

Moonshot: The Flight of Apollo 11

Author and illustrator: Brian Floca

- **Summary:** This astonishing, nonfiction children's book recreates NASA's Apollo 11 mission of the first astronauts landing on the moon over 40 years ago. The book begins with introducing the equipment the astronauts, Armstrong, Collins, and Aldrin, wear in order to go up in space. The men must strap themselves into the *Columbia* and *Eagle* which are the two congested ships the astronauts must live in for the next week. Mission Control must then give them a signal to launch. The United States, mission control, and the astronauts, together as one, count down from 10 seconds until liftoff. The *Columbia* and *Eagle* then connect to each other and go rushing into the darkness toward the moon. Finally they land on the moon and the United States cheers happily. After gathering pictures and stones they head back to earth to be home with their families.

- **Awards received:**
 - A Robert F. Sibert Honor Book
 - A New York Times Best Illustrated Children's Books of 2009 selection
 - A Society of Illustrators Silver Medal winner
 - Winner of the 2010 Flora Stieglitz Straus Award
 - Finalist for the Children's Choice Book Award Book of the Year Award (5th to 6th Grade)
 - Finalist for the Indies Choice Book Awards New Picture Book/Book of the Year Award
 - An American Library Association Notable Children's Book
 - A Kirkus Reviews Best Children's Books of 2009 selection
 - A Booklist Editors' Choice 2009 selection
 - A School Library Journal Best Books 2009 selection
 - A Horn Book Magazine Fanfare Best Books of 2009 selection
 - A Book Links Lasting Connections of 2009 selection
 - A New York Public Library's 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing 2009 selection
 - A Washington Post Best Kids' Books of 2009 selection
 - A Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books 2009 Blue Ribbon selection
 - A CCBC Choices 2010 selection
 - A Smithsonian Notable Book for Children 2009 selection
 - A Barnes and Noble Review Best Picture Books of 2009 selection
 - Finalist for the 2009 Cybil Award for Non-Fiction/Information Books
 - A finalist for the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Prizes for Excellence in Science Books for children and young adults
 - An Indie Booksellers Summer 2009 Kids' List selection
 - A 2009 National Parenting Publications Awards (NAPPA) Gold Award Winner

- **Reviews:** From *School Library Journal*: Starred Review. Grade 2–5—Large in trim size as well as topic, this stirring account retraces Apollo 11's historic mission in brief but precise detail, and also brilliantly captures the mighty scope and drama of the achievement. Rendered in delicate lines and subtly modulated watercolors, the eye-filling illustrations allow viewers to follow the three astronauts as they lumber aboard their

spacecraft for the blastoff and ensuing weeklong journey ("...there's no fresh air outside the window;/after a week this small home will not smell so good./This is not why anyone/wants to be an astronaut"). They split up so that two can make their famous sortie, and then reunite for the return to "the good and lonely Earth,/glowing in the sky." Floca enhances his brief, poetic main text with an opening spread that illustrates each component of Apollo 11, and a lucid closing summary of the entire Apollo program that, among other enlightening facts, includes a comment from Neil Armstrong about what he said versus what he meant to say when he stepped onto the lunar surface. Consider this commemoration of the first Moon landing's 40th anniversary as a spectacular alternative for younger readers to Catherine Thimmesh's *Team Moon* (Houghton, 2006).—John Peters, New York Public Library

- **Author/Illustrator Information, Brian Floca:** <http://brianfloca.com/index.html>
- **Discussion Questions:**
 - Would you like to be an astronaut? Why or why not?
 - What types of things would you see if you were in space?
 - How is the moon different from earth?
 - Could humans live on the moon?
 - What would be scary about going to the moon?
 - How are space ships different than your house?
 - How do astronauts eat, go to the bathroom, or sleep?
 - What could you predict about the book by its cover?
 - Is this book fiction or nonfiction?
- **Curricular Activities**
 - Reading/oral language – Read the book aloud. How would you feel if you were Mouse? What do you think Bear was thinking?
 - Writing – Have students write about an imaginary trip they took to the moon involving the things they saw, challenges they faced, and memories they made
 - Math – Calculate the speed of light, the distance from earth to the moon, the distance between the planets, or calculate how fast the spaceship travels
 - Science –
 - Research Apollo 11 or other manned space flights
 - Research the earth's atmosphere
 - Research the effect the moon has on the earth
 - Social Studies – Discuss how man landing on the moon affected the United States and other historical events happening during that time
 - Art – Make a 3 Dimensional representation of the planets orbiting the sun or of the moon
 - Drama – Have students act out when the first man landed on the moon
 - Music – Sing songs about the planets and the sun/moon
 - Technology – Have students make a video to their parents as if they were astronauts living in space
 - Cooking/food – Have students eat packaged food that is made for space travel

- **Related Books:**

- *One Giant Leap* by Robert Burleigh, illustrated by Mike Wimmer
- *Look to the Stars* by Buzz Aldrin, illustrated by Wendell Minor
- *Star Seeker: A Journey to Outer Space* by Therea Heine, illustrated by Victor Tavares
- *Comets, Stars, the Moon, and Mars: Space Poems and Paintings* by Douglas Florian

- **Other titles by Floca:**

- *Lightship*
- *The Racecar Alphabet*
- *Five Trucks*
- *Up in the Air: Story of the Wright Brothers*
- *Dinosaurs at the Ends of the Earth: The Story of the central Asiatic Expeditions*
- *The Frightful Story of Harry Walfish*

- **Websites for further study or enrichment:**

- <http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/games.shtml> - NASA's children's website with activities and games
- <http://www.apples4theteacher.com/starwarp2.html> - Interactive Solar System games
- http://www.kidsastronomy.com/solar_system.htm - Kids Astronomy website
- <http://www.earthsunmoon.co.uk/> - Earth, Sun, and Moon game
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFMniNY2db4> - YouTube video of the landing
- http://www.edhelper.com/books/Moonshot_The_Flight_of_Apollo_.htm - Subscription website with lessons for this book
- http://steely.nku.edu/lrc/lrc_materials_lists/space_non_fiction_pairs.php - Nonfiction pairings of books about Space, especially ones that deal with Apollo 11. Links to other websites as well.
- http://starchild.gsfc.nasa.gov/docs/StarChild/space_level2/apollo11.html - short video clips from the landing and the first steps on the moon, as well as pictures. A brief history and general information is also included.