



# Out of This World; Seeing Stars

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The size of the universe is a concept that used to keep me awake at night - how to explain *where* it is when it is everything that is anywhere. Stott is aware of this ungraspable idea too and comfortingly says an universe is 'so mind-bogglingly big...you'd need a tape-measure 300 million million million million kilometres long to measure it'. With a size like that, who cares where it is, besides, think of all the jobs such a tape-measure would provide. The approach of the 'Bright Sparks' series is essentially friendly - to subject and reader - and Stott pleasantly explores the size concept before turning to astronomic exploration and how it is done and then going on to actual astronauts and their amazing achievements.

Muirden - is he still going? Certainly is - and very effectively too, witness this engaging introduction to star gazing. The physical nature of the stars that we see is particularly clearly explained and the evolving nature of the whole of the universe is dramatically illustrated - in 5000 million years the Sun will be '100 times bigger than it is today, and 1000 times as bright. It will bake the Earth to a cinder.' So our greenhouse-global warming is but incidental to the great cosmic fry-up. That it is more important to us serves only to illustrate the theme common to each of these two engaging volumes - that the universe is unfathomably enormous.

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