

Rocket Man!

adapted by Lee McKlow

Set Your Purpose

What's it like to be in outer space? Read this interview for some inside information.

Do the words "blast off" thrill you?

Would you like people to say that you have "the right stuff"? That is the best **compliment** an astronaut can give someone. NASA astronaut Tom Jones has the right stuff. He has blasted into space three times. Here he tells an interviewer what it is like:

Interviewer: When did you decide to become an astronaut?

Tom Jones: When I was 10. It was 1965, and U.S. astronauts were practicing for the first trips to the moon.

Interviewer: What does it feel like when you blast off in the space shuttle?

Tom Jones: First, there's a **rumble** as the engines fire up. Then there's a huge **jolt**, followed by steady shaking. In the eight minutes it takes to get to orbit, the pressure (heavy feeling) against your chest builds. It feels like a 700-pound gorilla is sitting on top of you. Once in orbit, the pressure is gone and you are weightless.

Interviewer: What does it feel like to be weightless?

Tom Jones: It's very peaceful, like you're floating underwater. With a touch of your finger, you can push off and **glide** wherever you want.

Interviewer: What's cool about being in space?

Tom Jones: The view of Earth. At any point, you can "swim" over to the window and catch a **glimpse** of oceans, snow-covered forests, and deserts. The colors are amazing.

Interviewer: What advice would you give kids who want to be astronauts?

Tom Jones: Work hard in school. You need a college degree. You also need three years of work experience before you can apply to NASA to become an astronaut.

If you don't get picked the first time, keep trying. And don't give up!



Backpack

Inside is Tom's life-support system: electricity, oxygen, water, and a radio.

Helmet

Three layers protect Tom from the sun's ultraviolet rays.

Chest Pack

Tom can control the temperature inside his suit by pressing buttons on his chest pack.

Safety Straps

These are attached to a thin steel cable from the spaceship so Tom can walk in space without floating away!

**Think
About It**

Would you like to
travel to outer space?
Why or why not?

Name _____

Date _____

Check Your Understanding

Fill in the letter with the best answer for each question.

- From Tom Jones's description, you can infer that when astronauts blast off, they
 - feel no pain or unpleasant pressure.
 - "swim" around feeling peaceful.
 - must put up with unpleasant pressure.
 - take a nap.
- People who want to become astronauts
 - do not have to work hard in school.
 - must work hard in school.
 - should watch TV instead of studying.
 - do not need any work experience.
- According to Tom Jones, what causes you to feel like you're "floating underwater"?
 - blasting into space
 - looking at oceans
 - becoming an astronaut
 - being weightless
- Which words best describe people who have "the right stuff"?
 - silly and lazy
 - foolish and weightless
 - brave and hardworking
 - sleepy and likely to give up
- According to Tom Jones, the cool thing about being in space is
 - having a gorilla sit on your chest.
 - feeling a jolt as the ship blasts off.
 - listening to the rumble of the engines.
 - seeing amazing views of the Earth.

Vocabulary

Find each vocabulary word in the selection. The words and sentences around it will help you figure out its meaning.

Fill in the letter with the best definition of the underlined word.

- "The right stuff" is the best compliment an astronaut can give someone.

(A) space suit	(C) words of praise
(B) forests and oceans	(D) engine
- First, there's a rumble as the engines fire up.

(A) kind of bee	(C) peaceful feeling
(B) deep, long rolling noise	(D) explosion
- Then there's a huge jolt, followed by steady shaking.

(A) good time	(C) sudden jerk
(B) heavy gorilla	(D) gentle touch
- With a touch of your finger, you can push off and glide wherever you want.
 - hold down
 - turn upside down
 - have trouble moving
 - move smoothly and easily
- Through the window, you can catch a glimpse of oceans, forests, and deserts.

(A) quick look	(C) movie
(B) type of airplane	(D) far-off sound

Name _____

Date _____

Word Work

Antonyms are words that have opposite meanings. For example, *weightless* and *heavy* are antonyms.

Write the word that means the opposite of the words in dark type.

compliment noise
glide peaceful amazing

1. The astronaut heard the **silence** of the engines as the space shuttle blasted off. _____
2. The astronaut felt very **troubled**. _____
3. He could **stumble** easily from one end of the spaceship to the other. _____
4. From the window, the astronaut had a glimpse of Earth's **ordinary** colors. _____
5. It was a big **insult** for him to say that she had the "right stuff." _____

The letter combinations **sh**, **th**, and **ch** each stand for a special sound that is different than the sounds of the two letters pronounced separately.

fish **thirteen** **chicken**

Read the definitions. Complete the word by adding the letters **sh**, **th**, or **ch**. Write the word.

6. a rocket ship that can fly into space and land again on earth _____ **uttle**
7. to tremble or shiver _____ **ake**
8. to select or pick _____ **oose**
9. to stretch toward something **rea** _____
10. an exciting moment _____ **rill**

Write Now

Tom Jones gave a description of his journey into space. This word web highlights what he saw and felt.

- Plan to write a journal entry about traveling in space. First, imagine that you went with Tom Jones on an expedition in space. Create your own word web with the words "My trip with Tom Jones" in the center circle. Add words that describe what you might see and feel.
- Write your journal entry. Remember to use your word web. Add descriptive details to make your journal interesting to read.

