

**THE HISTORY CHANNEL® PRESENTS:**

**Special Presentation**

***FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION***



In 1957, the Soviet Union launched an unassuming orb into orbit around the earth. This satellite, the first ever to orbit the earth, started an unprecedented space race, and arms race, between the Soviet Union and the United States. The United States formed the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to bring America to the forefront of space travel. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy pledged that the United States would put a man on the moon before the decade was out. NASA fulfilled that legacy in July 1969 when Neil Armstrong stepped onto the surface of the moon uttering the historic phrase “One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” Today, space travel is as much a part of our history as any other type of exploration. Astronauts today remain in space for weeks and months at a time with astronauts from other countries. But for the decades of the second half of the twentieth century, especially from the late 1950s to the early 1970s, NASA and its accomplishments were the focus of national pride and honor. *Failure Is Not An Option* tells the story of the men and women behind the space program—the men and women of mission control.



**CURRICULUM LINKS**

*Failure Is Not An Option* would be useful for classes on American History, Political History and Science and Technology. It is appropriate for middle school and high school. This documentary fulfills several National Standards as outlined by the National Council for History Education including: Interrogating historical data, analyzing the importance of ideas, appreciating historical perspectives, Identifying issues and problems in the past and evaluating alternative courses of action.

## **VOCABULARY**

Mentor  
Cosmonaut  
Equivocation  
Fraught  
Precursor  
Prestige  
Ludicrous  
Visceral  
Acronym  
Insulate  
Shirk  
Exemplary  
Slogan  
Literally

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Behind every space flight is Mission Control. But what exactly is Mission Control? What does it do?
2. Gene Krantz was the flight director during the odd-numbered Apollo missions. What is the job description for a flight director?
3. In 1957 the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the first satellite to orbit the earth. How did the United States respond to Sputnik?
4. Discuss how the space race between the Soviet Union and the United States was part of the Cold War arms race.
5. Discuss the role of Chris Kraft in NASA's history.
6. Although spacecrafts travel beyond the earth's atmosphere, they are controlled from the earth. Why is flight control from the ground necessary?
7. Who was the first man in space?
8. Alan Shepard's flight, although not the first manned space flight, was televised. Why?
9. Discuss some of the complications of John Glenn's first orbit around the earth.
10. Discuss the impact of the assassination of John F. Kennedy on the US space program.
11. Mission Control has its own "culture." Discuss what it means for a group to have its own culture.

12. In January 1967, tragedy struck the space program when three astronauts perished inside of Apollo 1. How did the fire impact NASA and the space program?
13. Discuss the role of simulations in preparing Mission Control for space missions.
14. Discuss the impact of the moon landing on the United States.
15. Discuss the events and near tragedy of Apollo 13 and Mission Control's role in avoiding disaster.

## ACTIVITIES

1. Follow this link([http://www.thursdaysclassroom.com/index\\_01apr01.html](http://www.thursdaysclassroom.com/index_01apr01.html)) to NASA's activity "The Great Moon Hoax"
2. Follow this link (<http://www.tsgc.utexas.edu/spaceexplorers/activities/Design.pdf>)to Texas Space Grant Consortium's Mission Design Personnel activity
3. Create a visual timeline of NASA's history
4. Design a memorial for the astronauts of Apollo 1

## WEB SITES

NASA [http://www.nasa.gov/externalflash/nasa\\_gen/index.html](http://www.nasa.gov/externalflash/nasa_gen/index.html)

Panoramas: Apollo Missions <http://www.panoramas.dk/fullscreen3/f29.html>

Mission Control <http://space.balettie.com/MCC.html>

National Air and Space Museum <http://www.nasm.si.edu/>

The Apollo 1 Disaster <http://www.jimloy.com/astro/apollo1.htm>

## FURTHER READING

Ray Spangenburg, Diane Moser, Kit Moser, *History of NASA* (Scholastic Library Publishing, 2000) Age Range: 10 to Adult

Salvatore Tocci, *NASA* (Watts Franklin, 2003) Age Range: 10 to 12

Michael D. Cole, *NASA Space Vehicles: Capsules, Shuttles and Space Stations* (Enslow Publishers, Incorporated, 2003) Age Range: Young Adult

Mark Beyer, *Crisis in Space: Apollo13* (Scholastic Library Publishing, 2002) Age Range: Young Adult

Dana Meachen Rau, Thomas Buchs (Illustrator), *One Giant Leap: The First Moon Landing* (Soundprints, 1999) Age Range: 9 to 12

