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Activity Guide

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Reaching for the Moon

ABOUT THE STORY

Buzz Aldrin tells the story of his life in this autobiography of the famous astronaut. From his first plane flight to his walk on the moon, he describes the events and people who shaped his life and led him to be one of the greatest explorers America has ever known.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Buzz Aldrin was born in New Jersey in 1930. He went to school at West Point and fought in the Korean War. After the war, he got a Ph.D. in Astronautics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1963, he was selected by NASA as one of the first astronauts. On July 20, 1969, he and Neil Armstrong became the first humans to walk on the surface of the moon. Since his moon walk, Dr. Aldrin has written novels and an autobiography, lectured, and started a rocket design company. He has six grown children and lives in California with his wife.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Wendell Minor grew up in Aurora, Illinois and studied at the Ringling School of Art and Design in Florida. He has illustrated over two thousand books and magazines. He travels all over the United States to research his award-winning illustrations. Wendell Minor lives in Connecticut with his wife and two cats.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask children if they know anything about the historic 1969 walk on the moon. Write the information they volunteer on the chalkboard. Then tell them that the book they will read is the autobiography of one of the astronauts who walked on the moon.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- "How did Buzz feel about his first airplane ride?"
- "Why did Buzz want to go to West Point?"
- "Why did Buzz go back to school?"
- "Why did Buzz train underwater?"
- "How many people were watching the moon landing?"
- "What qualities did Buzz share with the Lone Ranger?" (*Compare and Contrast*)
- "How do you think Buzz felt about standing on the moon?" (*Make Inferences*)

Vocabulary

Write these specialized words and definitions in two columns on the chalkboard. Have children copy them and then draw lines linking each word with its definition.

calculate	pit
aeronautics	special assignment
astronautics	compute mathematically
orbit	the study of aircraft
crater	to revolve around
mission	the science of space flight

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Math: Find the Distance

Ask children to look in encyclopedias or books about the planets to find out how far Buzz Aldrin and the other astronauts traveled to go to the moon. Then have them find the distances to the other planets in our solar system. Children can work with partners to create a distance line – similar to a time line – showing the distance to the moon and each planet from earth. Display completed distance lines around the classroom.

Language Arts: Astronaut Biography

Have children look in books about space flight or astronauts to learn about another astronaut in the space program. Children can take notes on the astronaut they have chosen and use their notes to write a brief biography of the astronaut. When they are finished, collect the biographies in a class biography book of astronauts.

Health: Problems with Weightlessness

One thing Buzz Aldrin had to do was learn how to live and work in zero gravity. Have children look in books about the space program to find out about the problems caused by weightlessness, such as muscle weakness and atrophy, nausea, and difficulty using tools or getting food. Encourage them to write down one such problem and the ways astronauts try to combat it. Children can read their problems and solutions to the class.

INTERNET ACTIVITY

Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to be sure the sites are suitable.

Other Space Missions

Have children work with partners to research other space missions. Using the keywords *space missions*, pairs can choose one mission to report on. Have them take notes on the astronauts involved in the mission, its aim, and its outcome. Children can print out pictures of the spacecraft, if possible. When they are finished with their notes, they can report on the mission to the rest of the class.