

To the Moon

In 1969, Apollo 11 launched into history

CHARACTERS

James Webb, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) administrator

John F. Kennedy, President of the U.S., 1961-1963

Crowd

Jack King, a NASA public-affairs officer

Neil Armstrong, an astronaut

Charles Duke, a NASA ground controller in Houston, Texas

Narrators A-G

All of the characters were real people.

PROLOGUE

Narrator A: The late 1950s and early 1960s were dark days for the U.S. space program. On October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union, America's chief rival in the Cold War, successfully launched *Sputnik 1*, the world's first satellite. Although the United States launched its first satellite, *Explorer 1*, four months later, America's leaders feared that the Soviet Union would gain control of space. How could the U.S. win the "space race" against the Soviets?

SCENE 1

Narrator B: On January 20, 1961, John F. Kennedy is inaugurated as president of the United States. Over the next few months, Kennedy meets with NASA officials to

WORD TO KNOW

• **cosmonaut** (n): a Soviet astronaut

discuss putting a man on the moon.

James Webb: The Soviets have already beat us in sending the first man into space. We have to catch up. We're considering proposals for a lunar mission. It will take a huge effort, and it will cost \$20 billion.

John F. Kennedy: Whatever the cost, we must get a man on the moon before the Soviets. There's nothing more important.

Narrator C: On September 12, 1962, the president delivers an address rallying the nation to support sending a man to the moon.

Kennedy: We choose to go to the moon in this decade . . . not because [it is] easy, but because [it is] hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win.

SCENE 2

Narrator D: Meanwhile, the space race continues to heat up. From 1961 to 1963, NASA's Mercury missions send the first U.S. astronauts into space, shortly after the first Soviet **cosmonauts** travel into space. In 1965, NASA's second manned space program, called Gemini, launches the first American to complete a space walk. NASA's next program, which launches in

1967, is named Apollo, after the Greek god of the sun. After several Apollo flights, NASA is ready for its lunar mission.

Narrator E: On July 16, 1969, thousands of people crowd around the Kennedy Space Center in Florida to watch the liftoff. Millions of others are glued to their TVs.

Crowd: Three, two, one . . .

Narrator F: At 9:32 a.m., the engines of a Saturn V rocket power up, carrying the astronauts of Apollo 11. Onboard the capsule atop the giant rocket are three astronauts: mission commander Neil Armstrong, command-module pilot Michael Collins, and lunar-module pilot Edwin E. Aldrin Jr.

Jack King: Liftoff on Apollo 11!

Neil Armstrong: Roger.

Narrator G: After a four-day trip, the astronauts begin to orbit the moon. On July 20 at 1:47 p.m., the Apollo 11 lunar module, *Eagle*, separates from the command module, *Columbia*. Armstrong and Aldrin set off in *Eagle*, while Collins remains on board *Columbia*.

Narrator A: At 4:18 p.m., *Eagle* touches down on the moon's surface, in a lowland area called the Sea of Tranquility, narrowly avoiding multiple boulders. On landing, the spacecraft has only 40 seconds worth of fuel left.

Armstrong: Houston, Tranquility Base here. The *Eagle* has landed.



Edwin E. Aldrin Jr. after planting the American flag on the lunar surface

THE SPACE RACE

1957

The Soviet Union sends *Sputnik 1*, the first satellite, into orbit.

1958

The U.S. launches its first satellite, *Explorer 1*.

1961

Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin becomes the first human in space. He circles Earth for 89 minutes.

1962

Astronaut John Glenn becomes the first American to orbit Earth.

1965

Cosmonaut Alexei Leonov completes the first space walk, lasting 12 minutes. Three months later, American Ed White completes a 36-minute space walk.

1969

American Neil Armstrong becomes the first person to set foot on the lunar surface. No one from any other country has ever landed on the moon.

Charles Duke: Roger, Tranquility. We copy you on the ground. You've got a bunch of guys about to turn blue. We're breathing again.

SCENE 3

Narrator B: On July 20, 1969, at 10:56 p.m., as millions on Earth watch the live TV broadcast, Neil Armstrong becomes the first human to set foot on the moon.

Armstrong (to camera): That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.

Narrator C: Aldrin joins Armstrong on the surface 19 minutes later.

Narrator D: The astronauts unveil a plaque on the outside of the lunar

module and read its words to the television audience.

Armstrong: "Here men from the planet Earth first set foot upon the moon, July 1969 A.D. We came in peace for all mankind."

Narrator E: Aldrin plants a U.S. flag on the moon. After spending 2 hours and 32 minutes taking photos and gathering rocks and soil to be studied, the men fire up *Eagle's* rockets. The module lifts off the moon's surface and redocks with *Columbia*.

EPILOGUE

Narrator F: Four days later, the spacecraft splashed down in the Pacific Ocean about 800 miles

southwest of Hawaii. President Kennedy didn't live to see America's historic accomplishment. He was assassinated on Nov. 22, 1963. But his challenge had inspired the nation to become a leader in space exploration.

Narrator G: U.S. astronauts landed on the moon five more times between 1969 and 1972, but haven't returned since. In 2005, President George W. Bush announced plans to send astronauts back to the moon, but the program was canceled in 2010 so NASA could focus on other missions, such as sending spacecraft to Mars.

—Charles Piddock & Rebecca Zissou