

The Space Race

Grade: 8.1

At the end of World War II in 1945, there emerged two new world superpowers: the United States and the Soviet Union (USSR). These two nations differed in their belief systems and ended up living in fear of the other. This mutual fear led to a new era known as the Cold War. While there was no fighting between the U.S. and the USSR during the Cold War, it was called the Cold War because there seemed to be a constant threat that war between the two superpower nations could begin at any time.

The U.S. and the Soviet Union were trying to outperform the other during the Cold War. Part of this fierce rivalry would take place in outer space, where each nation tried to become the first to accomplish various feats. In the early 1950's, human beings had yet to send any objects into outer space, let alone attempt to make the journey to space themselves. Both the U.S. and USSR saw this as an opportunity to prove that their nation was the strongest in the world. They would each try to become the first to take over outer space. This led to the beginning of what is now known as "The Space Race".



A cartoon shows the rivalry between the U.S. and USSR during the Cold War

The Space Race was considered important to both nations for several reasons. First of all, journeys to outer

Writing

Skills: Narrative, Writing Conventions

- The Soviet Union and the U.S. spent many years competing with each other before they realized they could accomplish more while working together. Describe a time when you worked with others to accomplish something great.

Vocab

- emerged
- rivalry
- monumental

Reading

Skills:

- RI.4: Word Meaning & Choice
- RI.8: Claims & Evidence

RI.4: Word Meaning & Choice

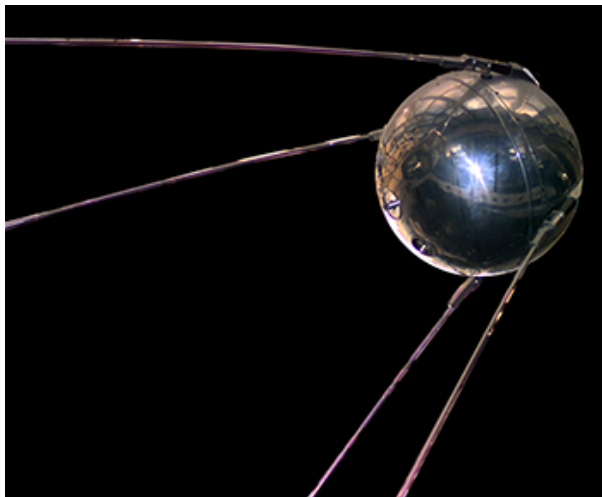
What is the meaning of the phrase, 'That is one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.'?

Armstrong could only take small steps on the moon.

✓ Taking one step normally does not mean much, but that step meant a lot because humans had finally landed on the moon.

Space are not easy. It would require a team of the best scientists, the best technology and a lot of funding to send humans to space. Only the strongest of nations could accomplish this monumental task. Another reason that the Space Race was so important to each nation was that they continued to fear what the other was capable of accomplishing. If one nation was able to launch a rocket into outer space, they could surely send a rocket across the world to attack the other. This turned the Space Race into a matter of national security. Both nations felt the need to win the race in order to prove their superiority and to protect their nation from harm.

The Space Race officially began in 1955 when both the U.S. and USSR announced that they would be launching a satellite into orbit. Two years after the original announcement, the Soviet Union sent the first satellite into space on October 4, 1957. It was named Sputnik I and represented the first victory for the Soviet Union in the Space Race. Four years later, the USSR accomplished another huge win in the Space Race when it sent the first man into outer space. A young man named Yuri Gagarin orbited the Earth on April 12, 1961 and safely landed back in his home nation.



Sputnik I, the first object sent into space

The Soviets were clearly ahead of the U.S. in the Space Race until U.S. president John F. Kennedy made the announcement that he wanted to be the nation that sent the first man to the moon. At the time, this feat seemed to be nearly impossible. Nonetheless, the Americans got to work and began developing the technology necessary to complete the mission. After years of experiments, test flights and training, the Apollo 11 spacecraft was launched into outer space. On July 20th, 1969, three

Armstrong did not take as large of a step as he would have liked.

Armstrong was trying to say that only the Americans would have taken a small step, while Soviets would have leaped for joy.

RI.4: Word Meaning & Choice

What does the author mean by 'mutual fear' between the nations?

The U.S. and the Soviet Union were both scared of the same things.

Neither nation was scared of anything.

The U.S. was living in more fear than the Soviets.

Both nations lived in fear of one another.

RI.4: Word Meaning & Choice

Which of the words below are antonyms of "monumental"? Select all that apply.

minor

complicated

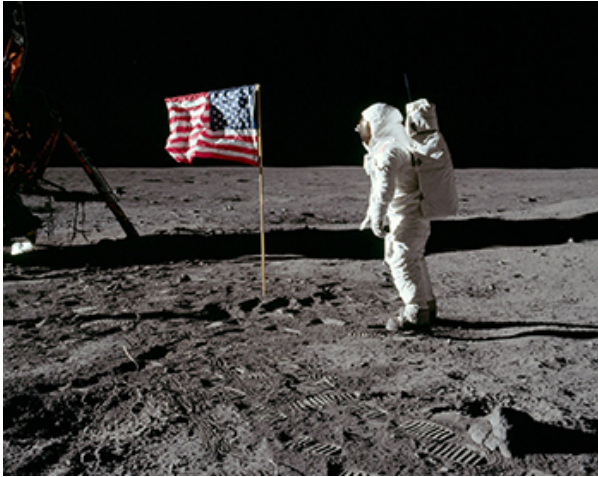
miniscule

massive

RI.8: Claims & Evidence

Which details from the text support the idea that the USSR was ahead of

Americans landed a lunar module on the moon. When he stepped out of the module and took the first steps by a human on the moon, Neil Armstrong famously said, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind".



Astronaut Buzz Aldrin walks on the moon in 1969

The Space Race didn't last forever. The Americans recognized the successes of the Soviet Union putting the first satellite and human into outer space. The Soviets saw the amazing feat the Americans achieved by putting three men on the moon. The Space Race ended in 1975 as a mission to outer space took off. On board were both Soviets and American astronauts, working together to continue the human exploration of space.

the U.S. at the beginning of the Space Race? Select all that apply.

Both nations felt the need to win the race in order to prove their superiority and to protect their nation from harm.

✓ Two years after the original announcement, the Soviet Union sent the first satellite into space on October 4, 1957.

✓ Four years later, the USSR accomplished another huge win in the Space Race when it sent the first man into outer space.

On July 20th, 1969, three Americans landed a lunar module on the moon.

RI.8: Claims & Evidence

Which of the following claims does the author make in the text? Select all that apply.

✓ The U.S. and the Soviet Union were the two strongest nations after World War II.

The U.S. and the Soviet Union signed an agreement that they would not fight one another during the Cold War.

✓ The Space Race was a way for the nations to show one another who was better.

The Space Race is still happening today.

RI.8: Claims & Evidence

How does the author support his claim that the Space Race was a matter of national security?

He talks about how the USSR was ahead of the U.S. at the beginning.

He describes the lunar landing made by the U.S.

✓ He says that if a nation could launch a rocket into space, they could launch a missile to attack the other.

He says that space exploration was the only way the nations could prove who was more likely to win in a war.

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