

Week 5 - Reading comprehension.

FIRST WOMAN IN SPACE

Read this short biography of how Valentina Tereshkova came to be the first woman in space, then answer the questions that follow.

Valentina Tereshkova was born in 1937 in a small village in central Russia, where her father was a tractor driver and her mother worked in a textile factory.

She started school in 1945 at the age of eight and left in 1953 to do textile work like her mother. During her teenage years, however, she became very interested in skydiving. She trained at the local flying club and, when she was 22 years-old, she did her first parachute jump. This experience would lead eventually to a place in the history books.

Her enthusiasm for skydiving brought her to the attention of the country's Space Programme. Russia had already put the first man into space in 1961, when Yuri Gagarin orbited the Earth. The government was very eager to achieve another Russian 'first' in what was known as the *space race* against the USA.

In fact, a Russian newspaper at the time reported that Tereshkova had 'dreamt of going into space' as soon as she heard about Gagarin's space mission.

Her dream and her skydiving abilities made her a likely candidate for the intensive training necessary to become an astronaut. Her training included weightless flights at high altitudes, isolation tests and spacecraft engineering. Skill in handling a parachute was an essential part of re-entry. Whoever was chosen would have to be ejected from the space capsule at 20,000 feet and land safely. She was selected in February 1962.

On the morning of 16th June 1963, Tereshkova was bussed to the launch pad. After routine communication and life support checks, she was sealed inside the rocket, Vostok 6. There followed a two-hour countdown and a successful launch.

She completed 48 orbits of the Earth in 71 hours – more time in space than all the American astronauts combined.

Back on Earth she was highly honoured, not only in her own country, where she received the Hero of the Soviet Union medal, but also around the world.

She never went into space again, but perhaps her spirit of adventure did not leave her. In 2013, she said she'd be happy to go on a one-way trip to Mars.



Now use evidence from the text to answer the following questions.

1. Do you think Valentina's parents expected her to grow up to be a famous astronaut? Why do you think this?

2. Why were her skydiving skills so important?

3. How do we know that Yuri Gagarin's space flight was a factor in Tereshkova's desire to be part of the Space Programme?

4. During her training for space travel, she had to have 'isolation tests'. Why do you think this would be part of the training?

5. Re-entry involved being 'ejected at 20,000 feet'. What does **ejected** mean?

6. It might be fair to say that, at this point in history, Russia was winning the *space race* against the USA. Give **two** reasons why it is fair to say this.

7. From what is said in the text, how do we know she became world-famous?

8. Did she ever lose her spirit of adventure? How do you know?

Answers

Now use evidence from the text to answer the following questions.

1. Do you think Valentina's parents expected her to grow up to be a famous astronaut? Why do you think this?

Since her father was a tractor driver and her mother a textile worker in a small village it is unlikely that they'd imagine she could be an astronaut.

2. Why were her skydiving skills so important?

As an astronaut, she would need skydiving skills on re-entry. She would be ejected from the space capsule at 20,000 feet and have to land safely.

3. How do we know that Yuri Gagarin's space flight was a factor in Tereshkova's desire to be part of the Space Programme?

She dreamt of going into space after Gagarin's orbit of the Earth.

4. During her training for space travel, she had to have 'isolation tests'. Why do you think this would be part of the training?

In space, she would have to cope with being completely on her own and be able to carry out all sorts of complicated tasks by herself.

5. Re-entry involved being 'ejected at 20,000 feet'. What does ejected mean?

thrown / propelled out

6. It might be fair to say that, at this point in history, Russia was winning the *space race* against the USA. Give **two** reasons why it is fair to say this.

In 1961, the Russian, Yuri Gagarin, was the first man in space.

In 1963, Valentina Tereshkova was the first woman in space.

7. From what is said in the text, how do we know she became world-famous?

She was highly honoured around the world.

8. Did she ever lose her spirit of adventure? How do you know?

In 2013, she said she'd be happy to go on a one-way trip to Mars.