

The Space Race

Reading and Discussion

After World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union became enemies. This period was called the **Cold War**. They competed against each other as each one wanted to become the most powerful nation. They were enemies and competed in many fields like military, technology, and culture. This rivalry represented the fight between different ideologies, or philosophy of the two countries. The two opposing ideologies are **capitalism** and **communism**.

Rivalry in the field of space was particularly significant because the two nations were thinking of military applications, and how advancement in space could be used in the arms race and military operations. Also, being the winner in the space race would help improve the spirits of whichever country won and show that the ideology the country was upholding was superior to the other one.

The United States and the Soviet Union competed not only in terms of military strength, but also to see which country could make the most scientific progress and advancement. The '**Space Race**' started on October 4th, 1957, when the Soviet Union launched the first satellite ever into orbit around the Earth. The satellite was called '**Sputnik**,' which means the '**Traveler**' in Russian.

Sputnik was a metal sphere about 23 inches across with four antennas. It sent out signals that could be heard and picked up from around the world. When Sputnik was launched, the entire world was surprised at what the Russian engineers had managed to do and they were also afraid. This event caused fear in the world because it meant that if the Russians had rockets that were powerful enough to launch satellites, then they had rockets powerful enough to launch atomic bombs. It also meant that the Russians would have power over **Space**.

A month later, the Soviet Union launched **Sputnik II**. By the end of December, the United States tried to launch its first satellite but it failed, ending up in an explosion. In 1958, the U.S. successfully launched its first satellite called **Explorer I**. In addition, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (**NASA**) was created by Congress to carry out space exploration. In 1959, NASA selected the first seven astronauts and the Soviet Union launched the first probe to hit the moon. It was called **Luna 2**. On April 12, 1961, **Yuri Gagarin**, a Soviet cosmonaut, which is the term used by Russians to mean astronaut, was the first person in space and the first to circle Earth. Less than a month later, **Alan Shephard Jr.** became the first American astronaut in space. In 1962, **John Glen** was the first American to orbit Earth in a capsule that named **Friendship 7**. The Soviet Union was considered to be the first in the Space Race and the U.S. ranked second. In 1963, Soviet cosmonaut **Valentina Tereshkova** was the first woman in space. In December 1968, the U.S. launched Apollo 8, which was the first human mission to go around the moon. This success gave the U.S. rank number one in the space race. In July, 1962, the U.S. sent astronauts Neil Armstrong, Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin and Michael Collins to the moon. **Neil Armstrong** was the first man to walk on the moon.

The U.S. having reached the moon and having its astronauts walk on the moon first won the Space Race. When the Cold War ended, the U.S. and Russia started working together on building a space station and collaborating on space projects.

Name _____

Date _____

Activities

Activity A: Fill in the Blanks:

1. The United States and the Soviet Union competed against each other during the _____ War.
2. The two opposing _____ are capitalism and communism.
3. Both countries were thinking of how advancement in space could be used in the _____ race and military operations.
4. In 1962, _____ was the first American to orbit Earth in a capsule named Friendship 7.
5. A _____ is the term used in Russian to mean astronaut.
6. In 1963, _____ was the first woman in space.
7. _____ was the first human mission to go around the moon.

Activity B: Name two important events that took place in the U.S. in 1958 in the Space Race:

1. _____
2. _____

Activity C: Multiple Choice:

1. The first person to go into space and circle Earth was:
 - a. Neil Armstrong
 - b. Yuri Gagarin
 - c. Alan Shepard Jr.
 - d. Michael Collins
2. The first satellite to be launched in space was called:
 - a. Explorer
 - b. Luna II
 - c. Sputnik
 - d. Apollo I

Name _____

Date _____

Answer Key

Activity A

1. The United States and the Soviet Union competed against each other during the Cold War.
2. The two opposing ideologies are capitalism and communism.
3. Both countries were thinking of how advancement in space could be used in the arms race and military operations.
4. In 1962, John Glen was the first American to orbit Earth in a capsule named Friendship 7.
5. A cosmonaut is the term used in Russian to mean astronaut.
6. In 1963, Valentina Tereshkova was the first woman in space.
7. Apollo 8 was the first human mission to go around the moon.

Activity B

1. The U.S. launched successfully its first satellite called Explorer I.
2. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) was created by Congress to carry out space exploration.

Activity C

1. The first person to go into space and circle Earth was:
 - a. Neil Armstrong
 - b. **Yuri Gagarin**
 - c. Alan Shepard Jr.
 - d. Michael Collins
2. The first satellite to be launched in space was called:
 - a. Explorer
 - b. Luna II
 - c. **Sputnik**
 - d. Apollo I