- Why did the statue not give the Queen all the power in the universe? p.147
- Why did the statue take hold of Buttons' blade?
- What do you think has happened to Buttons' father and the rest of the gang? p.155
- What will they do with Zankerflorna? p.158
- What role does the mysterious De Classified play in the end, and who is he really? pp.159-161
- What message does the author/illustrator give the reader at the end? p.171

## Activities

### ACTIVITY 1: GALACTIC MENU

On page 56, Tracey's Galactic Diner has a menu. Pick one of the meals and write out a recipe for it. Display it as it would be found in a recipe book, with a title, list of ingredients, and step-by-step instructions.

Afterwards, make up your own galactic space meal and write its recipe.

### ACTIVITY 2: REVIEW IT!

Write a review for the book. Include a summary of the story. Explain the importance of the diary and the ship settings. Describe the main character and sidekicks. Include information about the main themes and ideas presented in the story. Finally, give your opinion about the book.

Summarise the above and write it on a bookmark/note card and insert it into the book so that the next person who picks it up can see your comments.

### ACTIVITY 3: BOOK TRAILER TIME!

Design a book trailer for the book. Use a software package like 'Animoto', using one of their free templates. Storyboard what you want to say in the book trailer, collect photos, illustrations and videos (if needed), and then insert it into the Animoto template you have chosen. Show it to the class. See if the school library or website would like to include it on their site.

### ACTIVITY 4: JOKE STATION

On page 91, Buttons tells a few space jokes. See if you can come up with a few of your own.

### ACTIVITY 5: THINKING

*What if* the statue gave Buttons all the power in the Universe? How would it affect him? Would he use it for good or evil?

Write a synopsis or back cover blurb for a new book in the series. This time, Buttons has all the power in the world . . . universe even . . . What will he do with this power? Will someone try to get it off him? Will he use it for good or evil?

### ACTIVITY 6: SPACESHIP MAP

We've seen Buttons' inside diagram of the ZED 3000 rocket ship. It's now your turn to design a F.I.F.O. What will it contain? Will it have an engine room, storage room (and for what?), galley, sleeping quarters . . . let your imaginations run wild!

Draw a cross-section diagram of your F.I.F.O. and label its parts.



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