The Message
Astra receives a mysterious message—and faces an impossible choice.

About the Story
Lexile: 950L (pairing)
For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective:
to write an expository essay analyzing structure and author’s craft in a work of fiction

Key Skills:
setting, text structure, inference, character

Essential Questions:
• How do we make difficult decisions?
• What is it like to feel that you don’t fit in?
• How do we deal with the loss of loved ones?

Standards:
The texts and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.9, W.2, W.9, SL.1, L.4, L.5, L.6. For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.

Your Teaching Support Package
Find your full suite of materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Audio: Story and infographic
Slideshow: Greek and Latin Roots
Literature Connections: Ideas for connecting to curricular texts

Skill Builders to print or project:
• Close Reading and Critical Thinking
• Preparing to Write: What Happened?
• Quiz*
• Core Skills Workout: Inference
• Literary Elements: Theme Anticipation Guide, Character Thinking Tool, Genre Exploration
• Contest Entry Form
*Available on two levels
Preparing to Read

Do-Now: Theme Anticipation Guide
(5 minutes, activity sheet online)
• Project the Theme Anticipation Guide. As students come in, have them write down whether they agree or disagree with each statement.
• Take a quick poll. Ask volunteers to briefly explain their responses.

Preview Vocabulary
(5 minutes, activity sheet online)
Project the Vocabulary Slideshow: Greek and Latin Roots. The slideshow will prepare students to understand some of the words they will encounter in the story, such as astrobiologist, holo, and hydroponic.

Reading and Discussing
(30 minutes, activity sheet online)
DIFFERENTIATION: Students who need more support should first listen to the audio version of the story.
• Read the story once through as a class.
• Divide students into groups to read the story again, pausing to discuss the close-reading questions that appear in the margins. Have students write their answers in the margins or on the Close-Reading Questions handout.

Answers to Close-Reading Questions
1. Setting (p. 25) The story takes place in the first half of the 2300s—about 300 years from now.

2. Text Structure (p. 25) These paragraphs are in italics to set them off because they are a kind of prologue and not part of the chronological narrative.

3. Inference (p. 25) Students should infer that a holo is a device for digital reading, a more advanced version of a tablet or smartphone. The name “holo” suggests that the device projects holograms—which, later in the story, it does.

4. Text Structure (p. 27) These lines help you understand the significance of Astra’s decision to destroy the ag module because they show that food is a limited resource and that the colonists might starve to death.

5. Character (p. 27) As these lines reveal, Astra does not see herself as the brilliant person she is. Rather, she sees herself as a disappointment, as is revealed by what she says on page 26: “I could never remember my chores or where I was supposed to be . . . .”

6. Character (p. 27) Astra likely wants Oma’s advice because Astra feels Oma understood her best. Astra says on page 26 that although her parents love her, she is very different from them. Astra may think that her parents, like Rio, will refuse to even consider that she should follow the instructions from the woman in the message.

7. Inference (p. 29) Astra realizes that the woman in the holo is Astra—a few years in the future. This tells her that she will succeed in finding a way to travel back through time, or at least send messages through time. That is how her older self was able to send her younger self the message.

Grammar Alert!
On page 25, Rio quotes a morning bulletin. It’s a great example of how to use single quotes inside of double quotes!
Earth, the settlers of Rubin 23V would face many struggles as they set up a society in a place where nothing has yet been established.

If you had the ability to send a message to yourself at a younger age, would you? What would you tell yourself? Answers will vary.

Vida means “life” in Spanish. Why might the colonists have called the ship Vida? They may have called the ship Vida because they hoped it would carry them to a new life.

Should humans work toward colonizing another planet? Why? Some students may say yes, because climate change and overpopulation threaten Earth; if we want to survive, we may need to go to other planets. Others may say no—we should devote all our efforts to saving Earth.

Skill Building and Writing
(15 minutes, activity sheet online)
Have students complete the featured skill activity Preparing to Write: What Happened? This inference activity will prepare them for the expository writing prompt on page 29. For alternate culminating tasks, see the box below.