SALLY RIDE

Written by: Judy F. Richonne | University High School | Irvine, California

BASIC BIOGRAPHY

Sally Ride (1951–2012) was born and raised in Los Angeles, California. She attended Stanford University, double majoring in physics and English literature. She earned a Master of Science and Doctorate in Physics, and was selected into the NASA astronaut program in 1978. In 1983, she became the first American woman to fly on a space shuttle crew. She flew on the space shuttle *Challenger* (mission STS-7 in 1983 and STS-41G in 1984). A third mission was cancelled after the January 28, 1986 *Challenger* explosion. Ride served on the Presidential Commission (known as the Rogers Commission), which investigated the accident. In 1989, Dr. Ride began teaching physics at University of California San Diego and served as the Director of the California Space Institute. She founded Sally Ride Science in 2001 to support girls in STEM studies and careers; the organization targets elementary and middle school students, parents, and teachers. Ride also wrote science-themed children's books. An inductee to the National Women's Hall of Fame and the Astronaut Hall of Fame, Sally Ride died July 23, 2012 of pancreatic cancer.

KEY EVENTS

Challenger Disaster (January 28, 1986), Rogers Commission (1986), Sally Ride Science (2001)

KEY PEOPLE

Valentina Tereshkova, Svetlana Savitskaya, Mae C. Jemison, Ellen Ochoa, Peggy Whitson, Neil Armstrong

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In 1958, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) was established in response to the Soviet launch of *Sputnik* in October 1955. The Space Shuttle program began on April 12, 1981 and ended in July 2011. Five shuttles have flown in space: *Columbia*, *Challenger*, *Discovery*, *Endeavour*, and *Atlantis*. The *Enterprise* did not go to space but was designed to perform atmospheric tests. Dr. Sally Ride was a participant in the early years of the program flying on board the *Challenger* twice. On its tenth mission, the *Challenger* exploded shortly after takeoff on January 28, 1986.

FUN FACT

Sally Ride founded Sally Ride Science, an organization dedicated to the education of girls in science, technology, engineering, and math, in 2001. Re-launched in 2015 at the University of California San Diego, the organization promotes STEM subject for girls, one of many legacies of Dr. Sally Ride. Learn more at **https://sallyridescience.ucsd.edu/**.

Sally Ride, *June 18, 1983, NASA, https://www.nasa.gov/sites/default/files/images/462928main_GPN-2000-001083_full.jpg*

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

- Divide students into groups of two to four students each.
- Display the images of the Space Shuttle *Challenger*, with a focus on the successful missions, a craft at work.

Teacher Tip: These images can be projected or printed and shared, at teacher discretion.

- Display the images of the Space Shuttle *Discovery*, a space shuttle in retirement.
- Ask students to discuss in small groups:
  - » Consider the amount of technology put to use as can be seen in these images. What evidence do you see in these images of the value of space exploration?
  - » Why do you think that great expense in time and money have been spent to display the shuttles after they 'retire'?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

- Based on the analysis of the images of the *Challenger* and the *Discovery*, ask the students to write a proposal to ask Congress to reinstate the space shuttle exploration program. Ask students to include three rationales in the proposal: political, social, and scientific.

LOCAL CONNECTION

Visitors can see the four remaining space shuttles on display at museums around the country. *Endeavor* is located at the California Science Center in Los Angeles (**https://californiasciencecenter.org/**). *Atlantis* is located at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida (https://www.kennedyspacecenter.com/). *Enterprise* is based at the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum in New York City (**https://www.intrepidmuseum.org/**) and *Discovery* can be seen at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in Chantilly, Virginia (**https://airandspace.si.edu/udvar-hazy-center**).

LEARN MORE

PRIMARY SOURCES

Sally Ride, *To Space and Back*, 1989
History, National Aeronautics and Space Administration
https://www.nasa.gov/topics/history/index.html

SECONDARY SOURCES

Biographical Data, Sally K. Ride
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
https://www.jsc.nasa.gov/Bios/htmlbios/ride-sk.html

Dr. Sally Ride
Sally Ride Science
https://sallyridescience.ucsd.edu/about/sallyride/about-sallyride/

Meredith Worthen, "Women in Space: From Sally Ride to Peggy Whitson," May 26, 2017
Biography
https://www.biography.com/news/sally-ride-facts-female-astronauts

IMAGES OF *CHALLENGER* AND *DISCOVERY*

Space Shuttle *Challenger, January 26, 1983. "In this In this image, Space Shuttle* Challenger *waits on Launch Complex 39A at Kennedy Space Center before its first mission, STS-6, launched on April 4, 1983...It became the second operational Shuttle, delivered to Kennedy Space Center in July 1982." Image courtesy of NASA (KSC-83PC-0028).*

Challenger Ferry Flight Flyover, *April 9, 1983. View of the Shuttle Challenger atop the Shuttle Carrier Aircraft (SCA), NASA-905, during it s return to Kennedy Space Center (KSC) and flyover of the Johnson Space Center (JSC) and the Houston skyline. Image courtesy of NASA (S83-30236).*

Ride on the Middeck, *June 21, 1983. "On Shuttle Challenger's middeck, STS-7 Mission Specialist (MS) Sally Ride, wearing light blue overalls and communications headset, floats alongside the middeck airlock hatch." Image courtesy of NASA (S07-02-020).*

Diane A. Penland, Space Shuttle Discovery, *September 13, 2012. Space Shuttle Discovery in the James S. McDonnell Space Hangar at the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center. Image courtesy of The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum.*