Reading Comprehension: The Space Race

Instructions: Read the passage carefully and answer the questions that follow.

The Space Race

During the Cold War, a fierce competition unfolded between the United States and the Soviet Union, the two dominant global powers representing democratic capitalism and communism, respectively. This rivalry extended into space technology, with both nations racing to achieve significant milestones in space exploration.

As World War II concluded, both superpowers captured German rocket technology, including the V2 rockets, and recruited German engineers. Wernher von Braun, a pivotal figure in the U.S. space program, was among those recruited, while the Soviets brought in Sergei Korolev, who would lead their space endeavors.

In 1955, both nations announced plans to launch satellites. The Soviet Union took the lead by successfully launching Sputnik 1 on October 4, 1957, marking the first artificial satellite in orbit. The U.S. followed four months later with Explorer 1. The Soviets continued their success by sending Yuri Gagarin into

space aboard Vostok 1 in April 1961, making him the first human to orbit Earth. In response, Alan Shepard became the first American in space just weeks later.

Feeling pressured, President John F. Kennedy boldly declared on May 25, 1961, that the U.S. would land a man on the moon before the decade's end, leading to the launch of the Apollo program. In February 1962, John Glenn became the first American to orbit Earth, and in June 1963, Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman in space.

NASA's budget was increased to meet the ambitious moon landing goal. The Gemini program was also initiated to develop necessary technologies, achieving several milestones, including the first American spacewalk by Ed White and the first successful docking of two spacecraft in orbit.

Finally, on July 16, 1969, Apollo 11 was launched with astronauts Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and Michael Collins. Despite encountering malfunctions, the lunar module, named Eagle, landed on the moon on July 20, 1969. Armstrong famously declared, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." With America landing on the moon first and the Soviet lunar attempts failing, the U.S. emerged victorious in the Space Race.

By the 1970s, U.S.-Soviet relations began to improve, culminating in the Apollo-Soyuz mission in 1975, where U.S. and Soviet spacecraft docked in orbit, symbolizing the thawing of Cold War tensions.

Questions

Multiple Choice

What was the primary goal of the Space Race?

1.

1. A) To develop the best military technology

2. B) To achieve significant milestones in space exploration

3. C) To improve relations between the U.S. and Soviet Union

4. D) To capture German rocket engineers

Who was the American rocket engineer that played a significant role in the U.S. space program?

1. A) Yuri Gagarin

2. B) Sergei Korolev

3. C) John Glenn

4. D) Wernher von Braun

What was the name of the first artificial satellite launched into orbit?

1. A) Explorer 1

2. B) Apollo 11

3. C) Vostok 1

4. D) Sputnik 1

Who became the first woman in space?

1. A) Valentina Tereshkova

2. B) Sally Ride

3. C) Mae Jemison

4. D) Yuri Gagarin

Short Answer

What declaration did President John F. Kennedy make regarding the moon landing?

What was the significance of the Apollo-Soyuz mission in 1975?

Vocabulary Context

1. Explain the term "malfunction" as used in the passage. How did it relate to the Apollo 11 mission?

Answer Key

Multiple Choice Answers

1. B

2. D

3. D

4. A

Short Answer Responses

1. President John F. Kennedy declared that the U.S. would land a man on the moon before the end of the decade.

2. The Apollo-Soyuz mission symbolized the improvement of U.S.-Soviet relations and represented the first joint U.S.-Soviet space flight.

Vocabulary Context Answer

1. "Malfunction" refers to a failure to function properly. In the context of the Apollo 11 mission, it relates to the issues encountered that required the lunar module, Eagle, to be landed manually.