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Opening extract from

Journey to the Centre of My Brain

Written by

James Carter

Published by

Macmillan Children's Books

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Ever met an alien? **JAMES CARTER** is probably the closest you'll ever get. A prize-winning poet, wild guitarist and professional dreamer, he's written loads of poetry books and even stuff for the telly. He zooms all over the cosmos (well, the UK and abroad) in his UFO (well, trains, actually) to meet and greet aliens (well, visit schools and libraries and festivals) and do very lively poetry performances and workshops (yes, that bit's true).

When on planet earth, James lives in Oxfordshire with his earthling family – his one wife, two daughters, three cats and four guitars, all of which are called Keith (that's the guitars, by the way). Good luck on your journey into James's brain . . .

Raised by wild guinea pigs in the jungles of West Yorkshire, **CHRIS GARBUTT** developed the uncanny ability to emit funny pictures with his mind. He now works out of a giant blue airship hovering two miles above central London and only ever comes to the earth's surface to buy cakes.

Also by James Carter

Time-travelling Underpants

With Brian Moses

Greetings, Earthlings!

With Graham Denton

Wild! Rhymes That Roar

MACMILLAN POETRY

Journey to the Centre of My Brain

POEMS BY

JAMES CARTER

Illustrated by Chris Garbutt

MACMILLAN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

First published 2012 by Macmillan Children's Books
a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited
20 New Wharf Road, London N1 9RR
Basingstoke and Oxford
Associated companies throughout the world
www.panmacmillan.com

ISBN 978-0-230-75195-8

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1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As ever and for ever, for the three that make this journey with me – Sarah, Lauren and Madeleine (Moley) – with all my love. And so you know – 'You, by Me' is for Sarah, 'Life of Flight' is for Lauren, 'What Did You Do at School Today?' is for Madeleine (Moley), 'The Cat' is for uber-tabby Alice and 'This Is Where . . .' is for the very wonderful South Moreton Primary School. Oh yes, and thanks too to Jules Verne for letting me 'borrow' his title.

With a big bunch of thanks to some real top bananas: Gaby Morgan for her endless encouragement; Graham Denton for being such a brilliant poetry chum, and all those fantastic classes and teachers in all those super schools for making me feel so very welcome!

www.jamescarterpoet.co.uk

The ReallyReallyReally TrulyTrueTruth About . . . Teddy Bears

Everybody has a teddy.
Even if they say they don't, they do,
they're fibbing. Even kings, queens,

famous footballers, hairy rock stars
and busy teachers. Yours included.
And all those people on the telly. Them too.

And I'm sure even aliens have their own
equally cute, equally cuddly, equally
dog-eared, squished and dribbled-over

version of this classic soft toy. But why?
Well, why not? However old you are,
however grown up you may appear to be,

however important or bossy you become,
in a hush of a moment every now and then,
you will still feel the need to open

the bedroom cupboard, remove
that little fuzzy bundle, and give it
a sniff and a kiss and a little snuggle.

A MARVEL

of a **MARBLE**

MORE STABLE

than a

STAR

more

MAGICAL

than

moonshine

more

beautiful

by far.

Go **SEARCH**

this **BIG BLUE**

MARBLE

go see what

time has grown . . .

find **US**, find **LIFE**, find **LIVING**

it's *HERE*, it's *EARTH*

it's **HOME**

The Moon Speaks!

I, the moon,
would like it known – I
never follow people home. I
simply do not have the time. And
neither do I ever shine. For what you
often see at night is me reflecting solar
light. And I'm not cheese! No – none of
these: no mozzarellas, cheddars, bries, all
you'll find here – if you please – are my
dusty, empty seas. And cows do not
jump over me. Now that is simply
lunacy! You used to come and
visit me. Oh do return,
I'm lonely, see.

Try TIGER . . .

Come, human.
Try tiger.
Grow twisting tail and amber
eyes, plenty whiskers, midnight
stripes. Let your nails curl out
as claws. Let your fists
morph into paws. Slink
slowly into jungle.
Blend awhile.
Be still.
Begin
to
plot !!
your !!
First kill . . . !!
You be wise. !!
Now be wiser. !!
Now be . . . *tiger*!!

Random Ralph

A random boy was Random Ralph,
for random words popped out his mouth –
like PIFFLESNOG and TWIP and PISH
and SNOTTLEPOTS and FARPLEFISH.
Such randomness popped out his mouth.
A random boy was Random Ralph!

What Can You Do with a Football ?

Well . . .

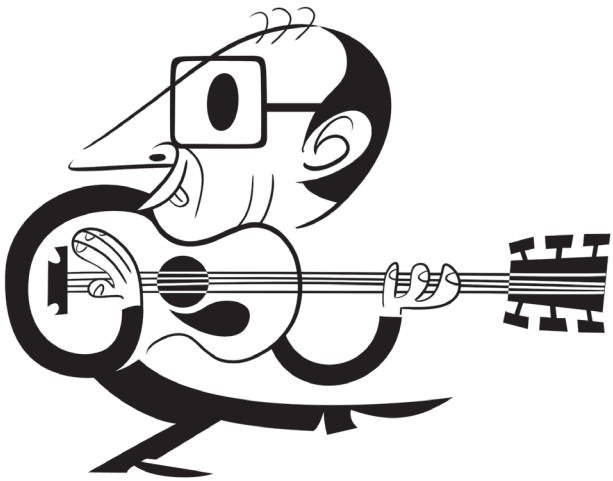
You can
kick it – you can catch
it – **you can bounce it** – all
around. **YOU CAN GRAB IT** *you can*
pat it ***you can roll it –*** on the ground.
You can throw it you can head it
you can hit it – **with a bat**. You can
biff it you can boot it **YOU CAN SPIN**
IT you can shoot it You can
drop it *you can stop it.* Just
like that!

An Ode to Keith, My Old Guitar

Listen up
my six-string
chum ... for
you're the
rea-
son
that
I
strum,
and
pick
and
plunk
and
have
the
FUNK.
Keith: you
are my #1.
You're brown. You're
wood. You're round. That's ...
good. You're thin. You're wide.
You've ... dust inside. You're
where I go when I feel low.
You help me lose
the BLUES you know. You
ROCK ... you ROLL. You're FOLK
with SOUL. And yes, you SWING,
you crazy thing. You jingle,
jangle. And you twang.
You're my guitar.
I'm so YOUR
FAN.

Journey to the Centre of

JAMES



in six actual facts

1. As a boy, James was BONKERS about books (especially Tintins) – and still is. He was also GAGA about guitars (especially electrics) – and still is. Saturday mornings would begin with him strumming along on his tennis racket to his favourite radio show. Later on he'd cycle down to the shop to buy two comics and then whizz back to read them on his bed. Nice!

2. James has been playing guitar – REAL ONES, NOT JUST TENNIS RACKETS – for over thirty-five years now. But he played biscuit-tin drums in his first and short-lived band The Electric Spiders. Sadly, the band broke up one morning when his best friend's mum wanted her drumsticks – well, knives and forks – back. Five years later, James's first school band, Villain, was booed off at its first concert during the first song! Not nice!

3. James wrote his first poem when he was seventeen. All he remembers was that it was entitled 'One'. He wrote it for the school magazine, but they didn't like it and didn't include it! James didn't give up though, for ONLY twenty years later he had his first poem 'Rules for School Trips' published. Very nice!

4. James loves school-dinner custard – as long as it's yellow and not pink. Pink custard? Yuck!

5. James used to be a trainspotter. But he's given it up. HONESTLY! No, really. Seriously. Nowadays he travels by train to schools all over the UK and abroad and does most of his writing on trains. This makes the drivers VERY cross. Ouch!

6. It takes him at least three months to write each poem. Some take years. Fussy or what? Actually, this book took five years to write, and he scrapped over a thousand poems to find the ones he wanted to include here. James writes poems because a) it gives him something to do with all his daydreaminess and b) he loves words, and always has, and he believes that poems are the best fun you can have with words. His favourite word? *Rhythm*. Funky!