

A FILM BY TODD DOUGLAS MILLER

# APOLLO 11

## A MODERN MOONSHOT ACTIVITY LEADER'S GUIDE

### OBJECTIVE

Getting people to the Moon and back was a tremendous achievement. In the film *Apollo 11*, we saw scores of planners, engineers, assistants, drivers, pilots, sailors, and many more, who all contributed. NASA estimates that 400,000 people worked on the Apollo program. The effort required nearly uncountable hours of work and more than \$25 billion (more than \$100 billion in today's dollars).

Mobilizing all of the needed resources took bold vision and inspired people. These were provided, in part, by motivating speeches from American leaders.

President John F. Kennedy buoyed the then-new Apollo program with a speech in 1962. His words were aimed at the whole nation. "Vast stretches of the unknown and the unanswered and the unfinished still far outstrip our collective comprehension," he said. His language drew on Americans' pride of accomplishment, wonder at technology, sense of history, good natures, and respect for knowledge. JFK tied the present task to America's past when he said, "William Bradford, speaking in 1630 of the founding of the Plymouth Bay Colony, said that all great and honorable actions are accompanied with great difficulties, and both must be enterprised and overcome with answerable courage." His speech motivated Americans for the required investment to come, and hinted at competition from geopolitical rivals like the Soviet Union.

President Richard M. Nixon was in charge when Apollo 11 landed in 1969. His phone call to astronauts can be thought of another kind of speech. "As you talk to us from the Sea of Tranquility, it inspires us to redouble our efforts to bring peace and tranquility to Earth," he said. And astronaut Neil Armstrong was certainly considering a global audience (estimated at 530 million!) when he replied: "It's a great honor and privilege for us to be here, representing not only the United States, but men of peace of all nations, and with interest and curiosity, and men with a vision for the future." These words were selected to influence more than just the men on the phone call.

Participants in this activity will consider motivating words about the Moon mission and write their own persuasive speech. They will plan a topic and thesis, target an audience, choose language, decide upon organization, and develop other means of effective communication.

### PRINCIPLES

The major principles discussed in this activity relate to the ways leaders motivated Americans to support the Apollo missions. Useful and related concepts include:

- Brainstorming
- Identifying problems and crafting a thesis
- Persuasive speech and rhetoric
- Selecting an audience

### ACTIVITY

In the following activity, participants will write a speech to pitch a modern moonshot. They will brainstorm ideas for an issue to talk about, why the issue is important, who their target audience will be, practical concerns like time and funding, and so on. Then they will use their brainstorming to write their speech.

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### MATERIALS

- Modern Moonshot” brainstorming worksheet
  - “Modern Moonshot” speech worksheet
  - Pencils or pens
  - (Optional) a copy of President Kennedy’s “We Choose to Go to the Moon” speech, available here: <https://er.jsc.nasa.gov/seh/ricetalk.htm>
  - (Optional) online or other resource material to research topics for speeches
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**TIME: 1-2 HOURS.**



### EXTEND THE LESSON: RESOURCES FOR FURTHER DISCOVERY

The following research and writing prompts and resources may be useful for deeper learning.

- Watch the speech. Kennedy's speech at Rice University, commonly called "Why we go to the Moon," can be viewed online at the site of his Presidential Library: <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USG/USG-15-29-2/USG-15-29-2>. Analyze his words. Who was he trying to reach? Do you think he was successful?
- Read and hear more speeches. Great Americans are frequently remembered in the context of their great speeches. Explore important speeches from Martin Luther King, Jr., Ronald Reagan, Eleanor Roosevelt and more at: <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/top100speechesall.html>. Choose a speech and analyze what makes it effective. How might you update it for 21st century listeners?
- Explore the Space Race. A consistent subtext of speeches about going to the Moon was the challenge posed by similar efforts from the Soviet Union. Read about the Soviet Moon program here: [http://www.russianspaceweb.com/spacecraft\\_manned\\_lunar.html](http://www.russianspaceweb.com/spacecraft_manned_lunar.html). What would have happened if the American mission failed? What if the Soviets made it first? How might history have changed?

### EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

- Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.
- Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose.





NAME:

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DATE:

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## MOONSHOT NOUN

- An act or instance of launching a spacecraft to the Moon.
- An extremely ambitious and innovative project.

Sending astronauts to the Moon was so impressive, so unprecedented, that the word “moonshot” has come to mean any project that stretches beyond what is currently thought possible. The American public was persuaded to support the Apollo program through speeches by presidents and other leaders. The speeches made people believe that the difficult and costly project was worth the effort.

## OBJECTIVE

In this activity, you will write a speech about a new moonshot for the 21st century. Think about important problems, challenges, and tasks currently before your society. Choose one project, then plan a speech and write to influence the world!

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## WHAT YOU NEED

- Modern Moonshot brainstorming sheet
- Modern Moonshot speech sheet
- Pen or pencil

## WHAT TO DO

1. Follow the instructions on the Modern Moonshot sheets to plan and write your speech.
2. Brainstorm with the brainstorming sheet. Note any ideas that come to you while you work.
3. Read over your brainstorming sheet and circle or highlight the ideas that you think will make good additions to your speech.
4. Use the ideas and notes on your brainstorming sheet to write your speech on the speech sheet.
5. Carefully read your speech. Correct any errors.
6. Read the speech in front of other participants. Were they convinced?

**Brainstorm ideas for your moonshot. In each box below, make notes for ideas to include in your speech. These ideas will help you write and organize your speech.**

**PROBLEMS OR CHALLENGES** What issues do we confront as a society that will require an effort like the one that took astronauts to the moon? Some ideas you might want to think about include the environment, medicine, energy, or new space exploration. Be creative!

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**CHOOSE A THESIS** Pick one challenge and make an argument that explains what it is and what you think our society should do about it. A premise for an argument is called a thesis. Use your thesis to help you fill in the other boxes.

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**WHAT IS NEEDED** Think of what is required to solve the problem. Consider money, supplies, people, time, knowledge, etc.

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**WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE?** Who do you need to convince? Who will help?

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**CHOOSE WORDS THAT WORK** The art of persuasive writing and speaking is called rhetoric. For the Moon missions, leaders spoke of “vast stretches of the unknown,” “great and honorable actions,” “a vision for the future,” and “peace and tranquility.” Think of words and phrases that will reach, move, and persuade your audience. List them.

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