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Shuttle Discovery launches successfully

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27 July, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Shuttle Discovery launches successfully

BNE: The 114th Space Shuttle flight has blasted off from the Kennedy Space Centre in Florida. America's mission to explore space is now back on track. The shuttle Discovery is 25 years old but carries the hopes of all Americans and the lives of seven astronauts. It is America's first manned space mission since the 2003 Columbia disaster. NASA has spent two years making sure everything is safe for this launch. It has overcome many hurdles but engineers are confident of a safe return to Earth.

Safety has been a major concern with this launch. A broken fuel gauge sensor stopped the original lift-off attempt two weeks ago. NASA technicians decided it was not a danger and gave the go-ahead for today's mission. Hundreds of hi-tech cameras are photographing the launch from every angle to spot possible problems. There has already been one worry. "Something" fell off of the shuttle soon after the fuel tanks dropped off. NASA refuses to speculate on this until it has studied the videos.

WARM-UPS

1. ASTRONAUTS: You are astronauts on the Space Shuttle mission. Walk around the classroom and meet the other “astronauts” in your class. Talk about your daily lives, your training, your fears and hopes. Why did you become an astronaut? Is it a good job?

2. QUICK DEBATE: Students A think money should be spent on feeding hungry African children, not space missions. Students B think spending money on space missions is more important than feeding hungry African children. Change partners often.

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Space Shuttle / space / Kennedy Space Centre / space exploration / astronauts / safety / NASA / safety / fuel tanks / possible problems

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. SPACE: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with space. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. OVERCOMING HURDLES: Write down three hurdles you have overcome in your life. In pairs / groups, talk about these. Repeat this activity by talking about three hurdles you will have to overcome in the future.

6. ASTRONAUTS: What would you like to know about astronauts? Discuss these points about being an astronaut:

- a. The astronaut interview / selection process
- b. Fitness training
- c. Education regarding the technology of the Space Shuttle
- d. Safety / Emergency procedures
- e. Scientific research
- f. Weightlessness in space
- g. Living in a tiny area
- h. Being far from home
- i. Other

Change partners and compare what you talked about.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. America's journey into the unknown is back on track. | T / F |
| b. The shuttle Discovery is brand new. | T / F |
| c. It is the first manned U.S. space mission since 1999. | T / F |
| d. NASA astronauts must jump over hurdles as part of their training. | T / F |
| e. A broken fuel sensor stopped the original lift-off two weeks ago. | T / F |
| f. NASA bent the rules a little and ignored the fuel sensor problem. | T / F |
| g. There was nothing to worry about with the launch. | T / F |
| h. Something fell off of the shuttle soon after it took off. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| a. blasted | thumbs-up |
| b. mission | go into |
| c. explore | guess |
| d. disaster | worry |
| e. hurdles | quest |
| f. concern | detect |
| g. go-ahead | lifted |
| h. spot | catastrophe |
| i. speculate | examined |
| j. studied | obstacles |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a. blasted | mission since... |
| b. mission to explore space is now | from every angle |
| c. carries the hopes | a major concern |
| d. America's first manned space | back on track |
| e. It has overcome | stopped the original lift-off |
| f. Safety has been | off |
| g. A broken fuel gauge sensor | to speculate on this |
| h. gave the go-ahead | many hurdles |
| i. photographing the launch | of all Americans |
| j. NASA refuses | for today's mission |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

WORD ORDER: Put the underlined words back into the correct order.

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AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'space' and 'shuttle'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. WORD ORDER: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers.

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "SPACE EXPLORATION" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about space exploration and the Space Shuttle.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- blasted
- track
- carries
- manned
- sure
- return
- concern
- attempt
- go-ahead
- angle
- worry
- speculate

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What were your feelings when you read this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. Have you been following the news of the Space Shuttle?
- d. Are you interested in the Space Shuttle?
- e. What do you remember about other launches and missions?
- f. What you like to go into space on a shuttle?
- g. Do you think money should be spent on space exploration?
- h. What is the benefit of space exploration for ordinary people?
- i. What kind of person is required to become an astronaut?
- j. Do you think people will ever live in space?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What did you think about what you read?
- c. What do you think when you see a rocket head into space?
- d. Is space travel humankind's greatest achievement?
- e. Are you interested in space?
- f. What will space exploration be like in fifty years?
- g. Do you think there will be wars in space one day?
- h. What do you know about the International Space Station?
- i. Do you have any major concerns at the moment?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

ASTRONAUT INTERVIEW: You want to be an astronaut. Look at these interview questions and think about your answers. Take turns in role playing the interviewer and interviewee. Interview two or more people.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why do you want to become an astronaut?
2. What skills do you have that would make you a good astronaut?
3. What experiments would you like to do in space?
4. What will you do to become physically fit enough to go into space?
5. Tell me about a time when you didn't panic in a stressful situation.
6. Give me an example of your ability to work as part of a team.
7. What do you think are the hard parts of life as an astronaut?
8. What do you feel about the dangers of the job?
9. What questions would you like to ask me?
10. Other _____

Return to the partners you interviewed and tell them whether or not they got the job and why (not).

Find a new partner and talk about who you interviewed and the quality of their answers.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

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Safety has been a major _____ with this launch. A broken fuel gauge sensor stopped the original lift-off _____ two weeks ago. NASA technicians decided it was not a danger and gave the _____ for today's mission. Hundreds of hi-tech cameras are photographing the launch from every _____ to spot possible problems. There has already been one worry. "Something" fell off of the shuttle _____ the fuel tanks dropped off. NASA refuses to speculate on this until it has _____ the videos.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on the Space Shuttle Discovery's mission. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. SPACE SHUTTLE: Make a poster outlining the history of the Space Shuttle. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all find out different things?

4. LETTER TO THE ASTRONAUTS: Write a letter to the astronauts of the Discovery. Tell them what you think of them and their work. Read your letter to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. T b. F c. F d. F e. T f. T g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. blasted	lifted
b. mission	quest
c. explore	go into
d. disaster	catastrophe
e. hurdles	obstacles
f. concern	worry
g. go-ahead	thumbs-up
h. spot	detect
i. speculate	guess
j. studied	examined

PHRASE MATCH:

a. blasted	off
b. mission to explore space is now	back on track
c. carries the hopes	of all Americans
d. America's first manned space	mission since...
e. It has overcome	many hurdles
f. Safety has been	a major concern
g. A broken fuel gauge sensor	stopped the original lift-off
h. gave the go-ahead	for today's mission
i. photographing the launch	from every angle
j. NASA refuses	to speculate on this

WORD ORDER:

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