

Apollo 13

milky way

Blast-Off

On April 11th 1970, Apollo 13 blasted off from the Kennedy Space Centre in Florida, USA. There were three crew members onboard: James Lovell, Fred Haise and Jack Swigert. Lovell had already been to the moon. He was the most experienced of all the crew.

Worryingly, the mission had bad luck from the beginning. One of the original pilots was replaced only two days before blast-off. This was because he had been exposed to a virus. NASA couldn't risk any of the crew getting ill in space.

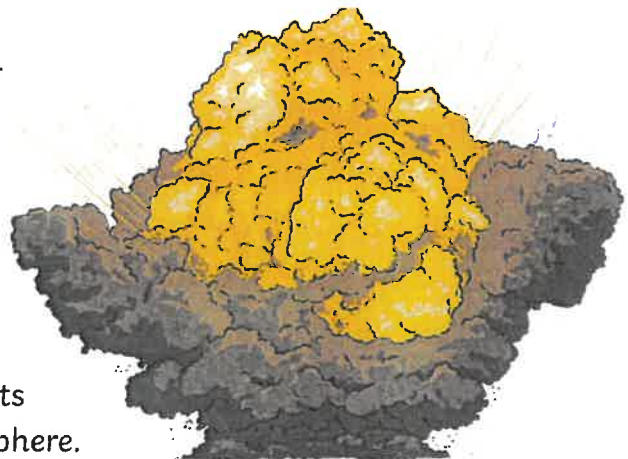


The Apollo 13 was made up of two different spacecraft, the Odyssey and the Aquarius, connected by a tunnel. The Odyssey was the main spacecraft and contained the crew's living quarters. The Aquarius was much smaller – it was meant for landing on the moon. Apollo 13's mission was to investigate the surface of the moon by taking photographs and getting samples

of the moon's surface. The crew were also going to film videos for television. At first, everything went well.

An Explosion

On the evening of 13th April, disaster struck. An explosion rocked the spacecraft. Swigert reported the explosion to mission control in Houston, exclaiming, "Houston, we've had a problem here." An oxygen tank had exploded and caused serious damage. From the window, the astronauts could see gas escaping into the atmosphere.



This gas was their precious oxygen.

Apollo 13 was in great danger. The crew were stranded in space with a damaged spacecraft. It would take a huge amount of teamwork and bravery to get the crew safely home. Thinking quickly, the crew moved into the smaller Aquarius. It became their lifeboat. The Odyssey was shut down to try to save as much power as possible for the journey home to Earth.

Life Onboard

Life in space was very difficult for the crew. All power was turned off, except for the essential systems, which made the spacecraft extremely cold. The astronauts put on extra clothes and some strapped into their lunar boots, which they would have worn on the moon. Water and food were carefully rationed. Some food became impossible to eat because it was so cold. The crew were cramped and couldn't sleep.

The astronauts felt anxious. They were supported by mission control, who were working hard to rescue them. Everyone had to work as a team, despite the distance between them.

To return to Earth, the crew had to return to Odyssey. They hoped there was enough power left to get them home. As the crew detached the Odyssey and floated back down to Earth, they could see the damage from the explosion. They had been lucky to survive.

Returning Home

On 17th April, the Apollo 13 crew splashed into the Pacific Ocean. The US Navy was waiting for the crew to land, picking up the exhausted men from the spacecraft by helicopter. Millions of people watched on television as they landed. The whole world celebrated the crew's safe return.



Apollo 13 Questions

1. Where was the Apollo 13 launched from? Tick **one**.

- ☐ Kennedy Space Centre
- ☐ Houston Space Centre
- ☐ Washington Space Centre
- ☐ New York Space Centre

2. What were the names of the two spacecraft that made up the Apollo 13? Tick **two**.

- ☐ Scorpion
- ☐ Aquarius
- ☐ Odyssey
- ☐ Gemini

3. **Find** and **copy** one word that means to cry out in surprise.

4. What is mission control?

5. What did Jack Swigert say at the time of the explosion?

6. How do you think the crew might have felt when they saw oxygen escaping into space from their window? Explain your answer.

7. Mission control kept in radio contact with the Apollo 13 crew, even though they were worried about power levels. Why do you think this was?

8. Name one quality the astronauts needed to help them through the scary situation onboard the Apollo 13. Explain why the quality you chose would be helpful.
