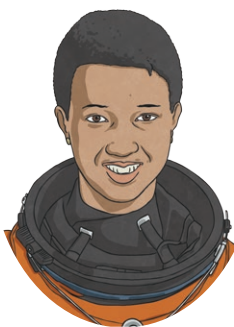


Mae Jemison

When the Space Shuttle Endeavour began its second space mission on 12th September 1992, one of its six passengers was Mae Jemison. That space flight lasted over 190 hours (8 days) and made her the first African-American woman in space.

Although born in Alabama, Mae Jemison's family moved to Chicago when she was three to take advantage of the better educational opportunities on offer. Jemison says her parents were the best scientists she knew because they were always asking questions. Despite the limited ambitions of her early teachers, her parents supported her curiosity and interest in science. She had a fascination with stars and space, just like many children at that time, and knew she wanted to travel to space from an early age. A teenager at the time of the Apollo Space missions, watching the first moon landings, she actually took it for granted that she would one day go to space. Despite her excitement at the landings, Jemison recalls being annoyed by the fact that there were no women astronauts. She knew there was no good reason for this and upon hearing the famous 'I have a dream' speech by Martin Luther King Jr. (which she took as a call to action to break down barriers to achievement) she felt inspired to succeed in her dream of becoming an astronaut.

In addition to her interest in science, Jemison was also a talented dancer and even considered becoming professional before settling on a career as a doctor. Graduating from high school aged just 16, the future astronaut studied chemical engineering at Stanford University in California before completing her postgraduate medical degree in 1981.

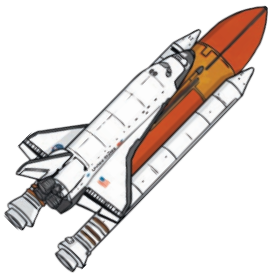


Did You Know?

As a child, Jemison expected that by now, people would be travelling to space as often as they drive to work! Now, she is principal of 100 Year Starship which aims to make travel beyond our solar system possible within a hundred years.

After completing her medical training, Mae Jemison worked as a doctor with the Peace Corps looking after the health of volunteers working in the African countries Liberia and Sierra Leone. A few years later, inspired by Sally Ride (the first American woman in space) and Star Trek's Lieutenant Uhura (played

by African American Actress, Nichelle Nichols), she decided the time was right to apply to join NASA. Her application was delayed by the Challenger Space Shuttle disaster in 1986 but, undeterred, she reapplied and in 1987, was one of only 15 candidates to be selected from a field of around 2000. Initially, she worked at Kennedy Space Center in Florida, working on software systems and launch support for space missions including the first mission after Challenger. After five years with NASA, she flew on the Space Shuttle Endeavour as a mission specialist. The flight lasted for eight days and orbited the earth 127 times! During the flight, Jemison conducted bone cell research experiments. Amongst the items she took with her on the mission, there was a dance theatre poster, several art objects from West Africa and a photo of Bessie Coleman, the first African-American woman to fly an aeroplane. A few months after her return to earth, in March 1993, Jemison left NASA to take up a post at Dartmouth College and pursue her own interests in science and education.



Did You Know?

Mae Jemison was the first real astronaut to appear on Star Trek! She played Lieutenant Palmer in one episode of the series in 1993.

Jemison has a special interest in the use of science and engineering in our daily lives and established her own company, The Jemison Group, to work in this area. She is also active in promoting science education and runs an international science camp for teenagers called The Earth We Share. Part of the Dorothy Jemison Foundation, named for her mother, the four week residential programme challenges young people to think critically about current problems around the world. She has appeared alongside Michelle Obama and is an active public speaker, using her status to support equality for all in the United States and worldwide. In 2001, she published a well-received memoir of her life aimed at children and has also written a series of books about space for children.

Did You Know?

In 2017, Lego announced that a mini figure of Mae Jemison would be one of a set of Women of NASA set!

Questions

1. Name three facts about Mae Jemison's space mission.

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

2. What does this phrase tell us about what her teachers thought about Mae Jemison's interest in science?

"... the limited ambitions of her early teachers..."

3. How did Mae Jemison feel about the fact that all the Apollo astronauts were men?

4. Tick the correct box related to each statement in the table:

| | True | False |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mae Jemison was a talented singer. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mae Jemison went to space twice. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| On board the space shuttle she carried out experiments. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mae Jemison became a surgeon when she graduated from university. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| She always assumed she would one day go into space. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

For those statements which are false, write the correct statement below:

Questions

5. Which organisation is she principal of and what does it aim to achieve?

6. Which two people inspired Mae Jemison to apply to work at NASA and why?

7. Which of these is a synonym for “undeterred”?

- Put off
- Determined
- Discouraged
- Unsure

8. What does this sentence tell us about working at NASA?

“She was one of 15 candidates to be selected from a field of around 2000.”

9. What is the name of the residential science camp Mae Jemison set up?

10. Which popular children’s toy includes a figure of Mae Jemison?

Answers

- Name three facts about Mae Jemison's space mission.
Any three from: the mission began on 12th September 1992, it lasted 8 days (190 hours), there were 6 astronauts on board, she was the first African-American woman in space, she conducted experiments on board, it orbited the earth 127 times.
- What does this phrase tell us about what her teachers thought about Mae Jemison's interest in science?
"... the limited ambitions of her early teachers..."
It tells us that they didn't really believe she could go on to become an astronaut. It suggests that they thought she should lower her expectations.
- How did Mae Jemison feel about the fact that all the Apollo astronauts were men?
She was annoyed by it and couldn't see any good reason why there weren't any female astronauts.
- Tick the correct box related to each statement in the table:

| | True | False |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Mae Jemison was a talented singer. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Mae Jemison went to space twice. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| On board the space shuttle she carried out experiments. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mae Jemison became a surgeon when she graduated from university. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| She always assumed she would one day go into space. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

For those statements which are false, write the correct statement below:

Mae Jemison was a talented dancer, Mae Jemison went to space once, Mae Jemison worked as a doctor with the Peace Corps when she graduated from university.

- Which organisation is she principal of and what does it aim to achieve?
100 Year Starship aims to make travel beyond our solar system possible within 100 years.
- Which two people inspired Mae Jemison to apply to work at NASA and why?
Sally Ride inspired her because she was the first American woman in space and Lieutenant Uhura because she was a senior character in Star Trek played by an African-American woman.

Answers

7. Which of these is a synonym for “undeterred”?

Put off

Determined

Discouraged

Unsure

8. What does this sentence tell us about working at NASA?

“She was one of 15 candidates to be selected from a field of around 2000.”

It tells us that lots of people wanted to work there and it was very competitive and difficult to get a job at NASA.

9. What is the name of the residential science camp Mae Jemison set up?

The residential science camp Mae Jemison set up is called The Earth We Share.

10. Which popular children’s toy includes a figure of Mae Jemison?

LEGO made a minifigure of her in 2017.