

The “Space Race” in the 1960s



In May 1961, President Kennedy told Americans that he wanted to send an astronaut to the Moon. No one had been to the Moon and he wanted the United States to get there first. He wanted the United States to reach the Moon before the country Russia reached the Moon.

At this time the United States and Russia, also called the Soviet Union, raced to see who could do more in space. The two nations were fighting a Cold War against each other. In this war actions were important. Sending a man to the Moon first would show that the United States was a leader in the world.

The Soviet Union started the race before John F. Kennedy became President. In October 1957 they used a **rocket** to send the first **satellite** into space. It was called *Sputnik*. People in the United States were shocked when they heard about *Sputnik* because it showed that the Soviet Union had the science to send an object to space. The United States worked hard and sent its first satellite in January 1958.

After a few years, the Soviet Union surprised the United States again. On April 12, 1961, The Soviet Union sent the first man to space. His name was Yuri Gagarin and he **orbited** the earth one time. It took

him less than two hours to go all around the earth in his **spacecraft**. Americans were worried that the Soviet Union had better **technology** than the U.S. A few weeks after Gagarin's flight, the United States sent Alan Shepard into space, but Shepard did not orbit the earth.

Since the Soviet Union was winning "the Space Race," President Kennedy decided that the United States would try to go to the Moon first. The Soviet Union had the same goal. They went back and forth with new achievements. The United States finally sent John Glen to orbit the earth in 1962. The Soviet Union sent the first woman into space and was the first country to have a person go outside of a spacecraft in outer space on a **space walk**. In February 1966 the Soviet Union came one step closer to the Moon by landing the first **unmanned spacecraft** on the Moon.

It looked like the Soviet Union would win the race but the United States was able to pull ahead. On July 20, 1969, two Americans, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, landed a spacecraft on the Moon and walked on the Moon. The United States became the first – and only – country to have astronauts walk on the Moon. The Soviet Union never landed a man on the Moon. Instead, the country focused on using unmanned spacecraft to explore the Moon and built a **space station**. After years of competition, the race to the Moon was over.

Glossary

Rocket – a tube-shaped object filled with gases that can go into the air

Satellite – an object that is sent into space to orbit the earth

Orbit – to travel around a planet, Moon, or sun.

Spacecraft – a vehicle that can go into outer space

Technology – applied science

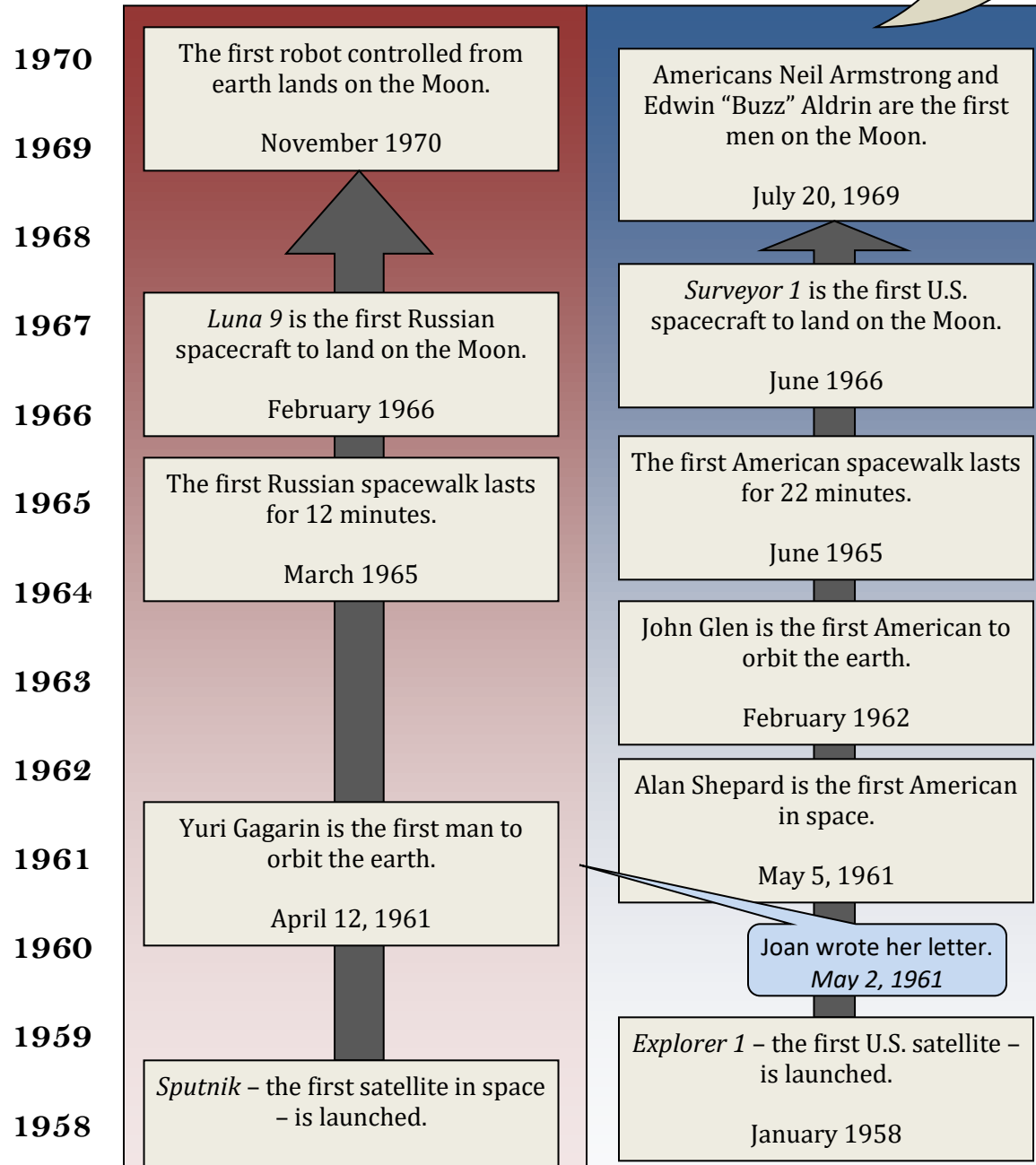
Space walk – to go outside a spacecraft in outer space

Unmanned Spacecraft – a vehicle in space without a person inside controlling it

Space Station – a structure in space that astronauts can stay in for long periods of time

Race to the Moon!

Timeline



Race to the Moon Chronology Game

Directions: The goal of this race to the moon is to place the events of the “Space Race” in the correct order. This game can be played with two or more players, as long as each player has a set of cards. Cut out the cards.

1. Combine and shuffle the cards from each player together in one deck and place the deck face down in the center. Taking turns, each player chooses a card from the deck and places the card face up in front of them.
2. On the next round each player picks a new card and places the new card face up in front of them either before or after the first card so that the cards are in the correct chronological order.
3. Play continues until one player has correctly ordered all 11 events. If a player places an event in the wrong order, other players must call the player out and that card goes back into the main deck. The player remains in the game. If a player chooses a card they already have, place the card back in the deck and play continues to next player. There are four “Milestones” and “Roadblocks” cards; follow the directions on each card.
4. The first player to place all of the events in correct chronological order wins.

Milestones & Roadblocks



<p><i>Milestone</i> President Kennedy asks Congress for more money for the moon landing project. Congress agrees. Choose another card.</p>	<p><i>Milestone</i> President Kennedy sends a telegram to Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev congratulating him on Yuri Gagarin’s flight. Choose another card.</p>	<p><i>Roadblock</i> A broken part delays the next test on the lunar spacecraft. Lose a turn.</p>	<p><i>Roadblock</i> The Soviet Union shocks the United States by launching Sputnik. Lose a turn.</p>
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<p>John Glen orbits the earth.</p>	<p>The first Soviet space walk lasts 12 minutes.</p>	<p>The first American space walk lasts 22 minutes.</p>	<p>The <i>Luna 9</i> spacecraft lands on the moon.</p>
<p>The United States lands a spacecraft on the moon.</p>	<p>Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walk on the moon.</p>	<p>A robot explores the surface of the moon, controlled by a team of people on earth.</p>	<p>Alan Shepard makes a suborbital flight.</p>
<p>The Soviet Union launches Sputnik – the first satellite – into space.</p>	<p>The United States sends satellite Explorer 1 into space.</p>	<p>Yuri Gagarin orbits the earth.</p>	