

The Space Race

Pre-reading

Have you ever looked up at the night sky? What did you see? Does the Moon always look the same? Has anyone ever travelled to the Moon and walked on its surface? Here's a passage about the race to be first on the Moon.

Learning Outcomes

In this lesson, you will learn about:

- Recount writing
- Summarising
- Antonyms and synonyms
- Pronouns

Three... Two... One... Zero... We Have Lift-off!

During a time in the 1950s known as the Cold War, the Soviet Union* and the United States of America didn't trust each other completely. There was intense rivalry between the two countries as each tried to be more successful than the other. In the area of space exploration, this became known as the 'Space Race'.

At first, scientists experimented with rockets containing monkeys. These rockets did not manage to reach outer space and many of the monkeys did not survive. In 1957, the Soviets launched a small satellite into space called Sputnik 1. It orbited the Earth for three months and gave the Russians the lead in the space race. A month later, the Russians launched Sputnik 2, this time with a dog called Laika, who was the first animal to orbit the Earth. Unfortunately Laika did not survive the mission. The Americans then launched their own satellite but this triumph was short lived. By 1961 the Russians had extended their lead again. A cosmonaut called Yuri Gagarin became the first person to travel in space. His craft orbited the Earth once, and landed safely. Valentina Tereshkova, also Russian, was the first woman in space. Another Russian success was when Alexei Leonov became the first person to leave a space craft and float in space.

The Americans were eager to catch up with the Russians. They achieved this when their space craft Apollo 8 succeeded in orbiting the Moon ten times and returning safely to Earth. Eventually, the Americans landed an unmanned spacecraft safely on the Moon. By 1969, they were ready for the ultimate test, to try to land a man on the Moon. On 20th July 1969, millions of people watched on television as astronaut Neil Armstrong was the first man to walk on the Moon. As he stepped out of the lunar module, the words he spoke were relayed around the world, 'That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind'. Buzz Aldrin followed and



Neil Armstrong



The Robot Curiosity

together they collected Moon rocks and soil samples. Later both men raised the American flag on the Moon's surface. This act was historically significant as it showed the Americans were claiming to have 'won' the space race. However, the end of the race was not the end of space exploration.

Other events happened that led to the end of the Cold War and Soviets and Americans began working together in space. By 1981, reusable rocket-powered space shuttles were developed, thereby reducing the expense of space exploration.

In 2001 Dennis Tito paid twenty million dollars (€15 million) to become the world's first space tourist. Recently, in 2012, a robot called Curiosity began exploring Mars. In the future, we hope to explore farther into space and uncover more secrets of the unknown. As yet, no Irish person has travelled into space. Who do you think the first Irish person in space will be? Could it, will it, be you?

*The Soviet Union used to be the largest country in the world. It was a union of fifteen countries, including Russia. The union gradually broke up and was dissolved in 1991.



Oral Language

Discuss the following questions with your partner.

1. If you were given the opportunity, would you like to orbit the Earth? Explain.
2. In your opinion, is it right for scientists to experiment with animals? Give reasons.
3. If you had fifteen million euro, what would you spend it on? Would you spend it on space tourism? Why?
4. Organise a class debate: Space exploration is a waste of money and it would be better to spend this money solving problems like poverty and malnutrition here on Earth.



Comprehension Skills and Strategies

Summarising

Summarising means taking the main idea from a piece of text and leaving out the minor details. It helps the reader to focus on what is most important in the text and to remember what they have read. Summarise the space race recount in a few sentences.

When summarising, I start by identifying the key words and phrases in a text.





Genre Features

The passage is a **factual recount** of the space race. Remember that a *recount* is the retelling of past events in the order they happened.

- It is written in the past tense.
- It tells us who, what, where, when, why and how things happened.
- Each new event is written in a new paragraph.
- Words and phrases are used to help sequence the recount.
- The conclusion tells us what happened at the end and how the author feels about what happened.

Examples of recounts are found in

- Newspapers
- History books

Where else can examples of recounts be found?



History book



Genre Analysis

- Write sentences using the past tense of these verbs.

orbit, experiment, achieve, survive

- Write six questions about the recount using the words below.

who, what, where, when, why, how

- The writer makes use of dates (1950s, 2001) to sequence the recount. Look back at the recount and find the dates used. Draw them on a timeline and state briefly what happened on each date.
- Read the last paragraph again. Do you think it is an effective conclusion? Give reasons for your answer.



Comprehension Activities

Remember

- How did the Soviets take the lead in the space race?
- Who was the first woman in space?
- Who was the first man to walk on the Moon?
- Who raised the American flag on the Moon's surface?
- What is a space shuttle?
- When did the first space tourist travel into space?

Think

- Explain the meaning of Neil Armstrong's famous words.
- In your opinion, what were the American people thinking as they watched Neil Armstrong walk on the Moon?
- Why was raising the American flag on the Moon's surface historically significant?
- Why do you think the astronauts collected Moon rock and soil samples?

Over to You

- Explain the origin of the phrase 'The Space Race'.
- Is rivalry sometimes a good thing or is it better to work together?
- Do you think space tourism will ever be popular? Give reasons.
- Use a dictionary to find out the meaning and origins of the words cosmonaut and astronaut.
- Find out what the first ever Irish phrase tweeted from space was. What does it mean?





Vocabulary: Synonyms and Antonyms

Synonyms are words which have the same, or nearly the same, meaning. For example, *big* is an antonym of *large*.

Antonyms are words that have the opposite meanings. For example, *rich* is an antonym of *poor*.

Using synonyms and antonyms improves our writing by making it less repetitive and boring.

Antonyms
 smart → clever, intelligent, brilliant

Synonyms
 smart → stupid, slow-witted, foolish

- Write down a synonym and an antonym for each of the following adjectives.
beautiful, loud, polite, difficult, gentle
- Write down a synonym and an antonym for each of the following verbs.
discover, achieve, raise, succeed
- Replace the underlined word with a suitable synonym.
 - Astronauts and cosmonauts are brave people.
 - The scientists were glad when the spacecraft landed safely.
 - Space exploration is very costly.
- Replace the underlined word with a suitable antonym.
 - The rude man assisted the young woman across the road.
 - The last letter of the Greek alphabet is called alpha.
 - Jet skis travel under water and submarines travel over water.



Grammar: Pronouns

A **pronoun** is a word that can replace a noun. There are many types of pronouns.

Personal pronouns are used in place of the person or people that we are talking about. For example, what did Neil Armstrong do? *He* walked on the moon.

Examples of personal pronouns include *I, me, you* (singular and plural), *she, her, he, him, it, we, us, they* and *them*.

Reflexive pronouns are used when the subject and object of the sentence are the same. For example, *I see myself* in the mirror.

Examples of reflexive pronouns include *myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves* and *themselves*.

| Personal Pronoun | Reflexive Pronoun |
|------------------|-------------------|
| I | myself |
| you | yourself |
| he | himself |
| she | herself |



Grammar: Pronouns

- Replace the underlined words with the correct *personal* pronoun.
 - Can you help my friend and I please?
 - People watched Aldrin and Armstrong on television.
 - Clara smiled at Andre, but Andre wouldn't smile at Clara.
 - As Neil Armstrong stepped out of the lunar module, the words Neil Armstrong spoke were relayed around the world.
- Complete these sentences with the correct *reflexive* pronoun.
 - I think I'm old enough to look after _____.
 - The cat was washing _____.
 - You can't do all that work by _____, let me help you.
 - I hope you all enjoy _____ at the cinema.



Writing: Recounting a Historical Event

Write a factual recount of a historical event you have learned about recently. You may need to recall the facts and ensure you have them in correct order. Organise your paragraphs before you start.

Title

- Choose an interesting title. When you are finished your recount, check to see if you can improve the title.

Beginning

- Set the scene – Say when it took place, introduce the main characters and describe the problem they faced or what they were trying to achieve.

Middle

- Write about their setbacks and successes. Begin a new paragraph for every significant step of the process. Use adverbs to help sequence the story: next, before, after, then.

Ending

- Write about whether it ended in success or failure. Did the world benefit from this achievement? What was the public reaction?

Top Tip!
Remember to keep to the facts!