

# WOMEN IN SPACE DISCUSSION GUIDE

## WOMEN IN SPACE

23 Stories of First Flights, Scientific Missions,  
and Gravity-Breaking Adventures



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### About This Book

*Women in Space* tells the story of the Mercury 13, women who had the “right stuff” at the “wrong time.” This book also profiles 23 pioneers who followed in their footsteps and broke the stratospheric ceiling. These women from around the world played a vital role women have played in the scientific understanding and exploration of space.

### Pre-Reading Activity

How many female astronauts can you name? Do you know when women first began going into space and the challenges they faced? Think about what you know as you read *Women in Space: 23 Stories of First Flights, Scientific Missions, and Gravity-Breaking Adventures*.

### Discussion Questions

- In 2007, the University of Wisconsin awarded doctorates to 13 women. What is the significance of an honorary doctorate and why were these women honored?
- Why were the first group of female astronauts in training not allowed to go to space? Was this decision based on scientific evidence?
- The late 1950s and 1960s were known as the time of the “space race.” What was the space race and who was competing?
- Who was chosen by the Soviet government to be the first female astronaut in space? What skills did she possess? Do you think she was the best candidate? Why or why not?
- Compare the other three female cosmonauts from the book. How did their accomplishments compare to American astronauts?
- The NASA astronaut class of 1978 included six women who all went to space within seven years of being chosen. How did these women break barriers for women in space?
- Star Trek was a popular television show in the late 1960s. What role did it play in diversity at NASA?
- What other contributions did Sally Ride make in addition to being the first American woman in space?
- Two women profiled in this book died in space shuttle disasters. Compare their lives. Do you think they understood the risks of space flight?
- In what ways did Mae Jemison break barriers?
- This book talks about space debris. Why could this be a problem that grows?
- When this book was originally written, 55 women had been in space. Two of the women in this book—Yelena Serova and Samantha Cristoforetti—went into space after the book’s publication, raising the total to 57. How many are there now? Are you surprised at the number of female astronauts? Explain why.
- This book answers questions like how do you go to the bathroom in space, sleep in space, and more. Do you have other questions about spaceflight that weren’t answered? Did you know that NASA has a website with resources for students who want to know more? It’s at <https://www.nasa.gov/audience/forstudents/index.html>.
- What person in *Women in Space* would you like to know more about? How can you find more information about her?