

## Team Moon: How 400,000 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon by Andy Paris,Catherine Thimmesh



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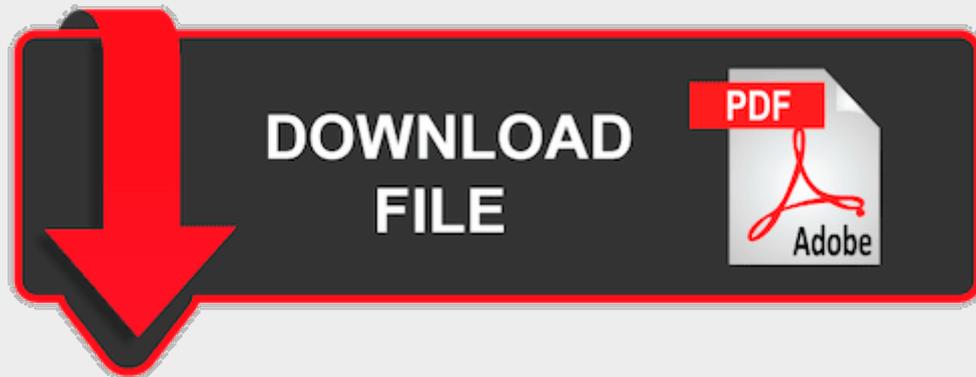
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## Reviews of the Team Moon: How 400,000 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon by Andy Paris,Catherine Thimmesh

### 1. Cha

Thank God for children's literature blogs. Without them I swear I'd miss half the cool new children's books coming out each and every year. Now I'm a children's librarian of variegated tastes. I like my books fictional, preferably fantastical, and with a British sense of humor. Basically if you

place a non-fiction book in my lap without warning me first, I scream and fly into a fit of severe heebie-jeebies. But when I heard about "Team Moon", it sounded too good to pass up. First of all, it was written by Catherine Thimmesh, who won my love when I read her, "The Sky's the Limit: Stories of Discovery By Women and Girls". At this point Thimmesh could write a book about how thrilling it is to learn about the history of mouthwash and I'd probably be all ah-twitter. I expected to find "Team Moon" fascinating. What I did not expect was to learn just how close to failure the launch was, how dangerous it became, the concerns that people had, and the sheer number of people and projects that had to work together to get it going.

For kids today, the fact that human beings once walked on the moon is old news. But how did we even do it? How do you go from walking on the earth one day and skipping amongst the stars the next? What "Team Moon" does is take kids through the entire Apollo 11 experience, but in a remarkably immediate way. Right off the bat the ship is blasting off, and there are continual flashbacks to things like the construction of the spacesuits, the spaceship itself, and so on. There's also a lot of high drama. Did you know that hidden software testing alarms started going off during the mission when it was considered impossible that any of them would happen during a real flight? Did you know that the astronauts almost ran out of fuel when they were trying to land on the moon and almost died that way? Or that the temperature in the fuel tank started rising up and up and up and no one could figure out why? Through every detail and every nail-biting moment, Thimmesh guides the reader through a two-day period that had the world on the edge of its seat. Reading this book, I guarantee that you'll be there too.

Children's television shows/ literature/ what have you, are always going on about the importance of teamwork and working together. Heck, that thought has inspired countless horrid motivational posters worldwide. It's awfully difficult to show such an idea in a concrete and understandable form that doesn't involve ants, though. Not anymore. "Team Moon" excels at showing just how reliant every aspect of this launch was on every single person working it. Had I given the project's team any prior consideration, I suppose I could have come up with the guys who made the space suits or the brainiacs in the black glasses at mission control. One fellow I never counted on was Cliff Smith. While Buzz, Neil, and Michael were traipsing their merry lunar path, Smith was down here on earth battling an Australian wind storm that nearly destroyed all television reception of the astronauts' videos from the moon. We would never have seen those historic shots had it not been for guys like Smith who, in danger to their life, remained posted on a huge satellite dish (despite the very serious threat of its collapse). And Smith's just ONE GUY out of 400,000 with stories like that to tell.

And aside from all of this is the mind-blowing thought that this project was done basically before computers were at all common. When Thimmesh writes, "They had put man on the moon that day, true; but computers in 1969 barely had the computing power of today's hand-held calculators. So a lot of analysis was done the good old-fashioned way: paper, pencil, and brainpower". Tell the kids, to whom you booktalk this tale, to imagine a world without a public internet that STILL was able to go into outer space. It boggles the little grey cells, it does.

Why should your child read this book? If nothing I've said till now sounds convincing then I've got two little words for you: moon germs. Specifically, the overwhelming fear that they exist. That was the driving force behind finding a way to detoxify the astronauts' film reels after they returned from the moon. All you need to know? That moon germs were an incredibly real fear back in 1969. Another thing I never knew? That before President Nixon announced the fate of the space mission, sitting in front of him was a piece of paper that read, "Fate has ordained that the men who went to the moon to explore in peace will stay on the moon to rest in peace . . . . These brave men, Neil Armstrong and [Buzz] Aldrin, know that there is no hope for their recovery. But they also know there is hope for mankind in their sacrifice". This was to be read in the event that the moon landing went tragically wrong. Reading it sends a distinct shiver down the spine too.

The fact of the matter is that Thimmesh makes space travel exciting again. First of all, you have all these great stories to tell. Then on top of that is the design of the book. Though I'm sure many a shelf-lacking librarian will groan at the shape of this book, the almost-square format of "Team Moon" is one of its charms. Standing at 11.2 x 10.6 x 0.5 inches, the book is filled with photographs. Tons of them. Some are from the moon, some are of the workers, some are graphs, some are breathtaking vistas, etc. Constantly engaging, the eye never gets bored with the design. Now, admittedly, the fact that almost all the pages are black and glossary is reason enough for some fingerprint concerns. They're unavoidable, frankly. Better wash your hands after eating that peanut butter sandwich, is all I've gotta say.

The other day I had some kids in my library desperately searching for astronaut information of any and every kind. It was with great pain that I accepted that "Team Moon" was not yet on my library's shelves (being too new and all). To avoid this agony, I suggest that you go out and purchase a copy of your own. Not only is it meticulously researched (I haven't even told you about the bibliography, glossary, index, or list of astronaut-inspired websites for, "Further Exploration") but it's actually a lot of fun to read too. This is how non-fiction should always be. Immediate, exciting, and pleasing to the eye. One of the best factual books for kids on the shelves, and perhaps the definitive child text on the flight of Apollo 11. Magnificent.

## 2. Nulix

"When those millions of people tuned in hoping to witness the moonwalk, one thing they wouldn't see [...] were the nonastronauts, those beyond the glare of the limelight. The regular folks whose efforts made an impossible mission possible in the first place." (From the text.)

I bought this book because I hoped to read about teamwork and a variety of roles needed to execute a mission to the moon.

The writing is breathless. And given to sentence fragments. The reading level would be OK for older FLL team members. (Lexile 1060L / Guided reading Y.)

The photos are lovely, although the white lettering on black background leaves something to be desired for these old eyes. The inclusion of quotes is neat, and tells the story differently from some drier retellings for the moon landing.

Did I get my stories of teamwork? Sort of. There are stories about programming alerts coming through as the Apollo 11 astronauts are trying to make a moon landing, being low on fuel, frozen fuel. The teams here are engineering teams and mission control. One doesn't get a sense of many specialties coming together. The section on the space suit is a bit better, and we get quotes from a space suit "model" and a seamstress who assembled the suits. Then comes a story about wind nearly messing up the transmissions for the first moonwalk. The discussion of tracking the astronaut's life support performance by hand is interesting, but again is mostly focused on the engineering aspects.

The section on photography was fascinating. The astronauts received training on how to take photos and what to take photos of (because you can't change film in a space suit), and then there was the question of how to decontaminate the film (without damaging it!), in case there were lunar germs. It's a great story.

I came away from the book with the impression that a wide range of engineering specialties were needed, but less so a sense of the non-engineering specialties needed. From the choice of featuring the seamstress in the promotional materials, I'd hoped for broader coverage

of all the specialties and skills needed.

FIRST teams need a huge range of skills, not all of them engineering. While this book is beautiful and interesting, it didn't quite have the hoped-for message about non-engineering skills also being needed.

### 3. BroWelm

Thanks!

### 4. Zuser

My 12 year old son loved this book! It is neat to hear about the people behind the scenes.

### 5. Blueshaper

Of course! How could I not have realized that it took a gargantuan effort to send Apollo 11 to the moon and allow a world full of people holding their breath to see Neil Armstrong walk on the moon? I've been an avid follower of the space programs of the world since I was in grade school. I had space maps and photos of the astronauts all over my bedroom walls. And yet, I never thought about all the people who made the moon walk possible. Catherine Thimmesh did. Through precise research and personal interviews, she has crafted the story of the people who made it happen. The number 400,000 and a period of eight years qualifies the effort as gargantuan. Thimmesh writes the story in an accessible manner that will leave readers eager to turn the page. From flight director Gene Kranz taking the stairs because he didn't want to risk being stuck in an elevator

to the program alarm that occurred twelve minutes before moon landing, Team Moon reveals the drama that evolved at key steps in the mission to set foot on the moon. People needed to see images. How do you take can't-miss photographs on the moon? Parachutes had to open, without fail, on re-entry. Heat shields needed to protect the capsule from burning up and destroying lives. I'm so glad that Thimmesh took the time to interview the people who had such valuable stories to tell us. Especially gratifying is the beauty of this book. The well-chosen photos are startling in contrast to the rich black background. Sources, references, and pointers for further reading will help fascinated readers continue their own journey into space. Highly recommended for schools, classrooms, and every home that has a reader who is curious about the world--and space.

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