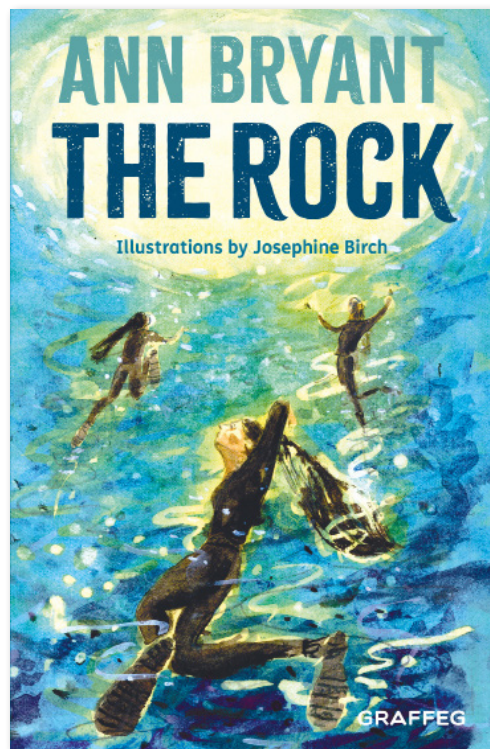


# Searchlight: The Rock

Ann Bryant and Josephine Birch. Publication 23 February 2024. £9.99.

**After being forced to flee from their home planet, twins Zane and Finola find themselves on Earth.** Dad is lost and Mum is no longer able to teleport, meaning that it is up to the twins to reunite their family. With such a large reward on offer for whoever is able to find the 'aliens', Zane and Finola can't trust anyone and must make sure that they never break cover on their tour of planet Earth.



**Author** Ann Bryant  
**Illustrator** Josephine Birch  
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## About the book:

After being forced to flee from their home planet, twins Zane and Finola find themselves on Earth. Dad is lost and Mum is no longer able to teleport, meaning that it is up to the twins to reunite their family. With such a large reward on offer for whoever is able to find the 'aliens', Zane and Finola can't trust anyone and must make sure that they never break cover on their tour of planet Earth.

## About the author:

**Ann Bryant** is a writer with several internationally successful series from Cafe Club to Ballerina Dreams. She also writes in the field of Music Education. Ann is often invited to schools in the UK and abroad to give presentations and workshops. The Searchlight Series will be her first publication with Graffeg.

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## Key themes:

- Empathy
- Diversity and cultural awareness
- Family
- Teamwork
- Green travel

## Selling Points:

- An action-packed story rooted in present day reality but with fantastical elements.
- Themes of empathy and diversity are subtly raised through comparing Earth and its twin planet.
- Includes a diagram at the end of the story of the transferrable skills that are encountered in the book.
- The story highlights the importances of in-person socialising as opposed to using social media.
- Perfect for independent readers between ages of 7-11.
- The first in a series about twins Zane and Finola's adventure to reunite their family.


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Finola turned to see what he was looking at and got a shock. Digger was bounding along beside them, wagging his tail enthusiastically.

Finola thrust her arm out and pointed a finger. "Go away, Digger!"


She had given the instruction in her sternest voice but the dog just kept looking at her and wagging its tail.

"Digger! Digger! Here, Digger!" came the owner's voice, sounding horribly close.

Zane spoke in a whisper-shout. "Go away!"

"Sorry Digger, we have to leave you now," said Finola, catching Zane's eye.

He nodded and they both closed their eyes, waiting for the picture of the kitchen in the flat to appear.



A second later, they vanished, and Digger looked around in confusion, then sat down and gave one small cry.

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## Chapter Two

Mum was at her desk in the small living room. She looked tired.

"Oh, hello! You're back! I must have lost track of the time," she said, as she saw the twins come through from the kitchen. "Are you hungry?"

"We want to talk," said Finola, wasting not a second.

Mum blinked in surprise then quickly smiled a small smile of acceptance.

"I had the feeling that this was coming," she said, narrowing her eyes as she looked at Zane. "I've noticed you're carrying something important in your mind."

The twins exchanged a glance. Maybe Mum hadn't completely lost her telepathy skills after all.

Zane spoke quickly. "I got a message from Dad. I know it was from Dad. I felt his closeness. It was a picture-message."

Mum sat up straighter. Zane had definitely got her attention.

"It's the second message he's sent me. They were both pictures of a rock. The second one had steps in it too. I looked up the rock. It's called Gibraltar."

Mum's eyes widened then she frowned. "How did you find it?"

"I just searched for pictures of rocks and..."

"He recognised it instantly," Finola interrupted. "Zane and I want to go there," she added firmly.

Mum nodded. "I understand," she said, "but... I have to think."

"Why? Because of the message Dad sent you?" Finola couldn't keep the impatience out of her voice. "That was ages ago. And it was just ants."

"It might have been ages ago but it was a strong message. It was the giant ant amongst the others that seemed to represent danger. Dad wouldn't have sent the message if it hadn't been important. I know him better than that."

"But we know we're not in danger from ants. There are millions of them in the forest and remember that time when one crawled up my leg? I didn't get a bite or a sting or a rash or anything, did I?"

"It's not the ants themselves that I'm worrying about," said Mum. "It's the feeling I got from the message. Dad's warning felt very clear and strong. If you go out to this rock, you'll be putting yourselves at such risk of being recognised."

Mum looked from one twin to the other and her anxious frown melted. "I don't want to pour cold water on your amazing news. Come on, we can at least take a look

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"It's okay we're not scared."

Zane nudged her and spoke in a sarcastic whisper.

"Great answer, Fin. We're not supposed to be drawing attention to ourselves, remember."

Finola didn't reply. It was a bit late for that, she thought. Even more tourists had gathered silently around Debbie. They were all staring wide-eyed at Zane and Finola whilst keeping their distance. Gasps filled the air as the Macaque stood on its hind legs and carefully placed its paw on Finola's chest.

"He won't hurt you if you stay still," came the guide's slightly trembling voice.

Finola put her own hand on top of the Macaque's paw and looked into his eyes.

"Hello, my friend," she murmured.

The Macaque made another soft sound.

"We have to go," mumbled Zane. "We're attracting too much attention."

Just as if the Macaque had understood, he placed a paw on Zane's shoulder before dropping down to all fours and loping off. The gaze of the crowd followed the Macaque as he leapt nimbly to the top of the high wall then into a sturdy tree.

"Quick, let's go while no one's paying attention," said Zane.

But there was no chance of that. The guide was striding over.

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he'd be so happy to see her that he'd give her the biggest hug.

All these thoughts jiggled and danced to the bounciest beat inside Finola's head and only paused when the waitress came up to her and handed her a menu.

"Here you are. Or do you already know what you want?"

Mum had talked about the difference between cafés and restaurants but this place seemed to be a bit of both. Finola didn't want to look down at the menu in case the man chose that moment to leave. She hoped it was all right just to have a drink.

"Er... orange?"

There was a silence. No wonder. Finola suddenly realised she wasn't looking at the waitress, she was staring at the counter, making sure there was no chance at all of missing the man. But, of course, she was drawing attention to herself again, and sure enough, when she met the waitress's eyes, she saw suspicion there.

The waitress sounded a bit impatient or that might have been Finola's imagination. "Orange squash? Orange juice? Sparkling oran...?"

"Juice... please," Finola interrupted.

"Fresh orange juice." The waitress scribbled on her pad then leaned forwards. She was frowning but her eyes looked full of concern. "Are you alright?"

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