

THE STAR, MAE JEMISON

All of science, all of space exploration— everything we do in the world is about imagination and using your creativity to expand beyond your normal boundaries.

–Mae Jemison



DIRECTIONS: Read the text on pages 1–2. Then, answer the questions on page 3.

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever used your imagination to make something happen? Like, fly down the stairs to the dinner table, or wave a magic wand to clean your room? Well, you're not alone in using your imagination. Doctor Mae Jemison imagined herself in space as a child, and she is now famous for making that dream come true.

As an astronaut for NASA, she became the first African American woman to fly into space. While on the space shuttle *Endeavour* in 1992, she was a mission specialist who studied how living things react to being in space. She is also a doctor, researcher, teacher, and businessperson.

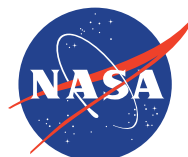
EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

The youngest of three children, Mae was born in Decatur, Alabama, on October 17, 1956. Soon after she was born, her family moved to Chicago, Illinois, which is where Mae grew up. Her mother was an elementary school teacher, and her father was a maintenance worker.

When Mae was younger, she liked to dance and she liked science. In her mind, her love for dance supported her love of science. With the encouragement of her uncle, it was in Chicago that her love for science grew. She learned more about science, specifically astronomy. She wanted to go to space, and she had faith that someday she would get there.

Mae won a scholarship to Stanford University in California. She was only 16 years old, but she thrived both in her studies in science and in the arts. She double majored in chemical engineering and African American studies. While on campus, she planned and performed in dance productions. Torn between her love for dancing and science, she eventually chose science as a career path.

After graduating from Stanford in 1977, she continued her education at Cornell University Medical College in New York. In 1981, Mae became a doctor. During summer breaks, Mae went to Cuba and Kenya to learn about medical care in other countries. In 1983, at the age of 27, she served in the Peace Corps for two and a half years. She wanted to use her medical degree to help others. During her time in the Peace Corps, Jemison served as a medical officer in West Africa.



NASA is an acronym for National Aeronautics and Space Administration

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KEEP GOING! Read the text below. Then, answer the questions on page 3.

LAUNCHING HER WAY INTO THE HISTORY BOOKS

Over the years, Mae continued to think about her dream to go to space, so she applied to be an astronaut for NASA. Even though Mae's first application was denied because NASA had stopped accepting new astronauts at the time, she didn't give up! She applied a second time, and in 1987, she was one of 15 people chosen to become an astronaut out of 2,000 applicants.

Five years later, she worked on the STS-47 mission to study life in space, flying in the space shuttle *Endeavour*. Mae studied in space for seven days, twenty-two hours, thirty minutes, and thirty-three seconds. Her experience of being in space was so impactful that she went on to encourage more human space travel.

CONTINUING HER SCIENTIFIC WORK

After leaving NASA, Mae started her own organizations. One was a camp called *The Earth We Share*. It started through the Dorothy Jemison Foundation for Excellence, named after Mae's mother in honor of her work as an educator. The camp helps kids learn more about science. Kids go to the camp from around the world. At the camp, young scientists get to use their imagination and share their ideas about future missions.

In 2012, the Dorothy Jemison Foundation for Excellence was awarded a grant for the 100 Year Starship project. The goal of this project was to encourage scientists to research and develop technology that would allow humans to travel to another star in the next 100 years.

EDUCATION ADVOCATE FOR ARTS AND SCIENCE

Mae also has an artistic side. She is trained as a dancer, choreographer, and actor. Using her training, she has appeared on television over the years. When she was younger, she looked up to Uhura, a Black female officer in the television show *Star Trek*. Her real life blurred with her childhood imagination as she guest starred in the television show *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Mae jumped at the opportunity to play Lieutenant Palmer in one episode. This was yet another example of a childhood dream coming true, and another experience that cemented the importance of the arts in expanding her imagination.

In her TED talk in 2002, Mae said, "We need to revitalize the arts and sciences." She advocated for teaching the arts and science together and not valuing one over the other. She even went as far as to say that understanding the arts can help young learners understand science better. Her advocacy for science and the arts in education is important at a time when schools are cutting back on music and art classes. She ended her TED talk by saying, "I like to think of ideas as potential energy. They're really wonderful, but nothing will happen until we risk putting them into action."

There is no doubt that Mae Jemison has used her imagination and worked hard to go beyond her normal boundaries. She has always imagined a world beyond the one she could see. And she dared to imagine until those dreams came true.



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DIRECTIONS: Answer the questions using evidence from the text.



1. According to the text, what are some things Mae Jemison liked to do?

2. Why is Mae Jemison famous?

3. What is one challenge Mae Jemison faced in her life? How did she respond to that challenge?

4. Reread the quote from Mae Jemison:

“I like to think of ideas as potential energy. They’re really wonderful, but nothing will happen until we risk putting them into action.”

What did she mean by this? Use information from the text to support your answer.

5. Reread the last section of the biography. Do you think teachers should teach arts and science together? Why or why not? Do outside research to support your answer.

6. In all of the journeys in her life, whether they were on Earth or outer space, Mae Jemison has used her scientific knowledge to help others. Write about a career you would like to try that can help people, too.

