

Michael Collins

MICHAEL COLLINS

Whilst Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin took their one small step onto the moon and into fame, astronaut Michael Collins' vital job was to fly the main spacecraft round and round the moon until it was time to collect the other two and return to Earth. When he was round the back of the moon and out of radio contact, Michael was the most isolated human that had ever lived.



As pilot of the command module, called Columbia, Michael was left all alone whilst his two friends became the first to walk on the moon. They landed in a module called Eagle, but Michael remained in orbit. Each time he flew around the back of the moon, Michael lost radio contact with Earth. But Michael loved the excitement and the importance of the mission and never felt lonely. If anything had gone wrong with Eagle, Neil and Buzz would have had to be abandoned on the moon, so Michael was very relieved when his friends returned to him successfully.



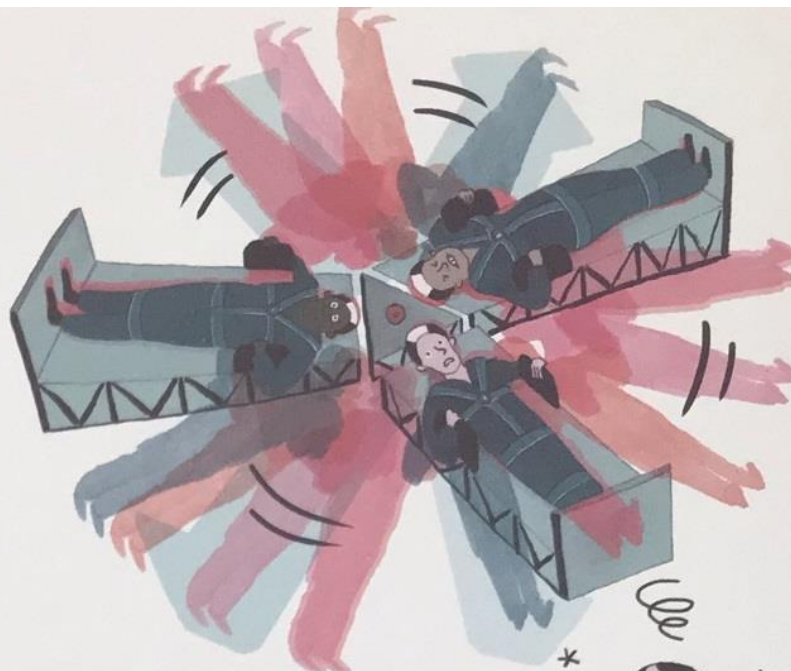
ASTRONAUT TRAINING

On a journey into space, one tiny mistake can quickly lead to disaster. Preparing for adventures often requires far more time and effort than the trip itself – and being an astronaut requires more skill than any other kind of adventure! That was certainly true for Michael, Neil and Buzz as they prepared for the first ever journey to the moon. The training was incredibly tough and careful planning was needed.

FROM ROCKET SCIENCE TO SPACE ROCKS

Firstly, to be an astronaut, you need to understand a lot of maths and science. Michael said that the most important equipment for an astronaut is a ruler and pencil, which doesn't sound very adventurous! The next stage of training involved hundreds of hours of flying skills, learning to navigate from the stars and studying geology so that they could research Moon rocks. But of all the training the astronauts went through, the centrifuge training was the worst.

It involved being spun round and round until they felt sick! This prepared the astronauts for the G-forces they faced when their spacecraft rushed back into Earth's atmosphere.



WE HAVE LIFT OFF

After basic training, each astronaut became an expert in particular skills. No one could learn everything, but as a team, Michael, Neil and Buzz had all the knowledge needed to attempt something that had never been done.

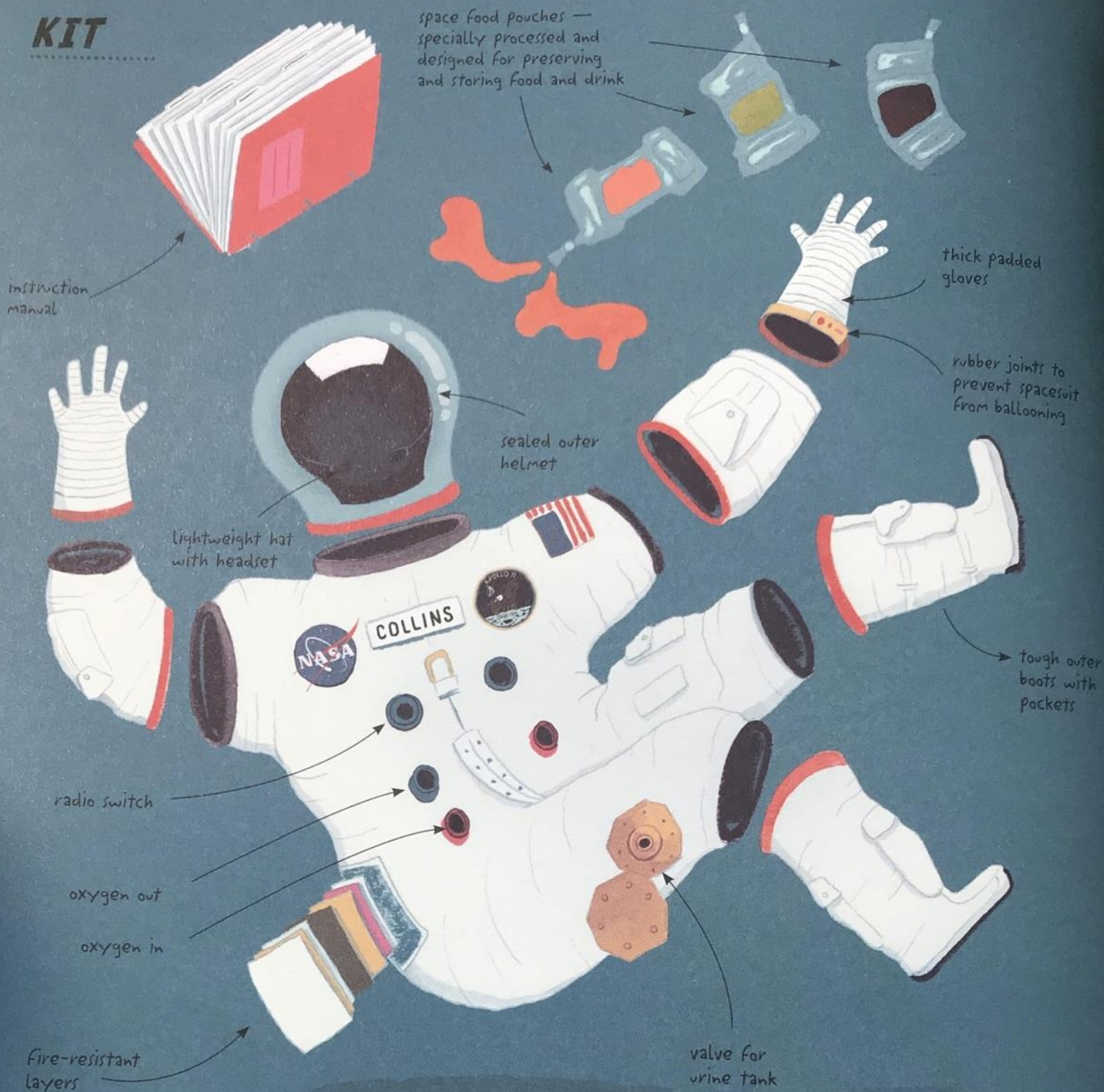
Michael felt lucky to be involved in such a famous adventure, though he did feel pressure because he knew that the whole world was watching. On top of that, the journey to the moon and back was dangerous as well as difficult. Blasting off in Apollo 11 must have been nerve-wracking, but to be able to say that he was part of such an historic expedition was worth all the hard work and worry.



“ I know that I would be a liar or a fool if I said that I have the best of the three Apollo 11 seats, but I can say with truth that I am perfectly satisfied with the one I have. ”



KIT



Why Michael Collins Inspired Me

I admire people whose actions speak louder than their words. Michael Collins was part of the team that completed the greatest adventure in history. Without him, it would not have succeeded. Yet most people today do not even know his name. Michael would have loved to walk on the moon but that was not his role. I like how he acknowledged this but was also grateful for the amazing things he *did* get to do.



DEAR DIARY

Well, it's not long now until we head for the moon. What a wild thing to write! A lot of hard work, a bit of a brain, and a dollop of luck got me into this adventure. It's Sunday, my one day of the week to relax. I've just cooked a delicious lamb curry (I made a mess of the kitchen, though!) and enjoyed playing with my dog, Dubhe.

Everything seems so normal.

BANG

My poor wife, Patricia, seems worried. I understand that. We're going to be flying at 40, 500 km/s — that's pretty fast! I guess I'm a bit uneasy too, especially about the launch when something

is most likely to go wrong. There's so much fuel in our rocket that an explosion would be like sitting on 2,000 tonnes of TNT. I prefer not to think about that! I don't want to make any silly mistakes and embarrass myself either. But mostly I am excited about the adventure!

Helicopter training yesterday was great fun, and taught us a lot about flying a spacecraft. It's like rubbing your tummy and patting your head at the same time. It was better than learning about rocks, which we have been dragged all over the world to do. We also had to learn jungle and

desert survival skills in case we don't land back on Earth exactly where we're supposed to.



My adventure is going to have a big impact on Patricia and our lovely three kids. No one thinks much about the loved ones that adventurers leave behind when we head off chasing our crazy dreams. But it's scary and lonely for them. Ann and Michael are only four and three, so don't really understand. But Kate's seven and she understands what I'm going to try to do. I'm glad she likes the idea of Daddy being an astronaut and doesn't seem too worried about it. I'll miss them all when I'm up there!

Mike

