

ZOMBIE SPIDERS AND ASTEROID BLASTERS

TEACHING TIPS

BY MAYNARD OKEREKE
aka the Hip Hop MD

Asking, “What Do You Want to Be When You Grow Up?” Can Be Daunting for Young Children.

At 10 years old I had no idea what a material science engineer or hydrologist was, let alone how to become one! To encourage students to think outside the box, I suggest we instead ask, “What problems do you want to solve?” This guide will use this philosophy to help personalize the learning experience, expand curiosity, and empower students to use their own creativity to develop solutions to culturally relevant problems that are meaningful to them.

► Career Snapshot Cards - “Meet the Scientist!”

Goal: Inspire youth to explore different career paths.

How It Works: Create a printable “Career Card” for each topic in the book. Cards can include the following:

- The scientist’s area of focus
- The tools they use
- The problems they solve
- What subjects from school can help with this career

Bonus: Have your student create their own future career card and perhaps design a brand new STEM career!

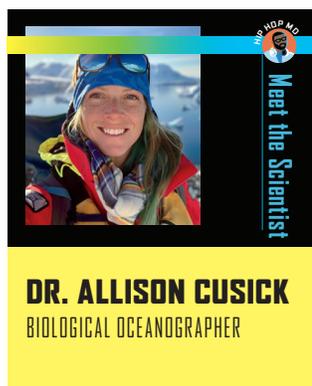
► Match That Profession!

Goal: Empower students to get creative about what careers they can pursue.

How It Works: Break out 2 columns either on a piece of paper or on a board for the entire classroom. One column lists an adjective portion of a career title, i.e. “Environmental, Astro, Medical.” The other column lists the specialty portion of the career title i.e. “Engineer, Biologist, Illustrator.”

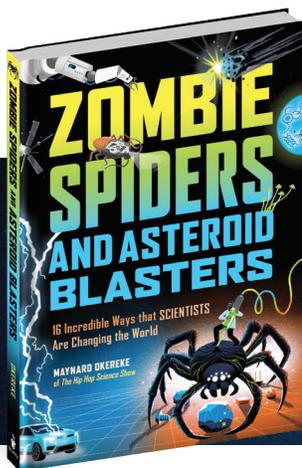
Have students match a word on the left with one on the right to create a full career title! Discuss with your students how different titles can be merged and what unique skills each profession has.

Bonus: Can you match more than two titles? In my book, Billy Almon’s title is “Astro-Bio-Futurist.” Let students’ creativity expand and think of mergers that aren’t already listed in the columns!



Environmental	Illustrator
Astro	Engineer
Medical	Biologist

Medical Illustrator



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► STEAM Story Theater!

Goal: Encourage creative storytelling and communication skills.

How It Works: Have students get in pairs or small groups and create a skit based on one of the concepts from *Zombie Spiders and Asteroid Blasters*.

Examples:

- Plants figuring out how to send chemical signals to each other
- A depleted robot in search of the battery that will bring him back to life
- A lost fish becomes friends with an extremophile deep in the ocean
- A cyborg cockroach goes on a special mission too dangerous for humans

Bonus: Have students turn their presentation into a video or written story! This can be a great introduction to science communication.

► Challenge Accepted: Create a Zombie Spider

Goal: To encourage hands-on STEM learning and problem solving.

How It Works: Set up a hands-on activity station for kids to create their own creatures with unique powers and skills. To do this, kids will need:

- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Markers or colored pencils
- Glue
- Any other decorative art supplies like glitter, buttons, pipe cleaners, etc.

Ask participants to design their own “Zombie Spider” with the craft supplies and then present what unique powers or skills their spider possesses. Then encourage them to explain how their creation could be used like the zombie spiders in the book!

Bonus: Encourage kids to use the engineer design process:

Ask → Imagine → Plan → Create → Improve.

