Star Trek!

A Brand-New Space Laboratory Is Making History

Years ago, someone had an idea that was out of this world. What if countries from around the globe could get together and build a gigantic spacecraft? The craft would be an enormous moving laboratory that would orbit the Earth. Teams of astronauts from different countries could live on that craft, working together to conduct important scientific experiments. Imagine what the world could learn about space! Imagine how great it would be to have countries working together!

Some people said it couldn't be done. But as you read this, that fantastic idea is becoming a reality. The International Space Station (known as ISS) is currently flying around, 220 miles above the Earth. It is, in fact, the third-brightest object in the night sky, after the moon and Venus. In November 2000, an American astronaut and two Russian *cosmonauts* blasted into space to become the first people to live at the station.

How did it happen?

The ISS, which will be completed in 2004, is being constructed like a gigantic Lego airship. Large pieces, called *modules* (MOJ-oolz), are rocketed into space. Astronauts connect the pieces on risky space walks while moving at speeds up to 17,500 miles per hour. That's like trying to build a car while it's speeding around a track! The crews load supplies into the different modules and connect wiring so computer data and electricity can flow between modules.

The ISS isn't the most luxurious place; the living module is about as long as your average classroom. But astronauts will find everything they need to survive in space. The thick walls will protect astronauts from space temperatures, which can rise to 250F and drop to –250F. Breathable air is piped through the station from special tanks. Water is brought up in tanks, and then recycled through filters. (Don't gross out, but even astronaut urine is filtered and used for drinking. It's cleaner than most tap water!)

Certainly life in space has its dangers. Many astronauts worry the most about space *debris* (duh-BREE)—junk from old spacecrafts and satellites—and rocks from deep space. If even a *tiny* object hits the station, the force could cause catastrophic damage.

For the men and women who train for years to become astronauts, nothing compares with the excitement of going into space. "I've wanted to be an astronaut since the fourth grade," says Jerry Ross, an American astronaut who has flown on five missions and "can't wait" to join another ISS mission. "The risks are a small price for the experience of going into space. It's more spectacular than you can imagine," Jerry told us. "And I really believe that what we will discover there will be enormously important for mankind."

By Lauren Tarshis, Editor, *Storyworks*

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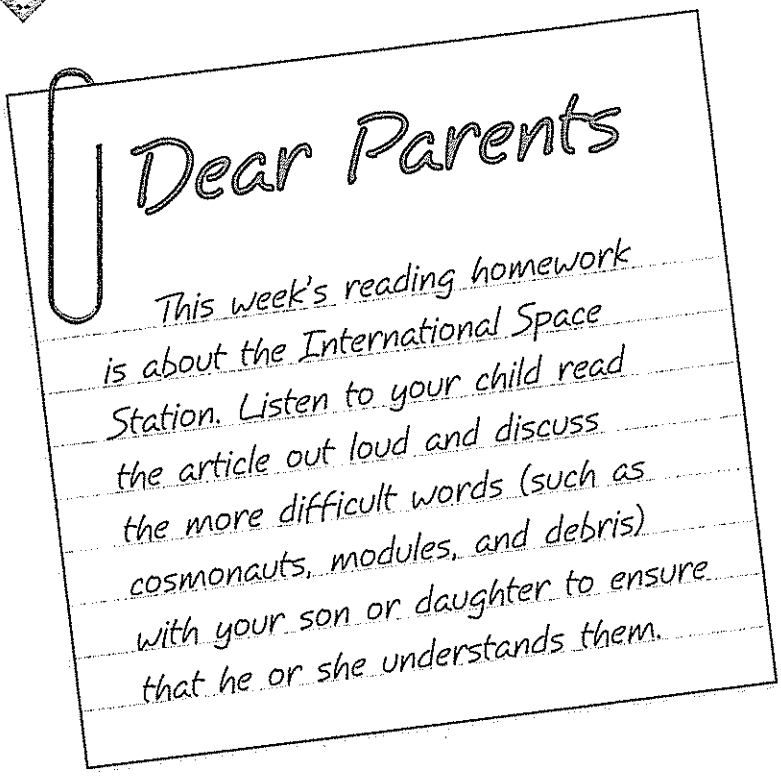

TIP OF THE WEEK

Many standardized tests use a multiple-choice format. Here are some tips for helping students answer these kinds of questions:

- Read the questions first to set a purpose for reading.
- Read all four answers.
- Go back to the story and scan for a clue word or date to verify that an answer is correct.
- Look for clue words such as *least, never, most,* and *main,* which limit the scope of the question and can help eliminate incorrect answers.
- Consider the whole article when choosing alternative titles

The Questions

1. What is the meaning of the word *debris?*
   - Ⓐ frozen astronaut food
   - Ⓑ life on other planets
   - Ⓒ scattered pieces of something that has been broken
   - Ⓓ a computer malfunction that could put the astronauts in danger

2. What does it mean when an idea is "out of this world"?
   - Ⓐ insane
   - Ⓑ hard to understand
   - Ⓒ fantastic
   - Ⓓ scientific

3. Another good title for this article would be:
   - Ⓐ "The Space Shuttle"
   - Ⓑ "Station in the Sky"
   - Ⓒ "An Adventure to the Moon"
   - Ⓓ "Blastoff"

4. How fast is the space station moving in orbit?
   - Ⓐ 220 miles per hour
   - Ⓑ 17,500 miles per hour
   - Ⓒ 250 miles per hour
   - Ⓓ 2004 miles per hour

We have completed this assignment together.

Child's Signature _____ Parent's Signature _____